

Reflections from Near Ground Zero

Jeanne Wilhelm lived in the East Village of Manhattan, 2 1/2 miles from the site of the horrendous events of September 11, 2001. Following is her reflections when U.S. air strikes began in Afghanistan.

The [beginning of U.S. bombing], continuing today, has intensified my ongoing state, which I have recently been able to describe as one of mourning. Like my friends and neighbors I am going about regular activities and appreciating gifts, such as the clear blue sky on a crisp autumn day, but somehow there is an ache inside that occasionally overflows as quick tears in response to a touching story about one of the 9/11 victims, survivors, or rescuers.

Now that we have begun a violent response to the disaster, I feel that all of us in the world community are in greater danger than ever before. This is a time when I need to remember that the source of our security is in God, however we name or describe the Creator/Sustainer of life. Also, I need to trust that all of us are being cared for individually, even though I don't understand how that can be, especially for the victims of the disaster, and the innocent people of Afghanistan.

I was 10 years old at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and saw how we pulled together and came through some very difficult times. Since then it seems to me that we have lost our way in some areas and are greatly in need of “conversion,” of a change of heart. Maybe we need to suffer ourselves before we learn to attend to the suffering of others...

Perhaps my feelings of mourning are related to the compassion I feel for all of those who are suffering now, and in anticipation of the suffering to come, of unknown origin, extent, and duration. I don't feel afraid of what may come, but simply sad at the prospect of the suffering ahead of the world community. And yet, there is the hope that the changes to come may save us from our own excesses, save our planet, and promote the development of a true world community. Let's hope that today's uncertainties and sufferings are the birth pangs of a new world order of peace based on justice and sustained by love.

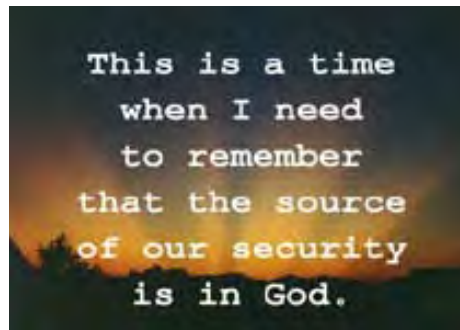


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