

Married with children

In wake of attacks, a mother hopes for peace

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This is what I hope for my children, now that terrorists have forever changed their world.

I hope they are heroes. I do not wish them to be firefighters or police officers or members of any other profession that demands they put their lives on the line for others. But I wish them the hearts of heroes to help others in time of strife.

I hope they are patriots. I do not want them to steer ships of war or fly aircraft of destruction or take on a uniform in any man's army. But I wish them the spirit of patriotism to love their country, its people and its



Patricia Gallagher Newberry

symbols.

I hope they are prayerful. They need not wear the collar of the ordained or the veil of the chaste. But I want them to know the comfort of quiet reflection and the power of a million prayers.

I hope they follow their dreams. But, at least for now, at least this week, I don't want their dreams to include pursuits that put them in tall buildings or large airplanes or teeming cities with any frequency.

This is what I hope for my children: That they remain protected from knowing the evil man can

inflict on man.

At 7 and 5 and 3, they know little of what happened on Sept. 11. They watched none of the TV coverage. They saw little in the paper. We told them only that some very bad guys crashed their planes into some buildings and hurt a lot of people. Then, in a stab at normalcy, we walked to UDF for ice cream.

They remain, thankfully, only vaguely aware of the thousands dead, the real and horrifying threat of war. Frances, the oldest, made a card in Brownies for fallen firefighters. A.J., the 5-year-old, said a prayer at school for people he didn't know. Both dropped some change

in a collection in the cafeteria. Beatrice has, by design, not a clue.

"We're safe here," we told them, assuring ourselves as much as them. "No one will hurt us here."

But I don't know that. In fact, in a city torn by violence of its own, I sometimes doubt it. Racial unrest. Killed and maimed street soldiers. Gunfire in a park where we play. A double murder a block away. A man with ties to our community accused of killing his pregnant wife.

I cannot shield them, completely, from danger in their own back yards. I cannot guarantee, with any certainty, their safety in a world where madmen plow

airplanes into buildings.

Our politicians say they will hunt down and wage battle on the enemy to ensure our futures and our children's futures. The president, last week, told us to live our lives and hug our children.

But hugs will not suffice. Songs and flags and rallies and tears will not keep them from harm's way. Saying we are resolute will not bring back the 6,000 lost to 6,000 mothers and 6,000 fathers — nor protect the next 6,000 in this unknown enemy's sights.

I did not lose friends or family in the carnage. I cannot fathom the grief of those who did. Perhaps that's why, instead of rage, I

feel mostly fear — of reckless retaliation, of battle and bloodshed, of suffering for all our children.

Maybe that makes me a coward; maybe that makes me a mother.

This is what I hope for my children. That our leaders proceed with enormous care and caution, putting preservation of life — here and half a world away — as a top priority.

This is what I hope for my children: An end to violence, in their world, in their country, in their city, in their neighborhood. This is what I hope for my children: Peace.

Contact Patricia Gallagher Newberry at newgal@one.net.