



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

1730
Ser N097/03081
20 Mar 03

Dear Colleagues,

"To every thing there is a season..." The steady rain in Washington today heralds the change of season so many here have been hoping for: the coming of spring. Last night, bombs rained down on Iraq to herald the change of season so many throughout the world have prayed would not come at all: the season of war. But it has come, and so let us continue to pray—to pray that this season of war will pass quickly into the next.

There is little doubt that ours is the superior force in this conflict. No sane person can imagine the defeat of our troops. And yet, superior forces are not invulnerable to attack or injury, to confusion or fear, or to death itself. We all pray for you who take the love of God to those who have put their lives on the line for all of us. We pray for your safety and theirs. We pray for your success and theirs, and that all your sacrifices and theirs will result in the better, safer world we all desire. I will even be so bold as to paraphrase old Mordecai (with none of his uncertainty): You have come to chaplaincy for just such a time as this! Encourage the anxious, comfort the wounded, console the grieving, honor the fallen, and you will have done your job well.

For those of us not deployed to the primary war zone, the nature of this war may bring the risks of war to our front doors anyway. It has already brought some requirements for sacrifice, and I pray that God will bless all of us who minister to frightened families and harried personnel doing their best to support our combat troops. Terrorists attack the mind and the heart of everyone in their physical assaults on innocent victims and revered symbols. The emotional and psychological wounds inflicted do not bleed, but they do take their toll...quietly...within. Your compassionate work binds these wounds with a spiritual balm every bit as powerful as the evil weapons that inflicted them. Continue this good work, even if you feel the inner wounds yourself.

And finally, let us continue to pray for those poor folks who did not go in harm's way, but found this war bringing

unimaginable and perhaps unavoidable harm in *their* way. Pray for their protection in this time of war so that they may experience the benefit of the suffering and sacrifice that will be expended in its prosecution. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." Let us pray that the "purpose under heaven" for this time of war will be to establish a long and liberating time of peace for these who have already suffered so much.

May God bless us and keep us and grant us all His peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry C. Black". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, CHC, U.S. Navy
Chief of Navy Chaplains