DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
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IN REPLY REFER TO
1730
Ser N097/02211
26 July 2002

Dear Colleagues:

Recently, I re-read The Door in the Dark by Robert Frost and recalled various unexpected encounters in the dark with a slim door that slipped past my guard.

The Door in the Dark
In going from room to room in the dark,
I reached out blindly to save my face,
But neglected, however lightly, to lace
My fingers and close my arms in an arc.
A slim door got in past my guard,
And hit me a blow in the head so hard
I had my native simile jarred.
So people and things don't pair any more
With what they used to pair with before.

Part of the transforming ministry we deliver throughout and beyond the Sea Services plays a critical role in helping people find their way through the darkened passageways of life. Those of us who have offered Evening Prayer on a ship, have seen how encouraging words can give hope to the Sailor who has given up. Those of us who have conducted worship under camouflage netting with a MRE box as a makeshift alter have seen how words of faith can give strength to the Marine who feels depleted. Those of us who have traveled to remote Coast Guard stations, have seen how a visit from the chaplain became the symbol of God's presence to the Coast Guardsman who feels isolated.

The assurance of God's presence guides service members through times of fear, despair, and darkness. As we point men and women to the wisdom only God can impart, they can be enabled to pass safely through the uncertainties of life. The book of Proverbs reminds us that God offers light to all who search for wisdom and seek righteousness:

"Make your ear attentive to wisdom," [2:2a]
"The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom," [10:31a]
"The integrity of the upright will guide them," [11:3a]

As we help others find their way in the dark, we want to pay attention to our own spiritual health, lest we walk into the "slim door" referred to in Robert Frost's poem. Through daily devotion, God lights our path and gives us the wisdom and grace to endure the rigors of ministry. Through our ministry and prayer life, we model what it means to avoid an unwanted encounter in the dark. May God continue to bless our Corps and use us as "lights" to those we serve.

BARRY C. BLACK
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