

suicide.” God will not automatically save America. With God’s help, we must save ourselves.

We cannot rely on past success to insure future success, and we cannot take the future for granted. Successful communities—successful countries—don’t just happen. They are built by dedication, sacrifice and hard work. They must find or build unifying bonds and values. They also are built by caring for each other, helping each other, and working jointly on projects and programs.

A great Amazon legend gives us a metaphor for cooperation and community: it tells of a priest who was speaking with God about heaven and hell. “I will show you hell,” said God. They went into a room that had a delicious beef stew on the table; around which sat people chained to their benches who looked desperately famished. They held spoons with long handles that reached into the pot, but were too long to put the stew back into their mouths. Their suffering was terrible. “Now, I will show you heaven,” said God. They then went into an identical room with the savory stew on the table, around which sat people with identical spoons and handles, but they were well nourished and joyous. The priest was baffled until God said, “Quite simply, you see, these people have learned to feed each other.”

We can create chaos, as in Bosnia, or we can create community. It is up to us.

### **COMMANDMENT II: A GREAT COMMUNITY NEEDS GREAT LEADERS BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY IT NEEDS GREAT CITIZENS.**

Leadership is important. We all know this. Churchill said, “An army of lions led by sheep will always lose to an army of sheep led by a lion.” But citizens are equally important.

America, in many respects, faces more of a “participation” problem than a leadership problem. One wise historian observed:

“To make a nation truly great, a handful of heroes capable of great deeds at supreme moments is not enough. Heroes are not always available, and one can often do without them! But it is essential to have thousands of reliable people—honest citizens—who steadfastly place the public interest before their own.”

—Pasquale Villani

John Gardner, former Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, similarly warns:

“Our society cannot achieve greatness unless individuals at many levels of ability accept the need for high standards of performance and strive to achieve those standards within the limits possible for them. We want the highest conceivable excellence, of course, in the activities crucial to our effectiveness and creativity as a society, but that isn’t enough. If the man in the street says, “Those fellows at the top have to be good, but I’m just a slob and can act like one.”—Then our days of greatness are behind us.”

A quality community can only be built on the bedrock of quality citizens, who have a stake in their neighbors and give of themselves.

### **COMMANDMENT III: A COMMUNITY MUST GENERATE TOLERANCE AND YET SET LIMITS ON THAT TOLERANCE. IT MUST BALANCE FREEDOM WITH SOCIAL ORDER, RIGHTS WITH RESPONSIBILITIES, AUTONOMY WITH COMMUNITY.**

We have been given the greatest inheritance (patrimony) from what Tom Brokaw called “The Greatest Generation”: social and political stability. They left us freedom but more than that an equilibrium between freedom and order—a first rate infrastructure, small national debt and a tradition of barn raising and tolerance.

Tolerance is a word easy to say—hard to apply. What should the community tolerate and what shouldn’t it tolerate? It often depends on context. It is your right to read your Bible, your Koran, your Torah. It is not your right to force these readings on others. We can tolerate almost any idea and the community should be alive with argument.

But the standards for teaching and tolerance are not coterminous. It may be that you deeply believe that it trees moving that make the wind blow. This is your prerogative, but you cannot teach it to my children in public institutions. You can stage debates in your school between Republicans and Democrats because their differences is a subject open to debate and constantly changing, but you do not give equal time in schools to how trees moving makes the wind blow. Science and rational thought have put to rest certain arguments, and knowledge must move forward if we are to survive in a competitive world. We can tolerate many private beliefs, but should stand strong against institutionalizing non-science and scientific error into our school system.

There are some people who believe the holocaust never happened. They are entitled to be mistaken—even gravely mistaken. They can stand on a soapbox on Main Street and profess that there was no holocaust—but they cannot teach in our schools a viewpoint that all evidence points against. We have pictures of concentration camps and holocaust victims. And, we have pictures in rocks (called fossils), which show us the inspiring story of evolution. Schools must struggle with knowledge, but cannot teach a particular theology—or all minority viewpoints no matter how passionately held.

Even more important is tolerance in the area of behavior, especially where behavior does not hurt others, and/or where no societal consensus exists. What should a community made up of various races, religions and ethnic groups tolerate and what should it not tolerate? The late Barbara Jordan talked about the need to “Americanize” immigrants. How tolerant

should our society be and what should we demand of immigrants from other cultures who come here with vastly different ideas of individualism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, rule of law, democracy, separation of church and state, private property? How many conflicting, contrasting and overlapping cultures can live together in peace and harmony? What happens when a separatist cultures clashes with a pluralist culture? When “Why can’t we all just get along?” meets “There is no God but Allah”

Certainly there should be freedom of religion, but can people handle snakes, refuse medical care and refuse on religious grounds to salute the flag? People can refuse a blood transfusion for themselves and even all-medical care if they want. We have generally allowed people to do these things on grounds of their religion. In fact, I saw a bumper sticker the other day that read “I’ve just become a Christian Scientist, it was the only health plan I could afford.”

But should they be allowed to refuse medical care for their minor children, can they force their 13-year-old daughter to marry her 45-year old uncle, or submit to female genital mutilation? Should Muslim clerics have the right to broadcast over outdoor loudspeakers the five daily Islamic calls to prayer? Should we give in to demands of some Muslim clerics for publicly maintained prayer facilities in such institutions as schools and airports? Should a Muslim woman be able to get her drivers license picture taken while in purdah.

Does the State have to maintain kosher kitchens in its prison system? Or can Hispanic students demand a separate graduation where the Mexican, not the American flag, is flown? Should the ritual slaughter of animals be forbidden under our animal rights laws? Do we grant a zoning variance to allow a Mosque to build a prayer tower? Should Sikhs we allowed to wear their daggers, so central to their religion, on airplanes? Louisiana cockfighters are suing the federal government over a new ban on shipping fighting birds, saying it discrimination against Cajuns and Hispanics. They claim that the ban is “moral imperialism” and that cockfighting is integral to their culture. All these examples challenge us to think about the limits to tolerance and multiculturalism.

Certainly there can and should be some reasonable accommodation to diversity. Someone in our public hospitals can’t refuse to be treated by a Black or Jewish doctor? We say no. But how about our Muslim immigrants where their religion forbids another man from seeing or touching the body of a wife/woman? Why not allow her request for a woman doctor for reasons of public health? But we are not going to let her perform female genital mutilation on her 12-year-old daughter.

Finding a balance between tolerance and chaos, rights and privileges, freedom and community will always be a work in progress.

### **COMMANDMENT IV: A COMMUNITY CAN BE A JOSEPH’S COAT OF MANY COLORS AND CREEDS, BUT IT MUST HAVE MORE THINGS IN COMMON THAN DIFFERENCES. IT MUST STRESS THE “UNUM” NOT THE PLURIBUS.”**

“Diversity” is a word sweeping America and, in particular, sweeping college campuses. It is appropriate to “celebrate diversity” but I suggest we must celebrate unity even more. I recently went around the world and in no place, with the possible exception of the United States, did I see “diversity” working. Diverse people worldwide are mostly engaged in hating each other—that is, when they are not killing each other. A “diverse,” peaceful, or stable society is against most historical precedent. It cannot be achieved with slogans or happy talk. It is much harder to achieve than most Americans acknowledge. A nation is not a rooming house where we all live separately while we make our livings. I believe that a society can be a Joseph’s coat of many diverse people, but they absolutely must have more in common than what separates them. We must share something with our neighbors besides a zip code.

I am sobered by how much unity it takes. Look at the ancient Greeks. Dorf’s *World History* tells us: “The Greeks believed that they belonged to the same race; they possessed a common language and literature; and they worshiped the same gods. All Greece took part in the Olympic games in honor of Zeus and all Greeks venerated the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. A common enemy Persia threatened their liberty. Yet, all of these bonds together were not strong enough to overcome two factors.... (local patriotism and geographical conditions that nurtured pol. Divisions ...)”

Our culture doesn’t have to be (and shouldn’t be) the culture of 1776 or 1950- but it must have a unified core. The United States runs the very great risk of creating a “Hispanic Quebec” if we do not develop the right “social glue.” As Benjamin Schwarz said in the *Atlantic Monthly* recently: “...the apparent success of our own multiethnic and multicultural experiment might have been achieved not by tolerance but by hegemony. Without the dominance that once dictated ethnocentrically, and what it meant to be an American, we are left with only tolerance and pluralism to hold us together. He observes, “‘Americanization’ was a process of coercive conformity according to which the U.S. was a melting pot, not a tapestry. We took immigrants and turned them into Americans.” erance and pluralism is not enough. The history of multiple cultures living together without assimilation is not a happy history. Another scholar bluntly put it this way: “Americanization, then, although it did not cleanse America of its ethnic minorities, it cleansed its minorities of their ethnicity.” Blunt but true. We took Irish, Indians and Italians, Cambodians and Chinese, Europeans and Ethiopians and made them into