

One Day of Security

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Thankfulness is a relative state of mind. One can count a thousand material blessings or be glad just to make it through the day. The Thanksgiving holiday that started as a ceremony of gratitude for the fruits of the harvest and the miracle of survival has turned into a celebration of nostalgia and homage to an earlier way of life. For many of us, the day is a chance to affirm continuity, an occasion for holding onto traditional values, an opportunity to create one day of security and comfort in a troubling world.

For this purpose we need the touchstones of familiar things. No Cuisinarts today, no haute cuisine; tradition means the hot pumpkin pies that make the French turn pale, the stuffings and sauces not to be found in

Larousse Gastronomique. It is a day for an old-fashioned feast.

It is also time, if we are fortunate, for family and friends. But even as we follow the traditional rituals and seek to affirm those basic values, we know that they are more often remembered than real. For every family that shares the holiday there is a set of statistics about separation and insecurity as the family changes. The worldwide contrasts between our lives and others are shattering this year. We cannot forget the scenes of starvation that haunt the bountiful board, and the news of repression that draws the circle around the table closer. We must not be too cynical for gratitude, or too worldly for prayer.

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