

# Saints and sinners: A need to return to the 'good old days'

When my sister was 13 or 14, I can remember her going up to our mother and lamenting, "Mama, I have nothing to look forward to." The whole world today is in the same fix as my sister was. We have nothing to look forward to.

We can all put up with rainy days when the forecast for tomorrow is sunny skies. But, when the clouds return after the rain and the prospect is for more of the same all week, our spirits dip. That is the situation we appear to be in.

There may be signs of an economic recovery on the far horizon, but we will put off celebrating until the next quarter's earnings reports and unemployment figures are in.

After 9/11, we thought we could look forward to a new era of civic togetherness. But, as a people, we are getting meaner and more

short-tempered with one another. A survey shows that almost 80 percent of us feel that a lack of respect and common courtesy is a serious problem in the United States — and it's getting worse.

Examples abound. Two women got into an argument on a supermarket checkout line. It got so heated that one of the women went to her car, got a hammer out of the trunk and smashed her antagonist's headlight.

Worst-case scenario: People are afraid that suicide bombers will make their way to this country.

Well, if there is nothing good to look forward to, maybe we can look back to the past in order to regain our sanity. Maybe we can bring it back. There are signs that this is what we may be attempting to do.

Mikey is sampling the Life cereal again on



**george plagenz**

• saints & sinners

TV commercials — and "He likes it!" Mr. Whipple is warning his customers not to squeeze the Charmin.

The yawning Maytag repairman has his feet up again waiting for customer complaints that don't come in.

To remind us how good the past could be, we are eating foods that were our favorites in the good old days. On the menu at an upscale Chicago restaurant are such 1940s and '50s

cuisine as stuffed peppers, chicken pot pie, turkey with mashed potatoes, chipped beef on toast, meatloaf, grilled cheese sandwiches, egg salad on Wonder Bread and hash with poached eggs - all washed down with a milkshake.

And, "Jello-O again." Even Jack Benny's favorite can be seen on the dessert carts at some of the nicer restaurants. Diners are homesick for Chef Mom, who never heard of beef carbonnade, asparagus al dente or pommes frites.

Some people say that the "good old days" is just a nostalgic saying for a time that never was. They may be wrong, however. There was a time, says James Collier in his book, "The Rise of Selfishness in America" (Oxford Press, 1991), when the great mass of Americans lived in a social order that was predict-

able, stable and basically decent.

Although longing for that world won't bring it back, nostalgia can be more than just a romantic looking backward to "the big band sounds" of the 1940s.

"Finding ourselves not in the world we love but knowing how deeply we love it," says novelist John Cheever, "there is kindled within us the conviction that we will discover the way to return to it in the future."

If our "dream is behind us," as F. Scott Fitzgerald has his hero say in "The Great Gatsby," the answer for us may be to turn around and recapture the dream. What happened to the "good old days"?

Did you and I contribute to their passing? (What was it Edmund Burke said about "good men who do nothing"? Was he talking about us?)

# Islamic principles guide preservation of the environment on small island

By George Mwangi

Associated Press Writer

MISALI ISLAND, Zanzibar — A conservation project based on Islamic principles is aiming to preserve the beauty of Misali Island, an uninhabited spot off mainland Africa surrounded by a magnificent coral reef.

"There are verses in the Quran that teach us why we should not destroy the environment," said Ali Mohammed Haji, a local fisherman. "To conserve is investment. There are a lot of benefits ... what we conserve will be used by generations to come."

The coral reef around Misali makes the area attractive to divers, and the island itself is home to green and hawksbill turtles that build their nests in its white sand.

In order to keep out developers who

wanted to turn the 22-acre island into an Indian Ocean resort, the semi-autonomous government of Zanzibar — which is part of Tanzania — declared the island of tropical trees and volcanic rock a protected conservation area in 1998.

The Zanzibari government, CARE International, the Austrian government, the European Union, African Wildlife Foundation, Irish Aid and the local community have since established the Misali Island Conservation Association.

The group will eventually become the manager of the Jozani-Chwaka Bay conservation project, under which some 1,500 fishermen have agreed not to fish along Misali's coral reef and in other breeding areas, and not to fish with dynamite, poison or nets that are

tightly woven.

In exchange, the fishermen will get a portion of the revenues from tourism by divers and other conservation-conscious visitors who may be drawn by the untouched beauty of Misali.

Organizers say the project depends on the Islamic concept of balance in nature, and also appeals to pre-Islamic beliefs that the island's coral caves were inhabited by spirits who would ensure good health and large catches if left offerings.

For generations, fishermen from villages on nearby Pemba in the Zanzibar archipelago have been using Misali as a fishing camp and a site for spiritual activities.

Legend has it that Misali got its name after the prophet Muhammad appeared and asked for a prayer mat — or

"msala" in the Kiswahili language of Africa's eastern coast. When none was available, he is said to have declared that the teardrop-shaped island that points northeast toward Mecca would be his mat.

Ali Thani, who coordinates the Muslim ethics portion of the project, said his office provides local religious leaders and schools with posters and pamphlets that offer guidance on how to make the teachings of the Quran relevant to fishermen and the conservation of their environment.

If the Islamic-based conservation education works on the island over a two-year period, Thani said, the concept will be tried on other parts of Africa's Indian Ocean coast whose inhabitants are primarily Muslim.

"The project is innovative as far as

conservation is concerned," said James Hutchins, an American researcher. "It is not demanding a lot from the resource users" — the fisherman.

But he said the project is challenging because it involves working with fishermen who remain in the conservation area, as compared to other approaches in which local communities are removed from the area to be conserved. Of course, not everyone is happy with the project.

"We don't know why they are conserving Misali; now we cannot fish where there are fish," said Mkumbwa Said Ali, a 33-year-old fisherman who has been making his living at the work since he was 10.

"We are suffering ... they should go and conserve somewhere else. The project is benefiting people at the top,

but we poor people are not benefiting because we totally depend on fishing."

Hutchins said such complaints are valid because it will take time before the fishermen begin to benefit from the project, which is also introducing a savings and credit plan.

Project executive director Ali Abdalla said 40 percent of revenue raised from tourism on the island will go to the local community and 60 percent toward conservation management.

Project manager Amour Bakari denied claims that the project was fostering Islamic fundamentalism.

"We are not supporting Islam as a religion. We are supporting culture," Bakari said. "We want to enable people to use principles taught in the Quran for conservation."



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 Fourth & College • 899-3605  
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 1160 Cattletrail  
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**Saturday:** Sabbath School: 9:30 am  
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**First Christian Church**  
**(Disciples of Christ)**  
**Pastor:** Loren Strait  
 Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233  
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**Sunday School:** 9:15 a.m.  
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**Pastor:** Leonard Cox  
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 Worship Service: 10:15 am

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**Pastor:**  
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 Morning Worship: 11 am  
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**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**  
 13th & Center  
 899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114  
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 Morning Prayer: 9:30 am 1st & 5th Sundays  
**Holy Eucharist:** 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sundays: 9:30  
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**Pastor:** John Coumerilh  
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