Can outrage in Afghanistan inspire us?

THE CONVICTION and pending execution of the Afghani student, Sayed Parviz Kambakhsh, for blasphemy is an appalling circumstance, but it offers an opportunity that we should all seize ("Insult to Mohammed draws death penalty," Page A12, Jan. 24).

The time has come for Muslims to demonstrate that Islam is a great faith that has no need for violence or intimidation to maintain the loyalty of its congregation. And we outside Islam must make it clear that we cannot respect or honor a religion that would consider blasphemy a capital crime, no matter how ancient the tradition from which this decision flowed.

Muslims who support the conviction and sentence of Kambakhsh, or who refrain from condemning it, must be made to realize that they share responsibility for bringing dishonor to their cherished heritage, and if we non-Muslims do not speak out, we too must share in the blame.

Friends prevent friends from committing, or condoning, evil. The best way of showing our good will toward Islam is by helping it shed an indefensible aspect of its legacy. Every religion has much to atone for, but that is no reason to button our lips and tolerate fresh grounds for atonement.

 DANIEL C. DENNETT
 North Andover

Parade in the path of the polls

READING "PARADE for Pats is issue in vote" (City & Region, Jan. 29) prompted me to contemplate the difficulty one might face accessing polling sites in Boston on a typical day. For the elderly and people whose mobility is impaired, access to polling stations is a challenge. While federal legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act protects a person's right to access, often logistical concerns on voting day make it impossible for homebound elders or those who must depend on public transportation to access polling sites.

A major event in the city would flood an already flawed public transportation system. Traffic would alter timeliness of buses and The Ride, and could influence caregivers' decisions to drive their elderly parents to the polling station. Of course I support our team and agree that celebration of the New England Patriots would foster unity, but I would rather not think of my grandmother packed like a sardine into a Green Line train or wading through rowdy crowds, all for the opportunity to make her vote count.

Regardless of overall turnout numbers, let us acknowledge that a parade on Super Tuesday would deter Massachusetts constituents who need their voices heard.

 SARAH MARSH
 Medford

A cub reporter was tuned to history

AS A footnote to history, I am writing about the photo that accompanied the Globe's Jan. 30 obituary of Margaret Truman. The picture showed President Truman with his daughter in what might be interpreted as a concert performance in New Britain, Conn. Why was the president playing the piano, of all things, in New Britain, of all places? As a neophyte reporter for the New Britain Herald, I was witness to such an event.

Motor to the steps of City Hall — and even moved a piano outside to entice him to demonstrate his musical ability. To everybody's surprise and delight, the president did sit down and played a dozen or so bars of what I believe was the "Missouri Waltz."

I was brash enough to submit a mock review, commenting at some length on his "firm rubato" in the bass notes and his "strict control" of the tempo. Somehow, that odd move picked up by the press.

Margaret Truman with her father, the president, at a campaign stop in New Britain, Conn.

JUST ANOTHER thought on having a Patriots' championship parade on the same day as the Massachusetts primary. If the parade is going to be Tuesday, that means that the Pats will have won the Super Bowl. And that means we're all going to be a pretty happy bunch. If we're all so happy, we'll be more optimistic and probably more likely to want to vote. And besides, if everyone's already out and about at the parade, they can simply swing into the polls on the way home. Who knows, we may even get a good turn out.