

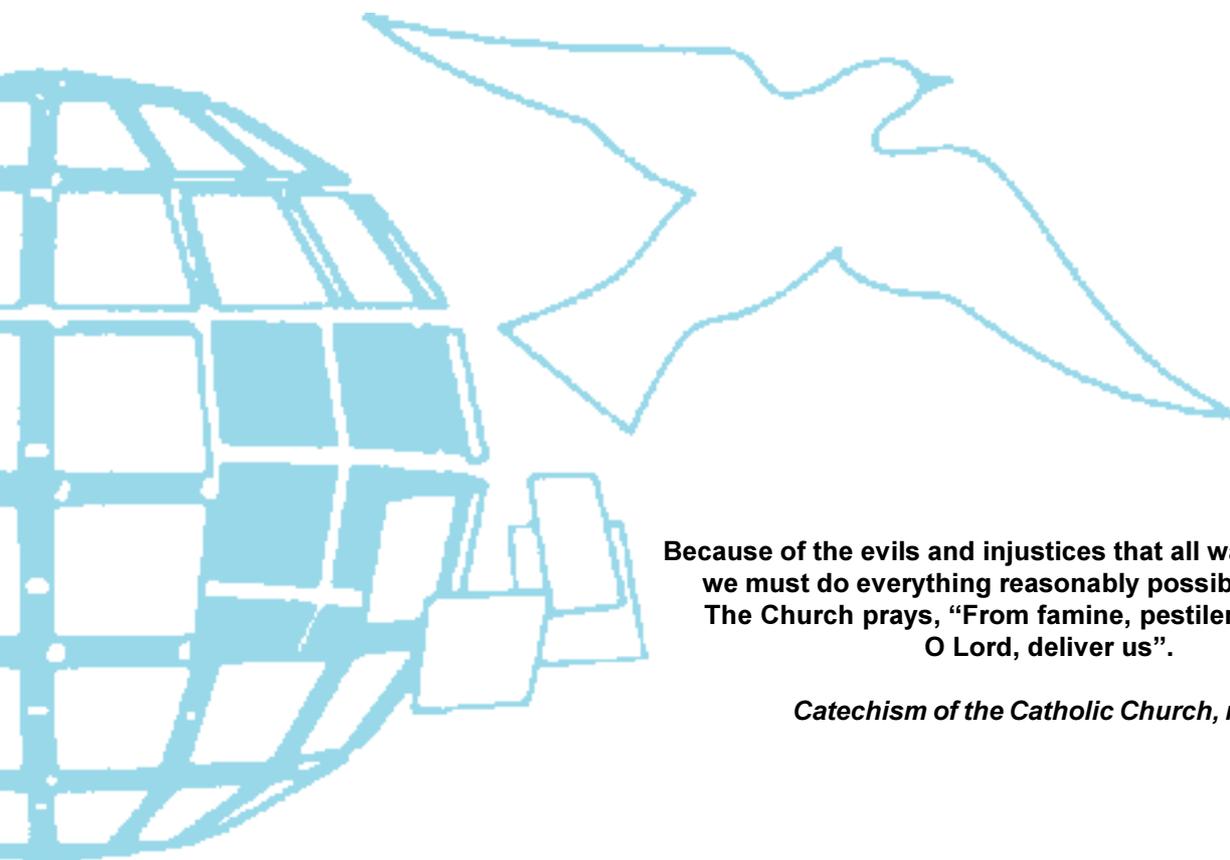
ACSJC Discussion Guide: The Church speaks on war and peace

In 1998 the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council produced two short documents outlining the statements of Pope John Paul II and teachings contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on the issue of war. At that time, Iraq was facing the threat of military intervention by a contingent of allied forces. Iraq had failed to meet U.N. Resolutions concerning inspections for weapons of mass destruction and the destruction of those weapons.

Today, the people of Iraq and, indeed, the world stand on the precipice of another Gulf War.

This document is provided as a basic resource for local communities, justice groups and individuals who are seeking further information on the Church's pronouncements on war and peace. It reviews the teachings of the Church on issues of war and peace as contained in the *Catechism*. Included are excerpts of statements made by the Holy Father and Church leaders around the world.

Some questions are posed for further reflection.



**Because of the evils and injustices that all war brings with it,
we must do everything reasonably possible to avoid it.
The Church prays, "From famine, pestilence, and war,
O Lord, deliver us".**

Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 2327

Two Strands of Church Teaching on Peace and War

There are two strands historically running through the Catholic Church's responses to questions on the use of force: what we would call today a 'pacifist' or non-violent tradition, and the 'just war' tradition.

As a rule, the pacifist tradition, exemplified especially in the religious orders, seeks the maintenance of peace using non-violent means. Based on Gospel values and the experience of national and global violence, pacifism regards war as being unthinkable and not to be justified. The just war tradition, on the other hand, opposes the use of force for similar reasons, but concedes that engagement in war may be justified in certain circumstances, under strict moral conditions and only as a last resort, in order to protect the innocent or to restore justice. The case of East Timor is a perfect example.

Though these traditions are strictly logically incompatible, they have co-existed over the centuries. While there is often disagreement between them on specific issues, there are also areas of strong convergence. For example, in response to emerging forms of warfare involving the threat of mass destruction, the pacifist and just war traditions often find themselves as one in calling for dialogue and the art of diplomacy as a means for avoiding the use of force.

It is also important to understand that the Church's teachings on war and peace have changed greatly over time and will continue to do so in response to new situations. The just war theory, which was formalised in the 5th Century by St Augustine, has continued to evolve as a moral framework for considering the changing nature and circumstances of conflict and, when it is acceptable, to engage in war as a response to aggression.

Today, questions have been raised about the adequacy of the 'just war' theory in responding to emerging forms of aggression which include ethnic cleansing and global terrorism. Would the suspected possession of weapons of mass destruction by so-called 'rogue' states constitute a certain threat or even an actual aggression that would justify the use of force? Could pre-emptive military action be justified?

Recent terrorist acts and the ensuing 'war on terror' may present challenges for aspects of this theory. But the strict moral requirements of this tradition continue to emphasise that war must remain a last resort and that peaceful and diplomatic means must be used to avoid it. In response to the unfolding events in the Persian Gulf, the Church has called for the peaceful resolution of differences and stated that notions of 'preventive war' and 'pre-emptive strikes' do not belong to a definition of a just war and would not constitute a legitimate use of force.

Over the centuries the views of Christians on issues of war and peace have diverged widely. In the face of current world events, people hold many different opinions and views on circumstances surrounding the crisis in Iraq. We must respect the right of others to form their own conscientious views on this matter. As Christians and as Catholics, however, it is important that our views and our judgements on these world events are informed by Church teaching and the voice of Church leaders at this time.

This document is provided as a resource to inform interested readers of the basics of Church teaching on this issue, of the statements of Church leaders around the world concerning the threat of war in Iraq, and a summary of the Church's teachings on war and peace as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Further information can be gained in a history of Church teachings on war and peace - see CSJC Series Paper no. 23, *The Peace of God*, by Dr Paul Rule.

A soon to be released Series Paper (no. 47) by Fr Bruce Duncan CSsR will deal with the topic of 'just war and Iraq'.

These papers can be ordered from the Australian Catholic Social Justice council by Ph: (02) 9956 5811 or email: admin@acsjc.org.au

What the Catechism says about war

The *Catechism* presents the teachings of the Catholic Church drawing on Scripture, the living tradition of the Church, the magisterial texts, and the spiritual heritage of the Saints, Doctors of the Church and key leaders of the Early Church. Even though it is a large document, it does not present a complete history of the development of the Church's teaching on every issue. For example, in its summary of Church teaching on the avoidance of war, the *Catechism* does not provide a full treatment of certain principles including: just cause; right intention; restoring justice; legitimate authority; and discrimination in the conduct of war to protect civilians.

The *Catechism* provides a snapshot of current teaching rather than setting out how and why the teachings have developed through time.

Paragraphs 2302 to 2317 of the *Catechism* deal with safeguarding peace and avoiding war. Here is a summary of these teachings.

◆ Respect for life

Right at the start of its reflections about war and peace the *Catechism* recalls the commandment, You Shall Not Kill (n 2302). All that follows must be read in the light of the Church's fundamental commitment to respect for life.

Respect for human life and its flourishing need peace. Peace is not simply the absence of war. It is a 'tranquillity of order' or state of well-being that comes from respect for the dignity and rights of both individual people and whole communities. It requires justice but is also made possible by love (n 2304).

Jesus is our peace. It is his love for us that makes peace possible. By his death and resurrection he reconciled us with God and has made the Church a sacrament and sign of the unity of the whole human family. Among the beatitudes he proclaimed "Blessed are the Peacemakers" (n 2305).

◆ Rejecting violence

Those who renounce violence bear witness to the serious physical and moral risks involved in the use of violence. In order to defend human rights they make use of non-violent means that are available to the weakest. It is a legitimate option for Catholics to be pacifists. Pacifism can be a way of bearing witness to love, as long as the rights and duties of other people or communities aren't harmed (n 2306).

All war is accompanied by evil and injustice and so the Church urges everyone to pray and act so that we may be freed from the bondage of war (n 2307).

Everyone has a duty to work to avoid war. That applies to every person and every government. However, once all peaceful efforts have failed, governments have a right to lawful self-defence. This will be true as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power to perform what would be in effect police actions (n 2308).

◆ Criteria for a Just War

There are strict conditions for deciding if a military action is morally acceptable. These are set out in what is known as the 'just war' theory. All of the following conditions must be met:

- The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave and certain;
- All other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- There must be serious prospects of success;
- The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition (n 2309).

Those who have responsibility for the common good must evaluate whether or not these conditions have been met. They then have a right to impose on citizens obligations that are necessary for the defence of the nation. Members of the armed forces who carry out their duties honourably are serving peace and security and contributing to the common good (n 2310).

At the same time, public authorities must make fair arrangements for people who, for reasons of conscience, refuse to bear arms. Their consciences must be respected and other ways in which they can serve the community must be found (n 2311).

◆ **Morality in war**

Moral laws are not suspended by the outbreak of war. All is not fair in war (n 2312).

Non-combatants, wounded soldiers and prisoners are to be treated humanely. Actions that are against the law of nations are crimes and so are orders to commit such actions. Obeying orders is no excuse. The extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority is a mortal sin. Everyone has a moral duty to resist orders that command genocide (n 2313).

Acts of war that indiscriminately destroy whole cities or vast areas and their inhabitants are a crime against God and against humanity. They are to be condemned firmly and unequivocally. The danger of modern warfare is that it provides an opportunity for the use of weapons like atomic, biological and chemical weapons to commit this kind of crime (n 2314).

◆ **The arms race**

The Church has strong moral reservations about the strategy of accumulating weapons as a method of deterrence. The arms race does not ensure peace. It does not eliminate the causes of war but rather risks aggravating them. The accumulation of arms increases conflict and the danger of escalation. Spending on weapons diverts resources from the needy and impedes countries' development (n 2315).

The production and sale of arms affect the common good of nations and the international community. Public authorities have a duty to regulate them. The pursuit of short-term interests cannot legitimate undertakings that promote violence and conflict among nations or compromise international law (n 2316).

◆ **Addressing the causes of war**

Peace is not simply the absence of war. We must also address those issues in our society and around the world that undermine human dignity and cause war. Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride constantly threaten peace and cause wars. We must do everything we can to overcome these disorders so that we can build up peace and avoid war (n 2317).

What Pope John Paul II said about the first Gulf War

As we contemplate the possibility of further military action in the Persian Gulf, let us reflect on what the Pope said about the first Gulf War.

On nearly fifty occasions from August 1990 to March 1991, Pope John Paul II spoke out urging a non-violent resolution of the conflict in the Persian Gulf. In these interventions he constantly called for dialogue, negotiation, and respect for the rights of people and of nations.

He emphasised the role of international law. He said that war was 'unworthy of humanity', that war could never adequately resolve the issues at stake and would only give rise to further hatred and injustice. He emphasised the risk of escalation and the unpredictable magnitude of the consequences. He found the indiscriminate effects of modern warfare morally unacceptable.

In his Christmas message of December 1990 he urged world leaders to **walk the path of peace**. He said:

May leaders be convinced that war is an adventure with no return! By reasoning, patience and dialogue, with respect for the inalienable rights of peoples and nations, it is possible to identify and travel the paths of understanding and peace.

He also spoke on **the role of the United Nations** as a moral authority finding the peaceful resolution of world conflicts. In an address to the Secretary of the State of the United he stated:

I ardently hope that the moral authority of the Organisation which you represent may make its contribution so that ultimately dialogue, reason and law may prevail and thus choices with disastrous, unforeseeable consequences may be avoided. May the supreme good of peace triumph, that peace which is so greatly desired by all the peoples of the earth!

Speaking to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, the Pope spoke of the **strict conditions governing the use of force** and legitimacy of war. He said:

...recourse to force for a just cause would only be admissible if such recourse were proportionate to the result one wished to obtain and with due consideration to the consequences that military actions, today made more destructive by modern technology, would have for the survival of peoples and the planet itself... How can we fail to echo here the warning of the Second Vatican Council in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*; 'The capability for war does not legitimise every military and political use of it. Nor does everything automatically become permissible between hostile parties once war has regrettably commenced.' (*Gaudium et spes* n 79).

In a **Message to the Presidents of Iraq and the United States**, the Holy Father warned of the untold consequences of war. He stated:

No international problem can be adequately and worthily solved by recourse to arms, and experience teaches all humanity that war, besides causing many victims, creates situations of grave injustice which, in their turn, constitute a powerful temptation to further recourse to violence.

Before the Angelus on 20 January 1991, the Pope spoke of the **human cost of war** borne by innocent civilians:

Unfortunately that is the terrible logic of war which tends to involve other States in the conflict and indiscriminately threaten civilian populations as well. The deplorable bombings which we have received news about are a painful confirmation of that. In reality, every civilian population, on both sides, has the right to be respected and not to be involved in military action.

One week later, before the Angelus, he prayed for the victims of war:

... Let us pray for the civilian populations who are undergoing the trial of bombings or forced by the hundreds of thousands to abandon their homes and homelands, experiencing the tragic plight of refugees.

[The texts of each of the Pope's interventions on the Gulf War are reproduced in *John Paul II for Peace in the Middle East* published by Liberia Editrice Vaticana in 1991.]

Pope John Paul II on the threat of war today

Pope John Paul II is deeply committed to peace. In the face of the danger of a war that might disturb the entire Middle East, he has invited all Catholics to dedicate with special intensity Ash Wednesday (5 March 2003) to prayer and fasting for the cause of peace.

◆ World Day of Peace message 2003

Every year on 1 January the Holy Father delivers a message for the World Day of Peace. In the World Day of Peace message for 2003, he devotes attention to Pope John XXIII's famous encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*. Its 40th anniversary in April 2003 is very timely. The call of Pope John XXIII for all people of good will to commit to peace is just as relevant as when his encyclical was promulgated in the darkest days of the cold war.

Pope John Paul II calls on us to develop the optimistic outlook of John XXIII for a **new vision of world peace** in the face of what seems to be a permanent situation of conflict:

... trust in the merciful and compassionate God who calls us to brotherhood, and confidence in the men and women of our time because, like those of every other time, they bear the image of God in their souls. It is on this basis that we can hope to build a world of peace on earth.

He says that, in the end, the work for **peace flows from the heart** of the individual:

Certain structures and mechanisms of peace... have been derived from nothing other than the accumulated wisdom and innumerable gestures of peace made by men and women throughout history who have kept hope and not given in to discouragement.

In the realm of international politics, there is a role for a 'constitutional organisation of the human family', such as the United Nations, capable of ensuring peace and harmony between people, as well as their development. The Pope calls for the **correct use of political authority** in international affairs:

Perhaps nowhere today is there a more obvious need for the correct use of political authority than in the dramatic situation of the Middle East and the Holy Land... The volatility of the situation is compounded by the clash of interests among the members of the international community. Until those in positions of responsibility undergo a veritable revolution in the way they use their power and go about securing their peoples' welfare, it is difficult to imagine how progress towards peace can be made.

In 2003 World Day of Peace Message, *Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment*, can be accessed at: www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=29130

◆ **State of the World address 2003**

In mid-January, the Pope addressed the representatives of 177 countries that have diplomatic relations with the Vatican. He said that he has been "personally struck by the **feeling of fear** which often dwells in the hearts of our contemporaries" in the face of terrorism, the threat of war, famine, disease and environmental degradation.

The Holy Father paid particular attention to the threat of war. He spoke of the need for the 'peoples of the earth' and their leaders to say "NO TO WAR!".

He emphasised the role of international law, honest dialogue, solidarity between the States and the exercise of diplomacy as methods for resolving differences. Stating that **war is always a defeat for humanity**, he added that the solution to difference "will never be imposed by recourse to terrorism or armed conflict, as if military victories could be the solution".

Turning to the crisis in Iraq he asked:

And what are we to say of the threat of a war which could strike the people of Iraq, the land of the Prophets, a people sorely tried by more than twelve years of embargo?

In responding to this question he summarised the Church's teachings on war and peace as they apply to the Iraq crisis:

War is never just another means that one can choose to employ for settling differences between nations. As the Charter of the United Nations Organisation and international law itself remind us, war cannot be decided upon, even when it is a matter of ensuring the common good, except as the very last option and in accordance with very strict conditions, without ignoring the consequences for the civilian population both during and after the military operations.

With optimism that **war is not always inevitable**, the Pope said that good will, trust, fidelity to commitments and cooperation would change the current course of events.

The full text of this address can be found at: www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=29883

◆ **Other voices from the Vatican**

When presenting the recent papal message for the World Day of Peace, **Archbishop Renato Martino**, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, called on developed countries to ensure that more of the resources involved in the production and sale of arms are allocated to peace and development in the world. On the subject of the war on terror he said:

Since September 11, peace is threatened by the cancer of international terrorism... The response to terrorism and violence is never more violence. Peace is not weakness but strength.

When asked about the Church's position on a possible 'preventive war' in Iraq, the Archbishop highlighted the difference between preventive war and the right of persons and states to exercise self-defence against an unjust aggression. A preventive war is not the same as defence against unjust aggression he said, "because it is a war of aggression and there is no doubt whatsoever that it does not belong to the definition of a just war".

Refer: www.cathnews.com/news/212/153.html

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, has also commented that the concept of preventive war does not appear in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. He said:

One cannot simply say that the catechism does not legitimise the war... But it is true that the catechism has developed a doctrine that, on the one hand, does not exclude the fact that there are values and peoples that must be defended in some circumstances; on the other hand, it offers a very precise doctrine on the limits of these possibilities.

Refer: www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=25413

Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, Secretary for Relations with States, has said that the best strategy for countering terrorism is to rediscover the 'sense of sacredness' of human life. Responding to the looming war in Iraq he said:

It is necessary to do everything possible so that this much-discussed attack does not take place.

The use of weapons is not a given, and moreover a preventive war is not foreseen by the U.N. charter.

It is important for Iraqi leaders to regulate their political actions according to the code of conduct that is imposed by Iraq's membership in the United Nations. But no military decisions should be made outside the U.N. authority... If that were the case, the entire system of international rules would collapse. We'd risk the jungle.

Refer: www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/20021223.htm

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's U.N. nuncio, addressed the U.N. Security Council calling for a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Iraq. He stated:

The Holy See is convinced that in the efforts to draw strength from the wealth of peaceful tools provided by international law, to resort to force would not be a just one. To the grave consequences for a civilian population that has already been tested long enough, are added the dark prospects of tensions and conflicts between peoples and cultures and the deprecated reintroduction of war as a way to resolve untenable situations...

On the issue of Iraq, the vast majority of the international community is calling for a diplomatic resolution of the dispute and for exploring all avenues for a peaceful settlement. That call should not be ignored.

Refer: www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=31662

Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, the Pope's special envoy to Iraq, said that peace is still possible in Iraq and for Iraq. Before returning to Rome from Iraq he stated:

...a small clearing seems to be opening between the great black clouds that hang over us at this time... The new and brief respite that has taken place must be used full time by all in a spirit of reciprocal trust, to respond to the demands of the international community. The smallest step over the next few days is worth a great leap towards peace.

Refer: www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=31497

What Church leaders are saying around the world

Over recent months Church leaders around the world have commented on the unfolding crisis in Iraq. Like the Holy Father and senior Vatican officials, they have urged all people of good will to pray for peace. They have urged the political leaders of the world to pursue political and diplomatic solutions with Iraq, while emphasising the strict moral conditions that ensure that the potential for military action would only be considered as the last resort and under very strict conditions. The overwhelming call has been for diplomacy and peace. The structures, means and alternatives for avoiding war are far from exhausted.

Following are some excerpts from statements and correspondence of church conferences around the world. They are taken from primary and secondary sources which can be obtained by following the internet links provided.

◆ Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference

"The international community has increasingly focused on the possibility that the Iraqi leadership is amassing weapons of mass destruction, implying the threat of an imminent attack. With other Church leaders around the world, the Catholic Bishops of Australia urge great restraint at this most delicate point and welcome the role of the United Nations Security Council in ensuring that Iraq meets its obligations to disarm..."

"We call especially on those in our nation who exercise political authority and diplomatic influence to do all in their power to build peace and avoid war."

"The Australian Bishops also stress the importance of solidarity with the people of Iraq. Recurrent war and the resulting humanitarian crises have already inflicted grave suffering upon the population, and any further conflict would be a human catastrophe, with the weakest inevitably suffering the most."

www.catholic.org.au/statements/ju_peace.htm

◆ Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes

"Our Just War tradition insists that peaceful and diplomatic alternatives, such as those currently in operation by the United Nations Security Council, must first be exhausted. The new doctrine of pre-emptive war is so radical that it has no precedent in international law. War is the worst possible solution to the present situation in Iraq. If fighting breaks out it is a defeat for humanity. The Iraqi people who have suffered greatly the effects of war and economic sanctions over the past decade will face untold suffering."

www.aclri.catholic.org.au/media/0301iraq.html

◆ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"People of good will may differ on how to apply just war norms in particular cases, especially when events are moving rapidly and the facts are not altogether clear. Based on the facts that are known to us, we continue to find it difficult to justify the resort to war against Iraq, lacking clear and adequate evidence of an imminent attack of a grave nature. With the Holy See and bishops from the Middle East and around the world, we fear that resort to war, under present circumstances and in light of current public information, would not meet the strict conditions in Catholic teaching for overriding the strong presumption against the use of military force."

<http://uscgb.org/bishops/iraq.htm>

◆ Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

"Iraqis must be the authors of their own change. Yet for many decades Western policy has undermined the pursuit of democracy and relentlessly disempowered the very people of Iraq on whom constructive change depends. The West's active military and political support for the regime of Saddam Hussein until 1990, as well as comprehensive economic sanctions since then, has left the tyrannical regime strengthened and enriched and the people demeaned and impoverished. We reject the increasing resort to military means to resolve entrenched conflicts."

www.cccb.ca/english/fullpublic.asp?ID=7

◆ Catholic Bishops' Conference of France

The Bishops of France said "the right to legitimate defence presupposes a real or imminent attack, not the simple possibility of an aggression."

"Our fellow citizens and the leaders of our country are resolute in pursuing with courage the search for peaceful ways to remove from the Iraqi people the evils that already oppress them and those that threaten them..."

"Against every temptation to resignation, we invite all to maintain hope, with all the Christian churches of the whole world, which pronounce themselves these days in profound unity with Pope John Paul II, who multiplies initiatives to avoid the war."

www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=31383

◆ **Catholic Bishops' Conference of Germany**

"In the context of a political strategy which finally aims at preventing war, the use of threats might be ethically justified in certain cases. But under no circumstances must this policy fall into the logic of escalation which inevitably ends up in war..."

"Is there any doubt that a war against Iraq would most probably kill and injure innumerable people, that it would bring about countless refugees and would deprive many people of their existence? A war also threatens to cause the most serious political divergences in the entire Middle East, which would put at risk the achievements of the international alliance against terror. A war against Iraq would probably enable fanatic Islamic fundamentalists to increase their influence everywhere in the region and would threaten to further intensify the serious reservations which the Arab and Muslim world has against the Western world. Would the region have better prospects of peace, stability and the protection of human rights after a war?"

www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=30323

◆ **Catholic Bishops' Conference of India**

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has expressed concerns "over the firm stand taken on behalf of some countries that are avowed to put an end to the production of weapons of mass destruction as it has worsened the atmosphere. Every effort must, therefore, be made by the international community to avert such a human made tragedy, and seek other paths to find lasting solutions to the problem of proliferation of arms."

The Bishops said "terrorism, under any circumstances, cannot be accepted as it does not uphold the basic right to live a free life and fearless life." The Bishops fear that "a remedy for putting an end to such terrorist activities and organizations could cause a full-scale armed conflict."

www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=30952

◆ **Catholic Bishops' Conference of Italy**

The Bishops' Conference of Italy has said that a possible U.N. authorisation of military action would not justify a "preventive war" with Iraq. While "the U.N.'s authorisation is an element that can never be given up in a military action, [...] it is not the only one.

"If the preventive dimension of a war continues and the conflict in question is not a concrete response to a situation of attack, the U.N. authorisation does not make a war just."

The concept of preventive war is seen to be "unacceptable in itself, because prevention, in fact, has no limit. Without a concrete situation of threat, actual or possible, no act of war can be justified."

www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=30728

◆ **Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBC)**

"The CBC agrees with the Holy See and Bishops from the United States and Middle East that resorting to war against Iraq under current circumstances would not meet the strict conditions in Catholic teaching for over-riding the presumptions against the use of military force..."

"We urge other Bishops' Conferences all over the world to join their voices in solidarity to call upon all involved to abide by the principles of international law."

<http://202.157.182.164/news/200301160018911.php>

◆ **Catholic Bishops of England and Wales**

"Sanctions have not worked. They have imposed a decade of misery on ordinary people whilst allowing an exploitative regime to sustain itself in power. It is time to find a policy that offers Iraq a positive incentive to comply with the demands of the Security Council. In return for genuine disarmament, monitored and verified by the United Nations, the lifting of comprehensive sanctions, and the reintegration of Iraq into the international community, is the route which must now be explored."

www.catholic-ew.org.uk/CN/02/021115.htm

◆ Christian Leaders of New Zealand

“The current intentions of the United States of America toward Iraq constitute a serious threat to world peace and threaten relationships between Christians and Muslims. The reconstruction of Afghanistan hangs in the balance, several Arab states are experiencing serious internal stress, and the Israel-Palestine conflict endures. This wound in the Middle East is still open and weeping. Rather than opening the wound further the resources of western countries must be employed in healing the wound.

“A war against Iraq has been portrayed as an action in the context of the so-called “war on terrorism”. Terrorism is born of grudge and grievance, whether rightly or wrongly held. An invasion of Iraq would greatly increase grudges and grievances already in place. Violence breeds further violence, and there is a moral obligation on us to break this vicious cycle. Peace will have a better chance when we all understand that we are part of the same humanity, that the death of people in Iraq is as terrible as the death of the victims of September 11, 2001.”

www.catholic.org.nz/documents/iraqchurchleaders.htm

◆ Christian Leaders of Pakistan

“We share the concern of our Muslim brethren and all people of good will in expressing their total condemnation of this pre-emptive strike.

“We call on President George W Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair to reverse their decision to wage war and, instead, to use other means to force Iraq to comply with the U.N. resolutions for disarmament of weapons of mass destruction.

“We also call upon Iraqi leaders and other world leaders to play their part in an all-out effort to avoid war and prevent untold sufferings for millions of innocent people who will be affected by a war.”

www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=30268

◆ Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans

His Beatitude Raphael I Bidawid said:

“The Iraqi people cannot endure any more suffering. They are exhausted by 12 years of sorrow and tribulation. Now a new threat arrives of destruction and annihilation...”

“If there really is a war, it will end in total destruction: Christians and Muslims will be sold at the same price. I pray to the Lord that he will remove this scourge...”

“There is an attempt to justify the attack with the intention of striking the president and his government, but it is well known that the war would cause an unheard-of tragedy.”

www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=25265

◆ Serbian Orthodox

The representative of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro said:

“In the 20th century alone, our Church and our People were subjected to seven wars, and still today they suffer from profound wounds, especially in Kosovo”

The Serbian Orthodox Church, “together with His Holiness, requests the powerful of the earth, especially the United States and its allies, not to get involved in a new war, on this occasion with Iraq.

“This new war would be a new defeat for all of us and a new disgrace for the whole of humanity, and not just a humiliation and destruction of the honest Iraqi people.”

www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=31070

Questions for Discussion

1. What does the *Catechism* say about war? Are there some circumstances that might justify war? What have Church leaders around the world said about the notion of a 'preventive war'?
2. International law and the United Nations charter form a moral basis for the maintenance of peace and understanding among nations. What are some of the functions of the United Nations as an international political authority in preventing war?
3. What do Church leaders say would be the immediate and long-term consequences of war on Iraq?
4. Everyone has a duty to work to avoid war. What has the Pope asked of us and of our leaders in his 2003 World Day of Peace message and his State of the World address?
5. Initiatives for world peace flow from the hearts of individuals. What practical things can we do as individuals to cultivate a culture of peace in our homes, our society and in the world?

Prayer for Peace

"The Lord bless you and keep you". In the face of the events that unsettle the planet, it is very clear that only God can touch the depths of the human soul; his peace alone can restore hope to humanity. We need him to turn his face towards us, to bless us, to protect us and give us his peace.

For this reason, we must begin the new year by asking him for this precious gift. Let us do so through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the "Prince of Peace".

Homily of John Paul II, 1 January 2003

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) was set up by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (ACBC) in 1987 as the national justice and peace agency of the Catholic Church in Australia. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference mandates the ACSJC to promote research, education, advocacy and action on social justice, peace and human rights, integrating them deeply into the life of the whole Catholic community in Australia, and providing a credible Catholic voice on these matters in Australian society. In this way the ACSJC seeks to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. The ACSJC is accountable to the ACBC through the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.

The major responsibilities of the ACSJC are:

- Researching issues and monitoring trends in public policy and current affairs in Australia and overseas;
- Presenting Catholic Social Teaching and the social justice tradition of the Catholic Church;
- Applying Catholic Social Teaching to current social justice, human rights, development and peace issues in Australia and overseas;
- Speaking out against injustice, the abuse of human rights, poverty and violence and in favor of change for a more just society and thereby ensuring a credible national Catholic voice on these issues;
- Promoting a spirituality of justice and the integration of concern for social justice into the liturgy, worship and general life of the whole Church;
- Building social justice networks within the Catholic Church, encouraging local action, coordinating action at the national level, and maintaining contact with relevant international Catholic agencies;
- Collaborating with national and international agencies with objectives similar or complementary to those of the ACSJC;
- Witnessing to and promoting unity among Christians through ecumenical action in favour of justice and peace;
- Educating the Catholic and wider community on social justice, human rights, development and peace issues in Australia and overseas by providing guided experience and educational materials;
- Advising the Bishops on statements and actions for justice and peace.

ACSJC Secretariat
19 MacKenzie Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Tel 02 9956 5811 Fax 02 9954 0056 Email admin@acsjc.org.au
Website www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

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ACSJC
Phone 02 9956 5811
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Email admin@acsjc.org.au
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