

Excerpt from Bulletin of October 13, 2002

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Attack Iraq?

Last weekend's Social Justice news insert, "Just us Parishioners", included the question '**Attack Iraq?**' and suggested "if you support the war, write a letter"; "if you oppose the war, write a letter." The issue was addressed by President Bush on Monday and a related resolution was debated by Congress throughout the week.

After masses today our Social Justice Advocacy Task Force has an information table and recommends letters of opposition to any preemptive U.S. attack on Iraq. In their recommendation they join the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops who have written to President Bush to urge him to "step back from the brink of war" with Iraq and to "pursue actively alternatives to armed conflict." Reflecting widely accepted moral and legal limits on when military force may be used the Bishops write, "of particular concern are the traditional just war criteria of just cause, right authority, probability of success, proportionality, and non combatant immunity."

The "**Just War Principles**" have a long history in the Catholic community and today are widely and internationally accepted by believers and non believers as a basis for judging the morality of entering and of conducting warfare. At the same time large numbers of religious leaders and people of good will consider them inadequate and too lenient in the face of the scope of today's weapons and the evolving concern of the need for peace on our planet. Still they are worth reviewing as a measuring rod of our own opinions and the U.S. Bishops use them in their correspondence with President Bush.

"Just Cause . . . is there clear and adequate evidence of a direct

connection between Iraq and the attack of September 11th or clear and adequate evidence of an imminent attack of a grave nature? Is it wise to dramatically expand traditional moral and legal limits to include preventative or preemptive uses of military force?

Legitimate Authority . . . we would be deeply skeptical about unilateral uses of military force, particularly given the troubling precedents involved.

Probability of success and proportionality . . . war against Iraq could have unpredictable consequences not only for Iraq but for peace and stability in the Middle East.

Norms governing the conduct of war . . . the use of massive military force to remove the current Government of Iraq could have incalculable consequences for a civilian population that has suffered so much from war, repression and a debilitating embargo . . .

We hope you will persist in the very frustrating and difficult challenges of building broad international support for a new more constructive and effective approach to press the Iraqi Government to live up to its international obligation."

(U.S. Bishops, September 13, 2002)