

MANNA *in the wilderness*

September 2002

The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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Middle East Christians: No War With Iraq

The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) is the umbrella organization, with headquarters in Beirut, for the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches in the Middle East. On August 5, the MECC issued a statement of alarm about reports of U.S. government planning for major military action against Iraq. The statement is also found on their website: <http://www.mecchurches.org/>

MECC Statement on Recent Situation Concerning Iraq August 5, 2002

The Middle East Council of Churches views with disappointment and increasing alarm intensified efforts in the United States to gather support for major military action against Iraq. Apart from its humanitarian concerns for the Iraqi people who, for over a decade, have been ground down by sanctions and daily air raids, the MECC is committed to Iraq not least of all because of the cries of its member churches there for peace and sanity.

From our nearby vantage point, we see the conflict in Iraq as one against the people of that country, the common people, not the politicians or power brokers. The UN sanctions — themselves a type of violence — have not really touched Iraq's governing elite, but have caused the people untold suffering. For over a decade the Middle East Council of Churches

provided ecumenical relief services in Iraq, becoming a channel for international relief and reconstruction. Now as talk focuses upon escalating this low-intensity war into a full-scale military offensive, the churches in the Middle East are truly alarmed.

Not only has the sanctions regime failed; that failure is now to be compounded by an initiative that

lacks justification and has no discernible or constructive goal. It has no support in the region. All that military offensive will leave behind is ruin and a shattered country. Chaos will ensue. In the meantime, nothing will be done to ameliorate the human suffering that has already scarred and ruined a whole generation of Iraq's youth, caused the death of thousands of infants, destroyed one of the region's most productive

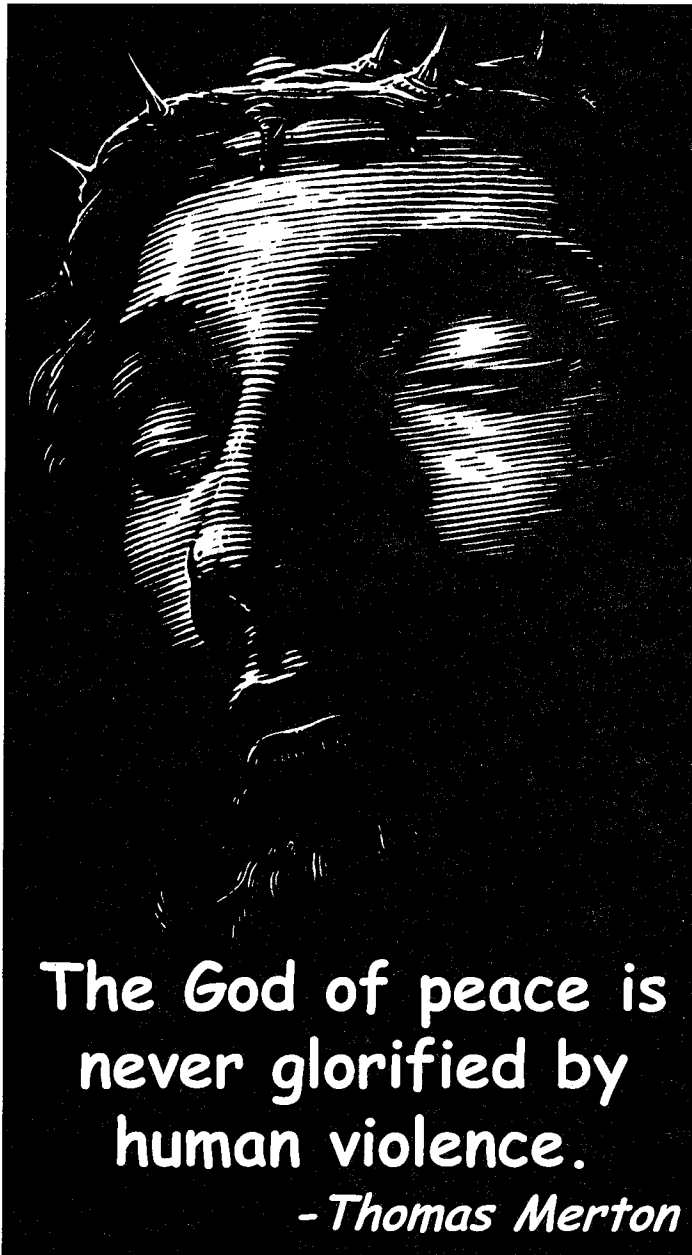
survival with dignity. Violence will only cause their circumstances to deteriorate further. What is needed is a sustained and determined diplomatic and political effort that engages the Iraqi government directly, and a sustained campaign to re-empower the Iraqi people and restore their dignity. This is the wisdom of the region. From the churches' point of view, it is also consistent with the priorities of the gospel that seeks healing for the nations and dignity for human beings.

The churches of the Middle East are committed to peace that comes through the power of the Word to establish justice, and champions the cause of the poor and downtrodden. We believe that through peaceful intervention the moral force of truth can break the cycle of violence in Iraq, in Palestine, and throughout the world.

Fr. Louie Vitale gets 3 months at Nellis AFB Prison

Fr. Louie Vitale, OFM begins a 3 month prison term at Nellis AFB Federal Prison in Las Vegas on Oct. 16 for trespassing during a protest to close the School of the Americas (SOA) in Ft. Benning, Georgia. Since 1946, the SOA has trained thousands of Latin American soldiers in the tactics of counter-insurgency, torture, and terror. In 1993, the United Nations Truth Commission Report on El Salvador was made public and

we learned more about the role of the SOA. At El Mozote, where over 800 people were killed, 10 of the 12 people responsible were graduates. Three of the five killers of the Maryknoll nuns were graduates, 19 of the 26 responsible for killing the Jesuits were graduates. Of the three responsible for Archbishop Romero's death, two were graduates. High Desert Catholic Worker Toni Flynn also received a six month sentence which she is now serving.



The God of peace is never glorified by human violence.

- Thomas Merton

and creative middle classes, and left a wasteland, a swirling pool of despair and rage, a time-bomb to bedevil the future.

We Christians of the Middle East urge the churches of the West, to speak to their governments. The issue to be kept squarely in the forefront is the humanitarian one. There is a whole population of ordinary and decent people whose desire is

20,000 Priests and Brothers Say No to War with Iraq

From the Conference of the Major Superiors of Men's Institutes August 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

The Board of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Institutes, representing the nearly 20,000 religious brothers and priests in the United States, meeting in Philadelphia prior to our Annual Assembly, is writing about our growing concern that the U.S. is preparing to take military action in Iraq aimed at overthrowing the government of Saddam Hussein.

We recognize the threat to stability that this government poses to the region, its continuing lack of cooperation with the international community, Iraq's failure to meet United Nations' demands to allow nuclear inspectors into the country, and the threat of weapons of mass destruction that the Iraqi government may be developing. Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, has been a potential threat for many years.

However, at this time, we question U.S. policy that would engage our military in yet another use of force while it is already involved in Afghanistan. The violence in Israel and the Palestinian Territories continues to create an atmosphere in the Arab world that leaves many feeling vulnerable and threatened. There seems to be little support from the international community to take

military action against Iraq — support that was essential in actions against terrorist "cells" in Afghanistan and against Iraq in 1990. Reports even indicate that our own Joint Chiefs of Staff have strong reservations about U.S. action against Iraq at this time. In addition, it seems that U.S. action against Iraq would not meet many of the requirements of the "just war theory" that has a long tradition not only in the Catholic Church, but also has had wide acceptance for centuries and often is used in strategic planning and execution of military actions.

Beyond these concerns, we are even more concerned about the loss of life, the injuries that will be caused, and the destruction of property that would be caused by military action. We are particularly concerned about the damage that can be caused to civilians in Iraq. The sanctions against Iraq in place since 1990 have already done great damage to the people of Iraq. Small steps taken to provide humanitarian assistance, while welcomed, have not been adequate to meet the needs of

the millions who require medical and nutritional assistance. We fear that military action in Iraq will further impact the people of that nation in negative ways, especially the deaths of innocent civilians, no matter how unintentional those deaths and the collateral damage may be.

Mr. President, we know that you will not make this decision lightly. The concerns we have, both for human life and dignity and political consequences, are not insignificant and we hope you will give them serious consideration. Be assured of our prayers for you, our nation, and the people of Iraq at this time.

Sincerely,
Canice Connors, OFM, Conv
- President
John Doctor, OFM
Clyde Guerreiro, SSCC
Michael Higgins, CP
Thomas Picton, CSSR
Austin Walsh, ST
Ronald Witherup, SS
- Vice President
John Franck, AA
Michael Guimon, OSM
Mark Miller, CPPS
Jesus Rivera, ST

PRAY
FOR
PEACE
IN OUR
WORLD!

(FOR
TAB)

THANK
YOU
FOR
YOUR
SUPPORT!

Call or Write your Representatives:

Nevada:
US Senator John Ensign: (702) 388-6605
US Senator Harry Reid: (702) 388-5020
Outside Nevada:
(202) 224-3121

Oppose
War
Against
Iraq

Vigil for Peace
Thursdays,
Noon - 1 p.m.

In front of downtown
Federal Building
333 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

www.catholicworker.org

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PLEASE JOIN US:

Wed., Fri., Sat., 6:00 a.m.:
Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
Wednesday - Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:
Breakfast meal served at St. James Church parking lot (G & McWilliams St.) to the poor and homeless.
Seven Days a Week:
Hospitality (IHN) to 3 to 5 homeless families, call 638-8806 to volunteer.
Last Saturday each month; 8:30 a.m.:
Deliver food to homes in need, gather for reflection & prayer, call for info.
Thursdays, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.:
Vigil for Peace, Federal Building (see ad above)

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