



# ARE THE CHILDREN OUR ENEMY?

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## BACKGROUND FOR THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS IN IRAQ

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*Wisam Khaldoun, 6, died in October 1998 from malnutrition. He died at Yarmouk Children's Hospital in Baghdad—on the day this picture was taken. Photo by Lorraine Al-Rawi.*

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# COURAGE AND COWARDICE

‘The embargo is destroying the spirit of the Iraqi people’

- Cardinal Roger Etchegaray in 1998

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Father Bill Foley, a Jesuit pediatrician who lives down the hall from me, has often struck me as one of the most intrepid men I've known. Even when he proposed to me that I accompany him and six others on a journey to Iraq over the Christmas holidays, I was somewhat awestruck by his boldness as I fretted over back problems and scheduling difficulties, which I finally and too easily interpreted as excuses not to go.

And here he was now, speaking to the Jesuit community upon his return, recounting his experience of the journey and the people he met, beginning with words I would never have expected from the likes of him. "I have never been so frightened in my life."

Although it had been his third trip to the Near East on behalf of the sick and dying children there, Bill Foley, steel nerves and all, had been scared. It was not because of infirmity or indisposition. He was not even frightened by the physical challenges of the long, arduous trek from Amman to Baghdad (made furtively overland, since our nation efficiently and effectively prohibits flying into Iraq).

Perhaps it was the fear of being caught or killed. If caught, Bill could have been subjected to 12 years in jail and a million-dollar fine. If killed, it might be in one of the ways the U.S. government fears if Americans travel to Iraq: They might be blown to smithereens by U.S. bombs. Or they might live to report the ugliness that is done in our names. This, no doubt, has led our State Department to do everything in its power to discourage John Paul II's pilgrimage to Iraq's holy historic places. "It would not be safe for him." Indeed.

If we have not bombed Iraq back to the stone age, we have certainly tried. While salaries of professionals like doctors, lawyers and teachers in Iraq were over \$100,000 in 1990, they now make a few dollars a month. As for the physicians, they do not have even penicillin to treat the simplest of infections. What is more, the infrastructure of the country is ruined. Power stations are destroyed. Potable water is rare. There are no pencils and paper. Hospital equipment, no replacement parts being available, sits unused. Infant mortality, which was 0.1 per 1,000 in 1990, is now 40 per 1,000. The United Nations estimates 5,000 children die each month from causes like malnutrition, infection, dysentery and cancers.

Dr. Foley, who is the director of Boy's Hope Girl's Hope International, estimated that half the children he saw were suffering from mental retardation or delayed growth. Was this what frightened him?

Or was it the bombs? We still regularly drop explosives on this ancient Abrahamic land, especially if we think the no-fly borders we dictated have been crossed.

Worse than bombs, however, is the arrogance of ruthless power. In our efforts to topple Saddam Hussein, our government has called and raised the monstrosities he bet against his people. Abhorring his heartlessness to Iraqis, we have attempted to break their hearts. To bring him down, we have brought the poor, once again, to their knees. Apparently, from this position, they will overthrow our favorite iconic "foreign devil." The 60,000 children who die every year as the result of our sanctions are the collateral damage we are willing to sacrifice at the altar of

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## COURAGE AND COWARDICE (CONTINUED)

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our national ego. We thought we could "bring down Saddam" by wrecking his country and maiming his people, but rather than admit our sanctions have done nothing to dislodge the tyrant, rather than allow visitors to inspect the harm we have inflicted, we persist in the bull-headed policy of surrogate punishment.

Perhaps what really frightened Dr. Bill Foley was us. We go on, we ignore, we celebrate our Christmases, we plan our Lenten liturgies, we run our elections, and we persist in ignoring the voices who speak on behalf of the defenseless.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, for example, has taken a stand against the sanctions imposed on Iraq. How is it that we Catholics seem not to know of it? How is it that we seem not to know even what is going on? Certainly we have been alerted. Shortly before Bill Foley's journey to Iraq, Bishop Joseph Fiorenza, president of the N.C.C.B., wrote the following:

After more than nine years of unparalleled and unmerited suffering, it is long past time to end the economic embargo against Iraq. Too many have suffered for too long. Efforts to mitigate the suffering inflicted by sanctions, namely the oil-for-food program, are

important but insufficient. The comprehensive sanctions have long since ceased to be a morally acceptable tool of diplomacy, because they have inflicted indiscriminate and unacceptable suffering on the Iraqi people. They violate a fundamental principle of engagement in conflict-states may not seek to destroy a government or a military by targeting the innocent.

Dr. Bill Foley may have been frightened by his firsthand encounter with the evils done in our name. And many of us, like myself, may be intimidated by the prospect of responding to the voice of the poor. What is scarier still is the fact that so few seem willing even to listen.

*- John F. Kavanaugh S.J.*

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# STATEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON THE SITUATION IN IRAQ

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## POPE JOHN PAUL II

The Holy Father has unequivocally condemned the economic sanctions, saying that:

The weak and vulnerable cannot be made to pay for mistakes for which they are not responsible (1998 Address to the Diplomatic Corps)...The crisis in Iraq has shown once more that war does not solve problems. It complicates them and leaves the civilian population to bear the tragic consequences (1999 Address to Diplomatic Corps).

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

In a 1998 statement, then-NCCB President the Most Rev. Anthony Pilla acknowledged that "the Iraqi government's actions are a primary source of the current crisis" and called for that government to stop its internal repression and cooperate with the United Nations. Nonetheless, he repeated the bishops' earlier statements against the embargo:

While we are aware of the complex roots of the current crisis, our concern for the widespread suffering of Iraqi civilians leads us to reiterate today with special urgency our long-standing call that the embargo be reshaped, reduced and ended quickly...

.the Iraqi government's actions do not relieve the international community of its

responsibility to end the horrible suffering caused by the embargo... Whatever the cause, whoever the adversary, we cannot tolerate the suffering and death of countless innocents, especially the very young and very old. It is time for new thinking and new approaches.

Last November, his successor, the Most Rev. Joseph Fiorenza, wrote:

After more than nine years of unparalleled and unmerited suffering, it is long past time to end the economic embargo against Iraq. Too many have suffered for too long. Efforts to mitigate the suffering inflicted by sanctions, namely the oil-for-food program, are important but insufficient...

Our concerns with U.S. policy toward Iraq are not limited to the embargo. We remain deeply concerned about the ongoing air strikes against Iraq... We urge a halt to this form of low-level warfare.

## OTHER CHRISTIAN LEADERS

In September of 1999, twenty-four leading American Christian leaders, including heads of major Christian denominations, joined in urging President Clinton to support lifting the sanctions. Said Bishop Craig Anderson of the Episcopal Church USA,

The U.S. churches individually and together have consistently spoken out about the

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## STATEMENT OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS (CONTINUED)

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immoral level of suffering created by the sanctions against Iraq, but this is the first time that church leaders from the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions have raised our voices together.

Bishop Fiorenza of the NCCB stated that the U.S. bishops, after repeated calls for ending the embargo,

are increasingly concerned and impatient with the morally intolerable suffering that continues in the absence of any change of policy.

The leaders cited

clear evidence that the embargo is contributing to falling living standards and life expectancy. By almost every measure – such as malnutrition, child mortality and overall morbidity - the situation of most Iraqi civilians has deteriorated markedly over the past eight years.

### **CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ENGLAND AND WALES**

At their meeting in August 1999, they expressed their concern about the situation, stating:

The suffering caused is out of all proportion to any legitimate political objective.

### **CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF BASRA, IRAQ**

The Most Rev. Gabriel Kassab described the suffering of his people and begged for intervention:

Epidemics rage, taking away infants and the sick by the thousands. Those children who survive disease succumb to malnutrition, which stunts their physical and mental development. Our situation is unbearable! We appeal to people of conscience to work to end the blockade of Iraq.

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# WHAT PARISHES CAN DO: SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

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## PRIESTS

- Ask your parish councils to put this issue on their agenda.
- Educate your parishioners on the importance of engaging in action for justice and ask them to read the background materials in this packet and write letters to the president and their representatives expressing their concern.
- Where appropriate, incorporate this issue into your homilies (the reflections from Bishop Sklba in this packet can assist you).
- Further educate yourself on this and other global justice issues and consider how such issues are related to your parish mission statement.

## STAFF

- Look for ways to address some aspect of this issue into your area of ministry. For example, schoolteachers in older grades could use Iraq as a case study of Catholic Social Teaching, while those in the lower grades might share with their children the story of the two Iraqi-American sisters in California who are trying to raise awareness about the suffering of young children in Iraq.\* DRE's could try similar approaches with Rel.Ed. children, and coordinate some action between them and the day school children, such as collecting medicine. Liturgists could be sure that the Prayer of the Faithful includes petitions for the people of Iraq and for political leaders to find solutions to this crisis. Pastoral Associates and Adult & Family Ministers could incorporate the issue into adult formation or RCIA.

## PARISH COUNCILS

- Devote 20 minutes at each of the next three meetings to study and faith reflection on this issue. Invite an outside resource person to lead the reflection.
- Ask the standing committees or other relevant organizations to study the materials in this packet and propose one way that they might contribute to further parish education or action on the sanctions.
- Commit yourselves to a thorough study of how well social justice concerns are addressed by your parish and whether that is an area that needs to receive ongoing attention and improvement. Bring in a parish consultant or other diocesan resource person to assist with the study.
- Evaluate whether the parish budget reflects its responsibility to work for justice. Work with the Human Concerns Committee to determine whether the budget for social action efforts is adequate.

## PRAYER & WORSHIP COMMITTEES

- Commit yourselves to a study and reflection on the relationship of liturgy and social justice, perhaps beginning with the pamphlet "Liturgy and Social Justice: An Unfinished Agenda," by Msgr. John Egan.\* Consider how you might appropriately incorporate concern for justice and peace into your parish's Sunday worship.
- Offer to work together with the Human Concerns Committee to discover creative ways to incorporate this and other social justice issues into the worshiping and praying life of the congregation, from Eucharist to Communal Reconciliation services to devotions to parish missions/renewals.

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## WHAT PARISHES CAN DO (CONTINUED)

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- Invite a guest presenter to the parish to speak on the topic of Liturgy and Social Justice or the Eucharist and Justice. Attend as a committee and urge all staff and adult parishioners to attend as well.

### HUMAN CONCERNS COMMITTEES

- Study the materials in this packet.
- Ask your Prayer & Worship Committee to work with you in finding creative and appropriate ways to include concern for the people of Iraq into the liturgy.
- Invite a guest presenter to the parish to speak to the committee and publicize the event to the whole parish. Ask staff people to attend and to encourage parishioners with whom they work with to attend.
- Organize an activity to raise awareness in the parish about the sanctions, such as collecting medicine or food baskets.\*
- After appropriate parish education, organize an offering of letters from parishioners to their elected federal officials, urging a change in U.S. policy toward the people of Iraq.
- In concert with other human concerns committees in your cluster or district (and perhaps with groups from other churches or synagogues), invite your rep-

resentative from Congress to attend an educational forum on the effect of the sanctions, hear their concerns and answer people's questions.

### CHRISTIAN FORMATION COMMITTEES

- Study the materials in this packet and determine one appropriate educational effort, however small, with each age group you serve, from children to youth to adults.
- Look for ways to collaborate with your Human Concerns Committee on this issue.
- Conduct an evaluation of how well Catholic Social Teaching is incorporated into the Rel.Ed. and day school curriculums, as well as into youth and adult formation programs. If lacking in any area, develop a plan address this deficit. You may want to call a diocesan resource person for assistance.

*\* Resource materials are available through the World Mission Office, 414-769-3406. For assistance with letter-writing campaigns, contact Mark Peters, 414-769-3369.*

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# BACKGROUND ON THE CRISIS

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Pope John Paul II's original plans for this year's Jubilee pilgrimage to the Holy Land included a visit to Iraq, the traditional birthplace of Abraham. Although the Iraqi government ultimately did not allow the trip, our own State Department had done everything in its power to discourage the papal visit as well. Why? Perhaps for the same reason they have banned U.S. citizens from travel to Iraq. They do not want their own people, let alone the leader of the world's one billion Catholics, seeing and reporting the sins that have been carried out in our names.

For most Americans, Iraq has become identified with Saddam Hussein, a name now almost synonymous with evil. Yet prior to 1990, he was one of our staunchest "friends" in the Middle East, helped into power not once but twice by the CIA. The fact that he was responsible for the deaths of 130,000 political opponents and ethnic enemies was overlooked because of his strategic importance to our own regional aims. When Saddam went to war with Iran (a hated enemy since the taking of American hostages at our embassy), we sold him billions of dollars of weapons.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, all that changed. At U.S. urging, the UN declared the most stringent trade sanctions on Iraq ever imposed on any country in history. Ninety percent of its imports and 97 percent of its exports, including oil, were banned. Iraq's wealth was almost completely dependent on oil, and it imported nearly everything, including food and medicine. The CIA reported the sanctions 97 percent successful, but the Bush administration moved quickly toward military operations. We took control of the war effort, despite the UN charter requiring Security Council command of armed force. By the conclusion of Desert Storm, the conventional equivalent of seven Hiroshima-type bombs had been rained down on Iraq.

From a well-developed, prosperous and highly urbanized nation, Iraq was reduced to the level of an undeveloped

country. Power, transportation and sanitation systems were destroyed. Potable water is rare, fresh food non-existent and all other food in short supply. Iraqi doctors and hospitals, once the finest in the Arab world, now cannot treat the simplest diseases because of embargoed replacement parts and medicine. The UN itself estimates that 5000 children die each month (one every eight minutes) from causes like malnutrition, infection, dysentery and cancers. Childhood leukemia cases have skyrocketed, attributed to radiation from our military's depleted-uranium shells.

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Since 1991, over one million people – over half a million of them children – have died due to the war's aftermath and the sanctions.

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After the war the US urged the maintenance of full sanctions and added new conditions to their lifting. The only concession to the growing humanitarian crisis was a meaningless exemption of food and medicine from the embargo (Iraq could sell no oil to pay for them). In 1996 the UN began an oil-for-food program, but Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported in December 1997 that it "did not redress the severe health and nutrition conditions of Iraqis" because it was too limited. In addition, U.S. and British planes have continued to bomb Iraq several times a week since the end of 1998, resulting in more civilian deaths and injuries.

Since 1991, over one million people - over half a million of them children - have died due to the war's aftermath and the sanctions. These numbers are far beyond those that in Rwanda and Kosovo were termed "genocidal." Four years ago, 60 Minutes asked Secretary of State Albright whether half a million children's lives were a price worth paying for U.S. goals. She replied, "I think this is a very hard choice. But the price, we think the price is worth it."



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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SANCTIONS

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**Q** Isn't the whole purpose of the sanctions to force Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi leadership to become less repressive and belligerent? They aren't directed at the people per se.

**A** U.S. officials have been adamant that sanctions are intended to punish the Iraqi regime, not the people. But it is clear that it is the people of Iraq, not their leaders, who are suffering. Further, observers agree that the sanctions have in fact strengthened Saddam's control "by deflecting popular anger to an external enemy and providing a pretext for a series of ruthless internal leadership purges. And by leveling the middle class and destroying the private sector, sanctions have concentrated all economic power in the hands of the regime. With most Iraqis now dependent on the state food rationing system for their day-to-day survival, organized political dissent is all but unthinkable."<sup>1</sup>

**Q** Despite all that, our real fear has to be Iraq's possible development of weapons of mass destruction. Since Iraq has refused to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors (UNSCOM), do we really have any choice but to maintain the pressure of the sanctions?

**A** In fact, UNSCOM records indicate good cooperation from Iraq before the U.S. accused it of "throwing out" inspectors and resumed its bombardment of Iraq. There is evidence, however, that Director Richard Butler removed them beforehand.<sup>2</sup> The head of the UNSCOM team says that by 1997 all weapons of mass destruction in the country (nuclear, biological and chemical) had been "destroyed, removed, or rendered harmless." Iraq did accuse some inspectors of spying for the U.S., which our officials vehemently denied at the time. But after an embarrassing Washington Post story, we finally admitted that it was true. Former Chief Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter has said

I, for one, believe that A) Iraq represents a threat to no one, and B) Iraq will not represent a threat to anyone if we can get weapons inspectors back in. Iraq will accept these inspectors if we agree to the immediate lifting of economic sanctions."

Ten years of sanctions have not produced the desired results. The fact is that there is another choice: end the economic sanctions, stop contributing to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis,

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<sup>1</sup> "Sanctions Against Iraq: New Weapons of Mass Destruction," Spring 1998, by Roger Normand (Policy Director of the Center for Economic and Social Rights).

<sup>2</sup> Voices in the Wilderness, Myths & Realities II, available at [www.nonviolence.org/vitw](http://www.nonviolence.org/vitw)

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

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and look for other ways to accomplish our goals. Targeted sanctions could focus on weapons or privileges of elites, not ordinary citizens. Another option: a British/Dutch proposal at the UN would suspend sanctions for a four-month renewable period in exchange for some type of weapons monitoring system in Iraq.

**Q** **Wouldn't the Iraqi people have the food and medicine they need if only Saddam Hussein would stop spending it on palaces, liquor and other luxuries?**

**A** Former UN humanitarian coordinator Hans Von Sponeck (who recently resigned his post in protest of the sanctions like his predecessor Dennis Halliday) points out that the UN, not the Iraqi government, controls the money from the oil-for-food program. The UN distributes the food and medicine purchased with that money in northern Iraq and carefully monitors the distribution throughout the rest of the nation. A major reason that limited supplies are often not being delivered is the extreme shortage of trucks and personnel. Von Sponeck adds, "it is not - I repeat, it is not - a premeditated act of withholding medicine. It's much more complex than that."

**Q** **We hear so little about this issue on the news or in political debates. What do our elected representatives think?**

**A** There has been a virtual news blackout by the administration on this issue. Nor has Congress spent much time examining it. But as pressure builds, largely from religious groups, many are having second thoughts. Just this past February, seventy members of the House sent President Clinton a letter asking for the de-linking of economic sanctions from legitimate military sanctions.

**Q** **There are so many legitimate issues pressing on us domestically and internationally. Why such a strong focus on this one?**

**A** In the end, there are two reasons. First, it is estimated that the sanctions have caused the deaths of more Iraqis than those killed by "all so-called weapons of mass destruction [nuclear, chemical, biological] throughout all of history."<sup>3</sup> It is truly a human rights disaster of unprecedented magnitude. Second, unlike most other injustices that seem to have no ready solution, this scandal could be brought to an end by the stroke of President Clinton's pen. Unfortunately, so few Americans are even aware of the reality of the situation, and so few Catholics are aware of the Church's condemnation of it, that little real pressure has been brought to bear on our government. This could easily change.

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<sup>3</sup>John & Karl Mueller, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1999. Numerous non-governmental organizations monitoring the situation have made similar claims, as well as groups like Fellowship of Reconciliation. The UN's own statistics support these claims.

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# SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS: APRIL 30 – SEPTEMBER 3

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## POSSIBLE SOCIAL ACTION THEMES/ILLUSTRATIONS FOR SUMMER PREACHING (CYCLE B)

### THE TRAGEDY OF IRAQ TODAY

A quick review of the Scripture readings selected by the Church for this year's Easter and summer seasons reveals countless opportunities for calling people's attention to the desperate condition of women and children who have become tragic victims of the Iraqi government's stubbornness and our government's determination to punish that intransigence. Our Church on all levels has begged for an end to the embargo and the military bombings. The children weep, suffer and die, and no one seems to care. The following verses are possible occasions for calling people's attention to that disaster, praying for the victims and encouraging political advocacy to end the embargo and the bombing. Religious leaders throughout the entire world have underscored that situation in Iraq as morally intolerable.

### 2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER (APRIL 30, 2000):

**1st Reading: Acts 2:42 "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles... "**

- primacy of the catechetical ministry of the church / parish.
- Church's social teaching as integral to the message of the Gospel.

**1st Reading: Acts 2:44 " ... all things in common... according to each one's need"**

- Generosity to all the needy, and today that includes victims of Iraqi & Cuban embargo, as well as workers throughout the world in subhuman environments!

### 4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER (MAY 14, 2000)

### MOTHER'S DAY/GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

**1st Reading: Acts 4:8 "... being examined about a good deed done to a lame man"**

- The church/believers should always be under scrutiny for good deeds done to the lame, handicapped, disadvantaged and those in need of advocacy and help.
- The Church gives voice to the voiceless, many of whom live in far distant corners of the world... Iraq, Sudan, Africans living with AIDS and suffering families.

**2nd Reading: 1 John 3:2 "... we may be called children of God"**

- The title is not restricted to those within eyesight, but must include the poorest of the poor around the globe.

**Gospel: John 10:11 "A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"**

- The shepherd is "good" in the sense of skilled, and thus is constantly seeking the benefit of all the sheep, especially the desperately needy throughout the world.
- Care for those unseen and often unreported by the US media, i.e., the children of Iraq, are within the responsibility of every good shepherd.

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## SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS (CONTINUED)

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### 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER (MAY 21, 2000)

**2nd Reading: 1John 3:18 "not in word or speech, but in deed and truth"**

- Obligation to exercise an active charity, toward the desperately needy everywhere.

**Gospel: John 15:1 "I am the true vine... "**

- The life of the true vine enables us to do everything in the name of, and with the power the Risen Lord who transcends space and expects us to reach out to the needy throughout the world. Our faith is global by definition.

### 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER (MAY 28, 2000)

#### MEMORIAL WEEKEND

**1st Reading: Acts 10:34 "God shows no partiality"**

- Even those listed as "enemies" (like a Roman centurion) can become members of our human and faith families. They deserve our care and concern.

**Gospel: John 15:12 "Love one another as I have loved you... "**

- Christ's love for us and all people begins before we are good, and loves us into goodness! That same love should be extended to the poor and suffering throughout the world, especially those caught in the crossfire of political and economic conflict and greed.

### ASCENSION SUNDAY (JUNE 4, 2000)

**1st Reading: Acts 1:8 "witness... to the ends of the earth."**

- It is hard to imagine people closer to "the ends of the earth" for us Americans than those mothers and children abandoned to hunger and disease in southern Iraq or the desperate areas of famine ridden Sudan and northern Africa!

**2nd Reading: Ephesians 4:5 "... one Lord, one faith, one baptism... "**

- The complete unity of our faith community must include those on the farthest edges of our world, including those who suffer in places like Iraq, the Balkan countries and other geographic locations of violence and utter deprivation.

**Gospel: Mark 16:15 "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature"**

- That universal sweeping vision of this reading surely includes the desperate and suffering everywhere. It is an ideal moment to underscore the global dimensions of our faith and charity!
- Justice is an integral element of the Gospel.
- The sign which accompany those who believe include all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy: feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, teaching the ignorant!

### PENTECOST SUNDAY (JUNE 11, 2000)

**1st Reading: Acts 2:9 "... Elamites, Medes... "**

- Among the ancient peoples listed as present in Jerusalem at Pentecost were the Elamites (today's northeastern Iraq) and the Medes (today's Iran), who heard the apostles speaking in their own language to their own needs.

**2nd Reading: 1Corinthians 12:13 "... all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free... "**

- Even the most disparate languages and cultures are united by baptism.

### TRINITY SUNDAY (JUNE 18, 2000) FATHER'S DAY

**Gospel: Matthew 28:19: "... make disciples of all nations"**

- One bridges differences and makes disciples by the example of care for the needy, among whom the children of Iraq and everywhere today are primary examples.

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## SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS (CONTINUED)

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### CORPUS CHRISTI (JUNE 25, 2000)

**Gospel: Mark 14:24 "... my blood of the covenant which will be shed for many."**

- Christ's eucharistic blood is given for the salvation of all, even the most distant, by the transforming presence of the Spirit, nourishing all, especially the most needy.

### 13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (JULY 2, 2000)

**1st Reading: Wisdom 1:13 "God... does not rejoice in the destruction of the living."**

- This reading offers an opportunity to address our own respect, not only for the sacredness of life (abstract), but of all living beings, no matter how important or marginal they may be judged by our society!

**2nd Reading: 2Corinthians 8:13 "... your abundance at the present time should supply their needs"**

- Paul's great collection for the sake of unity among the early churches is a model for our own contemporary efforts to be generous to those in need, even far beyond the pale of our vision and view.

**Gospel: Mark 5:23 "My daughter is on the point of death... "**

- The plea of the synagogue official can become a prayer for all the vulnerable and suffering children of our world.
- The Lord's concern that the girl be given something to eat can also echo concern for the needs of children everywhere, but especially those without resources. The plight of the children in Iraq is a human tragedy beyond description, unreported and virtually ignored by all our media and US government agencies, in spite of the pleas of the Holy Father and countless national episcopates.

### 16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (JULY 23, 2000)

**1st Reading: Jeremiah 23:3 "Woe... to the shepherds who have not cared for the sheep... "**

- Jeremiah's stern warning to royal/governmental leaders who ignore the most vulnerable always includes the neediest and most distant as well as those close at hand.

**2nd Reading: Ephesians 2:18 "... peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near."**

- Although initially aimed at the division between Jews and Gentiles, the fuller sense of the text includes all subsequent divisions and enmities among nations.

**Gospel: Mark 6:34 "his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd."**

- This introduction to one of the accounts of the multiplication of loaves reminds us of the Lord's instinctive sympathy for the hungry and needy everywhere.

### 17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (JULY 30, 2000)

**1st Reading: 2Kings 4:44 "Give it to the people to eat."**

- The command of the prophet Elisha that even firstfruits destined for sanctuary offering were to be given to the hungry, establishes a priority and a measuring stick for all our distributions and sharing.

**Gospel: John 6:5 "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?"**

- The invitation to use all our resources generously for the hungry everywhere brings God's promise to use our limited human efforts and to supply what may be lacking.
- Feeding the hungry was always a sign of God's Presence and a signal that the Kingdom of God/God's Sovereign action had entered our human world.

### FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION (AUGUST 6, 2000)

**Gospel: Mark 9:7 "This is my Beloved Son. Listen to him."**

- Though the primary affirmation of the Gospel targets the hidden presence of divine glory in the earthly ministry of Jesus, the final command stretches our hearts to include obedience to serving the needs of all, especially

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## SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS (CONTINUED)

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the poor and hungry everywhere, since that is what Jesus teaches and commands of us.

### 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (AUGUST 13, 2000)

**1 Kings 19:6 in the desert "a hearth cake and a jug of water."**

- The divine providential care for the prophet provided nourishment for his journey, and offers a model for all our efforts to provide nourishment to the most desperate of our contemporary world as well.

**2nd Reading: Ephesians 4:32 "... be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving..."**

- We cannot allow the political stances of our government to become obstacles to serving the critical needs of the poor throughout the world.

**Gospel: John 6:51 "I am the living Bread that came down from heaven."**

- Although the primary affirmation of this portion of John's sixth chapter does seem to focus on the Eucharist itself, the text can become an occasion for prayer for the hungry of the entire world, especially those impoverished by political actions judged immoral by the Church's highest teaching bodies.

### 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (AUGUST 20, 2000)

**1st Reading: Proverbs 9:8 "Come eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed"**

- Wisdom's invitation uses the metaphor of food and drink for revelation and for blessings which the truly wise extend to the poor and hungry everywhere.

### 22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (SEPTEMBER 3, 2000)

**2nd Reading: James 1:27 "Religion that is pure and undefiled: to care for widows and orphans in their affliction."**

- The example of true religion offered by James is the perfect occasion to remind all of our obligation to care for women and children everywhere. The civilian casualties of our embargo and our bombing of Iraq give clear testimony to the immoral nature of that strategy, as the Holy Father has pointed out repeatedly.

*- Bishop Richard J. Sklba*

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# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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## BOOK

*Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, edited by Anthony Arnove. South End Press. Call 800-533-8478 to order. Also available for borrowing through the Office for World Mission, 414-769-3406.

## VIDEO

**Genocide by Sanctions (1997)** describes how the United States deliberately destroyed the civilian infrastructure and economy of Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War, arguing that sanctions are the continuation of that war by other means. The video documents former Attorney General Ramsey Clark's trip to Iraq and the shocking evidence of genocide found there. The graphic footage illustrates the heroic efforts of Iraqi medical personnel to treat rampant childhood disease and malnutrition despite the almost complete lack of supplies and equipment. It also examines the recent political history of Iraq and its relations with the U.S., noting its progress and achievements prior to the imposition of sanctions, suggesting that U.S. pressure to maintain the sanctions is motivated by economic gain.

## ON THE WEB

**Voices in the Wilderness** is a group of Christians who have sent delegations to Iraq (despite the threat of huge fines or imprisonment by the government). They work to bring humanitarian supplies to the people of Iraq while raising awareness of the crisis among U.S. citizens and attempting to change government policy toward Iraq, and can be contacted at: [www.nonviolence.org/vitw](http://www.nonviolence.org/vitw).

## OTHER RESOURCES

The Racine Dominicans and Franciscans International are two groups of Catholic women religious who are working strongly on this issue. Contact Laura Sumner Coon at the Racine Dominicans, 262-639-4100. Speakers, written materials, and information on assistance and advocacy projects are available. Franciscans International can be contacted through: Shell Balek, OSF at [fi-noram@undp.org](mailto:fi-noram@undp.org). They are active in political advocacy. Speakers and other resources are also available through Milwaukee Peace Action, 414-964-5158.

## PRAYER CARDS

A sample is included in this packet. Cards may be purchased in bulk from Pax Christi (ordering information is printed on the back of the card).

*This packet may be downloaded as an Adobe PDF document from the archdiocesan website at [www.archmil.org/dept/wmo](http://www.archmil.org/dept/wmo)*

## FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE LOCALLY, CONTACT

- Office for World Mission, 414-769-3406
- Mark Peters, Parish Consultant, 414-769-3369

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