

# Questioning U.S. Persian Gulf policies

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It all seemed so personal, so close to home on Sunday morning at St. Boniface. I refer to the crisis in the Persian Gulf — the delicate situation, the danger, the pain it is causing. It was made so personal by the presence of Ray and Barbara Ryerse and their sons, Sean and Ray Jr.

I confirmed young Sean. As is the custom in some of our parishes, Sean's family came forward with Sean and his sponsor to share in the joy of his confirmation. Ray Ryerse Sr. was dressed in army battle fatigues. No mention was made of the reason for that particular dress nor did I ask at the time. But later, at the lovely breakfast held to honor the newly confirmed and their families, I learned the story. Ray was with his reserve unit on a weekend training session in preparation for being deployed to the Persian Gulf area.

For the Ryerse family, the joy of this special family occasion only heightened the pain of Ray's departure. For me, it made especially personal an issue I had thought about for several weeks and to which all of the bishops of our National Conference of Catholic Bishops had given special attention at our meeting last week.

I will not go into those deliberations in any detail here because you will find them reported in other places in this issue of the *Catholic Courier*. But I will say that I am

deeply concerned about the present situation in the Persian Gulf area, and that I judge it to be very important that we in the Catholic community and all citizens of our nation insist that our government pursue negotiations and every other possible, peaceful means to settle this dispute without bloodshed.

In our sessions last week, we came to four points about our present situation:

1) a strong condemnation of Iraq's aggression and hostage taking, and support for worldwide pressure to deter and reverse Iraq's aggression;

2) the urgent need to consider fully the moral and human consequences of the use of force;

3) the application of the criteria of the traditional "just war theory" to the situation in the Persian Gulf;

4) the conviction that our nation should continue strong, persistent and determined international and peaceful pressure against Iraq.

It might be useful here to name again the criteria traditionally used in the "just war" theory. These criteria are that there be a just cause for the conflict, that the conflict be declared by a competent authority, that there be some probability of success, that it be a last resort; and that there be some proportion between the good to be achieved and the human cost of achieving it.

All of the criteria are important; all need to be considered with the greatest care. But the ones that concern us most in this instance are the criteria that speak of the proportionality of it all and the one that demands that war be a last resort.

Have we really considered the devastation and loss of human life that would result if the present situation were to flame into war? And if, God forbid, that should happen, what will be the good that would be realized to justify it all? I for one find it most difficult to name that good. And have we truly pursued all of the means at our disposal to find a peaceful solution to the present difficulty? It seems to me that we have not exercised the quiet patience that would allow us to achieve such a solution. We seem more inclined to adopt a stronger offensive military posture and use rhetoric that grows harsher in tone.

It is crucial that we as Catholic citizens of our nation do all that we can to share our moral principles about life whenever life is in peril. We try to do so in a consistent way about abortion and capital punishment, about nutrition and hydration for the gravely ill, and about a wide range of other life issues. Now we must do it again about the serious threat of war we face in the Persian



Gulf. The present crucial situation, our heritage about life and morality, and people like the Ryerse family demand that we do so.

It's not about imposing our dogma or our religious beliefs on others. It's about joining the public debate and therein expressing our convictions about life. Let's do it.

Happy Thanksgiving and...  
Peace to all.

## Council seeks nominees for human rights award

ROCHESTER — The New York State Region VI Human Rights Advisory Council is seeking nominations for a candidate for the first-ever Loftus C. Carson Human Rights Award. The award will be presented at a luncheon on Wednesday, Feb. 28, 1991, at the Party House, 677 Beahan Road.

Nominees must have advanced the cause of human rights and social justice by distinguished service and personal example. Nominations are open to all citizens of Region VI, which includes Orleans,

Genesee, Wyoming, Allegany, Steuben, Schuyler, Yates, Livingston, Ontario, Wayne, Monroe and Seneca counties.

Nominations should be submitted by Dec. 7. For information call W. Gilmore McKie at 716/262-6900.

Loftus C. Carson was the first director of the Monroe County Human Relations Commission which he served from 1961 until 1982. He established the Southern Student Teachers Program in Rochester in the late 1960s.

The program brought black college graduates to the Rochester City School District and surrounding school districts. Carson was director of community programs at the Rochester Institute of Technology from 1982 until his death in 1989. He was also a fundraiser for the United Negro College Fund.

The Human Rights Advisory Council works toward the elimination and prevention of discrimination based on age, race, color, national origin, sex, disability or marital status. The council promotes tolerance and understanding among the many ethnic, racial and religious groups in the Region VI area.

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