


**Talented teams**  
McQuaid, Elmira  
Notre Dame and  
Geneva DeSales are all  
capable of winning sectional titles in high school basketball this season. Page 16.



# CATHOLIC COURIER

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## Gulf crisis poses tough issues for Catholics

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

The last time the United States waged a major war, the conflict was almost over before the U.S. bishops took a strong position on the subject.

The time was November of 1971, and the war was in Vietnam. Withdrawal of U.S. troops from Southeast Asia that would end two years later was already taking place when, the bishops voiced their opposition to the war, stating: "whatever good we hope to achieve through continued involvement in this war is now outweighed by the destruction of human life and of moral values which it inflicts. It is our firm conviction, therefore, that the speedy ending of this war is a moral imperative of the highest priority."

Fast forward to 1990. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. servicemen and women are being stationed in Saudi Arabia, along with smaller contingents from the armies of several U.S. allies.

Across the border in Iraqi-occupied Kuwait and Iraq itself await the forces of Saddam Hussein, repeatedly condemned for the invasion by the United Nations, whose Security Council, on Nov. 30, authorized the use of force to drive the Arab dictator from Kuwait should his troops still be there on Jan. 15.

Now, as the U.S. president travels the globe to preserve an international coalition against Iraq, the Catholic bishops — and church members at every level — are already posing critical questions about George Bush's intention to use force, if necessary, to drive Hussein from Kuwait.

On Nov. 12, the bishops adopted as their own a letter written to the president by Los Angeles' Archbishop Roger Mahony. In the letter, Archbishop Mahony, chairman of the U.S. Catholic Conference International Policy Committee, outlined five "basic issues in addressing the crisis." Summarized as follows, those issues are:

- The need to resist aggression by one nation that invades another.
- The need for a broad-based international coalition's pressure on Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, as expressed, in part, by the U.N.'s actions.
- The need to condemn Iraq's hostage taking, mistreatment and killing of civilians, and its use of them for propaganda.

- The need to distinguish between Iraq's leaders and its people. For example, the international trade embargo on Iraq should not include food and medicines.

- The need to pursue non-violent means to end the crisis.

Archbishop Mahony's letter was echoed by a similar missive from Cincinnati's Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, who emphasized the need for the president to exhaust all peaceful options before sending U.S. troops into battle.

The bishops' pleas to Bush were influenced by memories of the divisiveness engendered by the Vietnam War, observed

Robert Hennemeyer, director of the U.S. Catholic Conference's

Office for International Justice and Peace. The

bishops want Bush to examine whether current U.S.

actions in the Persian Gulf could lead the country into an

"unjust" war, one whose good intentions are outweighed by its

evil effects, he commented.

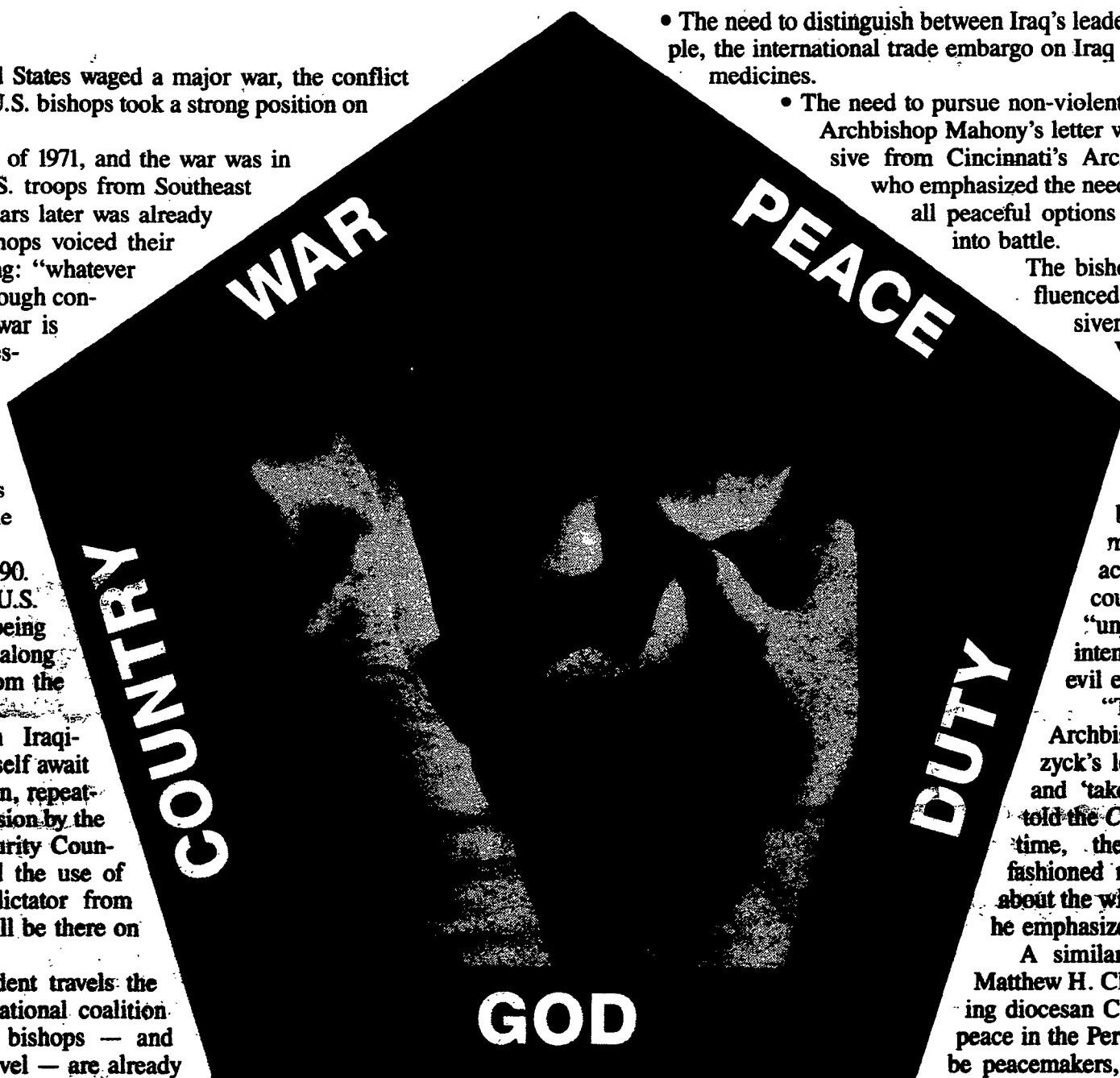
"The principal message of Archbishops Mahony's and Pilarczyk's letters was restraint, caution and 'take your time,'" Hennemeyer told the *Catholic Courier*. At the same time, the letters "were carefully fashioned not to make any judgments about the wisdom of our present policy," he emphasized.

A similar approach marked Bishop Matthew H. Clark's Aug. 27 statement calling diocesan Catholics to pray and fast for peace in the Persian Gulf. "We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus," he wrote.

The bishop took a more earnest tone in his Nov. 22 column for the *Catholic Courier*: "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 will be realized to justify it all? I for one find it most difficult to name that good."

Naming the "good" that would be achieved in a war with Iraq is at the crux of the developing debate over U.S. action, noted several observers. Both the letters of Archbishops Mahony and Pilarczyk failed to name that good, argued Monsignor William H. Shannon, professor emeritus of religious studies at Nazareth College of Rochester.

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## Modern weaponry disarms case for morality of war

War should belong to the tragic past.

— John Paul II

By Monsignor William H. Shannon  
Guest contributor

The "Theory of the Just War" developed in Christian thought only after the time of Emperor Constantine (312-337). Constantine's declaration of support for Christianity and the establishment under Theodosius (346-395) of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire called for a fundamental reorientation of the way Christians thought about their relation to the world.

Thereafter the affairs of the Empire and the church became ever more closely entwined. And while the state accepted war as a practical necessity, the church had no resources from which to draw principles that would govern the life and duties of Christians entering into what was for them a new profession, namely, the military.

Seeking a compromise between a Gospel-based opposition to all forms of violence and a practical method of approaching conflicts that threatened the welfare of the

## ANALYSIS

Empire, Christians turned to a principle developed by the Stoics and later by Cicero, namely the "theory of the just war."

I think it is fair to say that in a Christian context, the "Just War" theory was intended not so much to "justify" war as to limit the damages war could cause. If war had to be accepted as part of the human condition, then it was the church's task to do all that it could to restrict its ravages. Accepting the "just war" theory was one way of doing this.

Another was the experiment known as "The Truce of God," which was organized by the monks at Cluny in the 9th century. Cluny proposed to warring feudal lords that they restrict their hostilities to three days of the week (Monday to Wednesday), with no fighting on the remaining four days and especially on the Lord's Day. The arrangement was never really observed for any length of time or with any consistency.

The Cluniac experiment may strike us as naive; yet behind it was a deep symbolic truth. The spectacle of Christians being at peace for four days each week and then fighting the other three pointed up, in a highly symbolic way, how utterly absurd it was for people who shared the Lord's Body on the Lord's Day should ever be at war with one another. The "Truce of God" was a serious, though ultimately ineffectual call to return to the non-violence of the Gospel.

We must find ways that suit our times to return to the non-violent stance of the Gospel. I say this because I believe we have reached a point in human history at which we must abandon the "theory of the just war." Technology has produced weapons of such great destructive magnitude that for all practical purposes it is impossible to fulfill the conditions laid down for fighting a "just war."

Just to review quickly those conditions, the first was that the war must be conducted for a just cause. Since the time of Pius XII at least, the only just cause Roman Catholic theology acknowledges is self-defense. Just cause is always difficult to verify. For what nation

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