

Concern mounts for victims, conduct of war

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — As religious organizations geared up to handle Persian Gulf war refugees, Catholic leaders expressed growing concern about the conduct of the war and its effects on innocent victims.

In response to some Catholic and other church officials who argued that going to war was unjustified, President Bush defended his decisions and policies Jan. 28 in a speech to the National Religious Broadcasters association.

He took up the main principles of just-war theory in the Catholic theological tradition and addressed them point by point.

To the main argument of many critics, that warfare was not yet a last resort, he answered that "extraordinary diplomatic

efforts" to reach a peaceful solution had been "exhausted."

"Secretary of State Jim Baker made an extraordinary effort to achieve peace ... And sadly, Saddam Hussein rejected out of hand every overture made by the United States and by other countries as well. He made this just war an inevitable war," the president said.

He also defended U.S. conduct in the war, saying that despite "wanton, barbaric bombing of civilian areas" by Saddam, the allied forces "are doing everything possible, believe me, to avoid hurting the innocent."

Iraq's missile attacks on Israeli cities, its massive oil spillage in the Persian Gulf, its apparent mistreatment of prisoners of war and its calls for international terrorism provoked moral condemnation.

Pope John Paul II prayed in his Sunday Angelus talk Jan. 27 that "the tragedy under way not be made still more grave and inhuman with unacceptable actions" violating "natural ethics" and "current international conventions."

"The increasing notices about the fate of prisoners of war and of the danger of a recourse to the weapon of terrorism are reasons for great sadness," he said.

Alluding almost certainly to the huge oil spill in the Persian Gulf that was apparently unleashed by Iraqi forces in the second week of war, the pope also expressed concern that "catastrophic environmental risks" had been added to the war's "enormous" destruction and loss of life.

While most U.S. Catholic bishops reserved judgment on the morality of President Bush's decision to go to war, several

publicly opposed it.

Among the sharpest criticisms were those of two Alaska prelates, Archbishop Francis T. Hurley of Anchorage and Bishop Michael H. Kenny of Juneau.

"I see our going into battle as an offense against God and a crime against humanity. This war is immoral," Bishop Kenny wrote in a Jan. 22 editorial in his diocesan newspaper, *Inside Passage*.

"The thought of the dying and devastation that have already happened and are yet to be breaks my heart," he added. "I condemn this war with all my being."

Immediately after the war began Archbishop Hurley announced that he disagreed with the decision. In a column published Jan. 25 he said he was "just not persuaded" that all alternatives to war had

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Worries over gulf conflict affect turnout for march

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Concerns about the Persian Gulf war muted but did not silence pro-life marches and rallies held in a frigid Washington and around the country to mark the 18th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

Speakers at many events mentioned the war, but most seemed to agree with the assessment of Bishop Thomas V. Daily of Brooklyn, that the war on behalf of the unborn will continue long after the Persian Gulf conflict ends.

"We are talking not about a potential loss of life, but what is an admitted fact, loss of life in the womb," he said at a Jan. 19 pro-life awards ceremony in his diocese. No war or any event in history "could rival the destruction of human life" caused by abortion, he added.

At the Jan. 22 March for Life in Washington, organizer Nellie J. Gray told a crowd of some 25,000 shivering in below-zero wind chills that "They told us we wouldn't survive."

Delegations from some states were reportedly smaller than usual and at least one large contingent — Missouri Right to Life — stayed away. Loretto Wagner, co-ordinator of Missouri's Life Caravan, canceled the caravan of 1,000 or more people, saying, "We feel it would be inappropriate at this time to divert our nation's

attention."

"We're also praying for the men and women in uniform," Gray said, but of greatest concern were the "body bags of little babies" who were aborted.

The march is held annually in Washington on the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

The weather was not nearly as bad as the heavy snows in 1987, which cut the turnout to 5,000. But this year's attendance, given by Gray as 50,000 and by police as 25,000, was below last year's police estimate of 75,000. Organizers cited fear of terrorism as a factor.

Signs linking abortion and war abounded: "Save (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein ... kill our unborn?"; "Saddam is a killer? We murder millions every year. Save our children"; "Hey media — the worst war casualties are in the U.S.A.: 4,000 every day"; "No killing in the Gulf, no killing in the womb"; "Abort Iraq not babies."

Once again, President Bush telephoned with a message of support for the marchers, calling them "courageous and determined Americans." He said that largely because of the pro-life movement, January has become a month for reflection and rejuvenation of efforts to protect unborn babies.



AP/Wide World Photos
Pro-life marchers gather in front of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 22, protesting the 18th anniversary of the 'Roe vs. Wade' abortion decision.

"I'm proud my voice is a part of the growing chorus saying 'Choose life,'" Bush said. He added that the government and private sector must become more involved in encouraging alternatives to abortion such as adoption.

At a National Prayer Vigil for Life preceding the march, Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York tied the war and that day's holiday observance of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday to pro-life issues.

In his homily during the vigil Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the cardinal reminded the congregation that God loves "everyone ... caught up in this war" and that "all of them are made in the image and likeness of God."

At another Mass during the vigil, Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston urged pro-lifers "not to grow lazy" and to work hard for an end to abortion. "We must have

courage to defend the gift of life," he said. After the march, Cardinal O'Connor at a special "Seminarians for Life" Mass in Washington told seminarians that Catholic pro-life leaders for too long have neglected how important is "the power of Christ" in the abortion struggle.

He asked seminarians to maintain their "sense of urgency" about abortion after they are ordained.

Around the United States, more than 100 events were scheduled to mark the anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade*, according to the National Right to Life Committee, based in Washington.

The events included rallies and marches, showers for new mothers and pregnant women in need, candlelight vigils, breakfasts and luncheons with legislators, memorial services for aborted fetuses, life chains and, in Brighton, Mich., a blood drive.

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