



AP/Wide World Photos
VICTIM MOURNED — Family members look at the body of Ismael Aragon in Zapote, El Salvador, on Jan. 23. Aragon was among 15 people killed Jan. 22 by an unknown gunman.

War

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been exhausted or that its costs in life, material resources and post-war enmity were worth the limited peace it might achieve.

"It is inconceivable to me that the massive economic, social and political muscle of the many nations that have rightly condemned the action of Saddam Hussein cannot achieve the goal of defanging him and of liberating Kuwait," he said.

Most U.S. bishops, however, followed the lead of their chief national spokesman, Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Before the war Archbishop Pilarczyk, and many other bishops with him, questioned the morality of going to war before economic sanctions and political and diplomatic pressures were given more time to take effect.

In his first statement after war began, however, the NCCB president focused his comments on pastoral care of those affected by the war, the need for moral norms in the conduct of the war and a call for prayer and political efforts for an early peace.

He set aside for the time being the issue of initiating warfare, saying, "History will

judge whether or when this war should have been launched."

At least one prelate, Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston, defended the U.S. decision to go to war.

He cited the attacks on Israel, "the apparent abuse of allied POWs in violation of the Geneva Convention and the inflammatory inciting of worldwide terrorism" as evidence that the allies were justified in going to war because any hope of a peaceful solution was "vain."

"A further delay in the use of force," he said, "could have played to (Saddam's) advantage."

The allies, he said, had only two choices: "either to let this man wreak his havoc unchecked or to defend the cause of justice with arms ... (Peace) is not fulfilled at the price of granting tyrants and aggressors an open field to achieve unjust ends."

Several bishops addressed the issue of military service and conscientious objection if the draft is revived in the United States.

In a pastoral letter on the war Jan. 23, Bishop Kenneth J. Untener of Saginaw, Mich., praised those in the military for serving their country but urged his people to recognize the right of conscientious objection on the part of those who consider all war or the Persian Gulf war immoral.

Calls by church leaders urging both sides to adhere to moral norms prohibiting indiscriminate warfare or attacks on non-combatants were not seen as criticisms of allied conduct in the opening phases of the war.

While Saddam tried to portray the massive allied bombing as indiscriminate and resulting in high civilian casualties, church officials seemed generally satisfied with U.S. arguments and evidence in the first two weeks of fighting that the allied forces were making extraordinary efforts to hit only military targets.

They did not view Iraqi actions in the

same light.

Iraq's Scud missile attacks on Haifa and Tel Aviv in Israel provoked especially sharp moral condemnations.

Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, chairman of the U.S. bishops' International Policy Committee expressed "profound moral outrage" at the missile attacks, condemning "this indiscriminate attack on the civilian population of a nation not even engaged in the current hostilities."

Several church officials objected on grounds of morality and international law to the apparent beating of allied POWs by Iraq and Saddam's decision to parade them before TV cameras to denounce the war.

A joint conference of U.S. Catholic, Jewish and Muslim scholars, convened Jan. 22-23 by the Center for Interreligious Dialogue at Washington University in St. Louis to discuss just war issues in their respective religious traditions, found that all three traditions call for strict limits on both the conduct of war and the reasons for going to war.

J. Patout Burns, professor of Christian thought at Washington University and a spokesman for the group, said that concerns for protection of non-combatants and a sense of proportion between the destructiveness of war and the goals of war were shared by all three traditions.

Concern to protect the environment in the midst of war "is more specifically addressed in the Jewish and Islamic traditions than in the just war tradition developed by Christians," he said, "but all three traditions agree that wanton destruction of the means of life must be avoided."

Pope John Paul announced Jan. 27 that he had asked the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum," the Vatican coordinating agency for charitable activities, to form a special commission to work with international agencies and organizations as the prepared for a flood of war refugees.

Missionaries' aim is to convert non-Christians, pope declares

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The primary reason the church engages in missionary activity is not to provide social services but to issue an explicit call to conversion in Christ, Pope John Paul II said in his eighth encyclical letter.

Entitled "Redemptoris Missio" ("Mission of the Redeemer"), the encyclical was released at the Vatican Jan. 22. It was dated Dec. 7, the 25th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity.

The 153-page letter is subtitled, "On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate."

The main task of missionaries to call non-Christians to conversion is often questioned or "passed over in silence," the pope said.

Pope John Paul said some people would prefer that the church not use the words "missions" and "missionaries" because of "negative historical connotations" and an association with colonization in many parts of the world.

Others prefer to use the words to describe all of the church's activity and all of its members, instead of keeping its more traditional reference to work and workers in predominantly non-Christian areas.

The latter is a positive way of emphasizing that missionary activity "is not considered a marginal task for the church but is situated at the center of her life as a fundamental commitment of the whole people of God," the pope said.

The Christian message and the call to conversion must be explained in a way that respects the consciences of listeners, he

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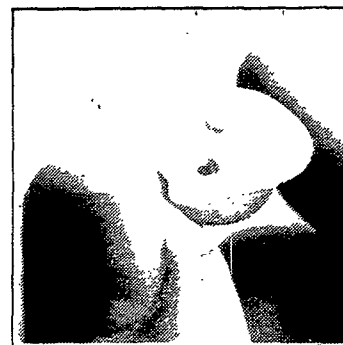
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