

War is always tragic, but it is sometimes necessary

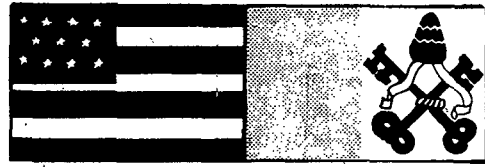
By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Question: What do you think of the war against Iraq?

Answer: All wars are dreadful because of the hate, suffering, maiming and killing, disruption of normal life and tremendous waste when there is such need in the world. The agony of wives, parents, children, grandparents, friends and worrying over loved ones is also very hard.

Does Our Lord condemn war? I have often pondered over Our Lord's speaking of prudence, illustrating thus: If a king comes with a large army to descend upon a small army, it would be the part of wisdom for the weaker king to try to negotiate. I do not know if the Scripture scholars would agree, but it has always seemed to me to imply that wars and violence would always be with us.

Our Lord also suggested that if someone strikes another on the cheek, turn the other cheek for a second blow. I don't know many people who follow that line of thinking. I recently watched a peace demonstrator on TV and a pro-war chap,



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

facing one another in utter hatred. The peace chap seemed even more savage than the pro-war chap. I thought, "Either would enthusiastically have socked the jaw of the other with a big fist." These were not people physically involved in the war, but in the ideology.

Question: Do you think this is a "just war?"

Answer: Isn't it curious that we are in the political and military bed with Muslims who have suppressed our religion for centuries? But this does not vindicate the rightness of the seizure and devastation of little Kuwait; with the expectation of expanding the conquest over much of the Middle East.

Question: But what does that have to do

with us. We are 5,000 miles away from that region?

Answer: A legitimate question, but what did Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia, then Poland, and onward, have to do with us, also some 5,000 miles away? Chamberlain expected peace from conceding one little country to Hitler. But it didn't work out that way.

Many wars have been unjust, for example, the Mexican-American War, England's conquest of Ireland, the tripartite of Poland, the seizure of the Ukraine, and others.

But I think it was right to prevent Hitler from taking over Europe and the East, and eventually ourselves. The tragedy is that Roosevelt and Churchill betrayed Eastern Europe to Stalin and the communists. We won the war but lost peace through politics.

Is Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait a parallel? President Bush, the U.S. Congress, and the United Nations believe so.

Question: What of the peace movement?

Answer: We all want peace, none more than the military men and women living in

the Middle East — including the Iraqis and Israelis. Even if we did not have relatives and friends living there — and most of us do — all fervently want peace. But would capitulation to Saddam bring world peace?

Question: What do you suggest?

Answer: Continue to pray earnestly for a just peace. Appreciate our military men and women. Send them letters and packages, signs of love and concern and appreciation for the home front. Pray for them, and for the Iraqi people, too. They are caught up in this maelstrom, and they, too, want a life of peace and normalcy.

I recently watched Mr. Rogers — host of a public TV children's show — telling parents not to expose their children to war on the TV. He said to wait until the youngsters are in bed or out of the house. He also suggested that families continue their normal family routine, making the children feel secure and loved.

He gave two beautiful examples of how to do this. One was a father seated on a couch with two youngsters, about 4 and 6 years of age, reading to the children.

The second example was Mr. Rogers himself, who has a gentle — yet virile — voice, with another man, showing two youngsters a mother-dog who had two little black puppies. The men and children were stroking the mother-dog and the puppies. What a sense of serenity.

Question: Do you consider yourself a "hawk" or a "dove"?

Answer: I have always considered myself a faithful Catholic, confessing Jesus as my Lord, loyal to the pope as the successor of St. Peter, and to the church, loving of our Blessed Mother, and trying — but not always successfully — to do God's will.

One must do more than listen to the Word of God

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Mark 1:21-28; (R1) Deuteronomy 18:15-20; (R2) I Corinthians 7:32-35.

On the first Sunday of the year — the Baptism of the Lord — a voice from the heavens spoke. According to the Gospel the voice said, "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests." The voice was that of God the Father. He spoke that we all might listen to his son.

In the readings for the second Sunday of the year, the voice spoke again — this time to Samuel. Through him and the other prophets, the father wanted his son to be pointed out. In the Gospel, the Son of God spoke to John and Andrew. They listened to his voice and followed him.

In the readings for the third Sunday of the year, the Son of God calls all mankind to repentance, just as Jonah did the Ninevites. His call re-echoes down through the ages through his "fishers of men," the Twelve Apostles and their successors.

On the fourth Sunday of the year — this coming Sunday — God's voice speaks once again: "Harden not your hearts." The father is saying, "Do not turn a deaf ear to the voice of my Son, Jesus, for He is the prophet spoken of by Moses, and He is the One who speaks with such authority that even the demons obey him."

Lastly, on the fifth Sunday of the year — the following Sunday, Feb. 17, is the first Sunday of Lent — we shall see that the words of Jesus have power not only over demons, but also over diseases afflicting the human body.

In the Responsorial Refrain, next Sunday, we are urged four times "not to harden our hearts to His voice," to God speaking through Jesus. His voice is uttered again and again in the Liturgy of the Word.

At the conclusion of the readings, we do not say, "This is the word about the Lord," but "This is the word of the Lord." St. Augustine said that "when we pray, we speak to God; when we read, God speaks to us."



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

And what is God saying to us? Basically, "Listen to my voice. Do not just hear it! More important, act upon it." St. James wrote: "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looks like" (1:22-24).

We are so blessed. We have Bibles, the inspired word of God. Before the printing press, Bibles were rare. Some monks in their scriptoriums spent their entire lives making copies of the Bible. They were so valuable that they were chained, like pens in a bank or post office, lest they be stolen. But what good is our Bible if we never open it? What good if we read it, but never try to act on what we read?

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them," said Jesus, "will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rains (of suffering) fell, the floods of (sorrows) came, and the winds (of temptation) blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it has been set solidly on rock" — on the word of God lived (Mt. 7:24-25).

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