

Jesus modeled pacifist standard for Christians

To the editors:

In response to Father Paul Cuddy, *Catholic Courier*, Jan. 31:

It does not take much Scripture scholarship to conclude that Father Cuddy is mistaken when he infers from Luke 14:31 that "wars and violence would always be with us." The context of the verse, 14:25-33, clearly yields a different meaning. Verses 28-32 are two examples given by Jesus to illustrate the cost of discipleship, concluded by verse 33: "So in the same way, none of you can be my disciples unless he gives up all his possessions." Perhaps this Scripture was the inspiration for St. Francis' teaching that Christ's followers were called to poverty because otherwise they would need weapons and armies to protect their possessions. The Rule for a Layman's Third Order instructs, "They are not to take up arms or carry them about for any reason."

In verses 25-27, Jesus also gives warning of the cost of discipleship to the great and too eager crowds that accompanied him as he resolutely continued on his way to Jerusalem. Verse 27: "Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." This is not the cross that an ordinary soldier or revolutionary like a George Washington or a Barabbas might be expected to have to carry. Violence had no place in the Kingdom of God even to preserve the life of the most just and innocent of men, Jesus himself. Jesus taught that love of enemies is crucial to the Kingdom. His cross is one of suffering love and non-violence. Many Scripture scholars assert that Jesus is indeed a pacifist.

Even the disciples could not understand this pacifism when Jesus was arrested; apparently defeated by the power of darkness and violence. A follower, Peter in John 18:10, drew a sword and wounded the high priest's servant. Jesus responded, "Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ... Then all

the disciples deserted him and ran away," Matthew 26:52-56. When we would confess Jesus as Lord, we must consider whether we have more in common with the deserting disciples or with Corinthians 1:23-25: "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and an absurdity to Gentiles, "A very serious consideration indeed for a priest or any Christian. I look for Father Cuddy, with his deep concern for the Gospel and the Church and its traditions, to be a champion of returning to its earliest tradition of pacifism.

I hope Father Cuddy will take more care soon to put Iraq's aggression in even its most recent historical context. Some of the seeds of this war were sown by Britain's arbitrary division of (Middle Eastern) territory in 1922. U.S. policy has sown seeds of violence for years. Our vital interests include the profit taking of U.S. corporations that sell armaments to anyone and not losing huge amounts of money that Kuwait uses to underwrite our government by buying its bonds. Truth has been the first casualty in this war and the establishment media has done little to correct this. Father Cuddy may wish to contact the Peace and Justice Education Center in Rochester for some balancing information.

I cannot appreciate what our soldiers are doing as Father Cuddy suggests. Those who are Christians have put their oath to "Caesar" above their allegiance to Christ. I cannot imagine Jesus in any of the roles that U.S. citizens have chosen in this war.

I can pray for our soldiers as Father Cuddy also suggests, but only in the same way I would pray for those who procure or perform abortions. A favorite Jesuit said, "Abortion is war, (to the unborn) war is an abortion." I pray that our soldiers awaken to the fact that they are destroying life made in the image of God and that they will then come to experience the grace and forgiveness of God that alone can restore meaning to their own lives.

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Sanctions not given enough time

To the editors:

There are a great many of us who feel that sanctions should have been given a longer time to take effect and that our government should have been willing to negotiate with Saddam Hussein. My conscience tells me that killing is not the answer and the cause is not worth thousands of casualties of our brothers and sisters.

Those of us who believe these things resent the fact that we are told that we are unpatriotic and that we are not supporting our service people in the Persian Gulf. It is because we love our country and all of its people that we speak out.

We are indignant that we are spending billions of dollars in the "killing fields" while in our own country programs to im-

prove lives are being slashed. We need greatly increased spending on programs for the homeless, the hungry, the disabled, the addicted, education for all of our children and research is needed to overcome or ameliorate the dread diseases of Alzheimers and AIDS, cancer and heart problems.

We pray for those participating in the Persian Gulf operation and our hearts are with them. We will rejoice with those who are fortunate and will return, and our prayers and sympathy will be with the families and friends of those who do not return.

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AP/Wide World Photos
SACRIFICES OF WAR — A black banner draped across the sign in front of the 14th quartermaster detachment building in Greensburg, Pa., serves as a memorial for the soldiers killed in a Feb. 25 Scud missile attack on a U.S. barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Victory euphoria countered by questions about policies

To the editors:

I've had a sense of unease that I can't seem to share the feelings of patriotism and euphoria over our one-sided victory in Iraq. I do rejoice that the killing, if not the dying, has stopped. I rejoice that Kuwait has been liberated.

However, I'm uneasy when President Bush talks about prosecuting the Iraqis for war crimes. Will he hold Saddam Hussein responsible for the atrocities committed by his soldiers in Kuwait? Should President Nixon have been put on trial for My Lai? Should we have prosecuted those who were responsible for the Phoenix program which was designed to eliminate indigenous Vietnamese leadership? Should we have tracked down American soldiers who pushed Vietnamese out of helicopters, who torched whole villages, who killed old people and children because "they all looked alike and we couldn't tell who was the enemy"?

I keep asking myself if it is the mission of the United States to stop aggression everywhere. If so, why did we stand idly by when China sacked Tibet? What did we do to show our horror over the Chinese murdering their own children who were demonstrating for democracy in Tiananmen Square? President Bush wasn't even willing to impose sanctions for

fear of offending the Chinese leadership. Is it only our economic interests that determine our degree of outrage over brutality and injustice?

I still mourn the unknown number of Panamanians killed when we invaded that country a year ago in the Christmas season. We covered up these deaths by burying them in mass graves before relatives could even identify them. As many as 10,000 people are still homeless there, forced to lie in small cubicles in hangers.

The purpose of all this death and destruction was to topple Noreiga, a man who may never come to trial because too much may be revealed about the CIA's complicity in his drug crimes. After all, he did allow "our Contras" to train there.

But it isn't just these things that trouble me. It was the way that we forced Iraq out of Kuwait.

Children under 15 make up 45 percent of the population of Iraq. Did we need to decimate the infrastructure of Baghdad in order to carry out the U.N. mandate? How many civilians — collateral damage! — died as we destroyed Baghdad's power stations, the water and sewage systems, the bridges? How many will die of disease before they are operational again?

Were we bombing Baghdad in order to unseat Saddam and, if so, who gave us the mandate?

One scene especially haunts me. In the final days of the ground war as the Iraqis were trying to flee Kuwait in every type of vehicle — buses, trucks, cars, tanks — and were backed up bumper to bumper, we attacked them from airplanes. It was like shooting fish in a fish bowl. Thousands died as they tried to empty Kuwait of material goods.

Was this killing necessary when it was obvious that we had accomplished our goal? Could we not have returned the property?

I keep asking myself why I can't just forget the Iraqis and rejoice that so few Americans and allied soldiers were killed and injured. Maybe it's because I was taught too well.

"I wish not the death of the sinner but that he repent and live."

"Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me."

When I put the face of Christ on every Iraqi, I tremble for my soul.

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