

WORLD & NATION



CNS/Reuters

Iraqi families gather in the presidential palace in Baghdad Nov. 17 to serve as human shields, hoping to deter an attack by United Nations' forces.

Bishop offers help for Iraq

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In a letter to his counterpart in Iraq, the president of the U.S. bishops' conference expressed solidarity with the Iraqi people and reiterated the bishops' opposition to broad sanctions against Iraq.

"We hear the cries of the millions of innocent men, women and children who are suffering as a result of the actions of the Iraqi government and the human costs of eight years of sweeping and comprehensive United Nations sanctions," said Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of Cleveland in a Nov. 14 letter to Chaldean Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid, president of the Iraq bishops' interritual conference.

Bishop Pilla, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference, said his fellow bishops would explore ways U.S. Catholic agencies could help alleviate the critical humanitarian needs in Iraq.

The letter from Bishop Pilla followed discussions on the Iraq situation that took place during the U.S. bishops' Nov. 10-12 meeting in Washington.

The bishops discussed how the NCCB could speak out about the U.N. sanctions against Iraq in the midst of a delicate international political situation caused by the wrangling between the United Nations and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein over violations of the terms of the agreement settling the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

"We do not focus on the political and policy aspects of the current crisis, but its

human consequences for you and the people you serve and others in the Middle East," Bishop Pilla wrote.

He noted that the U.S. bishops have frequently criticized the human effects of the sanctions and urged the government of Iraq to accept its "clear moral responsibility to end its threats to peace and to abandon efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction."

However, sanctions against Iraq "should not destroy the lives and health of people who bear no responsibility for the unacceptable acts of their rulers," Bishop Pilla continued.

"We will hold the suffering of your people in our hearts and in our prayers," he concluded. "As pastors, we assure you, your brother bishops and your people of our support, solidarity and prayers in these difficult days."

Meanwhile, apprehensive about the possibility of new fighting in the Persian Gulf, Pope John Paul II urged world leaders to insist on dialogue as the only way to defuse the crisis in Iraq.

The pope, speaking at a Sunday blessing Nov. 16, appealed especially on behalf of Iraq's civilian population, which has suffered under a U.N.-mandated trade embargo opposed by the Vatican and local church leaders.

"The fate of our brethren in the Gulf region is the source of strong and renewed concern," the pope said from his apartment window overlooking St. Peter's Square.

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Sr. Margaret
Registered Nurse from Louisville, Kentucky

"My vocation was a gradual process. It began with a recurring idea that God was calling me to something more. I prayed for guidance, asking Our Blessed Mother's assistance through her rosary, attended daily Mass and Holy Communion, and made two Holy Hours weekly. I also did a lot of spiritual reading. Several articles on "older vocations" encouraged me to explore my vocation.

I was initially attracted to this Community by the fact that the Sisters cared for the patients themselves. When I visited, I saw the loving concern and joyfulness of the Sisters, and their strong prayer life.

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