

Reasons for potential war on Iraq are not 'just'

Catholic moral theology resists all our efforts to reduce the moral life to a one-dimensional set of rules that obtains in every circumstance and eliminates our responsibility to think and decide in the real complicated circumstances that are part of life. Take the example our country now faces: whether waging war against Iraq is a moral, justified military action.

We know that since the rise of the "nation state," Catholic moral theology has placed great value on the virtue of patriotism. We owe our country loyalty and respect, and are taught to cultivate personal readiness to serve the good of our nation. Mainstream Catholic moral theology has taught that nations have the right and even the obligation to protect their own sovereignty and independence, and that they must exercise self-defense in the face of threats against these important goods.

Along these same lines, Catholic moral theology has justified nations taking up arms against other countries when their independent sovereignty is threatened, or when their citizens are in danger from attack. Thus, Catholicism has, by and large, maintained that there may be times when Catholics are dutybound to fight for their countries in a "just war."

The acceptance of the just war theory



the moral life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

right alongside our endorsement of patriotism as a virtue illustrates the point that our church resists reducing moral decisions to a simple, monolithic set of rules that "settle life for us." In addition to teaching us to foster genuine patriotism and loyalty to our countries, the church also teaches Catholics to make judgments about each particular war their country may wage.

In spite of our strong confirmation of patriotism, we never assume that our duty to endorse military action even by our own country is "automatic." Catholic acceptance of the just war theory calls for responsible decisions to be made by informed, responsible Catholic citizens.

In accepting the just war theory, our church expects that nations deliberating about whether or not to wage war will be

able to meet the following criteria so that their citizens are assured that a military action is a just one. Nations must be able to present evidence that the cause of the war is a just one; that civilians will not be directly targeted, that the goods to be gained by the action will be proportionate to the misery, death and suffering caused by it; that the action will have a reasonable hope of being successful, that waging the war is actually a measure of last resort, meaning that all other means of solving the conflict have been tried and have failed.

As Catholic citizens, then, we are likely to be thinking about the current administration's position regarding Iraq from a "conflicted" point of view. We probably hold two very deep assumptions. One is that we should try to "back" our country and the American military personnel who may soon be putting their lives at risk. The second is that war is undoubtedly the most severe human evil known to us, so that our presumption must always be against waging it.

In the case of the proposed action by the United States against Iraq, there are a number of issues that simply do not meet the criteria that would let us call this a "just" war. We do not know, for example, what it is that the administration hopes to

achieve through this action. If we hope to eliminate Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction," we haven't been assured that we know where all of them are, that they can't be easily moved, or that they can't be easily replaced. We haven't been assured that bombing storehouses of anthrax won't harm helpless Iraqis or American troops to such an extent that any "good" achieved would make no sense. If we hope to eliminate Saddam, efforts to date have not achieved that, and we don't even know where he is. And can we honestly say that this looks like a "last resort?" What measures have we actually undertaken to solve this dilemma, and how long have we worked at it?

At this writing, I'm pretty sure that to date none of the just war criteria have been met by the administration currently trying to "build support" for military action against Iraq. Maybe that's why the pope has spoken out so forcefully against it, or why all the U.S. cardinals have come out against it, or why every nation except Great Britain has expressed reservations about it. We must be patriotic, that's for sure. But we must scrutinize military action, too, even by our own country.

Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute.

Kindness marks the true follower of Christ

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 6:27-38. (R1) 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23. (R2) 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

The main character of *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo is Jean Valjean. Orphaned as a boy, Valjean as a teenager had to take care of his widowed sister and her seven children. All his work couldn't break the family's poverty. One day in desperation Valjean steals a loaf of bread from a baker's shop, to keep the children from starving. He is arrested and thrown into jail for half his life. There, his young heart becomes hardened with anger and hatred.

When released at the age of 46, his criminal past causes him to be rejected and ostracized everywhere he goes. Finally he stumbles on the house of a saintly bishop M. Myriel. The bishop treats him kindly and allows him to spend the night at his house. That night Valjean, angry and bitter, left the house with the bishop's silver.

The next day, soldiers come to the bishop's house with Valjean in tow. They are ready to throw him in jail. But the bishop greets Valjean with gladness. "I gave you the candlesticks also," said the bishop, "why did you not take them? Never forget you promised me to use this silver to become an honest man." The soldiers release their trembling prisoner and leave.



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

Valjean, in disbelief, accepts the gift of the silver from the bishop. He leaves the bishop's house a changed man — changed by one who treated him with kindness. Hugo ends his novel with the words: "To love another person is to see the face of God."

Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; be merciful, do not pass judgment."

A woman is brought to him who has been caught in adultery. "Let him who is without sin," says Jesus, "cast the first stone."

A Pharisee, Simon, invites Jesus to have dinner with him. A sinful woman invites herself to Simon's house, anoints the feet of Jesus and washes them with her tears. Simon is offended. Jesus told him the parable of two men who owed money. One owed a great deal; the other, much

less. The moneylender canceled the debts of both. "Which will love him more?" Jesus asked Simon.

Simon looked at the woman's past; Jesus weighed her potential. He knew kindness could heal that which condemnation could not.

Jesus was kindness personified. He had compassion for the sick as well as for the sinner. He welcomed children. On the cross he extended forgiveness to a dying thief.

In Jesus' day Romans considered mercy as "a disease of the soul." If an owner grew tired of his slaves, he could send them to the arena as an evening meal for the lions. If a slave grew too old to work, he could be disposed of like a broken hammer or a rusty plow. If a woman gave birth to a girl or a crippled son, the father could expose the infant to the elements and let it die. As for enemies, the only good one was a dead one. Jesus' attitude toward enemies, the sick, the poor, the weak was totally out of sync with the world.

Kindness marks out the true follower of Christ. One day a beggar asked alms from Alexander the Great. Alexander threw the man several gold coins. A courtier commented on Alexander's generosity, "Sire, copper coins would have

met the beggar's needs. Why give him gold?" Alexander answered in royal fashion, "Copper coins would suit the beggar's need, but gold coins suit Alexander's giving." Kindness says more about the giver than about the one who receives.

Heaven is full of people who are there because of kind actions. Many are there for doing them. Many are there for having them done to them.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, February 23
James 3:13-18; Mark 9:14-29
Tuesday, February 24
James 4:1-10; Mark 9:30-37
Wednesday, February 25
Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18
Thursday, February 26
Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:22-25
Friday, February 27
Isaiah 58:1-9; Matthew 9:14-15
Saturday, February 28
Isaiah 58:9-14; Luke 5:27-32

Looking for Quality Printing?

Call to Brochures & Newsletters

Through a special arrangement between Wayuga Press and the Catholic Courier Graphic's Department, you can now get quality, affordable typesetting and printing.

Give us a call for your next job!

COURIER GRAPHICS • 716-328-4340
WAYUGA PRESS • 315-754-6229



In our community, the Image Centre of the World, we greatly appreciate the value of memories. Pictures capture special moments, family events, and once-in-a-lifetime happenings. Our life, as with a picture, becomes a memory to family and friends. When you consider how you would like to be remembered and memorialized, think of us, we are the CRAWFORD FUNERAL HOME, where helping families share memories has been our focus since 1957.



Crawford FUNERAL HOME INC.



Independently Owned and Operated Since 1957
DAVID P. CRAWFORD MARK D. WAKEMAN

495 N. Winton Rd. • Rochester, NY 14610 • Phone (716) 482-0400
Visit us at www.frontiernet.net/~crawford/

HART MONUMENT COMPANY

Since 1856

Monuments, Markers and Cemetery Lettering

2301 Dewey Avenue
(OPPOSITE HOLY SEPULCHRE CEMETERY)

(716) 865-6746