

COLUMNISTS

Examine faith in terms of current events

Monday morning's headline read: "Nuclear arsenal to get upgrade: U.S. scientists to begin work on a 'bunker-busting' weapon." Our country is in a new mode now, trying as we all are to integrate the events of September 11 into our lives. I can't help wondering, however, about the effects that this kind of saber rattling ultimately will have on efforts to limit terrorism and violence. Does this sort of warning serve to frighten those who would strike against our nation, or does it actually promote violence as the only reality for our future?

In my opinion, the most logical question prompted by the headline is this: If terrorists, already willing to use suicide to advance their cause, assume we are prepared to use nuclear weapons against them, won't their activity only increase? A second question would be: What have they got to lose, if our powerful nation intends to unleash nuclear power against them?

I know that this headline is a symptom of our country's attempt to respond to and integrate the events of last fall. I know that our government struggles to determine how best to do these things, just as we all do. I understand that we will all have to learn which measures will help us and which will not. Some of the measures we adopt will surely be less productive than others. I am strongly con-



the moral life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

vinced that nuclear threats by our government are among the least helpful and most dangerous tactics we can take.

As our country struggles to deal with these matters, so do individuals. The academic community is working now to incorporate the current world situation into its programs, with new courses being planned and existing courses taking on new perspectives. In the fields of religious and theological education, too, considerable effort is under way to appreciate how the terrorist attacks affect our faith and our understanding of our religious convictions.

At my own school, St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry (we've recently changed our title from St. Bernard's Institute), a new summer program is being planned for July 2002. This summer we will offer a series of short courses, each to

be completed in two or three days. Each of these courses will consider a major theme from religious and ethical thought, but we will consider each one from the perspective of September 11.

Professor Nancy Hawkins will offer "God and the Problem of Evil" on July 1 and 2. Father Bob Kennedy will address "Knocking Down Barriers: Are Forgiveness and Reconciliation Possible?" on July 17 and 19. Dr. Roslyn Karaban will teach "Counseling Adolescents and Teens During Crisis" on July 23 and 25. Deacon Tom Driscoll will present "Preaching During Crisis" on July 18, 22 and 23, then again on July 24 and 26. Father John Colacino will teach on "What Are They Saying About Religious Pluralism" on July 25, 29 and 31. Finally, I will explore questions about the morality and forms of modern warfare in "War, What Is It Good For?" on July 16 and 18.

If you'd like information on any of this, please contact us at 585/271-3657, or www.stbernards.edu.

These short courses are ideal for those training for church ministry, for those already involved in parish leadership, for teachers, community leaders, and for all interested Christians. They will attempt to do what good theology should always do: Reflect on Christian faith from the perspectives of contemporary life. The new conditions that have affected us

since September 11 have altered almost everything we do and think. They have certainly cast new light on the eternal questions we all ask about God, God's providence and care for creation, the way sin and grace enter into human experience.

We have new questions now, too, about nationalism and patriotism, about other religions and our relation to them, about fear, justice, retaliation and forgiveness. We are far more concerned about the United States' role in the world, and need more understanding about why so many peoples mistrust us and wish us harm.

I don't think terrorism will be "defeated" in the sense that it will disappear. Assertions about this being a "long war" for the United States seem more to describe the new way in which our country has become involved in global cultural and economic conflicts that have characterized life in almost every other region of the globe for so long.

The fear that afflicts life in other parts of the world is now a part of our life too. The ways in which we act to promote peace, or war, will take on renewed significance in the years ahead. So will our approach to the faith we profess and the faith communities we attempt to form.

Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry.

Notice to Readers: Due to a low volume of letters to the editor received last week, we are omitting the Opinion page for this issue. It will return next week.

Kids' Chronicle Answers from page 12:
1, 15, 5, 2, 9, 3, 12, 6, 13, 8, 10, 4, 7, 11, 14

18TH ANNUAL \$10,000 CASH GIVEAWAY
Francis DeSales-St. Stephen's School Geneva, New York
will be selling raffle tickets for the benefit of their school.
Cash giveaway is as follows:
1st prize - \$5,000 - 2nd prize - \$2,500
3rd prize \$1000 - 4th prize - \$500
PLUS - 10 Prizes of \$100 Cash
PLUS Dinner Dance for 2 on night of drawing at Club 86
PLUS 2 \$50 Early Bird Drawings beginning March 17
Drawing will be at a dinner dance on Friday, April 26, 2002.
Covers 6:30 Dinner 7:30, Club 86, Geneva, NY.
Winners need not be present - Ticket donation is \$100.
For information or to purchase a ticket, please call the school at 585-229-2222 or 585-229-2222.

RETREAT FOR SISTERS
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Retreat begins 7:00 pm Sunday, July 14th & ends 11:00 am on Friday, July 19
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