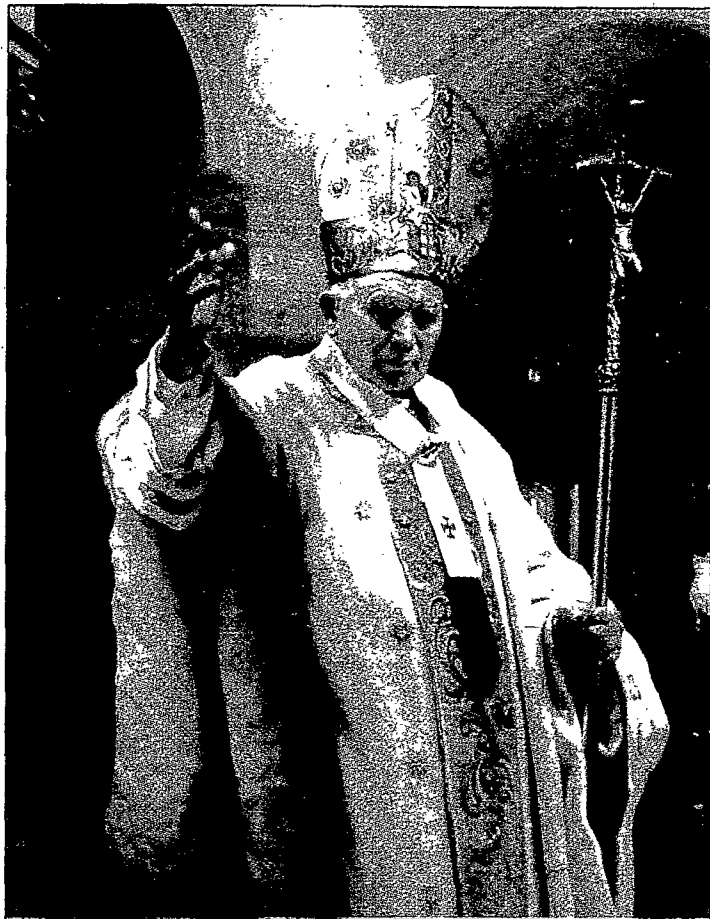


Our outlook on war, the church should change



Nelson Shanks/CNS

U.S. artist Nelson Shanks executed this portrait of Pope John Paul II without the pontiff posing for the painting. Shanks, a Rochester native, based his piece on photos, videotapes and seeing the pope at public activities. It is among works being presented in a traveling Vatican exhibit.

MORE LETTERS

Raise voices against war

To the editor:

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children were massacred in the 1990-91 Gulf War as collateral damage in the bombing of water purification plants, hospitals and schools. The pending war has much higher stakes because invasion will be necessary. For Iraq it would be close to a holocaust. Approximately 300 American men and women were lost in 1990-91. How many more American lives should we sacrifice to oust Saddam Hussein? Zero!

Launching a preemptive strike to overthrow an established government is against international law. Are we not a nation of law and order? There is no doubt we will dominate. It would be like going to war against the state of Rhode Island.

General Omar Bradley

stated that "Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than living."

Individually and collectively, we need to pray for peace in ourselves, our church, our nation and our world. We can enliven our prayer by promoting always peaceful, just and non-violent use of U.S. power. Write to President Bush, urging him to seek a non-violent approach and to work with the U.N. Ask Senators Clinton and Schumer to urge the same. OUR SILENCE GIVES CONSENT TO THE PENDING HOLOCAUST AGAINST IRAQ!

With God, all things are possible, including peace and justice for all. Let us save lives of American men, women and of our allies and also of Iraqi children, mothers, siblings and their families.

Eugene & Marie Fuerst
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I realize that it is the new year and we're supposed to be focusing on changes we need to make in ourselves. Still, I've always found it easier to focus on the shortcomings and transgressions that need fixing in others. So in this column I'm going to name two attitudes that I'd most like to change in other people this year.

Regarding our country, I would most like to change the belief that global problems can be solved by military intervention by the United States. In particular, I wish our country would reject the prospect of initiating war on Iraq. I realize that the United States has been attacked by terrorists, and that innocent people died and suffered because of the inhumane and immoral actions of Al Qaeda forces. I understand that other forms of terrorist activities threaten other nations and that the United States has a particular responsibility to investigate and eliminate those who would perpetrate the crimes of terrorism.

I am aware as well that Iraq is run by an inhumane regime that has not engaged in truthful international relations in the recent past. Still, I firmly believe that by attacking Iraq, our country stands only to intensify the hatred against us and thus to increase the likelihood of future terrorist activities. Furthermore, I believe it is immoral for us to attack



Patricia Schoelles, SSJ

The Moral Life

Iraq at this time. The burden of proof for a first strike is extremely stringent, and to my knowledge, it has not been demonstrated in any publicly verifiable way at this time.

The second attitude I would so much like to change this year involves the church. I would really love it if everyone would spend the year appreciating the church as centered in the sacrament of baptism. There seems to be so much panic and fear in us as we anticipate an era in which there will apparently not be resident priests in all our parishes.

I remember studying the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and I can still recall the joy I felt when one of my professors led the class through a discussion of the details behind the drafting of the Constitution of the Church during the council. He explained how the original intention of the authors of that document was to begin with a fairly routine account of the role of ordained ministers and the hierarchy. Then he showed us how this original plan was

turned upside down, so that the document began instead with a discussion of the church as mystery, followed by the chapter on the church as "people of God," emerging from the sacrament of baptism. It wasn't until the third chapter that the hierarchy was dealt with, and even that was changed dramatically. Instead of the hierarchy being presented as the core of the church, the hierarchy was defined in terms of its role as serving the ministry of the laity.

The next phase of church life in the United States will appear to be frightening and diminished if we view the church primarily in terms of priests, if we resist claiming our own authority as lay people, if we cling to modes of parish life that must conform precisely to the model we grew up with. The church in the United States originated from a community centered in and initiated by lay people. The church in most regions of the globe flourishes and the faith of believers intensifies in spite of a "priest shortage."

Believe me, I would like to have more priests. But I'd really like to change the attitudes that look upon the next stage of our church's development as a kind of "come down" because laity will be moving into new roles in the church.

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