

Church must focus on issues other than abuse



Father Eugene Hemrick

Making a Difference

At the moment, the sex-abuse scandal continues to preoccupy the church's mind in the United States, and that's important. But other important issues also need to be the order of the day.

Not long ago there was great excitement over the ecumenical movement. Success stories abounded of Catholics and non-Catholics working together to bring Christ's values to their communities and local governments. Those kinds of stories need to grow in number.

If faith communities worked together just a little more, we have to wonder how many more people seeking true values and peace would turn to religion to find them.

Racism still flourishes, as do misunderstandings over the new and diverse cultural groups in the United States. As good a job as civil authorities do to create better understanding, the church's rich religious tradition possesses the best means society has to achieve this. Love, which is at the basis of understanding, always is learned best in a religious environment.

In the world of science,

we face uncharted waters. Take, for example, the human genome initiative, stem-cell research and cloning. When the moral dimension of science is overlooked, it proceeds unchecked, leaving the door open for all types of serious problems.

And with war appearing imminent, the church more than ever needs to question and challenge U.S. leaders so that they do not lead us into a catastrophe. Without the church's moral voice, the steps leading up to war become ever so much easier to climb.

Then there is the environment. As our demands for energy and resources increase, so does our need to learn that they are gifts from God that must never be taken for granted. The age of the new evangeliza-

tion in the church is confronted by new urgencies, one of them being to employ innovative educational methods to teach that the earth is not impersonal matter, but rather is the creation of a personal God.

Finally, it wasn't long ago that the church focused strongly on the disparity between the rich and the poor. Important discussions even were taking place in the church on the Internet age and how those who couldn't afford a computer or Internet access were being deprived of opportunities that more and more are needed to succeed in the world today. It was a time of deep sensitivity to the plight of the poor. Though the church is facing difficult financial times, to short-change the poor would be to deny a major dimension of Christ's work on earth.

Many pressing issues confront society — and the church. The church must not lower its voice on the full range of issues that are dear to its heart and integral to its mission.

Father Hemrick is a columnist for Catholic News Service.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

an appealing way to children and adults.

I think the woman who wrote in might want to take a closer look between the lines. After all, years of Sunday school have taught me that God is always there, even if you can't see him.

Emily West

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Hussein's acts caused most harm

To the editor:

Disarming Iraq is a bipartisan issue. In 1998, President Clinton advanced arguments identical to those of President Bush to justify attacking Iraq and was enthusiastically supported by Senator Daschle.

The Fuersts' letter of Jan. 16 ("Raise voices against war") concerning the possibility of war with Iraq indicated their acceptance of the lies, mistruths, and distortions of fact disseminated by Iraq and its apologists. The truth is quite different.

The "Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children" supposedly massacred during Desert Storm has never been verified. However, the bulk of non-combatant casualties occurred because Iraq:

- Placed military targets adjacent to schools, hospi-

tals, mosques, etc. in order to maximize their damage

- Fired endless rounds of anti-aircraft munitions fruitlessly into the air knowing that all of it would fall to earth on Iraqis

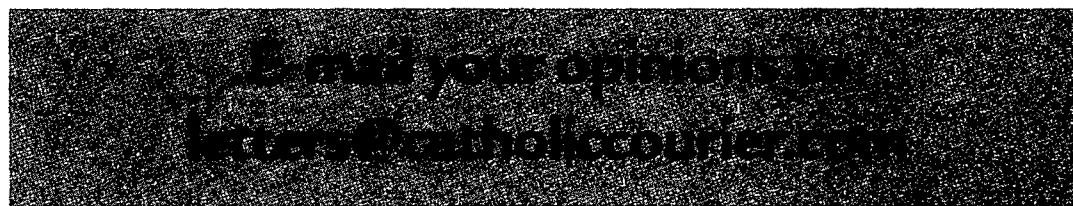
- Did not restore damaged civilian infrastructure, medical and food supplies, etc. but instead provided for government and military needs.

The Fuersts describe the possible invasion as a "holocaust," apparently believing that the invading forces will slaughter everyone in sight. This shows little faith in, or understanding of, the U.S. military or the young Americans who serve in it. "Holocaust" best describes the offenses Saddam Hussein has committed, since he, like all terrorists, prefers to slaughter innocents in order to increase the civilian body count. In contrast, the U.S./U.N. forces attack non-combatants only in self-defense, even if this policy sometimes puts their soldiers in great jeopardy.

Pre-emptive strikes are really just self-defense. Since Iraq has used Weapons of Mass Destruction many times and supports terrorists outside Iraq, it is necessary that the U.S./U.N. protect the world by destroying their capabilities to attack other nations.

Ben Reed

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