

Bush gives Iraq ultimatum

Vatican warns about 'grave responsibility' of acting outside law

John Norton/CNS

VATICAN CITY — As U.S. President George W. Bush abandoned international diplomacy and set a countdown for war on Iraq, the Vatican warned that whoever gives up on peaceful solutions would have to answer for the decision to God and history.

The Vatican statement March 18 came a day after Bush gave Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his sons a 48-hour ultimatum to leave Iraq to avoid military conflict.

"Whoever decides that all the peaceful means made available under international law are exhausted assumes a grave responsibility before God, his conscience and history," said Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls.

The one-sentence statement did not mention Bush or any other international leaders by name.

For months, the Vatican has spoken out against a possible war, calling on all sides to pursue diplomacy to avoid a fresh conflict.

In one of his most impassioned public pleas, Pope John Paul II said March 16 that war would have "tremendous consequences" for Iraqi civilians and for the equilibrium of the Middle East and could foment new forms of extremism.

He called on Saddam to cooperate urgently and fully with the international community "to eliminate any motive for armed intervention," and asked member nations of the U.N. Security Council to respect their own U.N. charter, which allows the use of force only as a last resort, when all peaceful means have been exhausted.

"I say to all: There is still time to negotiate. There is still room for peace. It is never too late to understand each other and to continue to work things out," the pope said.

Bush, issuing his ultimatum during a television address from the White House, said war would be an act of self-defense against a country that had ties to terrorists and was still trying to amass, hide and develop biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

"Instead of drifting along toward



Reuters/CNS

U.S. Marine Albert Martinez from Sunnyvale, Calif., is about to be immersed in a makeshift baptismal pool made of sandbags and plastic sheeting as Baptist chaplains baptize infantrymen March 16 in northern Kuwait near the Iraq border. Pope John Paul II urged Iraq and the United Nations to consider the "tremendous consequences" of the potential conflict and avert war.

tragedy, we will set a course toward safety," he said.

Bush said the members of the U.N. Security Council who have voiced opposition to military action — most notably, France, Russia and China — were aware of the threat posed by Iraq's weapons but did not share U.S. resolve to enforce Iraq's international disarmament commitments.

"The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities," he said. "So we will rise to ours."

Bush warned Iraq's military not to use chemical or biological weapons or destroy the country's oil fields. He told Iraqi civilians, "The day of your liberation is near."

Shortly after Bush's address, the U.S. government raised the national terrorism alert to "high risk" — the second-highest level — in anticipation of a potential backlash from the threatened U.S. military action.

The pope had sent a personal envoy to Bush earlier in March to urge that the Iraqi crisis be solved peacefully through the United Nations.

After returning to Rome and briefing the pope March 15, the envoy, retired Italian Cardinal Pio

Laghi, criticized what he called a rush to war in Iraq and said it was an illusion to think democracy can be imposed through military force.

"Democratization through war is a utopia. It is well-known that growth in democracy takes a long time," he said in an interview published the next day by the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

Cardinal Laghi, a former ambassador to the United States, said there was a serious risk that a U.S.-led war with a few Western allies would be seen by many Muslims as a "Christian" war against Islam. Hatred and terrorism can be expected to increase as a result, he said.

He said a key part of the Vatican's concern was maintaining the authority of the United Nations. This authority has been endangered by "those who demanded too much too soon" on a complicated question like disarmament in Iraq.

The cardinal said that other members of the U.N. Security Council may have involuntarily weakened the pressure on Iraq to disarm by publicly opposing the United States.

Cardinal Laghi said he told Bush that the pope would no doubt keep up his strong anti-war statements if the United States attacks Iraq.

BISHOP ANNOUNCES PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following pastoral leadership appointments effective June 24.

• Father William C. Michalek to pastor Holy Trinity, Webster, from pastor St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport.

• Father Richard J. Shatzel to pastor St. Mary, Honeoye, from pastor St. Mary, Bath.

• Father Michael J. Mahler to pastor St. Catherine of Siena, Cayuga Heights, from chaplain Cornell University, Ithaca.

• Father Timothy L. Niven to pastor St. Patrick, Victor, from parochial vicar Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community, Finger Lakes.

• Father Thomas F. Nellis to sacramental minister, St. Joseph, Penfield, during the sabbatical of Father Kevin P. Murphy. Father Nellis is pastor at Holy Trinity, Webster.

DIOCESEAN SCHOOLS PREPARE FOR ATTACKS

WASHINGTON (CNS) — With recent warnings of possible attacks against the United States, Catholic schools across the country want to be prepared to handle such an emergency.

Daniel Curtin of the National Catholic Educational Association said many diocesan school officials have asked him for guidelines on how schools should respond to a possible terrorist attack. He tells the schools of the Web site launched March 7 by the U.S. Department of Education, *united.gov/emergencyplan*, which includes advice on how schools can best prepare for an emergency.

VATICAN TO ISSUE DECREE ON EUCHARIST

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican's doctrinal congregation and the congregation overseeing the sacraments are drafting a document underlining the importance of following church norms regarding the celebration of the Eucharist and eucharistic adoration.

Vatican officials said the decree of the congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Divine Worship and the Sacraments is expected to be published in the fall. Pope John Paul II's new encyclical on the Eucharist is scheduled for publication Holy Thursday, April 17.

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