

# Catholic Courier

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Iraqi youths cheer British Royal Marines as they drive through the port town of Umm Qasr in southern Iraq March 22. Despite heavy fighting that included the capture and deaths of U.S. soldiers, military personnel said that the war was proceeding according to plan. In Rome, Pope John Paul II prayed for the "gift of peace."

## Reacting to war

WASHINGTON — Catholics found themselves at various points along the spectrum of reactions during the first week of Operation Iraqi Freedom and in the days leading up to war.

- In Amman, Jordan, a U.S. priest working with Chaldean Catholics dashed off an e-mail to a reporter in Boston asking for prayers for the Iraqi people, "especially those who have come from other nations recently."

- In Denver, a priest and retired 20-year Army veteran told Catholic members of the 96th Army Reserve Command as they prepared to head for war, "You are leaving your families and your loved ones but you're not going alone."

- In Washington, the director of Maryknoll's Office of Global Concerns called her arrest for protesting the war in front of the White House "an insult to the very democracy" that President Bush says he is promoting in the war against Iraq.

- In the tiny town of St. Anne, Ill., family and friends of a Marine pilot killed in a helicopter crash in Kuwait gathered to mourn him at the local Catholic church.

- At the Vatican, Pope John Paul II prayed March 23 for "the gift of peace" and declared that "violence and weapons can never resolve the problems of man."

- And at tens of thousands of worship sites around the world, millions joined in prayers for peace, while elsewhere Catholics and others chose to continue their protests against the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Jesuit Father Denis Como, a Boston priest who has been stationed in Amman for five months, was bracing for the arrival of more Iraqi refugees in Jordan with the start of the war. He said there are already 400,000 refugees there from Iraq, 10,000 of them Chaldean Catholics.

"When the war begins there will be millions coming over the border," he told *The Pilot*, Boston archdiocesan newspaper, in an e-mail shortly before the war began.

"The children suffer the most," Father Como added. "And the elderly suffer because they know they may die on the way to a

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