

POPE

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that underlie humanitarian law and promote respect for the dignity of military adversaries and civilians.

"Precisely when weapons are unleashed, the need for rules aimed at making warfare less inhuman is imperative," he said.

The pope also told the chaplains that recent worldwide peace protests against the Iraqi war showed that a large part of humanity rejects war — except in legitimate self-defense — as a means to resolve conflicts between countries.

After missiles struck two market areas in Baghdad, Iraq, and left an estimated 70 civilians dead, the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, said the war was "pitiless" and was being carried out with "indifferent cruelty." It said the civilian deaths would feed hatred now and in the future.

In St. Peter's Square below the pope's apartment, an Austrian peace activist made a rough landing March 28 in a motorized hang glider decorated with the words: "Peace — No War." He was arrested shortly afterward.

The Vatican's top foreign affairs specialist, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, said it was already clear that the Iraqi war would generate terrorism and seriously damage Christian-Muslim dialogue.

In an interview with an Italian magazine, Archbishop Tauran said the outbreak of hostilities had saddened him because of the "contempt (shown) for international law."

"This war will generate all the extremisms possible, including the Islamic one. We must be aware of this. It will provoke terrorism," he said.



A mural for peace on the side of a New York City building depicts Pope John Paul II holding a rosary March 29. At the Vatican, Pope John Paul continued his calls for peace and said the conflict must not become a "religious catastrophe."

Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, frequently mentioned as a possible papal candidate, said in Rome March 27 that economic interests were behind the war in Iraq and that "destruction is carried out in order to have a pretext for reconstruction."

In Iraq, the Chaldean Catholic Church closed its headquarters in the capital, Baghdad, and transferred its personnel elsewhere after a bomb or missile blew the building's windows out. A Carmelite church in the capital also was damaged. About 175,000 Catholics, most of them Chaldean-rite, live in Baghdad.

In Basra, the southern Iraqi city where some of the heaviest fighting occurred, Archbishop Djibrail Kassab appealed for emergency

medicine and water-treatment equipment because people risked contracting diseases from drinking contaminated river water.

Medical supplies provided by Caritas Iraq were used to treat several hundred people in Basra, mostly women and children injured in the bombing. Caritas Iraq also treated injured civilians on the streets of Baghdad and transported the seriously wounded to local hospitals, according to a British Catholic aid agency.

The heavy toll prompted Catholic and other Christian leaders of Baghdad to appeal for a cease-fire. Chaldean Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Shlemon Warduni told Vatican Radio that the bishops released their appeal after a March 26 meeting in the Iraqi capital, where he said the situation was worsening every day because of the coalition bombardments.

"United to our Muslim brothers, we ask everyone to issue an urgent appeal for a cease-fire," Bishop Warduni said.

Citing growing numbers of civilian casualties, he said, "Neither human rights nor civil rights are being respected." He said the war was a human rights violation because it was decided outside the U.N. Security Council.

U.S. officials have ruled out any talk of a cease-fire.

A statement signed March 21 by 19 leaders of the Middle East Council of Churches, including two cardinals and six Catholic patriarchs, said the war threatened to unleash a "clash of civilizations." They said it was immoral and could bring tragic repercussions to the entire region.

More criticism came from a coalition of Canadian churches and religious organizations — including the

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops — which said the U.S.-led war has no justification in international law. It said the countries that have inflicted destruction on Iraq should provide the majority of financing for a U.N.-administered reconstruction fund.

In the United States, Catholic discussion on the war touched on the role of soldiers fighting in the military campaign.

The head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services said in a March 25 letter to his priests that members of the armed forces should carry out their duties in good conscience because they can presume the integrity of the leaders who decided to go to war in Iraq.

"Given the complexity of factors involved, many of which understandably remain confidential, it is altogether appropriate for members of our armed forces to presume the integrity of our leadership and its judgments, and therefore to carry out their military duties in good conscience," Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien said in the letter.

In a March 7 Lenten message, Bishop John Michael Botean of the Romanian Diocese of St. George in Canton, Ohio, told the people of his Eastern-rite diocese that "any direct participation and support of this war against the people of Iraq is objectively grave evil, a matter of mortal sin."

That issue was reflected in the Rome meeting of chaplains, attended by Franciscan Father Louis V. Iasiello, deputy chief of chaplains for the U.S. Navy and the top chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps.

"The role of the chaplain is to bring troops the spiritual and ethical guidance needed to retain their humanity," said Father Iasiello, who holds the rank of rear admiral.

"If you fight with the right intention — to prepare for a just and lasting peace — you will retain your humanity and protect the humanity of others," he said.

In Washington, Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton was among four dozen war protesters arrested across the street from the White House March 26. The action was organized by Pax Christi USA, the Catholic peace movement, and other religious groups.

According to a national survey released in mid-March, only a small minority of church-going Americans say their religious beliefs have been the biggest influence on their own thinking about the war.

Asked what influences their thinking on the war, 41 percent cited the media, 16 percent personal experience, 11 percent their own educational background, 10 percent religious beliefs and 7 percent friends and family.

GENERAL

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