

# Catholic Courier

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

VOL. 114 NO. 26

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2003

75¢

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## Praying for war's end

Pope, parishes ask  
for quick resolution  
to conflict in Iraq

WASHINGTON — As the U.S.-led war on Iraq continued, Pope John Paul II and other church leaders maintained their opposition to the conflict while parishes across the United States held funerals for fallen parishioners, prayer services for peace and support groups for military families.

"I pray to God that this conflict ends quickly to make room for a new era of forgiveness, love and peace," said the pope April 6 commemorating the 40th anniversary of the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth).

The pope said he was worried about all those involved in the Iraqi war, especially civilians. The fate of Iraqi civilians has also been a constant theme of Catholic peace groups in Europe. Iraqi authorities said April 6 that more than 1,250 civilians had been killed in the conflict, and crowded hospitals in Baghdad said the number of injured was too numerous to count.

The spiritual leader of Chaldean Catholics in the eastern half of the United States likewise expressed concern for Iraqi civilians.

Bishop Ibrahim N. Ibrahim, who heads the Detroit-based Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, said he had been opposed to the use of military force to oust the regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, but he also assumed the attack would be so well-planned that it would be over within the first week.

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An Iraqi woman cries in front of her demolished home on the outskirts of Baghdad April 2. Air strikes pounded the area, where Iraq's Republican Guard was believed to be hiding.

Story and photos by Catholic News Service