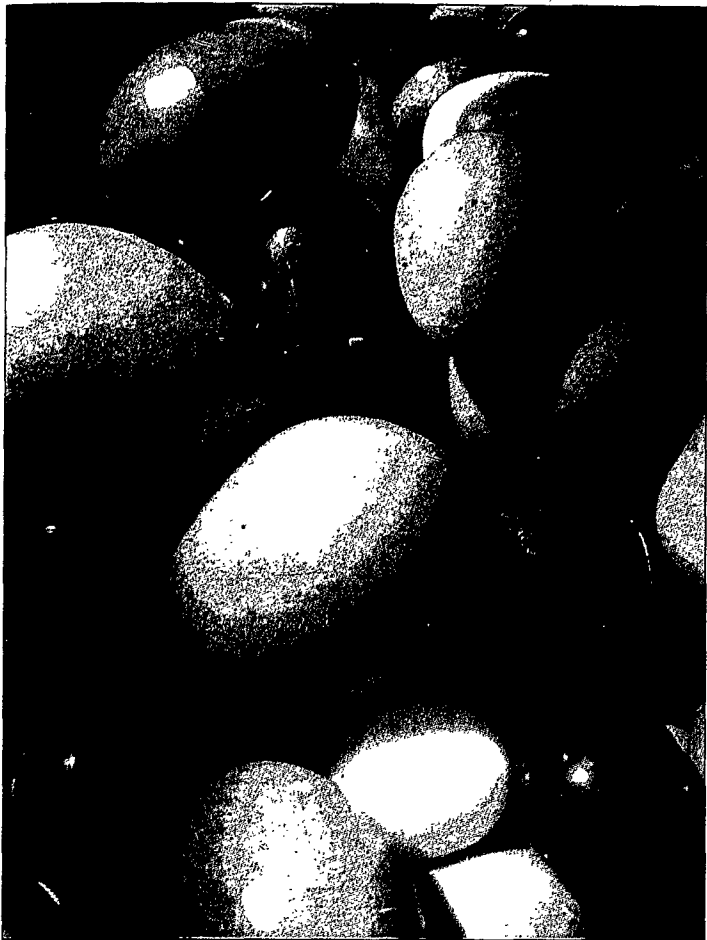


Is freedom a casualty of the war on terror?



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

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prior to the current economic downturn, but that the layoffs were necessary because of "decreased diocesan revenues." Father Hart likened the financial problems at the Pastoral Center to a family facing difficult times, and states that "like any family, you sometimes have to tighten the belt." What a unique concept! However, someone still doesn't get it, because we now have:

4. "Cathedral renovations include new parking lot." We rest our case.

Mr. & Mrs. Harold Driscoll
Dikeman Road, Pittsford

Courier is pacifist 'rag'

To the editor:

It is with great disappointment and disgust to see my life-long religious leaders and the *Catholic Courier* plunge deeply into politics over the present war to remove Saddam Hussein. The credibility and moral authority of the Catholic bishops of the

United States is already seriously weakened over sexual scandals. Now they are telling us to oppose the war in Iraq as this will result in killing. In reality, the bishops and the Pope are protecting a vicious dictator and attempting to prevent the liberation of an oppressed people. The Pope should hang his head in shame.

The *Catholic Courier* has become nothing more than a pacifist rag, card-stacking all the negative aspects of the war — a typical propaganda procedure. I cannot find any reference in the *Courier* that distances itself over political opinions expressed within. The column 'Loyal' Catholics should follow pope (by Father Richard McBrien) is telling me that we are supposed to prefer the moral guidance of the Bishop of Rome on Iraq even if we think he is dead wrong. It looks like the *Courier* is trying to push Catholics that disagree with its political naiveté out of the church.

Edward A. Ryan III
Easterbrook Drive West
Horseheads

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in 1933 in his first inaugural address. That famous line resonated with patriotic Americans throughout the years of the Great Depression and later in World War II.

Of course, some Americans did become afraid — and with good reason. They were the residents of our country who were dragged from their homes and confined in camps simply because they were of Japanese heritage. This was whipped-up patriotism, and it wasn't a new idea. It had really taken off in World War I, fueling fear, anger and prejudice against German Americans.

The fueling of fear, anger and prejudice got under way fast when the war on terrorism was launched after Sept. 11, 2001. Many people who simply had a Middle Eastern appearance were arrested and detained without cause.

People who protested the war in Iraq have been accused of being unpatriotic, even "enemies." Forgotten is that we are Americans, blessed to live in a democratic country that honors individual freedom. Or has that been changed behind closed doors?

I was extremely disturbed in early March when I read a story in *The New York Times* headlined "A Message of Peace on Two Shirts Touches Off Hostilities at a



Antoinette Bosco

Looking around

Mall." A 60-year-old father, Stephen Downs, and his 31-year-old son, Roger, had gone to the Crossgates Mall in Albany, N.Y., wearing T-shirts, over turtlenecks, with emblems saying "Peace on Earth," "No War With Iraq" and "Let Inspections Work." They went to the food court to have dinner, but soon were approached by security guards who told them to take the T-shirts off.

The younger man complied, but the father did not, believing strongly that individuals should be able to express themselves, especially when their message is of peace. That didn't fly with the guards, who called the local police. They came in and arrested Downs for trespassing.

I called my sister who still lives in Albany, and she said the story was all over the Albany news. I asked her what the pervasive feeling was. She said, in a word, "Outrage!" For which I say, thank you.

The *Times* story noted that Arthur Eisenberg, the

legal director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, called this action at the mall an attempt to censor the free speech rights of its patrons. "We wonder where such censorship will end. Will the mall start prohibiting customers from wearing political buttons? The ultimate point is that we are a diverse society in which individuals hold diverse views." And may I add, "Isn't that the American way?"

Are our freedoms going to be a casualty of the war on terror? Donna R. Newman, a court-appointed lawyer for Jose Padilla, accused of planning to explode a "dirty bomb," may have something to say on this. Her client can have no access to her, his lawyer, because President Bush has declared him "an enemy combatant." With much work ahead of her, she says, "If the government gets away with this, it can, with these rules, lock up any American."

Perhaps it is time to remember again what Thomas Jefferson, knowing how easy it is to legitimize measures that can threaten civil liberties, wrote to James Madison in 1787: "A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inferences."

Antoinette Bosco is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

The *Catholic Courier* provides space for readers to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

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Letters must not exceed 300 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

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