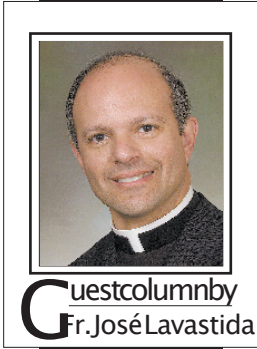


U.S. bishops say preemptive strike on Iraq not justified

There has been much debate about the morality of a "preemptive strike" or preventive war against Iraq. Advocates believe such a strike could curtail future terrorist acts on the scale of Sept. 11, 2001, by "nipping them in the bud." The debate requires a careful understanding of the Catholic Church's "just war" theory.

Jim Nicholson, the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, will hold a forum in Rome next month in which Catholic Church officials will hear presentations by American Catholic philosophers and moralists who will attempt to justify the validity of a preemptive strike as consistent with the requirements of the just war theory.



Guestcolumnby
Fr. José Lavastida

THE JUST war theory has been acknowledged historically by religious and secular thinkers as varied as Cicero, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Grotius (the father of international law) and Daniel Webster. Early Christian approaches were largely pacifist in nature; however, with the growing influence of Christianity in the Roman Empire, theologians in the fourth and fifth centuries began to develop justifications for armed conflict. St. Augustine, who wrote 1,600 years ago, was the first major Christian theologian to address this issue.

The just war theory is used to evaluate the ethics of military action. It has three core principles. In order for a nation to carry out a war, there must be a just cause, a declaration by a competent authority and right intention.

Just cause traditionally has been understood as strictly connected to the right of national self-defense. Competent authority is based on the idea that the decision to go to war must be lawfully made. Right intention insists that the motives for war must not be to inflict undue

suffering on another state but to use only the necessary amount of force. Other ideas are connected to the just war theory: that war should always be a last resort, that the damage to be inflicted and the costs incurred must be proportionate to the good expected (proportionality), and that the probability of success should prevent an irrational resort to force.

In the centuries after St. Augustine, the theory was used as a way of appeasing the natural Christian abhorrence of war and portraying war as an inevitable event. Even Jesus spoke about the inevitability of war (Matt 24:6).

Two world wars in the 20th century and the possibility of nuclear annihilation gave added weight to the proponents' view that the just war theory should be strictly observed. Thus, history has facilitated two different views of the just war theory – a hard version and a soft version.

THE UNITED States Catholic bishops, in two separate documents, have appealed to the just war theory to condemn any preemptive strike or preventive use of force against Iraq. Exhorted by the 60-member Administrative Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the conference, wrote a letter to President Bush last September making the case that a preventive war against Iraq could not be justified by the just war theory.

Bishop Gregory wrote there is no just cause because there is no clear connection, thus far, between Iraq and the Sept. 11 attacks. Bishop Gregory said because of the gravity of the situation, legitimate authority should not only consider our national constitutional imperative – the involvement of Congress to declare war – but also a broader consensus in the country and the expertise of the international community as represented by the UN Security Council.

A PREEMPTIVE strike could constitute the very kinds of attacks we are trying to prevent – indiscriminate assaults against the suffering civilian population of Iraq – thus negating the requirement of proportionality. U.S. bishops have since reaffirmed Bishop Gregory's convictions.

Pope John Paul II has spoken

out about this delicate situation. In his World Peace Day message last month, he suggested the development of a new international organization to promote peace, especially in war-torn places. He made clear this was not to be a global super-state but a forum for the continuation and deepening of a process "already in place to meet the almost universal demand for participatory ways of exercising political authority."

IN HIS Christmas Midnight Mass homily, the pope appealed to "those responsible for nations and international organizations" to do everything within their power to promote a lasting peace in the Middle East. On Jan. 13, in his annual "State of the World" address to Vatican diplomats, the pope said: "No to war! War is not always inevitable. It is always a defeat for humanity."

For the first time since the crisis erupted, the pope mentioned Iraq by name as "the land of the prophets." He also said: "War is never just another means that one can choose to employ for settling differences between nations. ... As

the Charter of the United Nations organization and international law itself reminds us, war cannot be decided upon, even when it is a matter of ensuring the common good, except as the very last option and in accordance with very strict conditions, without ignoring the consequences for the civilian population both during and after the military operations."

One element that was curiously absent from any of the pope's statements was a direct reference to the just war theory.

Perhaps the Holy Father is guiding the world toward a perception that war, as he said, is not inevitable and that we have to move from a mentality that tries to justify war to one that sees no connection between war and human nature.

THERE IS nothing more inhumane than war, and any preemptive or preventive war should never be seen as self-defense but truly an aggression, until there is a real, imminent and immediate threat that calls for self-defense against an unjust attacker.

(Father José Lavastida is academic dean of Notre Dame Seminary.)

Pope: Christian unity is a fragile, often unvalued gift from God

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Christ's gift of unity is a fragile gift that Christians have not always acknowledged and valued, Pope John Paul II said.

At his general audience Jan. 22, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the pope said constant prayer, love, respect and dialogue are needed if Christians are to find their way back to the unity that should mark the followers of Christ.

Referring to the theme for the 2003 week of prayer, Pope John Paul said, "The gift of unity is contained in 'earthen vessels,' which can break and, therefore, require maximum care.

"Despite the sublimity and greatness of this gift, human weakness has meant that it was not totally accepted and valued," he said.

"It is necessary to cultivate among Christians a love committed to overcoming differences; they must work to overcome every barrier with incessant prayer, with

persevering dialogue and with fraternal and concrete cooperation on behalf of the poorest and most needy," he said.

No church, no Christian community and no individual Christian can allow the yearning for Christian unity to weaken, he said.

"May the Lord grant us prudence, perseverance and trust in our ecumenical undertaking," Pope John Paul said.

The pope did not read the entire text of his main audience talk in Italian, although his voice was strong when reading summaries in seven languages and when intoning the first measures of the sung Lord's Prayer at the end of the audience.

In his prepared text, the pope said relations between Christians sometimes have been marked by tension and, "in some cases, even by mutual hatred," which betrays the Gospel message of love and makes evangelization difficult.

At the same time, the text said, progress has been made in ecumenism, both on a practical and on a theological level.

"We can say that Christians today are closer and more in agreement, even though the path toward unity remains steep with obstacles and narrow passages," the pope wrote in the text.

...

Pope John Paul's intention for February: That all Christians, sensitive to the people who are still suffering from hunger and thirst, may be moved to greater solidarity with their brothers.

Want a Full Time
St. Francis of Assisi Church in Madison, MS
 is looking to fill the full-time position of
Music Director and Organist.

Must Have:
 Experience in Roman Catholic liturgical
 and special usage of musical styles preferred.

Job Details:
 Knowledge of Solid System of Accounting
 preferred for bookkeeping.

St. Francis of Assisi
 4825 NE Talbot Lane
 Madison, MS 39110
 Fax: (601) 936-2899

ACCREDITED - TRULY - TRUSTED VALUE
POWER OF ATTORNEY
PROBATE & ESTATE
 Estate Plans Available
No Charge For Consultation

JAMES G. MAGUIRE
 Attorney at Law
 622-7410

Residing at 4825 NE Talbot Lane, Madison, MS