

Statement From Benedictine Men & Women

This statement arose from the meeting of Benedictine Presidents of Women's Federations and Men's Congregations of the United States held on October 12, 2002.

WE BENEDICTINE MEN AND WOMEN, members of the oldest religious order in the Roman Catholic Church, are alarmed by President Bush's and the U.S. government's steady movement toward an unprecedented pre-emptive attack against the people of Iraq.

Born in late antiquity, when marauding armies made all civilization vulnerable to violence, Benedictines adopted as their motto the Latin word Pax (Peace), and the central teaching in our 1,500-year-old Rule of Benedict is that everyone, including every stranger, is to be welcomed as a blessing and treated as Christ.

From that stance of reverence for the other, we state our opposition to a military attack on Iraq for the following reasons:

- A military attack against a densely populated country, already decimated by war and economic sanctions, will put millions of vulnerable civilians at risk of death and disease;
- The threatened military attack would follow over a decade of repressive sanctions that have already killed millions of innocent Iraqis, many of them children, who die of malnutrition, contaminated water, and a shortage of medication for treatable diseases;
- A military attack will not decrease but increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks against the U.S. and any allies who join us, both by giving immediate incentive to existing terrorist cells and by drawing more resentful and desperate young people of Islamic nations towards terrorist ideology;
- A military attack now will further divert attention and resources from solving our domestic economic problems, which threaten millions of American families and individuals with the terror of hunger, homelessness, and unemployment;
- A military attack would needlessly put at risk the young men and women in the U.S. military who would fight this war;

In saying this, we also recognize that Saddam Hussein's threats must be taken seriously. We realize that he did use chemical weapons against his own people in the 1980s, when he was allied with the U.S. We believe that United Nations diplomacy must be used to resolve this ongoing problem; threats to attack serve only to destabilize the situation and make more likely the use of any weapons Iraq may have.

One of the main reasons given by the administration for going to war is that, as Americans, we must refuse to live in fear.

As people of faith, we know that fear is a spiritual problem. Fear can only be overcome by confronting fear itself, not by eradicating every new object of fear.

The answer to fear is not war, but a deep and living faith.

Some of us Benedictines oppose all war as immoral, but all of us oppose this particular war as immoral.

We will each do what we can to prevent it.

As we gather each day for prayer in our monasteries, we pledge to join together in praying that peace will prevail.

Fall/Winter 2002 Bulletin



The Monks of Weston Priory

58 Priory Hill Road, Weston, VT 05161-6400

Tel: 802-824-5409; Fax: 802-824-3573