

Response Form

YES, please add my name to “The War in Iraq Remains a Defeat for Humanity,” a sign-on letter to American Catholics to remember the words of Pope John Paul II when he called the war in Iraq “a defeat for humanity.” This letter will be published in the magazine U.S. Catholic, and in cities around the country.

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This form can be mailed to PAX CHRISTI USA at the address below, or faxed to 814-452-4784, “Attention: Sign-On.” You can also sign-on to this letter online at www.paxchristiusa.org. For more information, please contact our national office at 814-453-4955, ext. 221 or email info@paxchristiusa.org.

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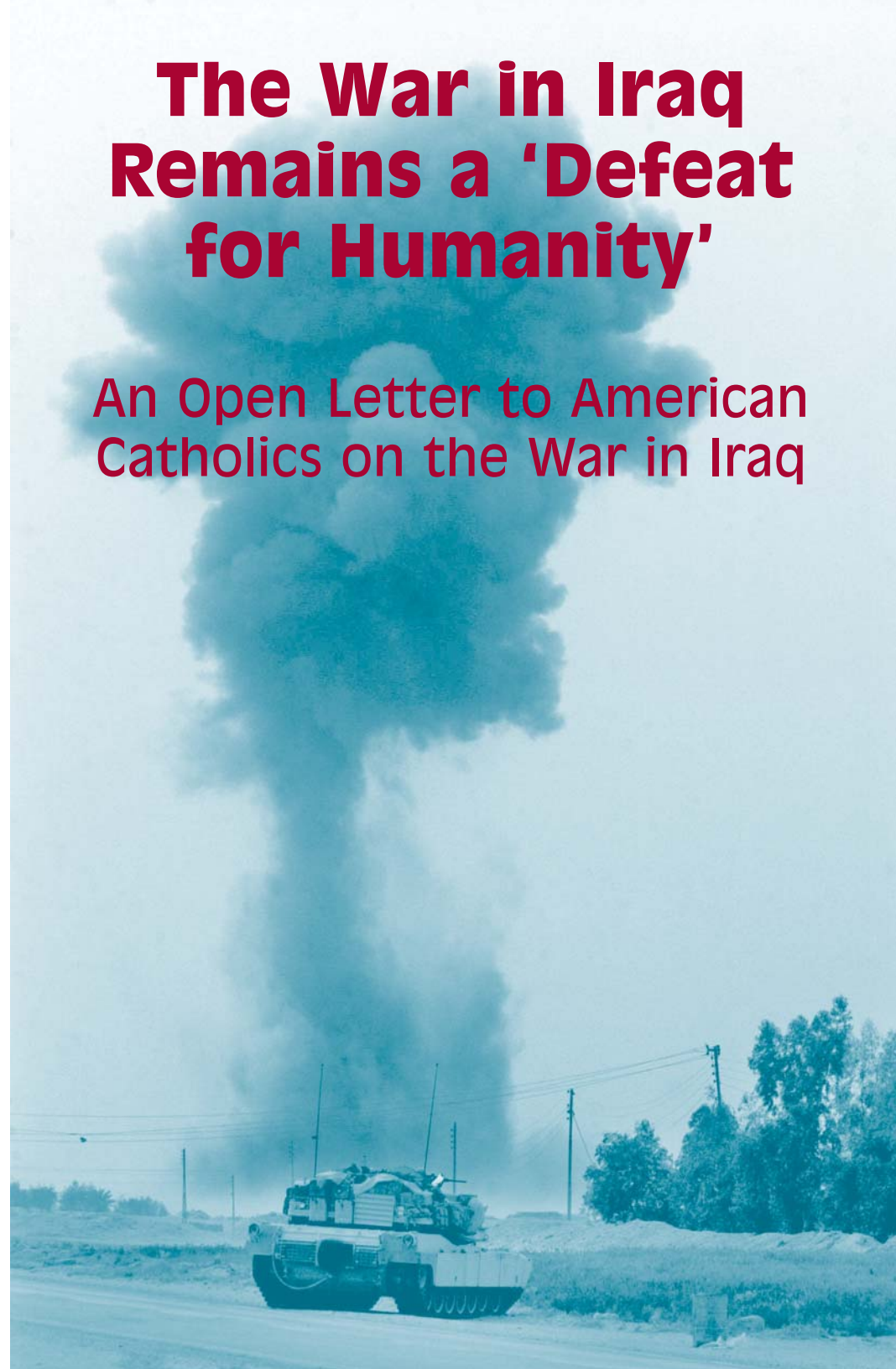
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The War in Iraq Remains a 'Defeat for Humanity'

An Open Letter to American Catholics on the War in Iraq



"How can we not think with profound regret of the drama unfolding in Iraq, which has given rise to tragic situations of uncertainty and insecurity for all?"

- Pope John Paul II, *Do Not Be Overcome By Evil But Overcome Evil With Good*, 2005 World Day of Peace Message

An Open Letter to the Catholic Community in the United States:

Shortly after the death of Pope John Paul II on April 2, President Bush rightly lauded the Holy Father for his "witness to the dignity of human life," for the way he showed us that "human life *at all its stages* is revered and treasured," and he called him "one of history's great moral leaders."

Sadly, President Bush does not fully appreciate the "culture of life" to which the Holy Father consistently and relentlessly called us all. Nowhere is this more evident than in the President's utter disregard of Pope John Paul II's unequivocal opposition to the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which he called "a defeat for humanity."

"When war, as in these days in Iraq, threatens the fate of humanity, it is ever more urgent to proclaim, with a strong and decisive voice, that only peace is the road to follow to construct a more just and united society," Pope John Paul II said. *"Violence and arms can never resolve the problems of man."*

Rather than listen to "one of history's great moral leaders," President Bush unleashed the very forces of death, destruction and dislocation that Pope John Paul II worked relentlessly to avoid. Instead of building a culture of life, this administration's policies are sowing the killing fields.

Now, three years of occupation have left more than 1,600 U.S. soldiers dead and more than 10,000 seriously wounded. Tens of thousands of Iraqis have died and countless numbers have been wounded. The Iraqi resistance to the occupation has grown in numbers and sophistication, waging daily attacks on both U.S. forces and the Iraqi government. Reports from Iraq indicate that a full-scale civil war is now possible.

Although we have been told that the U.S. has no plans to exploit the rich resources of Iraq, and that U.S. personnel would leave the country as soon as the situation becomes stable enough for Iraqi forces to provide security for their people, the evidence to the contrary is compelling.

Consider:

- During the past two years, the Bush administration has announced that attacks by the resistance would lessen after the capture of Saddam Hussein, after the handover of authority by the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iyad Allawi interim government, after the re-conquest of Fallujah, and after the January elections. Instead, the insurgency has intensified and solidified with the U.S. occupation serving as the common enemy;
- The U.S. military is now spending billions of dollars to construct a network of long-term bases in Iraq;

- A January 2005 Zogby opinion poll found that 82 percent of Sunnis and 69 percent of Shiites favor U.S. withdrawal "either immediately or after an elected government is in place;"

- Rather than stabilizing Iraq, the continued presence of U.S. forces is driving the resistance and tying the hands of the new Iraqi government, limiting the possibilities for negotiated and political solutions to the internal divisions currently escalating in Iraq.

As Catholic citizens we are motivated both by our deep faith and abiding commitment to the moral teachings of our church and our love of this nation. It is clear to us that the best course for us to serve both God and country is to proclaim our opposition to this administration's war and publicly encourage you and all people of faith and conscience to do the same.

We invite you to join us in efforts to:

- help our fellow Catholics and indeed all citizens of the U.S. see clearly how the administration's plans for Iraq are long-term, and do not serve the interests of either the Iraqi or American people;
- build a consensus in the Congress to declare that "it is the policy of the United States to withdraw all U.S. forces and bases from Iraq." Such a declaration of U.S. policy will weaken the resistance in Iraq and hasten the peace by assuring the Iraqi people that the United States has no long-term designs on their nation;
- support U.S. soldiers who refuse to serve as occupying forces and who seek conscientious objector status as supported by Catholic moral teaching and U.S. law.

We believe that to honor the legacy of Pope John Paul II requires that we oppose this war and work tirelessly to bring the U.S. occupation to an end. This does not mean that the United States and all of us as its citizens do not owe an abiding commitment to rebuild Iraq. Rather, it means that our best efforts to assist the Iraqi people will come not through military occupation, but through determined humanitarian and political support as they chart their new course through history.

Together, with your support, we will help get this message out to the millions of Catholics looking for a clear voice that says "No!" to the ongoing war and occupation in Iraq.

In addition to placing this ad in U.S. Catholic, it is our intention to make this ad available to regions and local groups for publication in their local newspapers, church bulletins, and diocesan newspapers. If you have interest in this possibility, please contact the Pax Christi USA national office at 814-453-4955, or info@paxchristiusa.org.

Pax Christi USA is the national Catholic peace movement, reaching more than half a million Catholics in the United States. Our members include more than 130 U.S. bishops, 800 parish sponsors, 650 religious communities, and 300 local groups. Pax Christi USA is a section of Pax Christi International, the international Catholic peace movement with consultative status at the United Nations.