

CATHOLIC WORKER STATEMENT TO U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS

We are Catholic Workers from across the US and Europe who have come to Iowa to celebrate special anniversaries of a number of our houses, to pray and reflect about what God calls us to at this critical moment in history, and to recommit ourselves to the Catholic Worker vision of creating a new society in the shell of the old.

In our various communities we have daily contact with the victims of our society. Thus, we strive to do the works of mercy and to follow Jesus' command to be nonviolent witnesses for peace and justice. As we confront the unrelenting violence and assaults on human life and our endangered earth, we repent for our own complicity in our culture of violence, and call on our church and all people of faith and goodwill to do the same. Taking the Sermon on the Mount as our Christian manifesto, we commit ourselves to upholding the sacredness of all life wherever it is threatened.

As a world community, we find ourselves in a complex and dangerous moral crisis. Longstanding cultural compulsions have obscured the basic teachings of Christ. We have become the wealthiest nation on earth in the history of humankind and the price we have paid is the collective loss of our souls. The ongoing efforts of militarization and exploitation of global resources have pushed us to a level of accepting the unacceptable. Pre-emptive war and the slaughter of innocents is being carried out in our names and for profit. A creeping apathy has allowed room for extreme abuses such as torture and the destruction of whole social fabrics. We are violating our own spiritual principles and civil laws to attain excessive creature comforts while others suffer from unimaginable deprivation and violence. We are living a lifestyle that demands war and distracts from our true calling of loving and caring for one another. Our path to redemption lies in the repudiation of domination and embracing the daily need of service to the vulnerable.

The teaching of Saint Paul tells us that when the health of one member of our community is suffering, the health of the whole body is lowered. We must make this time of crisis into an opportunity to move forward and carry on Christ's message without compromise. In the face of nuclear capabilities we have no other choice. God, the victims, and timeless prophetic voices call on us, the Church, the body of Christ, to repent from the sins of war, torture, and killing, from the making of widows and orphans, and from the fruitless works of darkness resulting in this last century being the bloodiest on record.

We as Christians recognize that the Christ, whom we worship, was himself a victim of torture. We are called to end his ongoing crucifixion which has been made manifest in our nations policies. This is particularly relevant in the latest Military Commissions Act of 2006. It is with burning sorrow that we look around at the world in which we live at the suffering, war, torture, and killing of our brothers and sisters, and realize that the response of both ourselves and our Church has been wholly inadequate. We cry out to be part of a Church that prays and works for peace, loves our enemies, and embraces the redemptive power of forgiveness. We cry out for a church that speaks without fear of consequences, including loss of revenues.

We understand that we live in a time of great fear and peril. We need to remind ourselves that we are not to fear those that can kill the body, but instead to fear those that can kill the soul. Our domestic and foreign policies have left us a nation without a soul.

We call on our Church to be a prophetic voice, a sanctuary, and a source of encouragement to those who want to work together in community towards peace and justice. To this we recommend:

- Prayer, fasting, vigiling and nonviolent civil resistance to end the military occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- That all soldiers refuse to participate in these wars
- That the Church actively support and encourage all conscientious objectors
- That all U.S. military and private contractors to refuse to engage in torture
- The closing of Guantanamo and other secret U.S. military prisons
- The eradication of the Military Commissions Act 2006
- Redirect our resources from war making and exploitation to meeting human needs and saving our planet
- An equitable redistribution of resources by simplifying our materialistic lifestyle
- All people of faith and goodwill join us for a nonviolent action in Washington, DC on January 11, 2007, the 5th anniversary of the first prisoners arriving at Guantanamo, to call for its closing.

As we approach this season of Advent and Christmas, let us be people of Light. “The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it” (John 1:5).