

# The Cost of War

## A Just War?



On March 19, 2007, the United States will mark the fourth anniversary of the start of the ongoing war in Iraq. As our nation struggles to decide whether to withdraw from the conflict or increase our involvement, we should consider the teachings of our own Church on issues of war and peace.

Catholics believe that we can sometimes resort to war, provided that we are doing so for the right reasons. But fighting a “just war” does not simply mean that we believe our cause is good. Our Church sets seven specific criteria for just war, mandating that we enter into conflict only with the correct intentions, if we have a reasonable probability of success, and if we can ensure that the damage inflicted by war will be proportional to the good we are trying to achieve. More importantly, a war can only be just if all possible non-violent options have been exhausted.

Though the decision to go to war has already been made, our nation’s moral responsibility to seek peace and wage this conflict in a just manner is ongoing. In his November 13, 2006 statement, Bishop William S. Skylstad (Diocese of Spokane, WA) noted, “The Holy See and our bishops' Conference have repeatedly expressed grave moral concerns about military intervention in Iraq and the unpredictable and uncontrollable negative consequences of invasion and occupation.” It is essential, Bishop Skylstad continued, to “seriously examine alternative courses of action, especially in light of their human, moral, and financial costs.”

### **Maryknoll Prayer for Peace in Iraq and a Healing of the Wounds of War**

The following prayer was offered at the service held on March 20, 2006 at Maryknoll NY, in commemoration of the third anniversary of the start of the Iraq war. To order copies of the prayer on a card, please contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns at [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)

Faced with the frightening prospect of continued chaos in Iraq, we affirm our commitment to reverence the dignity of each person and the whole community of life.

For an end to the violence that is ravaging Iraq, O God of Peace, *we pray.*

For an end to the mourning, an end to the suffering, O God of Peace, *we pray.*

For comfort and the healing of broken hearts, O God of Peace, *we pray.*

For the people of Iraq, *we pray.*

For surviving family members and loved ones in the United States, *we pray.*

For those whose broken bodies carry the scars of war, *we pray.*

For the earth damaged by war, *we pray.*



God of Life, we are filled with a deep yearning for peace. Maryknoll has seen too often the suffering wrought by war - close to home and on the other side of the world. We ache with the pain and fear of those who have loved ones - or who themselves are - now in danger. We ask you to guide our leaders toward a just and lasting resolution of this dreadful conflict. We ask you to gift the human community with a new capacity to build right relationships in a bitterly divided world.

Seeking to participate actively in the transformation of the world, pursuing social justice, the integrity of creation, and - with even greater intensity in these times - peace, we ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother. *Amen.*



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