

## **The Second Edition of**

### ***The United States and the Holy See: The Long Road***

**By Ambassador Jim Nicholson**

#### **Introduction:**

As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Holy See, I am pleased to add to my book on the subject published by 30 Giorni in 2002. These later chapters encompass our relationship from the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, through the Iraq War, and concluding with the Pope's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in October 2003. The true test of a strong relationship between nation-states is whether it withstands tension and disagreement. The Iraq War provided such a test for the United States and the Holy See, although it was a test due more to disagreement over means than ends. Having weathered that test, our dialogue on how we can work together to better serve all of God's children remains close, cordial, and dynamic.

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From the beginning of my ambassadorship, it was evident that the relationship between the United States and the Holy See would be one of mutual cooperation that would bear much fruit because of our shared values. The National Security Strategy of the United States states clearly that the first goal of American international engagement today is to "stand firmly for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law,

limits on the absolute power of the state, free speech, freedom of worship, equal justice, respect for women, religious and ethnic tolerance and respect for private property.”<sup>1</sup> This goal is also at the core of the Holy See’s vigorous and extensive international engagement. That is why, in my first two years as ambassador, we worked together closely to promote the dignity of human life by combating the horrors of human trafficking, overcoming hunger and malnutrition, increasing humanitarian aid and relief, and promoting democracy, human rights, religious freedom and tolerance.

### **Post 9-11: A Voice Against Violence in the Name of Religion**

When the United States was attacked on September 11, 2001, our country was confronted with a security crisis different than any we had ever faced before. Unlike Pearl Harbor -- an unprovoked military aggression by one country against another -- the terrorist attacks left us pursuing a shadowy enemy operating in many nation-states capable of striking U.S. interests at home or abroad. President Bush recognized that this enemy could only be defeated with the broadest possible international support, and set about building a coalition of 174 countries determined to oppose terror. In this coalition, the support of the Holy See greatly strengthened the moral foundation of this global effort to defeat terrorism.

I presented my diplomatic credentials to the Holy Father at his summer palace at Castel Gandolfo on September 13, 2001 – just 48 hours after the events in New York, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. The Pope told me that he had thought and prayed about this tragic day and concluded that, “this was an attack not just on the United States,

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<sup>1</sup> National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002

but against all of mankind.” He implied that the U.S. would have to take steps to protect itself and asked only that President Bush maintain the strong sense of justice for which our country had become so well respected. Building on the Pope's recognition that the September 11 attacks would justify a response, the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States, then-Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, gave public backing to U.S. actions to track down the perpetrators when he affirmed in an October 2001 interview that “today we all recognize that the United States government, like any other government, has the right to legitimate defense, because it has the mission to guarantee the security of its citizens.”<sup>2</sup>

Beyond recognizing the U.S. right to self-defense, the Holy See also intensified its own initiatives to counter terrorism by speaking out against any violence in the name of God, and by promoting inter-religious dialogue and understanding as a counter-weight to those who sought to provoke a violent clash of civilizations and religions. In January 2002, the Pope gathered over 200 religious leaders in the ancient city of Assisi, as he had done twice before, to lead representatives of world religions in a Prayer for Peace. At this time, the Pope exclaimed: "War never again! Terrorism never again! In the name of God, may every religion bring upon earth justice and peace, forgiveness and life, love!"<sup>3</sup>

On the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks, I was able to greet the Pope after his general audience where he prayed for the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks, and to thank him for his support and prayers. To prevent future terrorist attacks,

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<sup>2</sup> “Ethical Conditions Outlined for U.S. Military Operation,” <http://www.zenit.org>, October 15, 2001

<sup>3</sup> The Pope declared on January 1 and reiterated on January 10, 2002 that “It is a profanation of religion to proclaim oneself a terrorist in the name of God, to kill and violate human beings in the name of God. Terrorist violence, in fact, is contrary to the faith in God the creator of the human person, a God that takes care of humanity and loves it.”

he called on the international community "to undertake new political and economic initiatives capable of resolving the scandalous situations of injustice and oppression."<sup>4</sup>

### **The Challenge of Iraq: Justifying War to a Man of Peace**

As the fight against global terrorism proceeded and we learned more about terrorist efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction, the United States increasingly began to focus attention towards states with a track record of development and use of weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which had demonstrated its brutal disregard for its own citizens by a willingness to use biological and chemical weapons against neighbors and Iraqis alike, and which had maintained long-term connections with Hezbollah and other international terrorist networks, quickly moved to the forefront of U.S. concerns.<sup>5</sup>

Reflecting this priority, my staff and I began to outline U.S. concerns about Iraq to Vatican officials in the late summer of 2002, highlighting Iraq's 12-year defiance of United Nations resolutions, its failure to account for weapons of mass destruction, and its continued internal repression and human rights abuses. We found that Vatican officials shared our concerns about Saddam Hussein's regime and our desire to prevent the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. In fact, senior officials went out of their way to counter what they regarded as a misleading public impression that the Holy See was sympathetic towards Iraq. This impression was a product of the Vatican's previous

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<sup>4</sup> "Papal Address on Anniversary of 9/11 Attacks," <http://www.zenit.org>, September 11, 2002

<sup>5</sup> As early as March 2002, the President expressed in a press conference, "Every world leader that comes to see me, I explain our concerns about a nation which is not conforming to agreements that it made in the past; a nation which has gassed her people in the past; a nation which has weapons of mass destruction and apparently is not afraid to use them one thing I will not allow is a nation such as Iraq to threaten our very future by developing weapons of mass destruction.

opposition to the 1991 Gulf War, its persistent calls for the end of United Nations sanctions on Iraq, and its apparent public reluctance to address continuing Iraqi human rights abuses. In fact, the Holy See's caution toward Iraq reflected its preoccupation with the fate of the approximately half-million Chaldean Catholics living in Iraq and a desire not to provoke any government reaction against them. While I appreciated this concern, I also knew that the Holy See was respected worldwide as a voice for human rights and I believed that Iraq's abuses needed to be held up to international scrutiny. We therefore continued to make our case on Iraq privately, emphasizing the importance of human rights, the positive impact of the UN's Oil for Food program for the Iraqi people, and the risks to regional and international security posed by this evil regime.

Another factor that may have contributed to this impression of caution toward Iraq was the Holy See's broader desire for dialogue and cooperation with Islam and with the Muslim world to ease religious tensions that foment violence.<sup>6</sup> Clear public support for President Bush's Iraq goals could have created a perception that the Vatican was at odds with Islam and could have reinforced and equated in the eyes of many Muslims perceptions of an alliance between the Western World and Christianity.

Under this Pontificate, the Holy See has made great strides in building bridges and promoting inter-religious dialogue. Pope John Paul II has expressed respect for Islam and has articulated a vision of openness, respect and a desire for reciprocity in his

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<sup>6</sup> This concern was illustrated by His Holiness Pope John Paul II when he addressed the Diplomatic Corps on January 13, 2003 stating, "Ecumenical dialogue between Christians and respectful contact with other religions, in particular with Islam, are the best remedy for sectarian rifts, fanaticism or religious terrorism."

dealings with the Muslim world.<sup>7</sup> The Holy See has also sought opportunities to find common ground and cooperate with Islamic countries, especially in international organizations, where they sometimes share similar objectives, as during the United Nation's 1994 Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, where joined together in opposition to worldwide access to abortion and other population control policies. I believe the Holy See's initiatives and ecumenical efforts to reduce tensions between Christians and Muslims have helped prevent new divisions from being created and have great potential to continue breaking down walls of misunderstanding in the future.

As the U.S. spotlight on Saddam Hussein intensified in late summer 2002, a public debate emerged over whether the United States should seek a renewed UN mandate for any military action that might be necessary to compel Iraq's compliance to UN Security Council Resolutions. Both privately and publicly, the Holy See conveyed its view that any recourse to force should occur with United Nations authorization. In fact, the Vatican's foreign minister, Archbishop Tauran, in a September 9 interview with Italian Catholic newspaper *L'Avvenire*, reinforced the Vatican's view of the centrality of the UN's role: "Should the international community . . . conclude the use of force is opportune and justified, this should only happen with a decision made in the framework of the United Nations."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The largest mosque in Europe was inaugurated in 1995 in Rome, the Pope's diocese; however there is no Church in Riyadh.

<sup>8</sup> "No war on Iraq unless the United Nations allows the use of force, top Vatican official says," Associated Press, September 09, 2002. <http://www.cin.org/archives/cinjub/200209/0022.html>

Although the United States did not believe that such a decision could only be made within the UN framework, we clearly believed that decisions taken with strong UN support would strengthen the international community's hand in its effort to ensure Iraqi disarmament. To achieve such a consensus, President Bush appeared before the United Nations on September 12 and called on the UN to live up to its ideals and ensure its demands were respected. Far from ignoring the UN, the President was seeking to restore its authority in the face of a regime that had consistently ignored it. Following nearly two months of debate, the Security Council unanimously passed resolution 1441<sup>9</sup> on November 8, 2002 -- a resolution reflecting the united will of the international community to ensure Iraq's compliance with UN disarmament resolutions and giving Iraq one final chance to comply or face serious consequences – in UN-speak: military force. This was a resounding vote, and included even that of Syria, affirming that Saddam Hussein's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles posed a threat to world peace.

The Holy See welcomed the recourse to the UN represented by resolution 1441 and the unity demonstrated by the international community. It also acknowledged to us that in the absence of the threat of military force, Saddam almost certainly would not have allowed inspectors to resume their work following the resolution's passage. During the previous 12 years, Saddam Hussein had defied 16 previous Security Council

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<sup>9</sup> U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, November 08, 2002. <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/02110803.htm>, The resolution states that Iraq remains in material breach of council resolutions relating to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and requires that Baghdad give UNMOVIC and IAEA a complete and accurate declaration of all aspects of its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs and ballistic missiles systems, as well as information on other chemical, biological, and nuclear programs that are supposed to be for civilian purposes, within 30 days or face serious consequences.

resolutions. Furthermore, since Iraq invaded Kuwait, the UNSC had passed close to 60 resolutions requiring that the Iraqi regime comply with UN demands. In the absence of serious consequences for non-compliance, however, his only punishment had been further admonition and continued economic sanctions.

Despite the recognition of Saddam Hussein's defiance of international law and the danger that he posed, concern about the possibility of war in Iraq was widespread within Vatican circles, and often found its way into Vatican or other international media. Some of the concern was measured, such as from Cardinals who said they saw "neither motive nor proof" to justify military action until the inspection process had an opportunity to proceed further, and who suggested that war "would do great harm in the region." Other views, particularly from Vatican sources who criticized alleged "U.S. unilateralism" and spoke of a "spirit of crusade," were less guarded and contributed to an impression within the media of growing division between the U.S. and the Holy See.

Part of my job was to help overcome what seemed to be a high level of suspicion over the power and influence of the US and its alleged 'lust for oil.' This feeling, held by many in Europe, was that America, being the world's leading capitalist country, must have some profit motive in Iraq. The media's efforts to portray the United States and Holy See as fundamentally at opposite spectrums of the war debate continued to intensify – with one Italian Catholic magazine even commissioning a poll asking respondents whether they were "with President Bush for war, or with the Pope for peace." Notwithstanding such efforts, our positions were never as far apart as the media portrayed. Both the Pope and President Bush believed that war should be the last resort. Both recognized the danger posed by Iraq and called for Iraq to disarm. Both recognized

that decisions on war and peace must be made by legitimate civil authorities. The difference we had essentially came down to the question of whether all diplomatic means to achieve Iraqi disarmament had been exhausted short of resort to military action. The United States believed after 12 years of Iraqi defiance in the face of a strong UN consensus that Iraq would never willingly comply with the UN. The Holy See continued to believe that inspections and dialogue offered a means to meet the international community's concerns -- a view the Pope conveyed to President Bush in a late October correspondence.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Just War: the key role of Saint Augustine**

As we headed into the New Year, this difference in approach over how to achieve Iraqi disarmament and promote regional security gave rise to an international debate about when military action was appropriate to achieve desired international ends. As the repository of the “just war” tradition dating back to St. Augustine, the Holy See increasingly found itself at the center of the global debate about the Iraq war. In his traditional address to the 174 nations of the Vatican diplomatic corps at the start of the New Year, the Pope outlined his approach to Iraq. Beginning with a firm “No to War,” the Pope continued: “War is not always inevitable. It is always a defeat for humanity!” Although his opposition to war was strong, the Pope also added that “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”<sup>11</sup> -- a view the United States shared. The Holy See appealed to the world to be certain that the three well-established

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<sup>10</sup> Letter to President Bush from His Holiness John Paul II, October 21, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Papal address to the Diplomatic Corps to the Holy See, January 13, 2003

criteria of the just war tradition were met: that war be fought in self-defense or defense of others, that the use of force have a reasonable likelihood of success, and that all other non-violent means be exhausted. The Pope's message, reinforced in my private Vatican meetings, was that the international community should pursue all means short of war possible to achieve its agreed goal of Iraqi disarmament, but that the Church's doctrine did not exclude the legitimacy of the use of force under clearly defined criteria and after all alternatives were exhausted. President Bush made clear that he sought to abide by the precepts of a just war; however, in the end, the Holy See and the U.S. disagreed on the facts of whether all non-violent means had been first exhausted, and whether the threat of Saddam countenanced more time for talk and inspections.

Unfortunately, the subtleties of the Pope's message were lost on much of the public, particularly in Europe, where his "No to War" was seized on by protesters as an absolute "no" rather than a qualified "no." In Rome, I recognized that we needed to broaden the public debate to encourage more focus on the nature of today's terrorist and WMD threats and the responses morally appropriate to defend innocent populations from these new threats. We decided to stimulate some new thinking regarding these threats and reactions by inviting to Rome the noted American academic and Catholic intellectual Michael Novak to speak about Iraq in the context of the Just War theory. Novak's early February visit was intended to broaden the just war debate and clarify the just nature of United States policy in Iraq.

In the highly charged atmosphere of the time, with millions taking to the streets of European capitals, including Rome, to protest, the media seized on the visit, mistakenly portraying it as a last-ditch U.S. effort to convince the Pope to support the war. This

misunderstanding prompted some American religious leaders to write me, opposing Ambassador Novak's visit, asserting that he was a “dissident theologian” whose support for a “preemptive” military strike against Iraq was at odds with the church’s teachings on what constitutes just war. Contrary to the media's portrayal and the reaction it generated, Michael Novak came to Rome as a private citizen presenting his own views on traditional just war theories and today's new threats, not on a mission for the United States government.

Novak's presentation and meetings with Holy See officials did in fact offer a needed perspective on the issue of when military action could be justified. His February 10 lecture at Rome's Center for American Studies, entitled: "Asymmetrical Warfare and Just War," spoke directly to the new challenges confronting our leaders in a world where international terrorists operating without connections to states threaten innocent people with catastrophic results.<sup>12</sup> Novak eloquently made clear that traditional theories needed to be updated to take into account the speed and devastation of modern threats and the inability of governments to wait until after such an attack to respond. Taking on critics of "preventive war" -- he also pointed out that military action against Iraq should more appropriately be seen as the “lawful conclusion to the just war fought and swiftly won in January 1991,” whose ceasefire terms Saddam Hussein had violated with impunity.

Throughout this period, the Pope spoke out repeatedly and carefully in favor of dialogue and a peaceful means to end the tension, reiterating that war should always be the last resort. I fully appreciated the Pope's message. He is a man of peace -- perhaps

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Novak, “Asymmetrical Warfare and the Just War” Delivered on February 10, 2003 at the American Studies Center, Rome.

the world's greatest voice for peace -- but he is not a pacifist. His Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, frequently emphasized this fact during his public discussions of the Holy See's position. In fact, the Pope's position was fully in line with traditional Catholic teachings on just war, which make clear that there are circumstances in which "evil must be confronted to defend the innocent and to promote the minimum conditions of international order."<sup>13</sup> In fact, throughout this period, the Pope himself never took sides or condemned military action as immoral. His plea, consistent with the traditional role of the Holy See in international affairs, was to remind the world of the horrors of war and to encourage world leaders to resolve the threat through dialogue and reconciliation in order to achieve a lasting peace. The United States shared this goal, and continued to work through the United Nations during this period to achieve Iraq's disarmament peacefully.

### **Diplomatic Station of the Cross: Cardinal Laghi's Mission to President Bush**

As debates over a second UN resolution intensified in New York, the Vatican emerged as an international focal point for leaders on both sides of the debate who were seeking to make their case to the Pope and to secure his moral support for their hardening positions. Numerous prime ministers and foreign ministers came through Rome to see the Pope, prompting the New York Times to describe the Vatican as a "diplomatic stations of the cross." In the space of two weeks, the Pope received Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Spanish Prime Minister Jose

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<sup>13</sup> George Weigel, "Moral Clarity in a Time of War" William E. Simon Lecture, October 24, 2002, Washington, D.C.

Maria Aznar. The Pope's visitors brought different perspectives to Vatican City, but regardless of what side of the debate they represented, the Pope's message was clear and consistent:<sup>14</sup> First, all parties have an obligation to strive for peace and reconciliation. Second, all parties have a responsibility to collaborate with the international community and conform to justice, inspired by international law and ethical principles.<sup>15</sup> Finally, special attention and consideration must be given to the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people.

The Aziz visit presented an opportunity to convey to one of Saddam's inner circle the determination of the international community to see Iraq disarm. In a meeting I held with Archbishop Tauran prior to Aziz's visit, it was clear to me that the Holy See intended to use the meeting to send a clear message to Iraq on the importance of complying with UN resolutions. In Aziz's subsequent meetings with the Pope and his senior officials, the Holy See told him directly that time was running out for Iraq and that it needed to make concrete commitments to disarm in order to avert war. Unfortunately the Pope's message fell on deaf ears. The blustering Aziz publicly threatened European countries in a post-meeting press conference, asserting that "if the Christian countries of Europe participate in a war of aggression, it will be interpreted as a crusade against the Arab world and Islam. It will poison relations between the Arab world and the Christian world."<sup>16</sup>

With the prospect of war looming ever larger because of the unwillingness of key members of the Security Council to impose the "serious consequences" called for in the

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<sup>15</sup> Statement to Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, February 27, 2003

<sup>16</sup> "The Word From Rome," National Catholic Reporter, February 21, 2003.

unanimously approved Resolution 1441, the Holy See decided that it was time to make a final diplomatic initiative. Rumors of an envoy to Washington had long been circulating in the media, and the Pope's decision to send Cardinal Roger Etchegaray to Iraq to meet with Saddam increased speculation of a mission to Washington. Etchegaray's mission, seen by the Vatican as a last chance to avert war by impressing upon Saddam the implications of his refusal to cooperate, made little headway. Defiant and fatalistic, Saddam offered little more in his February 15 meeting than Iraq's standard assertions of its compliance and willingness to fight to the end. Despite Saddam's intransigence, the Holy See believed that Iraqi disarmament could be achieved through continued international pressure on the regime short of war with intensified inspections.

To make this point directly to the President, the Pope decided to dispatch Cardinal Pio Laghi as his Special Envoy to the President. I strongly supported this meeting, believing it would afford the President a chance both to outline the moral case for action in the event of Iraqi defiance and to highlight the commonality of our goals for the region's security. Cardinal Laghi, a former Nuncio to Washington and tennis partner of the President's father, arrived in Washington the first week in March carrying a letter from the Pope. I accompanied Cardinal Laghi to the Oval Office where he delivered the Pope's message, which assured the President of his prayers and urged him to "search for the way of a stable peace."<sup>17</sup> Laghi reinforced the Holy See's view that war should be the last resort, and that any decision on military action needed to be taken within the framework of the UN. The President eloquently outlined his view of both the legality and morality of military action, noting that the UN had already provided the needed

framework for action with Resolution 1441 and previous resolutions, and that his duty was to protect the American people from the potential risks posed by Saddam's regime.

In the end, neither side shifted its view on the need for military force, but both found common ground on the need to overcome the terrorist threat. Cardinal Laghi's mission, following the breakdown at the United Nations arising from France's decision to oppose any further resolutions on Iraq, did not change the Administration's approach. Nevertheless, the President's willingness to meet at length with the Vatican envoy reflected the importance he attaches to the Pope's views and his desire -- reflected in his two meetings with the Pope -- to take the Holy See's perspectives into account in U.S. foreign policy decision-making. This would pay benefits in the aftermath of the war when we were to collaborate closely on humanitarian relief and issues relating to Iraqi reconstruction and development.

### **The War.**

On March 19, after 12 years of waiting for Saddam Hussein to comply with United Nations' conditions imposed at the end of the 1991 Gulf War, the President announced that U.S. forces were en route to liberate the people of Iraq from Saddam Hussein. He defended his decision by explaining: "We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action."<sup>18</sup> Secretary Powell had phoned Archbishop Tauran on

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<sup>17</sup> "Papal Envoy meets Bush, reiterates Vatican opposition to Iraqi war," Catholic News Service, March 06, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002

March 17 to alert him that if Saddam did not respond to the President's final plea to leave Iraq, military action would follow. He assured him that the U.S. was mindful of the Pope's concerns, and would do everything possible to minimize casualties and alleviate suffering. Archbishop Tauran conveyed his appreciation for the call, and stated, as he had publicly days before, that the decision on whether all diplomatic means had been exhausted was one for civil authorities to make, this being consistent with the Church's doctrine on just war.

Following his intensive personal efforts to avert war, the Pope received the news of the outbreak of war, with "deep pain," according to his spokesman. The statement added that: "On the one hand, it is to be regretted that the Iraqi government did not accept the resolutions of the United Nations and the appeal of the Pope himself, as both asked that the country disarm. On the other hand it is to be deplored that the path of negotiations, according to international law, for a peaceful solution of the Iraqi drama has been interrupted."<sup>19</sup> Other officials expressed fears of "a blaze that could spread throughout the Middle East sowing hate and enmity against Western society which is perceived as an invader" and predicted "destruction, hatred and the development of a grave crisis."<sup>20</sup>

While the United States and the Holy See ultimately disagreed on whether all peaceful means had been exhausted prior to the decision to go to war, the Holy See did ultimately accept that such decisions are for legitimate civil authorities to make. Archbishop Tauran summarized the Holy See's role best when he explained to *Famiglia*

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<sup>19</sup> "Pained by War, John Paul II Prays for Iraqi People," [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org), March 20, 2003

<sup>20</sup> [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org), March 19, 2003

*Cristiana*, that "the Holy See is a moral power, and must be the voice of conscience. We recalled the supreme good of peace, the defense of life, the defense of human rights, and above all, the need always to make recourse to law. And then, at a certain point, the decision fell to civil authorities. They must decide if the time for diplomacy has ended and if the time to move on to force has arrived. It is their responsibility and the conscience comes into play. We tried to enlighten the conscience of those with responsibility."<sup>21</sup>

On April 9, concurrent with a visit from Undersecretary of State John Bolton, taken at the request of the White House, to begin to discuss possibilities for post-war cooperation with the Holy See in Iraq, Baghdad fell and Saddam's statues began to tumble. The Holy See expressed its relief that casualties had been minimal, and issued a statement April 10 calling the collapse of the Hussein regime as a "significant opportunity for the population's future." Following the discussion with Undersecretary Bolton, the Vatican emphasized its determination to work with us on the post-war needs of the Iraqi people, noting that "the Catholic Church is ready to lend the necessary assistance through its social and charitable institutions."<sup>22</sup>

### **Kissinger and "Pacem in Terris"**

With the first wave of military operations over and our attention turning to the construction of a peaceful, democratic, and tolerant Iraq, I reflected on my role as the representative of the American people to the Holy See during this historic period. My responsibility, and the responsibility of my colleagues in the diplomatic corps, is to

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<sup>21</sup> Archbishop Tauran's Interview with *Famiglia Cristiana*, March 2003

advance America's national interests by building international support for actions we believe can create a stable world environment for Americans and for others. To do this effectively, as Henry Kissinger has pointed out, we need to build a moral consensus internationally by making clear that America's interests and those of other countries can best be advanced by working toward shared values of liberty, human dignity, and peace. My efforts as Ambassador were aimed at forging a moral consensus on Iraq. Even though the Holy See did not in the end agree on the decision to resort to military action, they did share our goals for international and regional security and an end to the oppression of the Iraqi people. In the end, there was no doubt on either side that conditions for true peace were absent in Saddam's Iraq.

It was significant that at the start of this tumultuous year in his Message for the World Day of Peace, the Pope had recalled the framework for peace first outlined by Pope John XXIII in "Pacem in Terris." The Pope identified four essential pillars of peace: truth, justice, love and freedom. In the case of Iraq, none of these conditions existed. Instead of love of others, Saddam used chemical weapons on his neighbors and citizens. Instead of justice, we saw suppression of the Kurds, with whole families lined up in front of pits in the ground and shot. Instead of truth, we saw deception of the international community. Instead of liberty, we saw oppression and fear. Hate, injustice, deception, and fear – these are not true foundations for peace.

### **Managing the post-war period: Colin Powell visits the Vatican**

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<sup>22</sup> Catholic News Service, April 10, 2003

Recognizing the absence of the foundations for peace, the question the international community faced was how to create conditions to establish these foundations for the future. This was the challenge confronting President Bush and the rest of the free world. As a leading voice for peace and security, the United States had to define a response to the threat and the injustice embodied by the Hussein regime that would achieve the foundation for the genuine peace we all seek. President Bush listened carefully to the moral advice offered by religious leaders in shaping his prudential judgment on how to respond to the new threats we face in this era of senseless terrorism. The President himself is a man of deep faith. At the National Prayer Breakfast in February 2003, he outlined the source of his decision to act: "We can be confident in America's cause in the world. Our nation is dedicated to the equal and undeniable worth of every person. We don't own the ideals of freedom and human dignity... But we do stand up for those ideals, and we will defend them."<sup>23</sup>

Throughout this period, the Holy See always acknowledged that the pillars of peace were absent and that Saddam Hussein posed a threat to his people and the region. In fact, Cardinal Laghi referred to the four pillars of peace in his meeting with the President. Our discussions, contrary to the media-driven perception of a "chill in relations" were always shaped by this shared understanding of Iraq's shortcomings and our common interest in a peaceful, disarmed and tolerant Iraq. As a result, they were always friendly and focused on shared moral goals. As Archbishop Tauran explained to a journalist during the peak of the international debate when asked about discussions with the U.S.: "We are having conversations, but they are calm and serene. I would say they

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<sup>23</sup> President Bush Address to the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Prayer Breakfast, February 6, 2003.

are persevering in making their argument."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, contrary to perceptions of anti-Americanism that arose during this time, I always found the Holy See to be open to our views and appreciative of our efforts to advance the values we share. As Archbishop Tauran told the Italian magazine *Famiglia Cristiana*, the idea of an anti-American feeling within the Holy See "doesn't correspond to reality." He added: "The American people are a great people. There is a Catholic community involved in social and cultural life, with works of charity. These are the values that the Pope and the Holy See greatly appreciate."

Reflecting the continuing strength of the relationship and the breadth of our shared interests in bringing hope to regions of the world that have only known despair, Secretary Powell arrived in Rome in June for an audience with the Pope and a meeting with his top officials, Cardinal Sodano and Archbishop Tauran. In his meetings, Secretary Powell discussed ways the U.S. and Holy See could collaborate to help the Iraqi people, to promote religious freedom in Iraq and elsewhere, to advance the Middle East peace process, to promote inter-religious dialogue and understanding, to combat malnutrition and hunger through expanded use of bio-tech foods, and to defeat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. The visit reaffirmed publicly our private sense of a close, vibrant, and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship that is helping to promote human dignity worldwide.

### **The Moral Issue of Biotech Food**

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<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030206-1.html>

<sup>24</sup> "The Word From Rome," National Catholic Reporter, January 31, 2003.

In fact, throughout this period relating to Iraq, I was having separate and productive discussions with the Holy See on a moral issue, a life issue dear to my heart -- that of feeding the hungry. From the time I learned of the potential of biotech foods to ameliorate hunger and starvation, I was determined to work with the Holy See to try to bring its strong moral voice to this issue, just as it had recently done on the issue of trafficking in human beings at a May 2002 conference on this subject, which my Embassy organized with the Vatican's support.

The biotech food issue came to a head in the fall of 2002 when American food aid provided through the World Food Program was rejected by the Zambian government because it could have contained a small percentage of biotech foods. A Jesuit priest was active in Zambia in encouraging the government to take this stand, and he in turn had influenced Zambian bishops, contributing to the confusion that put millions of Zambians at risk. The World Food Summit held in Rome in June 2002, concluded that 800,000 people in the world are undernourished and that a child dies every five seconds from starvation. Food, when needed to sustain life, is clearly a moral issue, and thus, while acknowledging that every state has the sovereign right to accept or reject commodity assistance, the United States maintains that every state also has the duty to ensure that their citizens have enough food to eat. In short, we believe that food sustains life, and life is precious, and therefore this is a moral issue, especially to advocates of a "culture of life" such as the Vatican.

In light of the positive assessment of biotech foods by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Science, I urged them to share their results more broadly with bishops and

nuncios to help overcome the misinformation that had paralyzed the World Food Program's efforts in Zambia. Secretary Powell also took up the case in an appeal to Archbishop Tauran, and as a result, the Holy See agreed to share information more widely with church leaders in affected areas.

Given the benefits for the developing world from biotechnology, we believe that the Holy See's moral voice on the safety of foods for consumption and on the potential of such foods to overcome hunger and malnutrition can help dispel myths about biotech foods throughout the developing world. It can also discourage the propagation of misinformation by Church leaders or affiliated groups that is currently putting lives at risk. There are too many hungry people in the world whose futures should not be held hostage to narrow political agendas of well-fed people in developed countries. Significantly, in November 2003, the Holy See convened an international conference, "Genetically Modified Organisms, Threat or Hope?" indicating a strong interest to be better informed on this undeniably moral issue and a willingness to examine the potential of such foods to ameliorate hunger and malnutrition among the world's neediest people.

This is just one example of how the United States and the Holy See continue to work closely together to improve lives around the world. Whether protecting the sanctity of life, promoting human dignity, championing religious freedom and liberty, bringing attention to the trafficking of human beings or feeding the world's hungry, the fundamentally strong partnership between the United States and the Holy See ensures that these common goals that shape our respective foreign policies will continue to dominate the agenda for human dignity worldwide.

The United States and the Holy See will continue to share the international stage in the years ahead. Their voices will continue to shape the international agenda as well. Although we will almost certainly have differences over how best to achieve some goals we hold in common, the primacy of human dignity will illuminate the long road ahead of us. As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our formal diplomatic relationship, I am confident that our thoughtful dialogue will continue to enhance the dignity of mankind, and will continue to nurture the mutual goal that each person, regardless of race, color or creed can live peacefully in a free society and realize their God-given potential.

### **Celebrating 20 Years of Full Diplomatic Relations**

And so, as we celebrate this 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our full diplomatic relationship, we do well to reflect on the words of the Pope and President Bush regarding the road traversed and the road ahead. The Pope, addressing the President during his July 2001 visit to the Vatican, observed: “I am confident that under your leadership, your nation will continue to draw on its heritage and resources to help build a world in which each member of the human family can flourish and live in a manner worthy of his or her innate dignity. I cordially invoke upon the beloved American people, God's blessings of wisdom, strength and peace.”<sup>25</sup> President Bush reciprocated his respect and esteem for Pope John Paul II during his visit to Poland in May 2003. Speaking in Krakow, the Pope's spiritual home town, President Bush commented: “Through the years of the Second World War...a young seminarian, Karol Wojtyla, saw the swastika flag flying over the ramparts of Wawel Castle. He shared the suffering of his people and was put

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<sup>25</sup> “Remarks by President Bush and His Holiness Pope John Paul II, July 23, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/07/20010723-1.html>

into forced labor. From this priest's experience and faith came a vision: that every person must be treated with dignity, because every person is known and loved by God. In time, this man's vision and this man's courage would bring fear to tyrants and freedom to his beloved country, and liberation to half a continent. To this very hour, Pope John Paul II speaks for the dignity of every life and expresses the highest aspirations of the culture we share.”<sup>26</sup>

After 20 years as full diplomatic partners, this relationship between these two great superpowers -- one temporal, one moral -- is maturing, and, with their foundations of common values, will do well together to bring peace and dignity to the world's people. As the President's Ambassador to the Holy See and interlocutor with the Pope, it is a great privilege to be part of this history and this opportunity.

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<sup>26</sup> “Remarks by the President to the People of Poland,” May 31, 2003, <http://www.usinfo.pl/bushvisit2003/wawel.htm>