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A Call to Prayer for Just Peace

People of good will certainly have differing takes on the “hot” war in progress in the Middle East. Differences emerge over what the original conflict was, what “we” should have done about it, how we have gone about doing what we did, and what our next and intermediate steps should be.

Could we all agree that we need to pray earnestly for a just peace and specifically for an end to this war?

As it is, some very important values are getting trampled in this war. Among these values:

- **Respect for Life:** Word is we have 3,707 US military dead and another 14 who were killed in a helicopter crash August 21. A thousand or more US-employed contractors have been killed. Some 655,000+ Iraqi persons have been killed. Then there are the really big numbers of physically and mentally wounded, in actual battle or because of the war; the refugees both in Iraq and elsewhere; the people in much increased economic need - all of whose lives have been greatly impacted by this military response to conflict.
- **Care for God’s Creation:** If driving cars and trucks puts out pollution that hurts our environment, gives us damaging acid rain and all, what environmental costs go with bombs and firearms going off, all sorts of land, sea and air vehicles moving around all the time?
- **Community, Family and Participation:** Our elected leaders and their administrations are acting in our names. Thus we share responsibility for all these decisions being made and implemented. This goes with the privilege of being born and living in a representative democracy, right? Citizenship entails paying attention to what is going on and working with our leaders, sharing our wisdom.

So, this conflict is conflicting with our professed val-

ues. What to do to make the whole situation better is complicated. Years back someone spoke of the bondage that is sin. In sin, one so often finds it hard to get out of it: hurt happens in all directions.

Some faith communities are designating Sunday August 26 as a day of special prayer for a just end to this war in Iraq, for an end of our involvement in the war, and end of the killing, for our troops and for the suffering people of Iraq.

Maryann Cusimano Love, a professor of international relations, writing in *America* magazine (6-18-07), has laid out some of the actions it takes for just peace to happen:

- when we do the hard work of negotiating with warring parties and unsavory people
- help refugees
- strengthen international institutions and coalitions
- create just, inclusive economic and political orders where all have a stake in the system.

Given the oil involved, developing a just economic order will be very challenging.

As I keep agonizing over all that is transpiring, I have a hard time seeing the value of US military presence continuing in Iraq - given the target and excuse it provides other groups, some of whom usually are enemies of each other. I also struggle with our at-home lack of effort to cut back on our demand for oil that seems to be such a draw in this whole experience of sin.

So, let us pray, especially Sunday and every day, for all hurting from this war, for wisdom and courage to stop it and to make amends with all harmed by it. All of us around here have 155 special persons to remember in this prayer.

The set of our own civil rights will need mending, too.

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The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.