

**REFLECTIONS  
BY ADAM CARDINAL MAIDA  
SERVICE FOR PEACE  
NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER PARISH  
MARCH 20, 2003**

Monsignor Easton and my brother Priests, Friends of the Parish of National Shrine of the Little Flower, and all those concerned about the cause of peace:

Tonight we have gathered to lift up our voices in unison in fervent prayer for peace. We believe that our God is the Father of all peoples and that He wishes our human family to live in a bond of peace and love with each other. He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, into our world to establish a lasting covenant of peace between the human race and God, a covenant that also brings with it a commitment to act justly in our daily lives on every level – nationally and internationally, as well as individually. For as the Scriptures remind us, peace is the fruit of justice and, therefore, our prayer and efforts for peace must also be accompanied by a commitment to work for just relationships on every level of our society.

Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has repeatedly reminded us that given the potential capability of the world today, there should be no reason for armed conflict or warfare between nations. And yet, we are also aware of the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein and his regime over the decades and the terrible suffering of the people of Iraq. We also know – at least in part – the capabilities he has created for weapons of mass destruction that could be directed against many nations of the world and even different races and groups of people residing in or around Iraq. Clearly, the situation is a very dangerous one and our national leaders – in conjunction with other world leaders – have to weigh all the consequences and make the best-informed decision.

At this point in time, given the factors that we know, it is impossible to draw a conclusion “pro or con,” but the best we can say is that we must leave judgment in the hands of God and trust that the administration of President Bush is acting in a way that is appropriate to the situation. At the same time that we try to be supportive of our nation’s president, it is also important to keep before our minds and hearts our true desire for peace, and that any conflict should never be embarked upon for selfish motives or out of anger or hatred. We will reach peace only by taking steps, which are motivated in a peaceful way.

We pray tonight for a quick resolution to the conflict with Iraq and for the liberation of the people of Iraq. In a special way, we are conscious of the many Chaldean Catholics of our metro area who have relatives in their homeland. We join Bishop Ibrahim in prayer for them. We also lift up to the Lord those generous men and women who are giving their lives for the protection of our freedom here and now in this nation and for freedom throughout the world. We ask God to bless them and protect them from all harm and we pray for their families and loved ones who are anxious for their well-being.

We might wonder what any of us can do under the circumstances. Certainly, we can continue to fast and pray for peace – something our Holy Father has repeatedly encouraged. Secondly, it is good for us to keep abreast of all pertinent information on the situation and continue to read Catholic resources on just war and peacemaking; in that way, our discussions with friends and neighbors will be more enlightened. Above all, we need to be peaceful people in our daily lives – setting aside any bitterness, prejudice, or violence in thought, word, or deed.

On this night, we have kept vigil prayer for peace. Let us continue to pray with our families for peace throughout the world. Again, we lift up to the Lord all the people of Iraq and all those who are fighting for the cause of freedom. Eternal rest grant unto all those who have died and bring us all to eternal light and peace. Amen.