

## Pope: War is 'defeat for international law'

"This war marks a serious defeat of international law and of the international community," John Paul II stated on Jan. 17, in his first public statement after the U.S. raid against Iraq. The Pope was addressing his collaborators in the Rome Vicariate.

"This meeting with you is taking place in a moment of deep sadness for my soul as father and pastor of the universal church. The news that arrived during the night about the drama going on in the Gulf region produced in myself—and I am sure in you all—sentiments of deep sadness and great discomfort. Up to the last minute I prayed and hoped that this would not happen, and I did what was humanly possible to prevent a tragedy. The bitterness comes from the thought of the victims, destruction, and suffering that the war can cause. I feel particularly close to all those who, because of it, are suffering on one side and on the other.

"In these hours of great danger I want to forcefully reiterate that war cannot be an adequate means to completely solve the problems existing among nations. It never was and never will be. I continue to hope that what has begun, will end as soon as possible. I pray that the experience of this first day of conflict be sufficient to make people understand the horror of what is happening and to make people understand that the aspirations and the rights of all the people of the region be the object of a particular commitment by the international community.

"These are problems whose solution can be sought only in an international gathering where all parties involved are present and cooperate with loyalty and serenity. I also hope for generous gestures that could shorten the test, reestablish the international order, and ensure that the star of peace that once shone in Bethlehem, may come back now to enlighten that region, so dear to us."

The Pope had talked about "generous gestures" twice before, in public speeches on Jan. 13 and 15, addressing himself to Saddam Hussein. In the same speeches he had made references to some form of international conference to solve all the Middle East problems including the occupied Palestinian territories.

creative powers of the person, be placed foremost, and that man's respect for the other person, and for the persons of other nations, be founded upon the daily exercise of this which sets man apart from, and above the beasts.

I have proposed this to the Israelis in particular many times. I have communicated and exchanged correspondence with one-time Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and others on this subject—on the subject, for example, of a canal from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, lined on both sides with nuclear plants, which, among other things, are generating an added source of fresh water. I have emphasized again and again the use of nuclear power to generate new rivers of fresh water the size of the Jordan River, or the size of one of the great rivers of Mesopotamia. And that this added supply of fresh water, with the matching energy, transforms the Middle East as a whole from a desert into a garden. And that the common interest of the Arab and the Israeli, in such a transformation of the Middle East, not only brings them together in a peaceful way, on the basis of a common material interest, but invokes in both that which sets man apart from and above the beast, and causes each to recognize in the other that which sets man apart from and above the beast.

### Equal humanity of Arabs and Israelis

Let me speak finally of one problem of Israel, of Saudi Arabia, and of the Gulf states.

In Israel, we have apartheid, against the Arabs. The Arabs are treated as inferior. Fanatic racist—may I say racist—Israelis, who interpret the Eretz Israel in a racist way, do not recognize the equal humanity of the Arab, and therein lie the seeds of war. But among Arabs, we have those who, as in the royal family of Kuwait, hold human beings in chattel slavery, throughout the Gulf states. This was, until very recent time, the *official* state of affairs in Saudi Arabia. *Cultures which allow this kind of chattel slavery or conditions akin to it, which discriminate against the rights of human beings to vote, as did Kuwait—these cultures cannot be allowed to continue*, because in their denial of the humanity of other human beings, they deny their own and degrade themselves as to beasts.

There is a madness which grips Israel, a madness exemplified by the butcheries of Ariel "Arik" Sharon, and others. This madness flows from racism, which flows from beliefs which have nothing to do with God, but have a lot more to do with the satanic.

The practical answer, from the standpoint of politics, is that if we as societies commit ourselves to scientific and technological progress and to the promotion of those forms of art which are akin to the medium of the creative powers of the individual, we lay the cultural basis for valuing other human beings, and ourselves, in the way which leads to productive relations that, becoming good relations, lead thus to peace.