

March 27, 2003

## **STATEMENT OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CONFERENCE OF FRANCISCAN OFM PROVINCIALS FOLLOWING THE INVASION OF IRAQ.**

We lament in the depths of our beings the failure of diplomacy on the part of the U.S. government and the resort to war as the solution to America's legitimate differences with the leaders of the Iraqi people., especially Sadaam Hussein. We find no justification for this preventative strike against a regime and a people who represent no threat to the United States. It is an unjust war, waged at a time when A war has become morally unacceptable.

Our first reaction as this tragedy begins is, therefore, to commit ourselves and call all those who are touched by our Franciscan life to prayer and fasting, that even now hostilities may cease and negotiations resume. (cf. Jonah 3:6-10)

We further encourage our Franciscan brothers and sisters and all people of good will to make their voices heard on behalf of peace - in preaching, in approaches to government leaders, in joining non-violent, demonstrations and any other actions which convey a spirit of compassion and dialogue in the midst of bombs and devastation.

Now that the war has begun, we make our own the principles which must govern our leadership and all others engaged in it to bring an end to this conflict with as little bloodshed and human suffering as possible:

- that the means used in conducting this war be proportionate to the end desired - we cannot destroy Iraq and its people under pretext of saving them.
- that noncombatants be given immunity - we must not consider the death of innocent people as "collateral damage".
- that all prisoners be treated humanely - we have no right to use torture against those whom we deem to possess information useful to the United States.
- that international treaties regarding the conduct of war be honored.
- that the defeated be shown mercy.

Finally, we make our own the words of Pope John Paul II in his January 2003 to the diplomats accredited to the Vatican State: "Every war is a defeat for humanity." May God forgive us for engaging in this war and see us to its swift and merciful end.