

September 12, 2002

## Statement for Churches

*Middle East Peace Press Conference*

**by Rev. Joseph J. Nangle, OFM.**

Almost exactly forty years ago our country faced the real and present danger of a nuclear attack on the part of the Soviet Union, which had secretly installed weapons of mass destruction on the island of Cuba. Careful surveillance and intelligence gathering established the indisputable fact that such weapons did in fact exist in Cuba and were being augmented regularly.

The President of the United States at that time faced an awful dilemma, Respond in kind to the nuclear threat being posed - or seek other means of diffusing the grave situation. Fortuitously for our nation, for the Soviet Union and for the world President Kennedy chose the second alternative and a nuclear exchange between our countries was avoided

Great and courageous leadership acts in this way - not seeking conflict but pressing for ways to avoid it; not choosing the course of military action but doing everything in its power to forestall it-, not sending its youth and wasting its treasure on protracted war efforts but searching by every means the pathway of persuasion,

In this moment we urge our President to took back to the lessons on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the genuine leadership offered our country and the world by the Kennedy Administration. Even if Sadaam Hussein does possess or will shortly possess nuclear weapons - a premise which is far from conclusive - it is our belief that the United States has a moral obligation to avoid a preemptive attack on him. Like President Kennedy we have no idea where such a confrontation will lead the world but it can only lead to more conflict mid most probably the use by someone of those disastrous nuclear weapons which the world has abhorred since Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Should our President chose the path of military action against Iraq, one has to ask -where will it end"? Will we then be forced to to remove similar regimes in North Korea with its nuclear capability? Pakistan? China?

If I might end on a very persona) note. On September 11, 2001 I lost a brother Franciscan priest at the twin towers in New York City. Father Mychal Judge, OFM was a contemporary of mine during our years of study for the priesthood and a friend during the last four decades. He died as a direct result of the attacks on our country which President Bush now links with the Sadaam Hussein regime. I am sure that I speak for my Franciscan brothers when I say to our President - "please, Mr, president, no more violence, no more lives sacrificed in the name of Father Mychal Judge,"

