

Because we want peace with half a heart, half a life and will, the war making continues. Realize that the making of war is total because the making of peace by our cowardice is partial." -- *Daniel Berrigan, S.J.*

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CATHOLIC WORKERS APPEAL TO BISHOPS TO CALL FOR AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE U.S. WAR IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN AND FOR THE ERADICATION OF THE MILITARY COMMISSIONS ACT**

At the conclusion of National Catholic Worker Gathering, held from October 19-22 in Panora, Iowa, Catholic Workers from across the U.S. issued a statement appealing to the U.S. Catholic Bishops to break their silence and to call for an immediate end to the U.S. War in Iraq and Afghanistan. They also called on the Bishops to call for the eradication of the recently passed Military Commissions Act which allows for the indefinite detention for "enemy combatants", the ending of habeas corpus right for these prisoners, and the use of abusive interrogation methods which clearly constitute torture.

Over 300 Catholic Workers from sixty one communities, including from Germany and Holland, attended the Catholic Worker Gathering. The Catholic Worker was founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in 1933, and the late John Cardinal O'Connor initiated a process in the Catholic Church for her sainthood.

Declaring that torture and war are sins, the group called on the U.S. Catholic Bishops to do the following:

- call for an end to the U.S. practice of torture.
- call for an immediate end to the U.S. war in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- offer counsel to and support for conscientious objectors.
- call for the closing of Guantanamo and all secret military prisons and torture centers.
- call on all Catholics and people of faith to engage in prayer, fasting and acts of nonviolent resistance to stop torture and to end the war.

The group also called on Catholics and other people of goodwill to join them for a nonviolent action in Washington, D.C. on January 11, 2007, the 5th anniversary of the first prisoners arriving at Guantanamo, to call for its closing.

Below is the text of two statements the group released – first is a short statement followed by a longer version of that statement.

## **Catholic Worker Statement issued to the U.S. Catholic Bishop's on the Military Commissions Act and the War in Iraq and Afghanistan**

We Catholic Workers are outraged at the recent passage of the Military Commissions Act which subjects non-citizens, including legal residents of the U.S. and foreign citizens living in their own countries, to summary arrest and indefinite detention with no hope of appeal. The Act allows abusive interrogation methods which clearly violates the Geneva Conventions, strips prisoners of habeas corpus rights, and provides immunity to the torturers.

We believe that torture is a sin.

We believe that war is a sin.

We call on the church leadership to break its silence and demand the eradication of the Military Commission's Act. We appeal to the Bishops to:

- call for an end to the U.S. practice of torture.
- call for an immediate end to the U.S. war in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- offer counsel to and support for conscientious objectors.
- call for the closing of Guantanamo and all secret military prisons and torture centers.
- call on all Catholics and people of faith to engage in prayer, fasting and acts of nonviolent resistance to stop torture and to end the war.

We invite all people of faith and goodwill to join with many of us for a nonviolent action in Washington, DC on January 11, 2007, the 5th anniversary of the first prisoners arriving at Guantanamo, to call for its closing.

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## **Catholic Worker Statement issued to the U.S. Catholic Bishop's on the Military Commissions Act and the War in Iraq and Afghanistan**

(Longer Version)

We are Catholic Workers from across the U.S. and Europe who have come to Iowa to celebrate special anniversaries of a number of our houses, to pray and reflect about what God calls us to at this critical moment in history, and to recommit ourselves to the Catholic Worker vision of creating a new society in the shell of the old.

In our various communities we have daily contact with the victims of our society. Thus, we strive to do the works of mercy and to follow Jesus' command to be nonviolent witnesses for peace and justice. As we confront the unrelenting violence and assaults on human life and our endangered earth, we repent for our own complicity in our culture of violence, and call on our church and all people of faith and goodwill to do the same. Taking the Sermon on the Mount as our Christian manifesto, we commit ourselves to upholding the sacredness of all life wherever it is threatened.

As a world community, we find ourselves in a complex and dangerous moral crisis. Longstanding cultural compulsions have obscured the basic teachings of Christ. We have become the wealthiest nation on earth in the history of humankind and the price we have paid is the collective loss of our souls. The ongoing efforts of militarization and exploitation of global resources have pushed us to a

level of accepting the unacceptable. Pre-emptive war and the slaughter of innocents is being carried out in our names and for profit. A creeping apathy has allowed room for extreme abuses such as torture and the destruction of whole social fabrics. We are violating our own spiritual principles and civil laws to attain excessive creature comforts while others suffer from unimaginable deprivation and violence. We are living a lifestyle that demands war and distracts from our true calling of loving and caring for one another. Our path to redemption lies in the repudiation of domination and embracing the daily need of service to the vulnerable.

The teaching of Saint Paul tells us that when the health of one member of our community is suffering, the health of the whole body is lowered. We must make this time of crisis into an opportunity to move forward and carry on Christ's message without compromise. In the face of nuclear capabilities we have no other choice. God, the victims, and timeless prophetic voices call on us, the Church, the body of Christ, to repent from the sins of war, torture, and killing, from the making of widows and orphans, and from the fruitless works of darkness resulting in this last century being the bloodiest on record.

We as Christians recognize that the Christ, whom we worship, was himself a victim of torture. We are called to end his ongoing crucifixion which has been made manifest in our nations policies. This is particularly relevant in the latest Military Commissions Act of 2006. It is with burning sorrow that we look around at the world in which we live at the suffering, war, torture, and killing of our brothers and sisters, and realize that the response of both ourselves and our Church has been wholly inadequate. We cry out to be part of a Church that prays and works for peace, loves our enemies, and embraces the redemptive power of forgiveness. We cry out for a church that speaks without fear of consequences, including loss of revenues.

We understand that we live in a time of great fear and peril. We need to remind ourselves that we are not to fear those that can kill the body, but instead to fear those that can kill the soul. Our domestic and foreign policies have left us a nation without a soul.

We call on our Church to be a prophetic voice, a sanctuary, and a source of encouragement to those who want to work together in community towards peace and justice. To this we recommend:

- Prayer, fasting, vigiling and nonviolent civil resistance to end the military occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- That all soldiers refuse to participate in these wars
- That the Church actively support and encourage all conscientious objectors
- That all U.S. military and private contractors to refuse to engage in torture
- The closing of Guantanamo and other secret U.S. military prisons
- The eradication of the Military Commissions Act 2006
- Redirect our resources from war making and exploitation to meeting human needs and saving our planet
- An equitable redistribution of resources by simplifying our materialistic lifestyle
- All people of faith and goodwill join us for a nonviolent action in Washington, DC on January 11, 2007, the 5th anniversary of the first prisoners arriving at Guantanamo, to call for its closing.

As we approach this season of Advent and Christmas, let us be people of Light: *"The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it"* (John 1:5).