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The Fourth Sunday of Advent

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 2:26-38

Lutheran, Catholic Dialogue meets on theme of structures and ministries

WASHINGTON — Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops met in Charleston, South Carolina, December 5-8, 2002, to continue the tenth round of the U.S. dialogues.

The work of this meeting was a review of a draft text on The Church as Communion (koinonia) of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries. The topic includes such questions as how dioceses and synods relate to parishes and congregations, and the ministries that serve them. The churches recognize that they are in real, if yet imperfect, communion. This text hopes to point the way towards making the levels of communion more specific, hopefully identifying a real, mutual recognition of ministries. It will also provide the biblical, historical and theological bases on which such recommendations may be made.

The signing of the 1999

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification created a new context for the relationship between the Lutheran churches of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. It created a new level of communion in faith on the doctrine of salvation. This stage of the US dialogue attempts to deepen the understanding of communion on the levels of the life and mission of the church, with special emphasis on the structures and ministries of congregations and dioceses/synods. It also deals with national and universal structures and ministries.

The meeting worked on drafting background material on ordained ministries and structures of the Church as they have developed in history. Both Lutherans and Catholics have come to more precise positions on the ministries of pastors and bishops than were once held. However, the dialogue has found that there is more in com-

mon on the structures of communion that holds the community together in its saving mission than was presupposed in the life of the churches since the Reformation. Likewise, though full recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministries is not yet proposed in this text, on the basis of its historical, theological and biblical studies, particular contributions to unity and specific proposals to the churches should be possible.

In addition to the theological research and drafting of the text, the dialogue team attended Mass at St. John's Catholic Cathedral, and a Lutheran liturgy at St. John's Church, the first Lutheran church in South Carolina. The dialogue is co-chaired by Bishop Richard Sklba, Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee, and Bishop-emeritus Charles Maahs, of the Central States of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"The Prince of Peace" The Catholic Church and the Threat of War in Iraq

Editor's Note: This is the final part of a perspective by Bishop Edward K. Braxton on "A Statement on Iraq," a document approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at the group's November meeting in Washington, DC. To read the statement and other documents approved by the Bishops, as well as news from the USCCB, go the group's website - uscbb.org.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* limits just cause for war to cases in which "the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations is lasting, grave and certain." (#2309) We are deeply concerned about recent proposals to expand dramatically traditional limits on just cause to include preventive uses of military force to overthrow threatening regimes or to deal with weapons of mass destruction. Consistent with the proscriptions contained in international law, a distinction should be made between efforts to change unacceptable behavior of a government and efforts to end that government's existence.

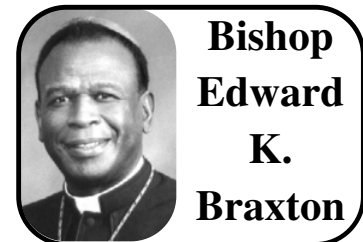
In the judgment of your Bishops, decisions concerning possible war in Iraq require compliance with U.S. constitutional imperatives, broad consensus within our nation, and some form of international sanction. That is why the action by Congress and the UN Security Council are important. As Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, Vatican Secretary for Relations with States, has indicated, if recourse to force were deemed necessary, this should take place within the framework of the United Nations after considering the consequences for Iraqi civilians, and regional and global stability.

The *Catechism* also teaches that the use of force must have "serious prospects for success" and "must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated" (*Catechism*, #2309). We Bishops certainly recognize that not taking military action could have its own negative consequences. We are concerned, however, that war against Iraq could have unpredictable consequences not only for Iraq but for peace and stability elsewhere in the Middle East. The use of force might provoke the very kind of attacks that it is

intended to prevent, could impose terrible new burdens on an already long-suffering civilian population, and could lead to wider conflict and instability in the region. War against Iraq could also detract from the responsibility to help build a just and stable order in Afghanistan and could undermine broader efforts to stopterrorism.

weapons of mass destruction in all nations, stricter controls on the export of missiles and weapons technology, improved enforcement of the biological and chemical weapons conventions, and fulfillment of U.S. commitments to pursue good faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

Some American citizens may feel that personal dislike for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the suspicion that he has weapons of mass destruction, anger over the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001 and frustration over the government's inability to find Osama bin Laden, are reason enough for war. But this is more emotion than reason. Even if the current U.N. weapons inspection finds such weapons, even if Iraq's declaration of December 8 is not deemed credible by the United States and a U.N. resolution gives legal justification for a military attack by our country, the moral justification for such a pre-emptive attack remains highly questionable. An armed conflict with Iraq will almost certainly result in the death of a large number of innocent people and possibly result in more instability in the region and more terrorism around the world.



**Bishop
Edward
K.
Braxton**

The justice of a cause does not lessen the moral responsibility to comply with the norms of civilian immunity. While we recognize the improved capability of modern weapons and serious efforts to avoid directly targeting civilians in war, the use of military force in Iraq could bring incalculable costs for a civilian population that has suffered so much from war, repression, and a debilitating embargo. In assessing whether the death of innocent civilians (often referred to as "collateral damage") is justified, we must value the lives of Iraqi men, women and children as much as we value the lives of members of our own family and citizens of our own country.

We urge that our nation and the world continue to pursue actively alternatives to war in the Middle East. It is vital that our nation persists in the very frustrating and difficult challenges of maintaining broad international support for constructive, effective and legitimate ways to contain and deter aggressive Iraqi actions and threats. We support effective enforcement of the military embargo and maintenance of political sanctions. We reiterate our call for much more carefully-focused economic sanctions which do not threaten the lives of innocent Iraqi civilians. Addressing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction must be matched by broader and stronger non-proliferation measures. Such efforts, grounded in the principle of mutual restraint, should include, among other things, greater support for programs to safeguard and eliminate

We Bishops know that there are no easy answers. Ultimately, our elected leaders are responsible for decisions about national security, but we hope that our moral concerns and questions will be considered seriously by our leaders and all citizens. We invite others, particularly the Christian faithful, to continue to discern how best to live out their vocation to be witnesses and agents of peace and justice.

I urge you to join me in praying for those who will be directly affected by war, especially those in military service and their families. Pray for President Bush and other world leaders as well that they may be given the wisdom to find the way to step back from the brink of war with Iraq and work for a peace that is just and enduring. If such peace is not possible, then what does it really mean to say that Christ, the Prince of Peace, has been born in the cold stable of our world? What does it mean to celebrate Christmas?

Vocation retreat set Jan. 17-19

MOSS BLUFF - A vocation retreat, jointly sponsored by the Dioceses Lake Charles, Alexandria and Baton Rouge, is set for Jan. 17-19 at Tabor Retreat House of Saint Charles Center.

Intended for young men, 16 years and older, who are discerning God's will in their lives, it invites participants to look at their spiritual journey in light of the Lord Jesus' call to a life of personal holiness.

The retreat will help a young man to reflect on and

judge how best to respond to God's call, in priesthood or religious life, in married life or in a single life committed to the Kingdom.

Bishops of the province and Vocations Directors from all three dioceses will be in attendance at the retreat, which will be staffed by seminarians from the sponsoring dioceses.

For more information contact your church pastor or call the Vocation Office at 439-7426, Ext. 17.

Pope names Bishop of Lexington; Auxiliary of San Francisco

WASHINGTON — Pope John Paul II has appointed Monsignor Ronald W. Gainer, Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania, as Bishop of Lexington, Kentucky. He succeeds Bishop J. Kendrick Williams, who resigned in June.

The Pope also named Monsignor Ignatius Wang, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, as Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco and Titular Bish-

op of Sitpa. Bishop-elect Wang, who is also director of the Archdiocesan Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and of the Chinese Apostolate, is believed to be the first Latin Rite Asian and the first person born in China to be named to the U.S. hierarchy.

Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, announced the appointments.

Cathedral Christmas Mass schedule told

LAKE CHARLES - The Most Rev. Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles, will celebrate Midnight Mass in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

On Christmas Eve the Cathedral Chorale will present a concert of Christmas music prior to Midnight Mass, beginning at 11 p.m. followed by a candlelight procession at 11:45 p.m.

Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Rector of the Cathedral, will celebrate the 5 p.m. Vigil Mass on Dec. 24. A concert of Christmas music presented by the Liturgical Singers will begin at 4:30 p.m.

On Christmas Day, Msgr. Jace Eskind will celebrate the 8 a.m. Mass while Msgr. Greig will celebrate the 10 a.m. Mass.

Teens and Sex: What's Going On?

By Gail Quinn

Hats off to *Newsweek* for its December 9 cover story, "The New Virginity....Why More Teens are Choosing Not to Have Sex." Despite decades of self-styled experts saying that young people are going to have sex anyway, so they better be given condoms and pills, kids are proving them wrong. Rejecting the get-down-make-love ethos of their parents' generation, *Newsweek* authors write, "this wave of young adults represents a new counterculture, one clearly at odds with the mainstream media and their routine use of sex to boost ratings and peddle product."

Have all unmarried teens stopped having sex? No. But the percentage of high school teens who remain virgins has risen substantially in the past decade. The *Newsweek* authors suggest several reasons for the surprising rise in virginity among teens.

Young people do fear pregnancy, and they fear contracting a sexually transmitted disease. Some teens say that having loving, involved parents helped them remain chaste. One added that her career choice requires so much time and ef-

fort that she won't allow herself to be sidetracked by sexual relationships and pregnancy. Alice, a college sophomore, credits the feminist movement: "One of the empowering things about the feminist movement," says Alice, "is that we're able to assert ourselves, to say no to sex and not feel pressured about it."

There's truth in all these explanations, but *Newsweek* barely alludes to one main reason: the spread of abstinence education in public schools.

For years, such education was not funded or poorly funded. Today, the Bush Administration has said it plans to expand funding for such programs to \$135 million (up \$60 million since 1998).

Still the decades-old debate goes on. Should we instill values in teens and teach them that abstinence works (you can't get pregnant, you won't pick up an STD, and you won't get hurt emotionally) or tell kids that abstinence is best, but since we know they're going to have sex anyway, hand them

condoms and pills?

For years American taxpayers have ponied up millions for Planned Parenthood to promote birth control, and hand out condoms, pills and other devices to teens. In fact, Planned Parenthood got \$137 million from the federal government last year alone. It operates clinics near colleges and in minority communities. And when the college students and minority women get pregnant and need abortions, Planned Parenthood is only too happy to provide them for a fee.

Something's terribly wrong with this picture. Before us are two approaches. One that is helping (abstinence only) and one that's been followed for decades and proven to be a miserable failure. What to do ought to be a no-brainer.

We ought to fund with our tax dollars programs of abstinence that really help. And, by all means, let's find better uses for the many millions we throw away each year by giving it to Planned Parenthood.

The next Catholic Calendar will be published January 22, 2003