



TORTURE



Torture is a Moral Issue
A Catholic Study Guide



TORTURE IS A MORAL ISSUE: A CATHOLIC STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION



This four-chapter discussion guide on torture was developed in early 2008, as a collaboration between the Catholic members of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and the [Office of International Justice and Peace](#) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The chapters are designed for use by discussion groups and classes in Catholic settings, as well as by individuals, families, and others. The intent of this material is to prompt thinking and reflection on torture as a moral issue.

What has Pope Benedict XVI said about the use of torture in prisons? What does the [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#) say about this? Have the Catholic bishops of the United States spoken out on torture? You'll find answers to questions like those in the chapters that follow, along with reflections on torture and prisoner abuse by numerous Catholic bishops, theologians, and other commentators.

Chapter 1 is devoted to Catholic thought on the dignity of every human person. For when Catholic leaders today turn attention to the use of torture in prisons of any kind anywhere in the world, they consistently view it as a violation of the human person's God-given dignity.

Chapter 2 focuses on torture itself, and the reasons why it is a source of such concern for the Church at this point in the third millennium. What forms does torture take? What reasons are given for the torture or abusive treatment of prisoners today? What specific objections are lodged by Catholic leaders against torture?

Chapter 3 closely examines Jesus' Gospel instruction to love our enemies. Is it actually possible to love enemies in these threatening times of terrorism? Is it possible to love an enemy who may harbor information we seek to defend ourselves? The teaching of the Gospel on love for our enemies is not easy to follow, but Catholic leaders tell in this chapter why they view it as a teaching of utmost seriousness.

Chapter 4 is designed to promote discussion of actions that individuals, families, small groups in parishes, schools and others might take to address the issue of torture, and to raise awareness of its importance as a moral matter.

Finally, in an appendix to this discussion guide, you'll find the text of a letter written in late 2007 by Bishop Thomas G. Wenski, Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, to members of the Senate. This appendix serves as a valuable overview of the Church's reasons for opposing torture.

Catholics enter into the public discussion of the great issues their society faces because they hope to contribute—in the light of faith—to resolving these issues. There is, in addition, the confidence that people of faith can contribute in highly positive ways to building up and transforming the world around them.

With that in mind, two basic convictions give shape to this discussion guide:

-- First, that torture is a moral issue, one that deserves to be understood and addressed by Christians.

-- Second, that an atmosphere of fear and desperation within society opens the door to the torture and abuse of prisoners, but that there is much Christians can do to help create a new atmosphere within society – an atmosphere in which respect for human dignity rules the day.

Thus, this discussion guide examines torture within the larger context of Catholic social teaching in an era of globalization. That is why each of our four chapters includes, in addition to its main point of discussion, the exploration of a positive way to help create a new atmosphere within our society and even in the larger world.

Building a culture of life as an antidote to a culture in which human dignity often goes unrecognized is a key element of chapter 1.

Bringing the virtue of hope back into a society pervaded by fear and anxiety is a key element of chapter 2.

Striving to become a genuine people of the Beatitudes is a key element of chapter 3.

Participating in interreligious dialogue, fasting for justice and peace, praying for enemies, overcoming evil with goodness, and advocating for the abolition of torture are among the actions proposed in chapter 4.

In preparing this discussion guide, it was recognized clearly that the times in which we live and the issues we face are tough. Nonetheless, we were led to ask the following question:

In these challenging times, is it still possible—even in the face of serious threats—for a people and a nation to defend and conduct themselves in ways that consistently demonstrate respect for human dignity, and that put the Gospel into practice?

Look for more information and resources about the Church's position on torture by going to our Web site: www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/libertyind.shtml. In the study guide, you will find links to other Web sites for your convenience. By providing these links, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops assumes no responsibility for, nor does it necessarily endorse, these Web sites, their content, or sponsoring organizations.



CHAPTER 1 - RECOGNIZING EVERY PERSON'S GOD-GIVEN DIGNITY



Revisiting Paul's Writings

“For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, ... all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16-17)

Introduction: Human Dignity, a Basic of Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching holds that something essential is missed whenever a human person's dignity is overlooked. Every human person possesses a God-given dignity.

But is this merely an idle claim that the Catholic Church makes about human life? No, it is a belief with far-reaching consequences. It is a belief that becomes visible through our actions. It influences how we live and act; it shapes how we relate to other people, other cultural groups and other nations.

This chapter in our discussion guide examines the principle of human dignity in Catholic social teaching. The discussion guide's overall purpose is to draw the issue of torture into clear focus, and to aid parish small groups, classes, families, and individuals as they look into the ways that Catholic social teaching applies to this important concern.

Why, then, do we begin by taking a close look at what the Church says about human dignity? Because basic to the Catholic Church's stance against torture and/or the abuse of prisoners is the belief that such practices violate a person's God-given dignity. In fact, some say that torture violates the human dignity, not only of the person who is tortured, but of those who impose the torture.

So, let's talk about human dignity. As we talk about it, let's ask, in particular, why this principle of Catholic social teaching matters so much in our times. What difference does a belief in human dignity really make?

Perhaps the following question will provide some initial direction for our conversation. Ponder it briefly now as we get under way.

How much would our world change if everyone's God-given dignity always and everywhere was recognized and honored?

Getting Started: What Is Human Dignity?

When you think of Catholic social teaching, what first comes to mind?

- a. Maybe you think of serving the poor in some concrete way.
- b. Maybe you think of protecting human rights—for example, the right to life, to food, to work; the right of people to participate in society and make their voices heard.
- c. Perhaps ways that the lives of children, or refugees, or the aged, or the sick, or workers are exploited and demeaned are what first come to mind for you.
- d. Or is it the need to counteract discrimination against various racial and ethnic groups and to give human equality its due that springs to mind?

Whatever it is that first comes to mind when you think of Catholic social teaching or the pursuit of social justice, it almost certainly in some way reflects a belief about human dignity. For this belief—that everyone possesses a God-given dignity—motivates the activities that Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools, families, individuals, and groups undertake to serve others and to carry out the mandates of Catholic social teaching.

It is only natural for people who participate in the Eucharist to be concerned about everyone's human dignity, Pope Benedict XVI suggested in the apostolic exhortation on the Eucharist ([*Sacramentum Caritatis*](#)) that he released in March 2007. “Precisely because of the mystery we celebrate [in the Eucharist], we must denounce situations contrary to human dignity, since Christ shed his blood for all,” the pope wrote.

The [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) says that “social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man” (No. 1929). In this context, the catechism quotes a sentence from one of Pope John Paul II's social encyclicals, [*On Social Concerns \(Sollicitudo Rei Socialis\)*](#), released in 1988. The “defense and promotion” of the human person's dignity “have been entrusted to us by the Creator,” the pope said (SRS 47).

The Catechism immediately adds that “respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature” (No. 1930).

Did you notice, in the preceding two paragraphs, how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in discussing human dignity and human rights, employed the term *respect*? It spoke of *respecting* each person's “transcendent dignity” and of *respect* for human rights. How significant is the term *respect* in Catholic social teaching? What, in fact, does the word *respect* actually mean?

In Catholic social teaching, a simple recognition of human dignity in and of itself isn't sufficient. Rather, this recognition bears consequences. It leads to respect—to respect for human life and for human rights; it highlights the need for actions of many kinds on behalf of human rights and human life.

The Catechism provides a bit of insight into the meaning of the term *respect* when it makes the following statement: “Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that ‘everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as ‘another self,’ above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity’” (No. 1931).

As our discussion of human dignity continues, reflect upon the term *respect* and its meaning. Undoubtedly, you hear frequently in the Church about *respect for life*. When you hear of this, isn't it clear that *respect* is not an abstraction? Isn't it clear that the call to respect all of life is a call to change ways of thinking and ways of acting?

What does it mean to respect another person or group of people? In other words, how do you define the term "respect"?

Catholic Voices: What They Say About Human Dignity

"The duty to respect the dignity of each human being, in whose nature the image of the Creator is reflected, means in consequence that the person cannot be disposed of at will. Those with greater political, technical, or economic power may not use that power to violate the rights of others who are less fortunate. Peace is based on respect for the rights of all." (Pope Benedict XVI, in his [*Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*](#), 1 January 2007)

"No one can be by nature superior to his fellows, since all men are equally noble in natural dignity." (Pope John XXIII in his encyclical [*Peace on Earth \[Pacem in Terris\]*](#), No. 89)

"The roots of human rights are to be found in the dignity that belongs to each human being." ([*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#), No. 153)

"A prime example [of intrinsically evil actions] is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia... Direct threats to the sanctity and dignity of human life, such as human cloning and destructive research on human embryos, are also intrinsically evil. These must always be opposed. Other direct assaults on innocent human life and violations of human dignity, such as genocide, torture, racism, and the targeting of noncombatants in acts of terror or war, can never be justified." ([*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*](#), No. 22, 23, November 2007)

For Discussion: Everyone's Human Dignity

This chapter suggests that a God-given human dignity is there to be recognized by us in every human person. What are the implications of this statement? Pause for a moment to think that over.

Who is encompassed by the words "every human person"? Is anyone left out?

Do we find it difficult to recognize the human dignity of some people? Are there hard cases for us? What about people who are unkind to us personally? What about people who cause harm within society, or who are violent? What about people considered enemies of our nation? What about prisoners of our nation's efforts to combat terrorism?

The Foundations of Human Dignity

If you search for just one rather simple, clear reason why Catholic social teaching holds that dignity is a basic characteristic of every human person, you won't find it. Instead, you'll find two reasons, both rather simple and clear:

First reason: God is our Creator; we are created in God's image. A reflection of God is found in all those he created. Pope John Paul II spoke about this in his encyclical, [*The Gospel of Life \(Evangelium Vitae\)*](#) . He wrote: "Man has been given a sublime dignity, based on the intimate bond which unites him to his Creator: in man there shines forth a reflection of God himself" ([EV 34](#)).

Second reason: In the Incarnation, Jesus Christ becomes one with the human family's members. All human persons are touched by the reality of the Incarnation, and by Christ's redemptive actions. Christ came for all. In *The Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II explained this. He said that Jesus' "self-oblation on the Cross becomes the source of new life for all people" ([No. 33](#)). And, the pope said, "Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face the face of Christ" ([No. 81](#)).

The Catholic bishops of the United States made the same two points regarding the source of our human dignity in their 2003 statement [*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*](#). They wrote, "Created by God and redeemed by Christ, every person possesses a fundamental dignity that comes from God, not from any human attribute or accomplishment."

And here is what the Second Vatican Council said about this, in its [*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World \(Gaudium et Spes\)*](#): "Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition" (No. 29).

Do you find it surprising or confusing that Pope John Paul II spoke about finding the face of Christ in every human face?

Building a Culture of Life

Where can this conviction regarding the God-given human dignity of every person lead? It can lead toward building what Pope John Paul II called a "culture of life." According to Pope John Paul's vision, builders of the culture of life constitute a powerfully constructive force for great good in the society and the world they inhabit.

Pope John Paul discussed the culture of life at length in *The Gospel of Life*. There is an urgent need for "a general mobilization of consciences and a united ethical effort to activate a great campaign in support of life. All together, we must build a new culture of life," he wrote ([No. 95](#)).

As the outlines of a culture of life unfolded in *The Gospel of Life*, the pope said that the time has come "to rediscover the ability to revere and honor every person" ([No. 83](#)). Many, many persons found a place in the pope's expansive discussion of the culture of life and what respect for life implies: the unborn child, the newborn child, the sick, the poor and needy, terminally ill people, the aged and those who mourn, those who are marginalized within society, minors, AIDS patients, and even enemies.

The people of the Church are “people of life and for life, and this is how we present ourselves to everyone,” Pope John Paul II said ([No. 78](#)). He added, “We are guided and sustained by the law of love” ([No. 79](#)).

In the late pope’s vision of a culture of life, “even an enemy ceases to be an enemy for the person who is obliged to love him” and to do good to him; the height of such love, said the pope, “is to pray for one’s enemy” ([No. 41](#)).

It is impossible in this short space to sum up all that Pope John Paul said about the culture of life in his important encyclical. However, in our context, the following statements should be noted:

“The deepest element of God’s commandment to protect human life is the requirement to show reverence and love for every person and the life of every person” ([No. 41](#)).

All of society should “respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person’s life” ([No. 81](#)).

Pope John Paul II went on to discuss the culture of life many times in the years after publishing *The Gospel of Life*. For him, the call to build a culture of life was a demanding call to take responsibility for our world and to enrich it. Just take a look at what he said in March 2001, when [he spoke to the Pontifical Academy of Life](#):

The best way to overcome and defeat the dangerous culture of death is to give firm foundations and clear content to a culture of life that will vigorously oppose it. Although right and necessary, it is not enough merely to expose and denounce the lethal effects of the culture of death. Rather, the inner tissue of contemporary culture must be continually regenerated, culture being understood as a conscious mentality, as convictions and actions, as the social structures that support it.

Pope Benedict XVI also affirmed the need to respect the life and dignity of the human person when he spoke at St. Peter’s Square on February 5, 2006: “It is fundamental to foster a correct attitude towards the other: the culture of life is in fact based on attention to others without any forms of exclusion or discrimination. Every human life, as such, deserves and demands always to be defended and promoted.”

Conclusion: Summing Up

Catholic social teaching holds that all people bear a God-given dignity. This conviction makes demands upon us: calls us to action, calls us to respect each person.

It is possible at once to feel personally affirmed by this teaching and disturbed by its most far-reaching demands, especially the demand to recognize human dignity in what may appear to us as difficult cases.

So this teaching leads somewhere: It leads to respect for ourselves and all others, and to action on behalf of justice. It leads to recognizing the face of Jesus in others.

This teaching also may prompt us to take a second look at widely accepted ways our society treats people—to assess whether some ways of treating people reflect respect for human dignity, or whether, in fact, they constitute abuses of human dignity.

Society itself frequently is divided when it comes to judging whether or not an action constitutes an abuse of human dignity. Thus, debates over particular issues get played out in the pages of our daily

newspapers and on TV. For example, since 1973, there has been an intense debate over abortion, in which the Church calls for respect for human life from the moment of conception. There are ongoing debates over racism: when it is operative in school systems and when it is not, or how it influences voting choices. Currently, there is an ongoing debate in society over abortion and human embryonic stem-cell research, which the Church regards as a failure to recognize the unborn child's humanity and dignity.

And, of course, there is debate over torture: whether certain practices commonly regarded as torture are legally or morally acceptable in the treatment and interrogation of prisoners accused of terrorist acts.

Torture is an issue in the news of our day, an issue that Catholic social teaching prompts us to examine. The issue of torture will be explored in detail in this discussion guide's next chapter. At this point, however, we might conclude this discussion of human dignity by posing these questions:

What is at risk when respect does not characterize the relationships of individuals, of cultural and religious groups, or of nations?

Is it possible to condone practices of torture while at the same time affirming every person's God-given human dignity? Why or Why not?

Concluding Prayer

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,
you have given the world its true light,
Jesus, your Son—the Son of God.
You abandoned yourself completely
to God's call
and thus became a wellspring
of the goodness that flows forth from him.
Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
Teach us to know and love him,
so that we too can become
capable of true love
and be fountains of living water
in the midst of a thirsting world.*

(From "[Deus Caritas Est](#)," Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical)



CHAPTER 2 - THE PROBLEM WITH TORTURE



Revisiting Paul's Writings

Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.” (Romans 12:14-18)

Introduction: Torture, a Sign of the Times?

Torture is much discussed and debated today in the media and in the courts. Questions have been raised, even in cartoons, as to how to define torture, and what constitutes torture. Some argue over what constitutes “cruel and inhumane,” while others say, “I’ll know it when I see it.” And some, who might have dismissed a given practice as torture, have quickly changed their minds when it was done to them.

The 1984 [United Nations Convention Against Torture](#) defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person” to obtain information or a confession, and where such an act is allowed by a public official. The International Red Cross defines torture as “existence of a specific purpose plus intentional infliction of severe suffering or pain.” Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions prohibits that prisoners of war be subjected to “violence to life and person, in particular . . . mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, . . .outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment.” But what does our faith say about torture?

Catholic social teaching today opposes torture in the treatment of any detained or imprisoned person. For the Church is convinced that every human person bears a God-given dignity; respect for that dignity must always be present. The Church also is careful to point out that torture is illegal, prohibited under international law.

Pope Benedict XVI talked about this in September 2007, when [he addressed an international congress of Catholic prison ministers](#). “Means of punishment or correction that either undermine or debase the human dignity of prisoners” must be eschewed by public authorities, he said. Immediately he added the following statement, which incorporates a quote taken from the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*: “The prohibition against torture ‘cannot be contravened under any circumstances’” (No. 404).

Torture raced to the center of public attention in 2004 when startling photographs depicting prisoner abuse by American soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq were published and broadcast widely.

While our primary, immediate concern in this discussion guide is about the possible use of torture by the U.S. government, an organization known as the Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition (TASSC) reminds us that torture currently is practiced by more than 150 governments of the world. Those who are tortured include the apolitical and the politicized, says TASSC. In chapter 4 of this discussion guide, we’ll listen to the voice of a survivor of torture who was taken captive because her work with poor children in Latin America was considered suspicious.

“We thought the word was gone.... We thought ‘torture’ belonged to a foreign language.... We were wrong,” write Rose Marie Berger and Joseph Ross, the editors of a book of poems and paintings about torture titled *Cut Loose the Body* (American University. Washington, D.C. 2007).

Is it surprising that in our third millennium torture has emerged as a matter of great public concern? Perhaps not, and we’ll discuss the reasons why as this chapter unfolds.

It surely isn’t surprising either that Catholic leaders speak out about torture. Why? First, torture is a moral issue for the Church. Second, as a participant in its surrounding world, the Church wants to contribute to society in positive ways, by sharing insights and values related to the most pressing matters of the times.

With that in mind, take a look at this statement on torture found in the Catholic bishops of the United States’ November 2007 statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*:

“The use of torture must be rejected as fundamentally incompatible with the dignity of the human person and ultimately counterproductive in the effort to combat terrorism” (No. 88).

Let us begin this discussion of torture by weighing-in on the moral/ethical dimensions of the present discussion; and asking if there are ways Christians can help to create a new climate in society—a climate that is hopeful and confident, and less ready to allow room for practices such as torture in the combat against terrorism.

One leading Catholic commentator on torture observed, “War always makes ethics hellish.” Yes, but what about that? In this age of terrorism, is it possible for a nation to act upon the world stage in ways that demonstrate respect for human dignity, and are consistent with the Gospel?

As our discussion commences, briefly ponder the following questions. They may help to start the wheels of the mind spinning as we look into an issue that is a sign of our times.

Can respect for the human dignity of all co-exist with an acceptance of torture in the interrogation of prisoners taken in the fight against terrorism? Why or Why not?

Why should the Christian community study and address the issue of torture?

Getting Started: The Whats and Whys of Torture

Entering a New Era: Confusing Questions

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks inside U.S. borders September 11, 2001, Americans experienced an unfamiliar sense of vulnerability. Millions anxiously asked, “What next?” They wondered if a sense of security could be re-established for themselves and their families.

Think back to your own strongest feelings and concerns during the period after the 9-11 attacks:

Did you experience fear, sadness or anger? Were you less optimistic?

Did you spend more time with those you care about most? Did you take more time to serve others?

Did you pray more? What did you pray for?

Did you feel hopeful?

Some might say that a new era began with 9-11. With the dawn of this new era, many felt shaken. People assessed and reassessed priorities.

And people shared an interest in knowing how their nation would respond to developments that seemed virtually to have shifted the ground under their feet. But as the months and years unfolded, it became clear that people wouldn't always agree about what was the "right way" to respond to terrorism.

The birth of this unique new era was accompanied by unique new questions. Many people undoubtedly felt that, while we had questions, we didn't have answers. There were questions like

What is the right way to deal with an enemy whose very location is incredibly difficult to discover?

What gives rise to terrorism?

Are there effective, moral means of self-defense against potential terrorist attacks?

How might a nation learn where terrorists plan to stage their next attack—and what form an attack might take?

With questions like those, it's no wonder that intelligence-gathering became a major focus, not just for government and intelligence agencies, but for society in general. For a rather long period of time after 9-11, intelligence-gathering became an intense object of media scrutiny. People wanted to know as much as possible about how intelligence-gathering works.

Intelligence-gathering for the sake of national security undoubtedly is an essential government function. Is it possible, though, to take some wrong steps in the process of seeking accurate answers to questions related to our security?

Today, "the Church's position on interrogational torture is absolute: It may never again be used," Jesuit Father John Perry wrote in a February 2006 article published by Catholic News Service. While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes it clear that torture is a grave sin which violates the Fifth Commandment (No. 2297), Father Perry noted that "sadly, our current position does not reflect a long, robust tradition against torture." He said that "for centuries the Inquisition used torture in the course of interrogations when judicial inconsistencies existed," and some 17th century writers on moral issues "devoted many pages in their treatises on torture to discussion of procedural questions."

But Catholic teaching on torture "developed over the centuries so that in his 1993 encyclical, *'Veritatis Splendor'* Pope John Paul II included 'physical and mental torture' in his long list of social evils that are not only 'shameful' ('probra'), as they are declared to be by the Second Vatican Council, but also 'intrinsically evil,'" Father Perry wrote. "This condemnation," he said, "was the culmination of teaching against torture by the papal magisterium that increased in severity through the course of the 20th century." Father Perry is the author of *Torture: Religious Ethics and National Security* (Orbis/Novalis 2005).

The Debate Takes Shape: Background

There are many means of intelligence-gathering, and it is pursued in many settings. Among them are detention centers where prisoners are questioned: prisoners of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or of actions against terrorist cells around the world. What methods of obtaining information from these prisoners were to be permitted?

Society's current debate over torture relates directly to how detainees are interrogated. What forms does the debate take? Here are a few positions on torture:

Some argue that the painful treatment of a few extracts information that saves the lives of many.

Some counter that torture doesn't work, that tortured individuals say whatever they think their captors want to hear.

Attention sometimes shifts to a specific approach to interrogation; a debate ensues about whether a particular practice indeed constitutes torture. The practice called "waterboarding," or simulated drowning, is an example of this.

Some find torture unfortunate but believe that desperate times call for desperate measures.

Others believe torture is counterproductive—that for every insurgent tortured, 100 new insurgents rise up.

Some call attention to how torture affects those who impose it, asking: Doesn't this practice degrade our own personnel?

Some say that torture raises the risk that our own forces will be tortured if captured.

What constitutes torture? Here's the full definition written in the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1984:

For the purposes of this Convention, torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

The U.N. Convention said that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat or war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture."

This U.N. Convention, known as CAT, took effect in June 1987 after ratification by twenty nations. The United States signed it in April 1988, and ratified in October 1994.

Of course, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights also says that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” And the Geneva Conventions of 1949 prohibited “physical or mental torture” and “any other form of coercion” against prisoners of war.

Torture assumes many guises, from electric shocks and burning with cigarettes, to sexual humiliation in various forms, even rape. Detainees may be threatened by attack dogs, or told that unless they cooperate their family members will be harmed. Detainees may be beaten, deprived of sleep, hooded for long periods. The list goes on of ways that pain is caused or that detainees are terrorized. And some parties to the debate argue, as we said, that some practices under discussion do not actually constitute torture. Or they may argue that when torture has occurred, it was inflicted by misguided individuals whose actions were unauthorized.

Is torture an acceptable means of gathering information sought for our own self-defense in the age of terrorism? In a June 2006 letter to then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando, Florida cautioned that the “nation must not embrace a morality based on an attitude that ‘desperate times call for desperate measures.’” Bishop Wenski, writing in his capacity as chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on International Policy, said, “In a time of terrorism and great fear, our individual and collective obligations to respect the dignity and human rights even of our worst enemies gains added importance.... Our nation must treat its prisoners as we would expect our enemies to treat our own military personnel.”

If you had the opportunity to participate in a meeting of national leaders discussing national security, what would you say about torture?

Catholic Voices: What They Say About Torture

“Torture is not easy to define, but—as our U.S. Supreme Court stated regarding pornography—common sense usually knows torture when one sees it.” (Archbishop Edwin O’Brien of Baltimore, Md., speaking Oct. 13, 2007, to a Vatican-sponsored course for military ordinaries and chaplains in Rome)

“The code of the warrior exists not only to protect the innocent and to ensure that combatants conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the principles of discrimination in the prosecution of war and of proportionality, but also to protect the warriors themselves, to guard against the invisible wounds of battle that oftentimes affect warriors psychologically and spiritually the rest of their lives. Torture is an immoral option not only because it denies dignity to fellow human beings, but because it saps the humanity from those who employ it. This psychological dynamic is reflected in [Vatican Council II’s] *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*: ‘(Such infamies) do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury.’” (Father Louis Iasiello, a Navy chaplain, in the February 2006 “Viewpoints” package published by Catholic News Service)

For Discussion: Perspectives on Torture

The two passages below are offered for your reflection, analysis and discussion.

A. Excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI's message for the 2006 World Day of Peace

The fathers of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* [*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*] pointed out that "not everything automatically becomes permissible between hostile parties once war has regrettably commenced." As a means of limiting the devastating consequences of war as much as possible, especially for civilians, the international community has created an international humanitarian law.

International humanitarian law ought to be considered as one of the finest and most effective expressions of the intrinsic demands of the truth of peace. Precisely for this reason, respect for that law must be considered binding on all peoples. Its value must be appreciated and its correct application ensured; it must also be brought up to date by precise norms applicable to the changing scenarios of today's armed conflicts and the use of ever newer and more sophisticated weapons.

Pope Benedict XVI reiterates the Vatican Council II teaching that not everything becomes permissible once war commences. Are there actions in times of war that instead of furthering peace, actually prolong or intensify the fighting and violence?

B. Quotes from an article by Holy Cross Father Edward Malloy, former president of the University of Notre Dame, in the winter 2007 edition of Portland magazine, published by the University of Portland, a Holy Cross Fathers' school

It is a constant temptation in the face of unjust bloodshed and targeted death-dealing wreaked upon us to lash out in response, to take off the gloves, to play by new and tougher rules; we so easily become exactly like that which we hate....

In the years since I walked through Ground Zero, moved to tears by pain and courage, I have become ever more convinced that vehement rhetoric and misguided response to the repulsiveness of terrorist murder is creating a nation and a world where the genius of the ancient Christian (and secular) moral tradition on war and violence has been lost. The rise of torture as a legal form of interrogation is inarguable evidence of a terrible mistake we make in our battle against a terrible enemy....

Yet pacifism has no special message to offer in the face of terrorism or suicide attacks, and so we come finally to some form of just-war thinking in our struggle against the murderous shard of Islam that desires the death of the West.

I suggest that Al Qaeda and its fellows are criminals and should be treated that way, and our police and armed forces be equipped with resources and weaponry to control and bring to justice criminals who would harm the common good.

I suggest that just-war theory, for all its flaws and manifest limitations, is the most helpful and moral system we have in judging when and how to fight back against those who would murder the innocent.

I suggest that just-war theory is crucial especially to us, as a check against our own worst impulses.

And finally I suggest that the greatest victory of all for bin Laden and his fellow killers would be to turn us into the sort of killers they are, men who have abandoned the moral and rational constraints that have evolved through the centuries in the Christian tradition about war....

We have a responsibility to counter terrorism in a way that is consistent with the Gospel.

Father Malloy suggests it is possible to respond to terrorism in a way consistent with the Gospel. Discuss his proposal.

Under the Just War tradition outlined in the Catholic bishops of the United States' statement [*The Harvest Of Justice is Sown in Peace*](#) (1993), the following criteria must be met before lethal force may be used:

Just Cause: force may be used only to correct a grave, public evil;

Comparative Justice: the injustice suffered by one party must significantly outweigh that suffered by the other;

Legitimate Authority: only duly constituted public authorities may use deadly force or wage war;

Right Intention: force may be used only in a truly just cause and solely for that purpose;

Probability of Success: arms may not be used in a futile cause or in a case where disproportionate measures are required to achieve success;

Proportionality: the overall destruction expected from the use of force must be outweighed by the good to be achieved;

Last Resort: force may be used only after all peaceful alternatives have been seriously tried and exhausted.

Creating a New Climate in Society: Injecting Hope Into the Conversation

The Story of Cardinal Van Thuan: Making Hope Resound

“A Christian is a living Credo, continuing Jesus' work here on earth and making the song of hope resound in the midst of the world's trials.”

Those words were written by Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan when he was imprisoned by communist authorities in Vietnam. They are found in his book, *Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage*.

What could make the song of hope resound in the world today?

In his 2007 encyclical on hope, titled *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI recalled the Vietnamese cardinal, who died in September 2002. The pope wrote, “The late Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, a prisoner for 13 years, nine of them spent in solitary confinement, has left us a precious little book, ‘Prayers of Hope.’ During 13 years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, the fact that he could listen and speak to God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him after his release to become for people all over the world a witness to hope” (No. 32).

Cardinal Van Thuan, born in 1928, was jailed by Vietnam's communist regime in 1975 after becoming archbishop of Saigon, later renamed Ho Chi Minh City. He never was tried or sentenced; he spent thirteen years in solitary confinement. In 1988 he was released, but communist authorities would not allow him to function as archbishop. In 1991 he fled to Rome, after a Vietnamese government official “suggested” he leave. In Rome he went on to head the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Cardinal Van Thuan long wore a pectoral cross and chain he'd constructed in prison from wood and electrical wire, and hidden from his guards. Speaking in Los Angeles in 2000, he said he wore the cross and chain “not because they are reminders of prison, but because they indicate my profound conviction, a constant reference point for me: Only Christian love can change hearts; neither weapons, nor threats nor the media can do so.”

Encyclical on Hope

A cautionary note related to hope—to its loss, that is—is found in Pope Benedict's encyclical on hope. He said, “Our daily efforts in pursuing our own lives and in working for the world's future either tire us or turn into fanaticism unless we are enlightened by the radiance of the great hope that cannot be destroyed even by small-scale failures or by a breakdown in matters of historic importance. If we cannot hope for more than is effectively attainable at any given time or more than is promised by political or economic authorities, our lives will soon be without hope” (No. 35).

People who have hope “live differently,” Pope Benedict wrote.

Hope Is the Solution

“How in our fearful times can we remain hopeful?” That question was posed in 2001 by Cardinal Godfried Danneels. It is a crucial question, he proposed, because “hope is not located somewhere at the edge of human existence: it is its heart. If it is hit, the person dies.” Cardinal Danneels, Archbishop of Mechelin-Brussels, Belgium, spoke about this at Jesuit-run John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, shortly after the attacks of 9-11.

The cardinal asked, “May we still hope?” There is, he observed, “so much war and violence, genocide, unemployment, crime and terrorism.” Thus, “a sort of existential angst hangs in the air,” and “humankind wishes to fight back.” But “do we always choose the right weapon?” The cardinal, responding to his own question, said, “Often we become cold, businesslike, cynical or even indifferent. The real solution lies elsewhere. It is hope.”

How important is hope? Living by hope and conveying hope to others is of the essence, Pope Benedict XVI proposed when he visited the United States April 15-20, 2008. He called upon seminarians and

young people at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y., "to invite others, especially the vulnerable and the innocent, to join you along the way of goodness and hope."

The pope spoke powerfully at St. Joseph's about what happens when people encounter "mind-sets which stifle hope" and situations in which respect for human rights is lacking. Recalling his youth in Nazi Germany, he said,

"My own years as a teenager were marred by a sinister regime that thought it had all the answers; its influence grew—infiltrating schools and civic bodies, as well as politics and even religion—before it was fully recognized for the monster it was. It banished God and thus became impervious to anything true and good."

Does "the power to destroy" remain in the world today? Yes, Pope Benedict said. "To pretend otherwise would be to fool ourselves. Yet it never triumphs; it is defeated." This, he said, "is the essence of the hope that defines us as Christians."

With that in mind, the pope took care to note that when the whole Church, in its great, annual Easter Vigil liturgy, cries out to God for our world, it is not a cry "from despair or fear," but a cry "with hope-filled confidence." The Church cries out: "Dispel the darkness of our heart! Dispel the darkness of our minds!"

Is the virtue of hope an important factor in strategies for dealing with terrorists? How do you think that a strategy developed in an atmosphere dominated by hope would differ from a strategy developed in an atmosphere dominated by fear?

Summing Up

The use of torture in the treatment of prisoners or of people considered to be enemies is opposed in Catholic teaching. In the Church's eyes

Torture violates a human person's God-given dignity.

The end does not justify the means; torture is a moral issue.

Torture violates international humanitarian law.

The torture and crucifixion of Jesus, and the torture and abuse of many saints down through history also are never forgotten by the Church. What do we learn from the interrogation, flogging, and crucifixion of Jesus? How does the torture of Jesus and many saints remind us of our nation's response to threatening developments in the world today?

Some think that a sense of desperation began to influence people's thinking in the period after 9-11. What do you think?

The Catholic Church always wants to contribute to the world in positive ways and to help cast light on the most pressing issues of the times. That is why the Church and her people enter into the public discussion of an issue such as torture.

What constructive contribution do you think the Christian community or its individual members can make to the conversation about key issues our nation faces, such as its response to terrorism?

Concluding Prayer

“From now on, Lord,
Help me to bring your love everywhere:
to schools and hospitals,
to marketplaces and theaters,
to press and television.
No one should be deprived
of the environment of love.
Lord, love is the means you want me to use
to bear witness to you,
or you would have shown me another way.”

*(From “Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage,”
by Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan,
Pauline Books, 2002)*



CHAPTER 3 - DO CHRISTIANS LOVE THEIR ENEMIES EVEN NOW?



Revisiting Paul's Writings

"We know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully." (1 Corinthians: 13:9-12)

Introduction: A Uniquely Demanding Expectation

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." Luke's Gospel reminds Christians of every century that Jesus taught his followers to love their enemies (Lk 6:27). In every century, however, this has seemed, for reasons unique to the times, a very difficult teaching to follow.

Who first comes to mind when you reflect upon this teaching of Jesus?

Someone who harmed you personally or who doesn't appear to wish you well?

A person whose actions demeaned you?

Individuals or groups whose thinking differs so greatly from yours that you see no grounds for mutual understanding?

Religious extremists who plotted against our nation and harmed innocent people?

Prisoners accused of terrorist acts, detainees who may harbor information sought for purposes of self-defense?

No doubt about it: Loving enemies isn't easy! Simply contemplating the examples above makes that perfectly clear.

Today, in the 21st century, hauntingly vivid memories keep the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, very much alive for people. Anxiety surrounds the threat of additional terrorist attacks. Our society asks, are we doing all that can be done to deter terrorism? In this atmosphere, many undoubtedly feel that they know with surety who their enemy is.

It is within such an atmosphere that our conversation takes place, a conversation about what Jesus said in Luke's Gospel: that we ought to "love [our] enemies, do good to those who hate [us]." This may not be an easy conversation to pursue. After all, do we even begin to grasp what it means to desire only what is good for people who, we believe, do not desire the same for us?

Page through the Gospel of Matthew, and you'll hear this teaching of Jesus again. He says, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44-45). In Matthew, this teaching comes hard on the heels of the astonishing message communicated by the Beatitudes—a message that peacemakers, the gentle, the merciful and the poor in spirit truly are blessed.

It often is said that the Beatitudes present a vision for Christian living. The Beatitudes are not platitudes. The Beatitudes are a call to live as Jesus lived, and to approach the world around us in an entirely new way.

In *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI said, “Love is ‘divine’ because it comes from God and unites us to God: through this unifying process it makes us a ‘we’ which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the God is ‘all in all’.” (DCE 18)

As our conversation commences, spend just a moment reflecting on the following questions. Perhaps they can provide some initial direction for us.

In your own life or even the life of your nation, do you recall an occasion of reconciliation—a time when an “enemy” became a friend? What paved the way to reconciliation?

How does the torture of a detained terrorist, or turning a blind eye to such torture, represent a failure to love our enemies?

Getting Started: Love Interrupts the Spiral of Hatred

Love Recreates the World

There is a temptation to empty the words “Love your enemies” of meaning, to make them “innocuous.” Pope Benedict XVI, in *Deus Caritas Est*, said, “In a world where the name of God is sometimes associated with vengeance or even a duty of hatred and violence, this message [that God is Love] is both timely and significant.” (DCE 1)

Pope John Paul believed that loving “the one who offends you disarms the adversary and is able to transform a battlefield into a place of supportive cooperation.” Love of enemies helps to interrupt “the spiral of hatred and revenge” and break “the chains of evil which bind the hearts of rivals,” he wrote. For Pope Benedict XVI, “Love of neighbor . . . consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know.” (DCE 18)

Is love that powerful? Can love light up for us the passageways that actually lead toward peace?

Actions to Avoid, Actions to Undertake

Love isn’t just an idea. Rather, love is oriented to action. Love motivates actions of many kinds; in this way love becomes visible. How does love for enemies become visible?

First, this kind of love becomes visible through actions that are avoided.

At the end of October 2007, Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, discussed some actions to avoid. He said, “Christians are called to cooperate for the defense of human rights and for the abolition of the death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment” both in wartime and in times of peace. “These practices are grave crimes against the human person created in the image of God and a scandal for the human family.”

Second, this kind of love becomes visible through actions that are undertaken by us, and by our nation.

Just days after the attacks of September 11, 2001, someone posted these well-chosen words on a Franciscan-sponsored Web site that at the time was soliciting pledges for peace: “I will cultivate a place in my heart where the Spirit can teach me love of enemies.” Another person posted this message: “I will pray daily for world peace and show, by my own actions, that people have the ability to transform their own piece of this world.”

Can we, indeed, love our enemies? Ponder that question. Note that it is a question about “enemies,” but it also is a question about “love.” What “love” are we talking about? Often it is said that to love someone we must desire or will only the good for him or her. How do we “will what is good” for an enemy?

Love was the topic of Pope Benedict XVI’s first encyclical, “God Is Love.” He wrote:

Love is the light—and in the end, the only light—that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world -- this is the invitation I would like to extend (No. 39).

How can we love people who don’t love us—or who, at least, don’t seem to?

What does it mean “to love” people whom we do not know personally? What forms might such love assume?

Catholic Voices: What They Say About Loving Our Enemies

“In a time of terrorism and great fear, our individual and collective obligations to respect dignity and human rights, even of our worst enemies, gains added importance. Reaffirming the standards contained in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Accords would reflect the conviction that our nation must treat its prisoners as we would expect our enemies to treat our own military personnel.” (Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando, Fla., writing in June 2006 as chairman of the Catholic bishops of the United States’ International Policy Committee to then-U.S. Defense Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld)

“It is clear to us today that the only way to peace is by destroying enmity, not the enemy. (Should we destroy half the population of the world dissatisfied with the way things are? And how do we identify the enemy where terrorism is concerned?) Someone once took Abraham Lincoln to task for being too courteous to his enemies and reminded him that his job as president was to destroy them. Lincoln answered, ‘Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?’ ... Enemies are destroyed with armies, but enmity with dialogue.” (From the Good Friday 2003 homily by Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the papal household, to Pope John Paul II)

For Discussion: Perspectives on Loving Our Enemies

The following passages – one from a speech, the other from a homily -- are offered for your reflection, analysis and discussion.

A. Excerpt from a speech Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles gave in September 2003 at Regis University in Denver:

There was a story that circulated after the September 11 terrorist attacks about a Native American boy and his grandfather. The boy asks his grandfather, “Grandfather, how are you doing after what happened on Sept. 11?” The grandfather replies, “My son, I have two wolves within me. The first is the wolf of anger, vengeance and hatred. It sees the suffering of innocent people, it is saddened by the tremendous loss of life and wants to respond to the perpetrators in kind. The other one is the wolf of reconciliation. It too understands the horror of what has happened. It sees the children who have lost parents, the friends who have lost loved ones, and the fear and anxiety it created in peoples' lives.” And the grandson asks, “And which wolf will prevail?” The grandfather replies, “The one that I feed, my son.” The challenge before us as people of faith is to be that leaven in society that brings hope, healing and reconciliation. We live amid a world that yearns for this. Let us meet that challenge guided by the Spirit of God, who knows no boundaries and can accomplish in and through us infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

The people of the Church could serve society and the world at large as “leaven,” giving rise, as yeast does in bread dough, to hope, healing, and reconciliation, according to this passage. What are some ways of giving rise to hope, healing, and reconciliation in our world today?

B. Excerpt from the 2004 Christmas homily by Bishop Kenneth Angell, now the retired bishop of Burlington, Vermont. Bishop Angell’s sister-in-law Lynn and his brother David died when the passenger plane they were aboard crashed into the World Trade Center in New York September 11, 2001.

Peace really does spread from person to person, family to family, country to country. I believe we must seriously tithe for peace by supporting the needy of the world, especially the sick, the starving, the homeless, the hopeless, the tortured and war-torn. And this does not exclude our enemies. We must learn to love our enemies, literally, by understanding their needs, which so often cause aggression and war.

Bishop Angell believes that we must “learn” to love our enemies. What are some ways of learning this? Are there actions we might undertake that will lead us in this direction?

Becoming a People of the Beatitudes

Path to Peace

God's ways are mysterious, sure enough! Nonetheless, can't Christians say with surety that hating enemies isn't God's way, and that hating our enemies won't lead to peace? The 2006 letter that Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando, Florida, sent to then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, spoke about this. The bishop said, "A respect for the dignity of every person, ally or enemy, must serve as the foundation of the pursuit of security, justice and peace."

But in loving their enemies and taking the Beatitudes seriously, are Christians being naïve, or attempting to escape from the realities of the world as it really is?

Is It Realistic to Love Enemies?

"Christ's proposal [that we love our enemies] is realistic," Pope Benedict XVI said in remarks in St. Peter's Square February 18, 2007. These words, "love your enemies," represent "some of the most typical and forceful words of Jesus' preaching," the pope commented.

But why are these words realistic? Because they take "into account that in the world there is too much violence, too much injustice, and therefore this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with more love, with more goodness," Pope Benedict explained. What the Gospel says about loving our enemies "does not consist in succumbing to evil, as a false interpretation of 'turning the other cheek' claims, but in responding to evil with good and thereby breaking the chain of injustice."

For Christians this "is not merely tactical behavior but [is] a person's way of being, the attitude of one who is so convinced of God's love and power that he is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone," said Pope Benedict. He continued, "Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution,' a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power: the revolution of love, a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God which is obtained by trusting solely and unreservedly in his merciful goodness."

What the Beatitudes Offer Our World

Terrorism is indeed a reality of the world we live in today. But Christians who, even in this kind of world, love their enemies believe it is possible to counter terrorism "in a way that is consistent with the Gospel," to borrow words from Holy Cross Father Edward Malloy, former president of the University of Notre Dame.

The Beatitudes constitute a "countercultural truth." But when this truth has been followed, it has "changed our world," the Catholic bishops in the United States said, in a November 1999 message titled "Because God Loves You."

And Cardinal Roger Etchegaray said, in a 1991 speech in Washington, D.C., that a "volcano" erupted into a world searching for peace with "the Sermon on the Mount and its incandescent Beatitudes." The cardinal was president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at the time of his speech. He said that "merciful love is, perhaps, the greatest challenge to the hardness, to the ferocity, of our modern times."

Peace, said Cardinal Etchegaray, "is waiting impatiently for pioneers who will open up new ways."

Pope Benedict XVI believes that loving our enemies is not naïve, that it is a "realistic" way to approach our world. Discuss his reasons for saying this.

Conclusion: What Jesus Taught

Our enemies should be treated as if they were “another self”—treated as though we recognize in them people who are not simply different from us, but who, in so many ways, also are like us. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* makes this point. It says

“Inextricably linked in the human heart are the relationship with God—recognized as Creator and Father, the source and fulfillment of life and of salvation—and openness in concrete love toward man, who must be treated as another self, even if he is an enemy (cf. Mt 5:43-44)” (No. 40).

Once we recognize an enemy as “another self,” haven’t we begun to recognize that person’s God-given human dignity? Like us, that person is made in the image of God. And, if Christ died and rose to new life for all, haven’t his death and resurrection somehow touched that person too?

Christians love their enemies because they

Take the words of Jesus in the Gospel seriously.

Recognize their enemies’ human dignity.

Hope to discover the difference that a people of the Beatitudes can make for today’s world.

What Jesus taught his followers about loving their enemies adds up to a demanding, even difficult instruction for Christians of the 21st century, and of every century. In fact, Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles said in a September 2003 speech that “one of the greatest challenges put before us in the Gospels is the call to love our enemies.” But, he explained, “This is not a simplistic command to ignore the potential for evil in our world.... It is a call to reflect fully and honestly on the ethical dimensions of our responses to evil.”

What are some ways for individuals, families, parishes, communities and even nations to respond to evil with good?

Concluding Prayer (From Preface, *Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation II*)

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God,
we praise and thank you through
Jesus Christ our Lord
for your presence and action in the world.

In the midst of conflict and division,
we know it is you who turn our minds
to thoughts of peace.

Your Spirit changes our hearts:
Enemies begin to speak to one another,

those who were estranged join hands
in friendship,
and nations seek the way of peace together.

Your Spirit is at work when
understanding puts an end to strife,
when hatred is quenched by mercy
and vengeance gives way to forgiveness.

For this we should never cease to
thank and praise you. **Amen.**



CHAPTER 4 - ACTION STEPS TO ADDRESS TORTURE



Revisiting Paul's Writings

“You have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator.... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another.” (Col 3:9-10; 16)

Introduction: Motivated to Act

Every so often a news report astonishes us. Maybe it makes us aware, as if for the first time, of a challenging situation in the world around us. Maybe the report disturbs us and leaves us wanting to do something about the concern it brought to our attention.

Think back to a news report that affected you this way. Was there, for example, a report that awakened you as if for the first time to the number of abortions performed annually in the United States? Were you astonished by a report that detailed the profound effects of poverty on children? Was there a report on the plight of homeless people, human trafficking or elder abuse that really brought the problem into the light for you and left you feeling disturbed?

When a new awareness of a particular challenge emerges within us, it is common to feel personally challenged. At first we may just want to learn more about the issue. Soon, however, we'll very likely want to share our new awareness with others, to draw them into the circle of our concern. And before long we may begin to ask what we can do to address the problem personally or together with others.

At the time of this writing, torture makes an appearance almost daily in news reports. It is investigated, analyzed, debated. Torture even has become the subject of primetime TV dramas, with some even seemingly justifying it.

Most current news reports that discuss torture relate to how the United States and its allies have treated and interrogated captives of the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan, and others detained in an effort to deter future terrorist attacks. That is this discussion guide's primary concern. At the same time, an organization known as the Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition reminds us that torture currently is practiced by more than 150 governments of the world. Torture has not become merely a reality of the past. You may well know a torture survivor or find yourself sitting next to one while commuting to work.

Many people were astonished to learn of the ways prisoners were interrogated by U.S. personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Often, what people heard about this had an awakening effect upon them; it brought to the front of their minds a moral concern that up to that time hadn't come into their full view.

Not surprisingly, people began to ask what they could do about torture and prisoner abuse. Where could they learn more about this? How could they share their concern about this with others? What constructive action could they take—alone, or with others—to act upon their concern?

What to do about torture is the focus of this chapter. In keeping with the twin concerns that shaped our three earlier chapters, we'll examine

1. Ways to raise awareness of torture in and of itself, and to address its current use.
2. Ways to view torture within the larger context of Catholic social teaching and a consistent ethic of life, in hopes of establishing a less fearful and desperate tone within society, and thus helping to build a society less likely to resort to practices such as torture.

Perhaps we can begin this discussion by pondering the following question, which may give direction, and lend substance, to our investigations:

What can any of us do, alone or together, that makes a difference in matters of great public concern such as poverty, or abortion, or human trafficking, or torture?

Suggested Actions

Each of this chapter's ten brief essays discusses actions that individuals, families, groups, or parishes might take to raise awareness of torture in our world, to act upon this awareness, and to build the kind of world in which it can be hoped that torture will simply become a reality of the past. In what follows, it is suggested that we

1. Listen to the voices of torture survivors;
2. End the use of euphemisms for torture;
3. Educate, educate, educate—and pray!
4. Consider signing a statement of conscience; make our voices heard;
5. Pray for our enemies or those who consider us their enemies;
6. Overcome evil in the world with goodness;
7. Participate in interreligious dialogue; know who our enemies are NOT;
8. Prepare the young for a new world of dialogue;
9. Fast for justice and peace; foster solidarity with torture victims;
10. Promote justice in the world.

RAISING AWARENESS OF TORTURE

1. Listen to the Voices of Torture Survivors

A. Torture's Immense Toll

Invite a torture survivor to speak at your church, your school, or in another context. That is an action recommended by the Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition (TASSC) as a means of helping to abolish torture wherever it is practiced in the world today.

TASSC was established in 1998 by Ursuline Sister Dianna Ortiz, a U.S. citizen and missionary who, in November 1989, was tortured and raped in Guatemala. Sister Ortiz wrote in *The Blindfold's Eyes* (Orbis Books), her 2002 account of the suffering she endured and her long quest for justice, that she is “but one of millions worldwide who has ascended from the torture chamber.” She notes that according to one source, in 2001 “more than 150 governments engaged in torture or ill treatment.”

In *The Blindfold's Eyes*, Sister Ortiz said that “while working as a missionary in Guatemala, I was abducted by security forces and taken to a secret torture center in the capital city.” She explained, “People who were considered threats to the status quo were abducted and tortured at a rate of nearly two a day.”

As a teacher working with indigenous children, the security forces considered her a possible subversive, Sister Ortiz said. She said that with Vatican Council II in the mid-1960s and the subsequent 1968 meeting of the Latin American bishops in Medellin, Colombia, “the Church made a commitment to work toward social justice on behalf of the excluded, poor and underprivileged. The Guatemalan army, accordingly, ‘considered Catholics to be allies of the guerrillas,’ as Guatemala’s truth commission would find years later.”

After she was tortured, Sister Ortiz promised to “tell the world what I have seen and heard.” Yet, she writes, “every time I have spoken publicly about what happened to me in that secret prison in Guatemala, I have relived the experience.”

In an October 2003 Catholic News Service report by Tara Dix, Sister Ortiz said it was ironic that in Guatemala she had found herself, her mission in life, but that in Guatemala, she also lost herself in the darkness of despair, and “saw evil at its worst.”

Torture’s toll is immense, Sister Ortiz makes clear in her book. “The damage torture does can never be undone. If I survived for any reason, it is to say that.”

B. Visit the TASSC Web Site

“The mission of TASSC is to end the practice of torture wherever it occurs and to empower survivors, their families and communities wherever they are,” the Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition’s Web site explains. TASSC actively works on behalf of torture survivors, especially those seeking asylum and living in fear that they will be deported back to their nation of origin. It encourages local groups to aid torture survivors, noting that many live in poverty. You can make an online visit to TASSC at www.tassc.org.

“Survivors of torture live all over the world,” says TASSC. “Survivors of torture may be working in offices beside us, cleaning our homes and caring for our children.”

The TASSC Web site includes a helpful list of Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About Torture. You can access the questions and answers by clicking on the site’s “About Torture” section.

Truth Speakers is TASSC’s public speaking network, promoting education about torture by providing speakers for local groups. These speakers are torture survivors. Contact TASSC at 4121 Harewood Rd. N.E., Suite B, Washington, D.C. 20017, or by telephone at 202-529-2991.

2. End the Use of Euphemisms for Torture

How important is it to label a reality accurately—to call it what it is? Some commentators believe that by avoiding the use of certain terms in discussions of disturbing social realities, we actually avoid dealing with these realities themselves.

The use of “sanitized” or “evasive” terminology and “skewed definitions” in discussions of the handling of prisoners in the current combat against terrorism has a way of keeping torture itself from coming into full view, the Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition suggested, in a 2006 submission to the U.N. Committee Against Torture. TASSC called it “highly deceptive” for government officials to use such language.

Father Bryan Massingale, a Catholic moral theologian who teaches at Jesuit-run Marquette University in Milwaukee, also has called attention to the terminology sometimes used in discussions of major social realities, including torture. In a July 2007 speech to the Roundtable Association of Diocesan Social Action Directors, Father Massingale said, “Consider some contemporary euphemisms, that is, how we describe social reality in ways that disguise and misrepresent it to dull our awareness of injustice. We speak of ethnic cleansing instead of genocide; of gated communities instead of racially segregated neighborhoods; of neutralizing the enemy instead of killing; of downsizing instead of unemployment; of domestic surveillance instead of spying; of corporate restructuring instead of profit maximization; of enhanced interrogation techniques instead of torture.”

Enhanced interrogation techniques: This terminology, cited above by Father Massingale, undoubtedly represents the euphemism most frequently cited by commentators on the contemporary use of torture. And the second most frequently cited euphemism for torture is surely “the extraordinary rendition” of prisoners, meaning that the United States or its allies sends a prisoner into another nation’s custody for interrogation. Often, commentators point out, it is well known that these other nations practice torture.

But any terminology that waters down the reality of torture, or that masks its reality, may be a euphemism. Thus, “sleep management” might replace “sleep deprivation,” forcing prisoners to sit or stand in “stress positions” might mean forcing them to assume cruelly punishing postures for long periods.

Sometimes severe forms of interrogation are labeled “abuse,” rather than “torture”—apparently out of a sense that “abuse” somehow sounds less cruel. Some might say that a certain interrogation technique is “tantamount” to torture, as if to suggest that it is almost, but not quite, torture. And some commentators consider even the term “waterboarding” euphemistic—a term that they say does not fully call to mind the reality of a simulated drowning.

What do you think? Do you find it difficult even to use the term “torture” in discussions of the treatment of military prisoners held by your country? If so, why?

3. Educate, Educate, Educate – and Pray

Franciscan Father Kenneth Himes, chairman of the theology department at Jesuit-run Boston College, reports seeing a display at one time in the home church in Rome of the Sant’Egidio movement that vividly called attention to the issue of prisoner abuse. Sant’Egidio is a contemporary church movement

actively working for peace and justice in the world in quite specific ways—for example, helping to negotiate peace settlements between nations and campaigning against the death penalty.

Father Himes said that when he visited the church some years ago, a display had been set up “in one of the niches of the church that had been a side altar. The exhibit was set up like a prison cell, painted dark gray, with bars across the stained-glass window and various instruments of torture on display: chains, pincers, handcuffs, a whip, needles, blindfolds, etc.”

The display included “photos of a half dozen or so people who were recent victims of torture in different regions of the world,” Father Himes added. He said there also was “a placard on a small stand that was a prayer for healing and courage for victims.” Whenever Father Himes visited the church while the exhibit was up, he saw someone kneeling in prayer before it.

Raising awareness of the reality of torture is a first step to creating a consensus of the need to end this practice. Distributing reading materials about torture or sponsoring a workshop can raise awareness. You can show a film to raise public consciousness or write to television producers to protest programs which appear to justify torture.

You can keep abreast of current news and legislation related to torture by checking out the Web site of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), www.nrcat.org, for a list of other sites to visit as further sources of information about torture and activities undertaken to combat its use. And you can keep track of USCCB actions against torture by visiting the human rights page of their Web site, www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/libertyind.shtml.

What are some contexts in your church community—classes, small groups, etc.—where a religious educational effort might be undertaken to address torture and prisoner abuse in today’s world?

4. Consider Signing a Statement of Conscience

More than 18,000 concerned people have signed the “Torture is a Moral Issue” Statement of Conscience of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. The president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has endorsed this statement. Anyone can join them, simply by signing the Statement of Conscience online at www.nrcat.org. Here is the text of the statement:

Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions, in their highest ideals, hold dear. It degrades everyone involved—policy-makers, perpetrators and victims. It contradicts our nation’s most cherished ideals. Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable. Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation. What does it signify if torture is condemned in word but allowed in deed? Let America abolish torture now—without exceptions.

You can visit the Web site’s “People of Faith Act” section for a discussion of additional actions to take against torture. At the NRCAT Web site, in addition to its many other materials and offerings

- You can order an anti-torture banner to display in your faith community, or school, or in some other location, as a means of raising awareness of the reality of torture today. Just click on the site’s “People of Faith Act” section to order a banner with the message “torture is wrong” or “torture is a moral issue.”

- You'll find a sample letter to the editor to send to your local newspaper, opposing legislation that allows the use of practices commonly regarded as torture. (Click on "Don't let this be ignored!" on the NRCAT home page.)
- You can phone, e-mail, or write your representatives in Washington, D.C. (call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121, or go to www.house.gov and www.senate.gov to locate your representative) to urge them to support legislation banning torture

What are some ways for people of faith to make their voices heard in society on the issue of torture and its use today?

5. Pray for Your Enemies

Does it make sense to pray for those we perceive as enemies or who perceive us as their enemies?

"We need every day to pray for our enemies in order to avoid the toxin of hatred. Praying for our enemies enfolds this chaotic world into the harmony of God's kingdom," Jesuit Father Frederic Maples, a chaplain and spiritual director in Littleton, New Hampshire, wrote in a 2004 article for the Catholic News Service religious educational service Faith Alive! (January 12, 2004).

Jesus says in Matthew's Gospel, "Pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). Those words have been recalled frequently since September 11, 2001. Often it is said that in praying for our enemies, we begin to see them more clearly as persons—that prayer counters a temptation to demonize them. How important is this at a time when, as Holy Cross Father Edward Malloy, former president of the University of Notre Dame, wrote recently, "we are increasingly tempted to characterize our enemies as satanic, demented" (*Portland* magazine, winter 2007, p. 28).

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, says that the love of God and of neighbor is so firmly linked "that to say that we love God becomes a lie if we are closed to our neighbour or hate him altogether." In his [2001 Lenten message](#), Pope John Paul II said that when the Church speaks about loving enemies, it hopes to inspire within the human family "a new way of relating to each other—a somewhat difficult way, but rich in hope." He said, "To love those who have offended us is to disarm them and to turn even a battle-field into an arena of mutual support and cooperation."

One opportunity to pray for enemies arises in the Prayers of Intercession during the Mass. What form might an intercession for enemies take? In a 2002 article, Father Thomas Faucher of the Diocese of Boise, Idaho, cautioned against turning any prayer of intercession—including a prayer for enemies—into an editorial statement or brief sermon. With that in mind, he wrote, "All the parts of the Mass that we compose (homily, General Intercessions, announcements) must truly be anchored in the Gospel, must challenge everyone and must be written with theological care. That might be as simple as praying for 'those who consider themselves our enemies...'" (Catholic News Service, Faith Alive!).

Is there a way for your parish community to pray for those your nation regards as enemies or who regard your nation as an enemy, including prisoners accused to terrorist acts?

In a September 2002 homily, one year after the attacks of 9-11, Bishop John Kinney of St. Cloud, Minnesota, said, "As difficult as it is at this moment, we even pray for our enemies as Christ has

commanded us to do. We pray for all those whose hatred has become so great that they are willing to commit such horrible crimes against our common humanity. How is it possible for people to commit such horrible acts of cruelty and ferocity against other human beings? We must struggle beyond our anger to search out the reasons why they hate us so much.”

“Prayer is the breath of the soul. Without prayer, the soul suffocates,” Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, who was imprisoned for 13 years in Vietnam, wrote in his book “Prayers of Hope, Words of Courage.” What is risked by us when we do not pray for our enemies? Should we pray for captives of the battle against terrorism? How would such prayer provide breath for the soul?

**BUILDING A CULTURE OF DIALOGUE, JUSTICE AND PEACE:
CREATING A LESS FEARFUL, MORE HOPEFUL CULTURE**

6. Overcome Evil With Goodness

“We must be convinced that the power of good can overcome evil in each and every human heart and nation,” Bishop Paul Loverde of Arlington, Virginia, wrote in a pastoral letter for the fifth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in America.

Bishop Loverde cautioned that “revenge and resentment are deeply entrenched human emotions which we have all experienced.” He said, “As Catholics we know a higher road. We are called to respond to terrorism by imitating our Lord, the loving author of peace and justice. For Jesus said, ‘Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.’”

The Arlington diocesan offices are located near the Pentagon, one target of the 9-11 attacks. Bishop Loverde described the horror of the morning of 9-11. He said, “The memories I have ... will never leave me.”

How can peace be found in times such as these? “Appeasement,” Bishop Loverde wrote, “has never shown itself to be the friend of peace; therefore we must act in a just manner to confront the evil of terrorism, so that the world may be a safe and peaceful place.”

Here the bishop quoted Pope John Paul II, whose [2002 World Day of Peace message](#) said “that the shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness.” Are forgiveness and justice irreconcilable? In the pope’s words, “forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge, not of justice. In fact, true peace is ‘the work of justice’ (Is. 32:17).”

Several ways of responding to the attacks of 9-11 were proposed by Bishop Loverde. He urged respect for Muslims, many of whom live in his Northern Virginia area, even attending diocesan schools. (“Our respect is always for the dignity of the person. There is no dignity in terrorism,” the bishop said.) He encouraged authentic interreligious dialogue.

Other ways of responding were suggested by Bishop Loverde:

forming consciences “so that our response is in accord with the teachings of Jesus Christ”

praying, seeking divine guidance for our own actions and those of our nation

insisting that just-war criteria are met

doing all that we can to avoid “the taking of innocent human life in military undertakings aimed at eliminating the scourge of terrorism.”

Catholics know a higher road than that of revenge and resentment for responding to terrorism, Bishop Loverde said. Do you think that revenge and resentment often condition our society’s response to terrorists? Is there an alternative to this?

7. Participate in Interreligious Dialogue: Know Who Your Enemy Is NOT; Become a Peace Builder

Dialogue among the people of the world’s religions is essential in these times, the Vatican has said. Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, the Vatican’s equivalent of a foreign minister, spoke about this in an address October 1, 2007, at U.N. headquarters in New York. He said, “Dialogue among peoples of different cultures and religions is not an option; it is something indispensable for peace and for the renewal of international life.”

In the present era of globalization, the world grows smaller. The citizens of nations once considered distant from each other now find themselves in much closer contact. The forces of international trade, instant communications and rapid travel are major factors in the shrinking of the planet.

At the same time, globalization has given rise to increased nationalism in numerous places. Concerned that globalization will lead to a loss of respect for their unique identities, nations—and religions—are tempted in some cases to retreat into themselves.

Therefore, one goal of the dialogue between religions that Catholic Church leaders consider essential is to foster respect—a respect for each other’s God-given human dignity and a respect born of recognizing the right of each person to seek the truth for himself or herself—and to reach out and listen to each other on the basis of that mutual respect. The risk, otherwise, is that the people of differing religions, instead of moving toward a closer relationship, could, even in an era of globalization, drift further apart.

Interreligious dialogue also is regarded today as necessary for world peace. This is particularly important at a time when terrorists typically attach a religious justification to their actions. It becomes ever more vital that the world’s religions show themselves to be positive forces for goodness and peace; it is vital that religion not be thought of by anyone as a font of violence.

Pope John Paul II brought leaders of the world’s religions together a number of times to address the role of religion in promoting peace. Speaking at the Vatican to more than 200 representatives of some twenty religions and Christian denominations in October 2000, he said, “Either we learn to walk together in peace and harmony, or we drift apart and ruin ourselves and others.”

There is an additional benefit of interreligious dialogue to mention: Interreligious dialogue fosters a clearer awareness of who our enemies are NOT. Since the time of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many religious leaders have gone to great lengths to make clear that the world's Muslims as such are not enemies of the United States, or of the West, or of Christians.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, Ireland, spoke about this in November 2003, in a speech to the Catholic bishops of the United States. He said that "because the 'enemy' ... is difficult to define" in the fight against terrorism, "we have to be careful to avoid that everyone becomes a potential enemy," to avoid regarding the combat against terror as "a war against the other." For, said Archbishop Martin, "a society built on fear and mistrust of the other will never be a peaceful society."

Does your parish, diocese, or local Catholic college conduct an ongoing interreligious dialogue, perhaps one involving Jews, Catholics and Muslims? If so, might you attend or help to plan this dialogue? If not, how can you encourage your parish, diocese, or local Catholic college to initiate such a dialogue?

8. Prepare the Young for a New World of Dialogue

Cardinal Francis Arinze spoke in 2000 of the need to prepare young people to live in a new kind of world. Today, the education of young people ought to encompass "the fundamental values of human dignity, peace, freedom and solidarity," he said. Moreover, their education ought to evoke "the desire to know other people, to be able to share their sorrows and to understand their deepest feelings." Cardinal Arinze, then president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, presented these thoughts in his December 2000 message to the Muslim world marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

"Education for dialogue means nurturing the hope that conflict situations can be resolved through personal and collective commitment," Cardinal Arinze's message said.

"In accompanying young people along the highways of life, attention has to be given to the preparation required for living in a society marked by ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism," Cardinal Arinze said. Such education implies "that we broaden our vision to an ever wider horizon ... so that we can see humanity as a single family in both its diversity and its common aspirations."

Finally, the cardinal noted, "education for dialogue is not just for children and young people; it is also important for adults."

How can you support an educational effort or program in your church community that could focus for a period of time on the reasons why it is important to create positive relations with the "others" living alongside us in this globalized world, such as members of the worldwide Muslim community?

9. Fast for Peace and Justice: Foster Solidarity With Others

Two months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Catholic bishops in the United States urged Catholics to begin fasting one day a week. In a statement titled *Living With Faith and Hope After September 11*, the bishops said, “A successful campaign against terrorism will require a combination of resolve to do what is necessary to see it through, restraint to ensure that we act justly and a long-term focus on broader issues of justice and peace.”

Fasting was among actions the bishops encouraged. They said, “This fast is a sacrifice for justice, peace and for the protection of innocent human life.” Your group may want to consider dedicating one day during your examination of the torture issue to fasting.

What is fasting good for? It can be penitential; it often is regarded as a form of prayer and it facilitates conversion (turning our lives around). Fasting also can express solidarity with others.

The fact that fasting is a practice shared by Christians and Muslims was noted in November 2001 by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, D.C. (The cardinal retired as Washington’s archbishop in 2006.) Cardinal McCarrick said, during an interfaith commemorative service in Washington, that among its various purposes, fasting can “assure our Muslim brothers and sisters of our love and respect, and remind ourselves that it is never right to indict a whole people for the crimes of a few.”

Also in November 2001, Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles encouraged Catholics to “fast for an end to fear and terror, and that paths of peace might be found throughout the world.”

How can a sacrificial means of fasting that you, your family or a group in which you participate might undertake as a means of saving money to contribute to Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org) or some other organization that aids suffering people, work for justice and thus help to create a basis for peace in the world?

10. Act to Foster Justice in the World

“A more just world will likely be a more peaceful world, a world less vulnerable to terrorism and other violence,” the Catholic bishops of the United States said, in their November 2007 statement on political responsibility. The United States, they said, “has a unique opportunity to use its power in partnership with others to build a more just and peaceful world.” In a February 2002 statement regarding September 11, bishops said, “Without in any way justifying the unjustifiable, the U.S. must do much more to address policies and problems that provide fertile ground in which terrorism can thrive.”

When leaders and educators in the church call attention to the role of social development in the creation of world peace, they are echoing the voice of Pope Paul VI, who, in a 1967 encyclical titled *Populorum Progressio*, called development “the new name for peace.”

Pope Benedict XVI visited Turkey in November 2006, where he had this to say, in an address to the diplomatic community in Ankara: “We have come to realize that true peace needs justice to correct the economic imbalances and political disturbances that always give rise to tension and threaten every society.” The pope said, “More than 40 years ago the Second Vatican Council wrote that ‘peace is more

than the absence of war: It cannot be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of power between opposing forces ... but it is the fruit of the right ordering of things with which the divine founder has invested human society and which must be brought about by humanity in its thirst for an ever more perfect reign of justice.”

To promote international justice and peace and oppose the use of torture, go to USCCB’s Department of [Justice, Peace and Human Development Web site](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/libertyind.shtml). See the attached link, www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/libertyind.shtml .

Are you aware of actions carried out by your parish to foster social justice on the local level? What are some additional actions you might take to promote justice locally or on the larger national and international levels?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, my allotted portion and my cup,
you have made my destiny secure.
Pleasant places were measured out for me;
fair to me indeed is my inheritance.
I bless the Lord who counsels me; even at night my heart exhorts me.
I keep the Lord always before me;
with the Lord at my right, I shall never be shaken.

(Psalm 16:5-8)



APPENDIX
LETTER FROM BISHOP WENSKI TO SENATE ON TORTURE



Department of Social Development and World Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • FAX 202-541-3339

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

December 17, 2007

Dear Senator:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I am writing regarding proposed legislation in HR 2082, the Intelligence Authorization Act, to prohibit torture as an interrogation technique. I urge you to ensure that the United States continues to insist upon the highest ethical standards and fully complies with U.S. commitments to observe international law in its treatment of detainees whether here in the United States or abroad.

In 2005 our Conference of Bishops encouraged Congress to adopt provisions in the FY2006 Defense Appropriations Act prescribing uniform standards for the interrogation of persons under the detention of the Department of Defense and prohibiting cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment of persons under the custody or control of the United States government. We welcomed President Bush's endorsement of those provisions. When Congress adopted them, the United States began to answer the profound moral question of how we should treat detainees. This issue has a major impact on human dignity and on the way the United States is viewed abroad.

We hoped that through these recent actions the United States would regain the moral high ground on this issue. We also hoped that these favorable actions would not be jeopardized by any proposed or adopted legislation or other actions that would appear to once again decriminalize torture and abusive conduct. Any legislation adopted by the Congress must be unambiguous on these issues, just as the U.S. Army Field Manual is unambiguous in rejecting torture and cruel treatment as dangerous, unreliable and illegal.

As you know, the United States has long supported Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits "cruel treatment and torture" as well as "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment..." Our own troops and citizens benefit from the protections of this standard. As events continue to unfold in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, we recognize that combating terrorism remains a top priority for Congress and the Administration. We also recognize, however, that any report of prisoner mistreatment by members of the armed forces of the United States or its allies could seriously undermine U.S. efforts to defeat terrorism.

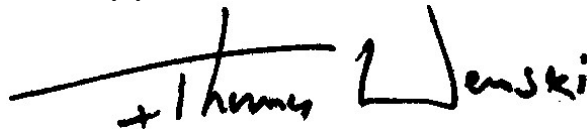
More importantly, prisoner mistreatment compromises human dignity. A respect for the dignity of every person, ally or enemy, must serve as the foundation of security, justice and peace. There can be no compromise on the moral imperative to protect the basic human rights of any individual incarcerated for any reason.

We share the concern of lawmakers and citizens for the safety of U.S. soldiers and civilians serving abroad in these times of great uncertainty and danger. In the face of this perilous climate, our nation must not embrace a morality based on an attitude that “desperate times call for desperate measures” or “the end justifies the means.” The inherent justice of our cause and the perceived necessities involved in confronting terrorism must not lead to a weakening or disregard of U.S. or international law.

In a time of terrorism and fear, our individual and collective obligations to respect dignity and human rights, even of our worst enemies, gains added importance. Reaffirming the standards contained in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions would reflect the conviction that our nation must treat its prisoners as we would expect our enemies to treat our own military personnel or citizens. We urge you to support proposed legislative language that would definitively implement America’s commitment to Common Article 3. Preserving the strong U.S. commitment to humane and ethical treatment of detainees would continue your efforts to restore the moral credibility of the United States at a crucial time.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on the just treatment of prisoners and detainees.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy

