NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

The Catholic campaign to end Iraq war

John Dear | Aug. 21, 2007 On the Road to Peace

As I ready myself for trial Sept. 6 for trying a year ago to persuade my senator to oppose the Iraq War, I'm happy that a new organization of Catholics opposed to the war has formed. On July 12, Catholics United, a nonpartisan organization, launched "Catholics for an End to the War in Iraq" to encourage U.S. Catholics to advocate for diplomacy, redevelopment and a "responsible withdrawal" of U.S. troops from Iraq.

What a positive step and a hopeful sign! I'm convinced, of course, that every American Catholic should actively oppose this evil war, with every priest and bishop leading the way. Alas, thousands of them continue to support the war, as I frequently hear on my travels around the country.

This notwithstanding Vatican condemnation of the war. Asked about Vatican policy on Iraq, in 2003, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said, "There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq. To say nothing of the fact that, given the new weapons that make possible destruction that go beyond the combatant groups, today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war.'"

Just a month ago, now as Pope Benedict XVI, he called upon the nations of the world to end these "useless slaughters."

Another sign of hope came June 23, 2007. In a historic letter, 14 Catholic members of Congress, including my great friend Dennis Kucinich, wrote an open letter to the U.S. Catholic bishops' conference, asking them to help Congress end the war in Iraq. Writing to Bishop William S. Skylstad, the conference president, and Bishop Thomas Wenski, head of the International Justice and Peace Committee, these members of congress asked for a meeting with the bishops' conference to discuss how members of Congress could work with the bishops to mobilize public action to end the war.

"Throughout our nation's history, Catholics have been at the forefront of the fight for social justice," said Congressman Tim Ryan. "We are proud to see that the [U.S. bishops' conference] feels as strongly on this issue as we do and we are prepared to work closely with them to reach out to fellow members of the faith."

"As Catholic members of Congress, we stand in unison with the Catholic church in opposition to the war in Iraq. Yet to attain the ideal of peace, we must not only speak the words, we must take action and that is why we are reaching out to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to work with them to bring an end to the war in Iraq," said Congresswoman DeLauro.

"We write today to urge you to help mobilize Catholic opinion on this, one of the most critical issues of our time. We have taken great comfort in the prophetic words of many Catholic leaders, relied on them for inspiration during our deliberations, and welcomed them in helping shape policy. If we understand the Catholic tradition correctly, thoughtful Church leaders around the world do not believe that the war in Iraq meets the strict conditions for a just war or the high moral standards for overriding the presumption against the use of force. We agree and seek an end to this injustice.

"Our concerns are rooted in both the political realm and in our faith and are manifest in our efforts to enact legislation that will bring an end to this war. Pope John Paul II framed the moral question well when he said: 'When, as in Iraq in these days, war threatens the fate of humanity, it is even more urgent to proclaim with a strong and decisive voice that peace is the only path for building a society which is more just and marked by solidarity. Violence and weapons can never resolve the problems of humanity.'

"Throughout our nation's history Catholics have been at the forefront of the fight for social justice. Now, at another critical moment, we respectfully urge the USCCB to join with us in mobilizing support for Congress' efforts to end the war."

Like these Congress men and women, we too should write the bishops in a spirit of non-violent love and ask them to put all their energies into stopping this immoral war and working for peace. Their address: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 3211 Fourth Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20017.

The new campaign calls upon political leaders to "bring together Iraq's warring factions in a multiparty conference that involves neighboring countries in the peace process" and to "provide funding and other support for reconstruction to be done by Iraqis in ways that benefit Iraqis," according to the new Web site: www.catholicsforanend.org [1].

The campaign also calls for the United States to withdraw combat troops from Iraq and asks that the United States refrain from maintaining a long-term presence there. Organizers invite Catholics to go online and sign the petition demanding these goals be met. The project has earned the eager support already of Network and Pax Christi.

Catholics account for one in four voters nationwide, and the war in Iraq now ranks as the single most pressing concern for Catholic voters, according to a recent poll. Chris Korzen, executive director of Catholics United, said in a statement "By joining the campaign, Catholics now have a unique opportunity to send a clear message to our leaders: our faith community demands immediate action on this issue, and will no longer tolerate an open-ended commitment in Iraq."

Organizers hope to have 20,000 signatures by Sept. 1, when they will deliver the petition to other members of Congress. Sign up now, and let's show Congress that Catholics around the United States oppose this immoral, useless, deadly, evil war on Iraq. Then, check out the week of nationwide local actions against the war, Sept. 14-21, at www.declarationofpeace.org [2]. And keep us in prayer as we take the stand for peace on September 6th.

John Dear is featured in a new DVD, "The Narrow Path," available from **www.sandamianofoundation.org [3]**, and his new book, *Transfiguration*, (Doubleday) is available online or at your local bookstore. For information, see: **www.johndear.org [4]**.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/02/2015 - 11:17*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/road-peace/catholic-campaign-end-iraq-war

Links:
[1] http://www.catholicsforanend.org
[2] http://declarationofpeace.org/
[3] http://www.sandamianofoundation.org
[4] http://www.johndear.org