

**COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO  
OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH ON IRAQ**

November 26, 2002

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We are sending you this letter on behalf of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. The Council is composed of chief leaders of the Greater Chicago area's Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish and Islamic communions and institutions. The churches, synagogues and mosques represented around our table embrace nearly four million men, women and children. Our seminaries prepare clergy and lay teachers for service in the Greater Chicago area, and throughout the world. The Council embraces a broad diversity of theological, ideological and political orientations. It is a microcosm of American religion as it exists in a great city that lies in the American heartland.

In years past, the Council has frequently been unable to find consensus on the role of military action as an instrument of peace. Some of our constituent institutions supported Operation Desert Storm; others did not. Some endorsed the use of force in Afghanistan; others urged alternative means to combat terrorism. Once again, we are confronted by the possibility of our nation going to war, and once again we find ourselves seeking to discern the will of God in this most grave of matters.

Some members of our Council hold to the faithful judgment that war in its very nature is an affront to God and can never be justified. Some believe that war can be justified under certain conditions. Among them are members who are convinced that the despotic regime that governs Iraq has offered sufficient grounds for military action against it. All believe that war, if undertaken, can be justified only under the most rigid of conditions. In the present situation, these conditions have not been met.

We still lack compelling evidence that Iraq is planning to launch an attack. Nor have diplomatic pathways been exhausted. We believe that there is ample time and latitude for pursuing alternatives that could avert warfare, saving untold thousands of lives.

Moreover, a singular focus on war draws attention from America's responsibility to provide guidance and material assistance essential to overcoming economic and social conditions that destroy human dignity. The world's only military superpower must strive to be a nation that promotes peace with justice. We ask you to lead our nation and the nations of the world in a new commitment which will offer long-term stability in the Middle East and around the globe.

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We thank you for bringing the issue to the United Nations and commend your assurances that war can be averted and will remain among the last options our nation might elect. We urge you to continue working with our allies and other nations to achieve greater security in the region while avoiding, if at all possible, a costly, dangerous and destructive war.

We join you in praying for the peace of America, and for world peace.

Respectfully yours,

The Members of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago

Bishop William Persell, President of the Council  
The Rev. Paul H. Rutgers, Executive Director