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Statements

Commitment to peace must guide response U.S. has right to defend innocent

October 8, 2001

The recent military strikes in Afghanistan should cause all Catholics to pray for a quick and just resolution to this conflict and to reflect seriously on the tragic consequences of war.

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, our country has a right to defend itself and to protect innocent populations from those who would harm them. We need to pray that justice and lasting peace will be achieved in the most nonviolent means possible.

We ask your continued prayers for President Bush and his advisors, that the decisions they make will be guided by a true commitment to peace and justice. As we know from Catholic moral teaching, if all nonviolent options are exhausted, the use of force should be limited to achieving military objectives. Our leaders should take every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians. We should exercise restraint where there is little probability of success and never use more force than is necessary.

We need to pray in a special way for the members of our military who have been called into harm's way, and for their loved ones who await their safe return. Let's also pray for the people of Afghanistan, especially the innocent families who may suffer deeply for the sins of others.

We need to reflect seriously about what's in our own hearts, too. As this conflict unfolds, we must continually ask ourselves: "Do we seek revenge or peace? Do we choose love or hatred?" May we always choose love.

May God bless our country and our leaders. And may God bless the world with peace.

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