

## **SACBC PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON THE GULF WAR 95/3/91)**

As we in the southern region of Africa look back on the events of the past seven months in the Middle East, we may well ask – is war really an effective way of resolving differences?

Already in the 1960's Pope John XXIII stated in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, that it did not make sense to maintain that war is a suitable method for repairing the violation of justice. He was speaking in the context of nuclear war. Pope John Paul II extends this thinking to modern warfare adding a warning that the use of arms could give rise to a new and perhaps worse injustices.

We have already seen the devastating effects on the ecology. The burning oil wells and the spillage in the Gulf are causing pollution of a kind never seen before. This alone gives the 'victory' a hollow ring.

While we are happy and relieved that war has ended, we find the euphoria in the West somewhat misplaced. True, the instruments of death and destruction are silent and the cleaning up operations are underway, and reconstruction will soon get started.

However, experience of conflict in our country teaches us that it is much more difficult to repair the damage to people's lives. Many are so shattered that they will need every human and divine help if they are to pick up the threads of their lives again.

As a service to the victims of the war, especially the children, we, the SACBC ask our Moslem and Jewish sisters and brothers to join hands with us, as we strive to put into practise the exhortations of the holy teachings of our faith:

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. (Sunan).

What is hateful to you; do not to your fellow man. That is the entire law; all the rest is commentary. (Talmud, Shabbat 31a).

All things whatsoever ye would that men should to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the word of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12 The Bible).

Issued by: Bishop Wilfred Napier,  
President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference  
On behalf of the Bishops' Administrative Board.