

# AMERICAN-CASSINESE CONGREGATION

OF THE ORDER OF SAINT BENEDICT  
SAINT JOHN'S ABBEY  
BOX 2015  
COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA 56321-2015

March 21, 2005

President

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500-0001

Mr. President:

On behalf of members of the Order of Saint Benedict (Benedictines), of nuns, monks (priests and brothers), Oblates of Saint Benedict, and the presidents of the sisters' federations and the men's congregations, I am sending to you the Benedictine Peace Statement 2005. This follows a Peace Statement signed by many Benedictines in fall, 2002.

This new Benedictine Peace Statement 2005 has been signed by 2,357 Benedictine women and men over the past four weeks. We present it to you, with a copy to Dr. Condoleezza Rice, to indicate our concerns that have resulted from this nation's involvement in the war in Iraq. As followers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we find the current situation irreconcilable with that gospel.

During this Holy Week we are deeply aware of the sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is revealed to us in the gospels as true God and true man, the revelation of his identity. He reveals God's universal love for all because Jesus Christ gave his life for all. Because we believe in the scriptures we also embrace Christ's continuing identity in the Body of Christ, in the vine and the branches imagery, in the Christ who is shepherd of the flock. That means Christ is still being scourged, crowned with thorns and crucified in his members who are persecuted, who are dealt with unjustly, who are denied the essentials of life while the minority well-to-do and powerful of this world ignore the accountability we will have to make to God for not caring.

We cannot relive in this Holy Week the sufferings of Christ and ignore the suffering of the people for whom he gave his life. That means all people, not just some, because his love, being God's love, is universal. All people have an equal claim on it. If we would not betray Christ, if we would not crown him with thorns, if we would not force him to carry a cross, if we would not nail him to the cross and watch him die, why do we tolerate this behavior perpetrated by our own actions or failure to act?

Today, the news media are quoting your statement concerning Terri Schiavo in which you said, "In cases like this one, where there are serious and substantial doubts, our society, our laws and our courts should have a presumption in favor of life." As a

powerful nation in this world we have a special obligation to model for the whole world what respect for life means, and that it includes all people, not Americans only. We present these peace statements to you so that policies that do not reflect gospel faith will be changed to give witness to Christ's truth that all life is to be respected, that all for whom he gave his life will recognize his love in all our national priorities, actions and policies.

We pledge our prayers for you in your very difficult and responsible position of service.

Sincerely in Christ,

Right Reverend Timothy Kelly, O.S.B.  
President, American-Cassinese Congregation  
of the Order of Saint Benedict

Copy: Dr. Condoleezza Rice