

CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN NONVIOLENCE

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The enclosed Pastoral Letter was read from all the pulpits of all the Romanian Catholic Churches in the United States on Sunday, March 9, 2003. It was also mailed to each Romanian Catholic in the U.S.

It represents an extraordinary moment in the Catholic Church in the U.S. and perhaps in the Church in the wider world. Here is a bishop with full Apostolic authority, who is an Ordinary not an Auxiliary, officially proclaiming to the people entrusted to his spiritual care by Christ, that direct participation in a war of their nation would be mortal sin and therefore explicitly and absolutely forbidden. This has never been done in modern Catholic Church history. It is the equivalent of a Church being informed by its highest spiritual authority that it is under a Divine mandate to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience, if legally required to participate in this war.

This is not a bishop functioning as a political lobbyist, nor is it a bishop simply giving good advice to his people, nor is it a bishop functioning as a theological disputant with anyone inside or outside his Church. This is a bishop declaring to those who are actively one with him by Baptism and by faith in Christ and His Church, that as the final authority in matters of faith and morals in their Community, this war is intrinsically evil and therefore morally impermissible for them.

It should be noted that Bishop Botean's declaration is binding only on the Romanian Catholics of the United States. No member of any other Catholic diocese in the U.S. or elsewhere is bound in conscience to accept or to adhere to it. Each bishop must stand before the Cross and discern what the truth of Jesus Christ is on this situation for himself as bishop and for those souls specifically given to him for their sanctification and eternal salvation. No bishop can bind in conscience Catholics of another diocese—except for the Bishop of Rome or all bishops formally gathered in an Ecumenical Council.

BISHOP BOTEAN IS A SUMMA CUM LAUDE GRADUATE IN PHILOSOPHY OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA. ANY SUGGESTION, THAT HE CANNOT APPRECIATE THE COMPLEXITIES, NICETIES AND NUANCES OF THE CONCEPTS PRESENTED TO JUSTIFY A WAR AS BEING IN CONFORMITY WITH CATHOLIC TEACHING, IS PATENTLY WITHOUT MERIT.