

**Dr Stephen M. Collechi
Director, Office of International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth St NE
Washington DC 20017-1194**

**Cc: Bishop Thomas G. Wenski, Bishop of Orlando and Chairman, USCCB
Committee on International Policy
Cc: Bishop William S. Skylstad, Bishop of Spokane and President, USCCB
Cc: Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, formerly of Detroit**

**Justice and Peace Committee
Our Lady of the Lake Parish
8900 35th Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98115**

July 18th, 2007

Dear Dr. Collechi,

We are responding to your letter of June 11 in which you reply to our letter of April 15th, addressing Bishop Thomas Wenski and Bishop William Skylstad on the topic of the USCCB's public action relating to the pursuit of peace in Iraq.

We are grateful that you take the time to address our parish-based justice and peace group on this important issue. In writing to you today, however, we are expressing our disappointment in your response and our continued concern that the USCCB is not perceived as a strong and decisive voice for peace. Although, as you state, in recent months the USCCB has met with senior officials of the Department of State to urge a responsible transition in and withdrawal from Iraq, a strong public stance by the US Catholic Bishops against violence and war is not visible either to the US Catholic laity or the population at large.

Furthermore, we respectfully disagree with the point you made in your letter to us that "many distinctive voices echoing similar messages are very effective in moving public policy", and we continue to believe that at this juncture a strong and united Catholic voice for peace is essential to help bring about a critical change in policy that must lead to peace. The leadership of our Bishops is needed now more than ever in this respect. We continue to invite your discernment on this idea and urge you to consider preparing a USCCB statement that will address all the Catholic faithful in the US. It is with great interest that we learned of the July 3rd letter to the USCCB from Catholic Members of Congress requesting a meeting with the Bishops to discern the best course of action to bring about an end to the war in Iraq. We hope and pray that the USCCB will respond in a powerful and prophetic manner to this call for action.

Our small group continues to seek ways to pursue peace and work against all the violence that so marks our nation. Some of us will be attending the upcoming Pax Christi annual conference in Seattle, August 10-12, 2007, and we intend to continue there with this pursuit of unity and action for peace in Iraq, among our Catholic brothers and sisters.

Yours sincerely,

**The Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Parish Justice and Peace Committee
Seattle, Washington**