A Meditation in Time of War
20 March

On March 20th three years ago, the United States with several other nations initiated military action against Iraq. That war persists with effects that have wreaked havoc in that land and across the world. We, as citizens of the United States, are implicated in that war.

As Christians, however, we cannot rejoice in that action. March 20th to mourn. As of war, presumed our meditation must be a sorrow. With minds and attend to all sufferings that action.

Combatants, if not killed or maimed, suffer acute psychological damage. Children whose lives are touched directly or indirectly by war are traumatized. Family relations deteriorate. Human rights are sacrificed in the name of military necessity. Enemies are dehumanized and demonized. Farmlands are rendered useless. Ecological systems are disrupted. Economies are shattered, impoverishing many while enriching a few. Ancient sites and sacred places are desecrated. Truth is suppressed in the interest of propaganda. Histories of peoples are recomposed and mythologized. In short, the sufferings and devastation of war are virtually incalculable.

Some insist, to be sure, that the sufferings of war are far less than the evil against which a defensive military action is directed. However, as Christians, we must keep before us those central mandates of our faith: love your enemies; do not repay evil with evil; do good to those who hate you; overcome evil with good; those who love God must love all others.

We, as Christians, confront a formidable moral challenge: how to struggle against the injustices and evils in this world, but in a manner that honors the mandate to do good to all even as God loves the whole creation. In this spirit, our meditation of sorrow must end with a firm commitment to become peacemakers and to create effective ways and means to teach all the nations, including our own, how they might turn their swords into plowshares for once and forever.