

The capture of Saddam Hussein resulted from a combination of intelligence and bravery. Crafty spies learned his whereabouts, and courageous soldiers apprehended him. It is the fervent hope of all reasonable people that the arrest of this inhuman dictator will speed the causes of peace and stability in Iraq.

The Vatican has called for a fair trial for Hussein, and a spokesperson for the pope has restated his opposition to the death penalty.

For the most part the Vatican has remained silent about events in Iraq ever since the war began. Earlier this year, Pope John Paul II tried to stop the United States from going to war. Vatican officials argued that there was not sufficient cause for our country to strike first, and that an invasion would bring dire consequences: It would leave many soldiers and civilians dead and wounded, it would destroy the infrastructure of Iraq, increase hardship on its civilians, provoke the harassment of Iraqi Christians, increase civil conflict, weaken the United Nations and invite more terrorism in other parts of the world. These things happened, but the Vatican kept quiet; nobody said, "I told you so." Once war was engaged, the Vatican realized that if the United States left Iraq too soon, more havoc would be unleashed.

Doing what is right is difficult in international affairs and in personal affairs. Especially when circumstances change, it is hard to know how to do God's will. Most of us want to do God's will. But sometimes God's will is not clear, or it is clear but it seems unpleasant, or it seems that God's will has changed on us.

Today's reading from the Letter to the Hebrews implies that God's will may change. It says Jesus came into the world not to offer the sacrifices of the old law, but in order to do God's will. Under the old law of Moses, God's will was for people to offer sacrifices. But now, God's will was different: it was for Jesus to sacrifice himself and to consecrate his people.

This week we will celebrate the birth of our Savior. We can celebrate well if, like Jesus, we desire only to do the will of God. God's will may surprise us, it may challenge us, and it may cause us to think differently about global politics or personal decisions. We learn God's will through prayer, study and conversation. We do God's will with courage. We experience God's will in peace.