

**PEACE VIGIL TALK**  
**By The Reverend Tony Perrino**

On behalf of Clergy and Laity United for Justice and Peace, I want to welcome you to this vigil for peace, a vigil of fasting and prayer, for redemption and reconciliation. Today we join thousands of citizens — who'll be gathering across our land this weekend — to urge our elected officials to end the war in Iraq! Our time will be spent mostly in silence, but I have been asked to say a few words of introduction.

I approach the matter with these staggering statistics reported by The National Priorities Project in Washington, D.C. For \$361 billion we could build 3½ million homes (some in New Orleans), OR we could provide comprehensive Health Insurance for the 46 million persons who do not have that basic protection against illness, OR we could hire more than six million teachers — for a whole year!

Those are only a few of the things we could do with \$361 billion — the significance of which is that, as of yesterday, our government will have spent more than \$361 billion on this unprovoked war in Iraq! And who knows how much more money, and more importantly, how many more lives will be sacrificed to that tragic misadventure before the matter is finally resolved?

We are here today to express our deep sorrow at such a misappropriation of our national resources and to tell our government leaders that we can no longer tolerate such a paranoid allocation of our tax dollars.

And to those who say it's a matter of survival, we say "Survival of what?" If we unleash the devastation of war — on a nation which has not attacked us, the "shock and awe" our Air Force proudly visited upon the citizens of Baghdad, we are no better than the enemy we're fighting!

Most significantly — if it is peace we pursue, the enormous military power we possess — is irrelevant to the purpose we profess! Exercising its awesome destructiveness has only bred more hatred toward us and more terrorism — by fueling the Arab world's fear of U.S. Imperialism.

The inescapable reality we face, today and every day, is that we can never win the hearts and minds of people with bullets and bombs.

As people of faith we are here to pray for an end to this tragic war — now!