

## **IRAQ: “Why Are We Here?”**

The following reflection was written by Tom Fox on Nov. 25, 2005, the day before he was abducted in Baghdad. His body was found 10 March '06.

CPT's [Christian Peacemaker Teams's] Iraq team went through a discernment process to compare the project's compelling benefits with its costs (financial, psychological, physical). The exercise led me to the larger question: Why are we here?

My understanding of God's message is that we are to take part in the creation of the Peaceable Realm of God. Again, if I understand the message of God, how we take part in the creation of this realm is to love God with all our heart, our mind and our strength and to love our neighbors and enemies as we love God and ourselves. In its essential form, different aspects of love bring about the creation of the realm.

I have read that the word the Greek Bible translates as “love” is “agape.” I have read that this word is best expressed as a profound respect for all human beings simply for the fact that they are all God's children. I would state that idea in a somewhat different way, as “never thinking or doing anything that would dehumanize one of my fellow human beings.”

As I survey the landscape here in Iraq, dehumanization seems to be the operative means of relating. U.S. forces in the quest to hunt down and kill “terrorists”--kill, as a result of this dehumanizing word, not only “terrorists,” but also innocent Iraqis: men, women, children in various towns and villages.

It seems as if the first step down the road to violence is taken when I dehumanize a person. That violence might stay within my thoughts or find its way into the outer world and become expressed verbally, psychologically, structurally or physically. As soon as I rob a fellow human being of his or her humanity by sticking a dehumanizing label on them, I begin the process that can result in torture, injury and death.

“Why are we here?” We are here to root out all aspects of dehumanization that exists within us. We are here to stand with those being dehumanized by oppressors and stand firm against that dehumanization. We are here to stop people, including ourselves, from dehumanizing any of God's children, no matter how much they dehumanize their own souls.