

## **DEAR PRESIDENT BUSH, THOU SHALL NOT KILL. – January 2006**

— By Richard L. Kiniry

Oh, and yeah, you shouldn't torture people either.

I know you claim to be part of the Christian religion, but where did you get your value system? I'm serious; I don't recognize the moral standards of any religious tradition in your actions. While I may not agree with your politics, I am concerned about you and your moral development and its effect on the nation. People without a moral center are called sociopaths and although I am not a trained psychologist, I'm starting to suspect that you and your government may be moving close to that diagnosis.

I'm pretty sure the Methodist Church (in which you claim membership) does not hold lightly the Commandment about not killing people and yet you have a notorious record as a killer. Besides your record as the Governor who signed the most death warrants, you entered the White House planning to go to war against Iraq. Which, in case you didn't put two and two together, meant killing people, and there is no indication that you morally struggled over the possible deaths. This week you rather casually admitted that at least 30,000 Iraqis have died as a result of your war. Supposedly 75% of the living Iraqis say they are satisfied with the result of your invasion, but has anyone asked the dead and their families?

Then there is that other Commandment about not lying. Reporters and pundits may, for the sake of a stable society, not actually shove the facts into your face, but we remember the lies you told. You may find a dozen ways of characterizing those lies as premature judgments or misinterpretations but a rose by any other name is still a lie. Just recently you said we did not choose this war; Saddam Hussein did. Is that just rhetoric and not actually a lie? Before this war Saddam Hussein was running scared, changing houses every night, his army of little threat. And what is this about "we" not choosing the war; you choose to go to war, not "we," nor Saddam Hussein.

No doubt every politician has to dance around the truth to keep all the people happy, but you so blatantly lie, confident that the American people are too polite or simple to admit their President is a liar. You may justify your lying as necessary for national defense, but do you not worry about what your example is doing to the moral fiber of the country.

And now you, members of your government, and your stooges in the press have spent months attempting to legitimate torture as American policy. My religion takes as a core value respect for the worth and dignity of every human being. I believe your religion does also and yet your excuses for permitting torture are excuses of convenience - convenient ways of subverting religious belief and moral values. Because your enemies do not wear uniforms and use terroristic methods of war, they can be considered scum who don't deserve respect. My humanist religious tradition is often accused of being morally relativistic, especially by your religious allies, and

yet if anything your administration is identified with relativistic morality - you suspiciously and conveniently stretch worthy values to legitimate the interest of your business and ideology friends.

Recently your Internal Revenue Service has threatened religious groups that challenge political policy. That makes sense. If religious groups were true to their declared values, they might be gathering mobs outside the White House demanding respect for historic American values. It is the job of religious organizations to challenge injustice, dishonesty, and cruelty in the public and personal arena. That is one of the reasons we have Separation of Church and State; so that religion will have the freedom to challenge authority.

You came into office saying you wanted to raise the moral tone, but while appearing to champion morality, you have lowered the moral intelligence of the country. The one benefit of your actions is that we all have to face how low our public moral standards have become and we can be hopeful that change is coming.