

Don't glorify death and dismemberment

By promoting military service to high school students in “Local Catholics steer to Naval Academy” (CR, May 3), our archdiocese tragically deceives Catholic youth. This deception subjects young Catholics to a difficult dilemma – join the military, and then choose between rationalizing away Christ’s message or going to jail.

American bishops formalized this deception in 1917 when they created the Catholic War Council to encourage young Catholics to prove their “Americanism” by enlisting to fight Germans. (The German bishops, meanwhile, were telling German Catholics that it was “just” to kill Americans.) The U.S. bishops tempered this militarism in 1983 with their pastoral letter “The Challenge of Peace,” but certain bishops remain committed to promoting military service.

These bishops, including Cardinal Edwin F. O’Brien, emphasize the service component of the military while conveniently omitting any mention of the perpetration of violence and death that is integral to it, or that John Paul II declared U.S. involvement in Iraq to be an unjust war.

Service to others is central to our Catholicism. But ours is not service that delivers violence, death, dismemberment and hatred.

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