



Living in the Light of Christ's Peace

A CONVERSATION TOWARD
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

A PASTORAL LETTER BY

MOST REVEREND JOHN C. WESTER, ARCHBISHOP OF SANTA FE

In Summary

In September 2017, I traveled to Japan and visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was a somber, sobering experience as I realized that on August 6, 1945, humanity crossed the line into the darkness of the nuclear age. Historically, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has been part of a peace initiative, one that would help make sure these weapons would never be used again. I believe it is time to rejuvenate that peace work.

We need to sustain a serious conversation in New Mexico and across the nation about universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament. We can no longer deny or ignore the dangerous predicament we have created for ourselves with a new nuclear arms race, one that is arguably more dangerous than the past Cold War. In the face of increasing threats from Russia, China, and elsewhere, I point out that a nuclear arms race is inherently self-perpetuating, a vicious spiral that prompts progressively destabilizing actions and reactions by all parties, including our own country. We need nuclear arms control, not an escalating nuclear arms race.

Further, we need to figure out concrete steps toward abolishing nuclear weapons and permanently ending the nuclear threat. If we care about humanity, if we care about our planet, if we care about the God of peace and human conscience, then we must start a public conversation on these urgent questions and find a new path toward nuclear disarmament.

The Archdiocese of Santa Fe has a special role to play in advocating for nuclear disarmament given the presence of the Los Alamos and Sandia nuclear weapons laboratories and the nation's largest repository of nuclear weapons at the Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. At the same time, we need to encourage life-affirming jobs for New Mexicans in cleanup, nonproliferation programs, and addressing climate change.

Pope Francis has made clear statements about the immorality of possessing nuclear weapons, moving the Church from past conditional acceptance of "deterrence" to the moral imperative of abolition. Instead of just a few hundred nuclear weapons for just deterrence, we have thousands for nuclear warfighting that could destroy God's creation on earth. Moreover, we are robbing from the poor and needy with current plans to spend at least \$1.7 trillion to "modernize" our nuclear weapons and keep them forever.

The Catholic Church has a long history of speaking out against nuclear weapons. The Vatican was the first nation state to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. As Pope Francis declared, "We must never grow weary of working to support the principal international legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons." It is the duty of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, the birthplace of nuclear weapons, to support that Treaty while working toward universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament.

In his reflections on the Gospels, Pope Francis often highlights the nonviolent Jesus and the themes of "blessed are the peacemakers" and "love your enemies." He has called on us to practice Gospel nonviolence. Therefore, I invite us to step into the light of Christ and walk together toward a new future of peace, a new promised land of peace, a new culture of peace and nonviolence where we all might learn to live in peace as sisters and brothers on this beautiful planet, our common home.

Your brother in the Light of Christ's Peace,

+ John C. Wester

Most Reverend John C. Wester

Archbishop of Santa Fe

January 11, 2022

4000 St. Joseph's Pl NW

Albuquerque, NM 87120