

# *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace*

A CONVERSATION  
TOWARD  
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

A PASTORAL LETTER BY  
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*“My peace is my gift to you”  
(John 14:27).*

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# Living in the Light of Christ's Peace

## A CONVERSATION TOWARD NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

In a single plea to God and to all men and women of good will, on behalf of all the victims of atomic bombings and experiments, and of all conflicts, let us together cry out from our hearts:



NEVER AGAIN WAR,  
NEVER AGAIN THE CLASH OF ARMS,  
NEVER AGAIN SO MUCH SUFFERING!  
MAY PEACE COME IN OUR TIME  
AND TO OUR WORLD.

-Pope Francis, Peace Memorial (Hiroshima), Sunday, 24 November 2019

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# Introduction

## The Journey from Hiroshima to New Mexico to Christ's Peace

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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. We can now kill billions of people instantly and even destroy the world in a flash. The reality of this evil becomes very real as you walk through Hiroshima and Nagasaki today.

In one exhibit, I read about school children in Hiroshima who, on that fateful morning in August 1945, ran to the windows, attracted by a bright light. I wonder how many were running to their deaths, either instantaneously incinerated or dying later in agonizing pain. Normally, light brings new life and clearer vision. Not that day. Sadly, the light generated by the first nuclear explosion used in war brought only destruction and death.



Figure 1: Hiroshima after the atomic bomb

Then I remembered when I was a schoolboy in October 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I recall looking up at the sky on my way home from school to see if any Russian planes were about to drop atomic bombs on me. I became so frightened that I ran all the way home. Those Japanese school children had no time to be afraid. They had no time to run and there was no home left to run to. Later, when I walked through the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and stood before the incinerated Genbaku Dome, it dawned on me that I

had not really thought about the possibility of nuclear war since then or felt fear over the nuclear threat. Those childhood days when we practiced for nuclear war by hiding under our desks or locating the nearest bomb shelter are dim memories. But Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought them all back vividly.

Within a day or two of my return to New Mexico, some friends came to visit me in Santa Fe. I took them to the New Mexico History Museum. There I saw a different exhibit with a different story. With Hiroshima and Nagasaki still fresh in my mind, I read about the Manhattan Project, the development of the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories, and the creation of the nuclear bombs that were eventually dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I viewed these displays much differently than I had on a previous visit, before I had been to

Japan. It was eerie to see photos of Little Boy and Fat Man, the nicknames given to the actual Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, when I had just been in those very places only weeks before. I knew now what those bombs did to our Japanese brothers and sisters.

When my friends and I stepped outside into our beautiful city, I noticed how peaceful it was. Santa Fe—the City of the Holy Faith of St. Francis of Assisi, a faith which inspired him to be an instrument of Christ’s peace to the world—is home to Nuestra Señora de la Paz, Our Lady of Peace. I felt disturbed by our history, the long, dark legacy of building the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, and many thousands of nuclear weapons since then. We are the people who designed and built these weapons of mass destruction. We were the first to use them. We must be the people to dismantle them and make sure they are never used again.

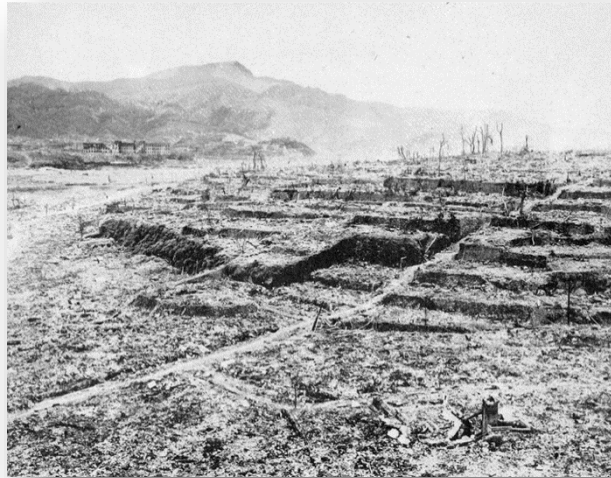


Figure 2: Nagasaki after the atomic bomb



Figure 3: The burnt "Madonna of Nagasaki" found at the destroyed Urakami Catholic Cathedral

That day in Santa Fe, it seemed blasphemous to me that we could create a weapon with the potential to destroy our entire planet, our common home, given to us by a loving God to be cared for and nurtured so that all might live in God’s peace. It became clear to me that the Archdiocese of Santa Fe must be part of a strong peace initiative, one that would help make sure that these weapons would never be used again, that we would never destroy our planet or one another, that instead we would clean up our poisoned land and fund global institutions that resolve all international conflicts through nonviolent means such as dialogue and negotiation.

Historically, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has been part of a peace initiative, especially given our role in the creation and manufacture of nuclear weapons. I believe that it is time to rejuvenate that peace work. I

think we need to sustain a serious conversation in New Mexico and across the nation about nuclear disarmament. We can no longer deny or ignore the dangerous predicament we have created for ourselves. We need to start talking about it with one another, all of us, and figure out concrete steps toward abolishing nuclear weapons and 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.

There are many who have engaged this important conversation through their writing and witness. I think of my friend Father Louis Vitale, OFM, the former Franciscan provincial of the Santa Barbara Province, who has spent over 50 years speaking out for nuclear disarmament, organizing peace vigils, and engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience actions at the Nevada nuclear weapons test site. He was one of the founders of *Pace e Bene*, an organization that develops educational programs for nonviolent living with an emphasis on spirituality.

I also think of Sister Megan Rice, who died in 2021 at the age of 91 and spent several years in federal prison for entering the nuclear weapons facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee while calling for nuclear disarmament. During her widely publicized sentencing, Sister Megan called the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki “the greatest shame in history.” She said her only guilt was that she had waited 70 years before speaking out publicly and taking action against nuclear weapons.

There are other amazing prophetic people around the world speaking out for peace. In this letter, I am calling for a renewed commitment to the cause of peace in our world and specifically, to engage a spirited conversation that will lead to nuclear disarmament throughout our world. If we do not, then who will? If not now, then when? As I believe Dietrich Bonhoeffer said during World War II, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”<sup>1</sup> We cannot sit back and be silent in the face of our ongoing preparations for nuclear war. Instead, we need to talk with each other about how we can abolish these weapons and ensure that they are never used again.

“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil.  
God will not hold us guiltless. Not to  
speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”  
Attributed to Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In this letter, I hope to encourage such a conversation here in New Mexico and around the country. I offer these reflections prayerfully, in a spirit of peace, to share my thoughts and concerns in the hope that one day we will stop building these weapons, disarm our state and our world, and embark on a new future without the fear and terror of the nuclear threat.

I will reflect on Pope Francis’ recent pilgrimage to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and his recent calls for nuclear disarmament, as well as other statements by the Second Vatican Council, other popes, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic of Bishops. I will look at the teachings and example of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who called us to be peacemakers and to love our enemies. I will reflect upon the current situation of nuclear weapons and why we urgently need to begin the process of nuclear disarmament now, and I will suggest some possible solutions and concrete actions that we can all take.

I hope and pray that this state-wide dialogue will be part of a national and even international conversation that will help pave the way toward nuclear disarmament. I invite us all to turn in prayer to the God of peace and ask for the gift of nuclear disarmament. I invite us to turn

to one another in peace and talk and listen to each other about the ongoing development of these weapons and how we might end the work of nuclear war preparation. 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.





# Part I

## We Are Called to Be Peacemakers: The Teachings of Pope Francis, the Church, and the Gospels

In recent years, Pope Francis has led the Church in a dramatic shift away from supporting nuclear weapons and deterrence to denouncing them as immoral and calling for their complete abolition. In 2017, Pope Francis publicly declared that nuclear deterrence is “morally unacceptable.” This pronouncement was made during the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development’s international symposium on “Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament.”

On November 24, 2019, Pope Francis visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and met with atomic bomb survivors and prayed for nuclear disarmament. He spoke passionately about the “black hole of death and destruction” that nuclear weapons could cause today and called for a “world without nuclear weapons.” He added, “The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today, more than ever, a crime not only against the dignity of human beings but against any possible future for our common home...The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possession of atomic weapons is immoral.”<sup>2</sup>

After laying a wreath at the memorial to all the bombing’s victims in Nagasaki, the pope declared the nuclear arms race creates a false sense of security, poisons international relations, and said these weapons are wasteful and environmentally damaging. “In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered and the fortunes made through the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance and sale of evermore destructive weapons are an affront crying out to heaven,” Pope Francis said. He added:

Convinced as I am that a world without nuclear weapons is possible and necessary, I ask political leaders not to forget that these weapons cannot protect us from current threats to national and international security. We need to ponder the catastrophic impact of their deployment, especially from a humanitarian and environmental standpoint, and reject heightening a climate of fear, mistrust, and hostility fomented by nuclear doctrines.<sup>3</sup>

Two months later, in January 2020, Pope Francis again called upon all nations to work toward a world without nuclear weapons. His appeal came two days ahead of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, also known as the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. The accord is the first legally binding international agreement to prohibit signatory states from developing, testing, producing, stockpiling, stationing, transferring, and using or threatening to use nuclear arms. Referring to their indiscriminate impact, Pope Francis said nuclear weapons “strike large numbers of people in a short space of time and provoke long-lasting

damage to the environment.” He encouraged all nations and people to “work with determination to promote the conditions necessary for a world without nuclear arms.” The best way to do this, added the pope, is by “contributing to the advancement of peace and multilateral cooperation, which humanity greatly needs.”

On August 6, 2020, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nuclear attacks on Japan, Pope Francis once again called “for prayer and commitment to a world completely free of nuclear weapons.”<sup>4</sup>

With his visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and his strong plea for nuclear disarmament, Pope Francis has begun a global conversation on nuclear disarmament. I want to encourage us here in New Mexico to continue that conversation, that we might stop building nuclear weapons, dismantle our arsenals, and do our part to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

For many decades now, the church has condemned nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear war. Support for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is solidly rooted in Catholic social teaching on war and peace and has been emphasized by Pope Saint John XXIII, the Documents of Vatican II, Pope Saint Paul VI, Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and most recently our current Holy Father, Pope Francis. In addition, the U.S. Bishops have advocated for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

“Nuclear weapons must be banned... true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust.”

*Pacem in Terris, no. 112*

Just a year after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, in his 1963 Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, which read the “Signs of the Times” to explore relationships between nations, Pope Saint John XXIII reflected on the arms race which continued to build after the U.S. dropped the nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He noted the damaging outcomes of the arms race and called for its end along with a ban on nuclear arms, and a true and lasting peace based on mutual trust. He said:

...We are deeply distressed to see the enormous stocks of armaments that have been, and continue to be, manufactured in the economically more developed countries. This policy is involving a vast outlay of intellectual and material resources, with the result that the people of these countries are saddled with a great burden, while other countries lack the help they need for their economic and social development ... Justice, right reason, and the recognition of man's dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race...Nuclear weapons must be banned... But this requires that the fundamental principles upon which peace is based in today's world be replaced by an altogether different one, namely, the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust.<sup>5</sup>

Then, a year later, the 1964 Pastoral Constitution by the Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* reflected on how the Church interacts with current issues facing our world, such as the arms race, in the light of our faith. In exploring

peace among nations, the cost of amassing weapons of war, and its impact on the poorest among us, *Gaudium et Spes* states:

...the arms race in which an already considerable number of countries are engaged is not a safe way to preserve a steady peace, nor is the so-called balance resulting from this race a sure and authentic peace. Rather than being eliminated thereby, the causes of war are in danger of being gradually aggravated. While extravagant sums are being spent for the furnishing of ever new weapons, an adequate remedy cannot be provided for the multiple miseries afflicting the whole modern world. ...The arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree. <sup>6</sup>

In a February 1981 address to scientists of the United Nations University in Hiroshima, Pope Saint John Paul II spoke about how the wounds inflicted at Hiroshima and Nagasaki profoundly influence all of humanity. He observed, "Our future on this planet, exposed as it is to nuclear annihilation, depends upon one single factor: humanity must make a moral about-face."<sup>7</sup>

Then, Pope Saint John Paul II, while addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1982, noted that the Church's teaching on the arms race has been consistent and clear. He said:

Since the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the "atomic age," the attitude of the Holy See and the Catholic Church has been clear. The Church has continually sought to contribute to peace and to build a world that would not have recourse to war to solve disputes. It has encouraged the maintenance of an international climate of mutual trust and cooperation. It has supported those structures which would help ensure peace. It has called attention to the disastrous effects of war. With the growth of new and more lethal means of destruction, it has pointed to the dangers involved and, going beyond the immediate perils, it has indicated what values to develop in order to foster cooperation, mutual trust, fraternity and peace...Each successive Pope and the Second Vatican Council continued to express their convictions, introducing them into the changing and developing situation of armaments and arms control... [the Church] has deplored the arms race, called nonetheless for mutual progressive and verifiable reduction of armaments as well as greater safeguards against possible misuse of these weapons. It has done so while urging that the independence, freedom and legitimate security of each and every nation be respected.... the constant concern and consistent efforts of the Catholic Church will not cease until there is a general verifiable disarmament, until the hearts of all are won over to those ethical choices which will guarantee a lasting peace.<sup>8</sup>

In 1983, considering the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union and the subsequent nuclear arms race following World War II, the U.S. Bishops wrote a pastoral letter entitled *The Challenge of Peace*, which offers a map for applying Catholic teaching to the U.S. nuclear policy at the time. The bishops stated, “The need to rethink the deterrence policy of our nation, to make the revisions necessary to reduce the possibility of nuclear war, and to move toward a more stable system of national and international security will demand a substantial intellectual, political, and moral effort.”<sup>9</sup>

The U.S. Bishops continued their reflection on war and peace in *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, a 1993 statement on peacemaking in a post-Cold War world. They state, “...as Bishops of the United States, we have made similar appeals in the past when we stated, ‘the moral task is to proceed with deep cuts and ultimately to abolish these weapons entirely.’”<sup>10</sup>

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, for his World Day of Peace Message on January 1, 2006 entitled *In Truth, Peace*, addressed nuclear weapons and the sense of false security they provide. He said:

How can there ever be a future of peace when investments are still made in the production of arms and in research aimed at developing new ones? It can only be hoped that the international community will find the wisdom and courage to take up once more, jointly and with renewed conviction, the process of disarmament, and thus concretely ensure the right to peace enjoyed by every individual and every people.<sup>11</sup>

He goes on to say that the notion that nations need nuclear weapons to maintain peace is

“How can there ever be a future of peace when investments are still made in the production of arms and in research aimed at developing new ones?”

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

“not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. The truth of peace requires that all –whether those governments which openly or secretly possess nuclear arms, or those planning to acquire them– agree to change their course by clear and firm decisions and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament. The resources which would be saved could then be employed in projects of development capable of benefiting all their people, especially the poor.”<sup>12</sup>

During his General Audience on May 5, 2010, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said, “Progress toward a collaborative and secure nuclear disarmament is closely connected with the full and rapid fulfilment of the relevant international commitments. Peace, in fact, rests on trust and on respect for assumed obligations, not only on the balance of power.”<sup>13</sup>

The Statement on Nuclear Disarmament by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on International Justice and Peace, February 14, 2020, affirms

“...the constant concern and consistent efforts of the Catholic Church will not cease until there is a general verifiable disarmament, until the hearts of all are won over to those ethical choices which will guarantee a lasting peace.”

Pope Saint John Paul II, 1982

the efforts of Pope Francis to address the nuclear threat. “The words of Pope Francis serve as a clarion call and a profound reminder to all that the status quo of international relations, resting on the threat of mutual destruction, must be changed. As Bishops of the United States, we have made similar appeals in the past when we stated, ‘the moral task is to proceed with deep cuts and ultimately to abolish these weapons entirely.’”<sup>14</sup>

In his encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti* (October 2020), Pope Francis states:

International peace and stability cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation, or on simply maintaining a balance of power... In this context, the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons becomes both a challenge and a moral and humanitarian imperative... With the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, let us establish a global fund that can finally put an end to hunger and favor development in the most impoverished countries.<sup>15</sup>

Just a few months ago, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State for the Vatican, while addressing a conference on disarmament on November 17, 2021, stated that security “cannot be based on the threat of mutual destruction and fear, but must find its foundation in justice, integral human development, respect for human rights, care for creation, promotion of educational and health facilities, dialogue and solidarity.” He went on to say, “‘The ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons is both a challenge and a moral and humanitarian imperative,’ ... and ‘a practical approach should promote reflection on a multilateral and cooperative ethic of peace and security that goes beyond the fear and isolationism that permeate many current debates.’”<sup>16</sup>



*Christ Breaks the Rifle*, by Otto Pankok

### **“To Be True Followers of Jesus Today:” Pope Francis’ Message on Peace and Nonviolence**

As we trace the Church’s development of doctrine from provisional acceptance of deterrence to its call for the abolition of all nuclear weapons, I note also that Pope Francis has, for the first time, invited the Church to understand Jesus and the Gospels in light of “nonviolence,” as a fresh, new way to live out our discipleship in the nuclear age. In fact, in his World Day of Peace Message on January 1, 2017, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the annual Peace Message to the World, Pope Francis issued a message entitled *Nonviolence—*

*A Style of Politics for Peace.* In his historic statement, Pope Francis addressed the violence of the world and Jesus' way of nonviolence and called us to make "active nonviolence our way of life."

"Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering," Pope Francis wrote, "because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all." <sup>17</sup>

Jesus lived and taught nonviolence. Pope Francis wrote, Christ

...offers a radically positive approach. He unfailingly preached God's unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (cf. Mt 5:44) and to turn the other cheek (cf. Mt 5:39). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (cf. Mt 26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. He walked that path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility (cf. Eph 2:14-16)."

"To be true followers of Jesus today includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence," Pope Francis wrote. He quoted Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who said that the command to love our enemies "is the magna carta of Christian nonviolence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil..., but in responding to evil with good and thereby breaking the chain of injustice."

*"To be true followers of Jesus today includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence."  
Pope Francis*

"An ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue," Pope Francis continued. "I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons; nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incompatible with such an ethics," he concluded.

Pope Francis ended with a solemn call that we put the active nonviolence of Jesus into practice:

May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.... Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict... I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.... Every such response, however modest, helps to build a world free of violence... May we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming

nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home.

In light of Pope Francis' call to live the nonviolence of Jesus, I invite us to reflect on how Jesus practiced nonviolence and how we can do the same here in New Mexico and across the United States.

**“Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?”**

When He began His public ministry, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). In part, He was saying the days of violence, injustice, war and empire are coming to an end. We are invited to welcome God’s reign of peace and live in God’s universal love and nonviolence here and now.

In the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus commanded us to be peacemakers and to love our enemies, saying: “Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called the sons and daughters of God” (5:9). “You have heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ but I say to you: ‘offer no violent resistance to one who does evil’” (5:38-39). “You have heard it said, love your countrymen and hate your enemies. But I say love your enemies and pray for your persecutors, then you will be sons and daughters of the God who lets the sun rise on the good and the bad and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust” (5:43-45). In these teachings, Jesus says that God is a peacemaker, and since we are God’s sons and daughters, we are peacemakers too, not warmakers. He says that God practices universal nonviolent love, and since we are the sons and daughters of the God of universal nonviolent love, we practice universal nonviolent love, too. There are no exceptions, no justifications for warfare, and no “just war theory.”

*“Jesus was not an impractical idealist. He was the practical realist.”*

*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Many would question these teachings as naïve, impractical, and idealistic. But as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said so well when he wrote about this call to love our enemies, “Jesus was not an impractical idealist. He was the practical realist.”<sup>18</sup>

Dr. King also stated:

Probably no admonition of Jesus has been more difficult to follow than the command to “love our enemies.” Some have sincerely felt that its actual practice is not possible. Others contend that Jesus’ exhortation to love one’s enemies is testimony to the fact that the Christian ethic is designed for the weak and cowardly, and not for the strong and courageous...In spite of these insistent questions and persistent objections, this command of Jesus challenges us with new urgency. Upheaval after upheaval has reminded us that modern humanity is traveling along a road called hate, in a journey that will bring us to destruction and damnation. Far from being the pious injunction of an utopian dreamer, the command to love one’s enemy is an absolute necessity for our survival. Love even for enemies is the key to the solution of the problems of our world...Our responsibility as Christians is to discover the meaning of this command and seek passionately to live it out in our daily lives.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. King taught that nonviolent love toward our enemies is the only practical, realistic, political solution left today. Even if we do not fully understand Jesus' commandment, as His followers we have no choice but to try to put His teachings into practice here in New Mexico and in our nation. To love our enemies means we have to begin the process of ending our preparations to kill them, including our preparations to drop nuclear weapons on them. It means seeing every human being as a sister and brother, and doing everything we can not to harm them, but to actively love them, including the people of Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and others.

It is interesting to note that shortly after Jesus commanded His disciples to love their enemies, according to Luke's account (9:54-55), they asked if they could kill their enemies. They wanted to call down hellfire from heaven on their enemies, as Elijah did. This passage is particularly important for us here in New Mexico.

Jesus had begun His walking campaign to Jerusalem where He would confront systemic injustice and was crossing the border between Judea and Samaria. The Judeans and Samaritans hated each other, engaged in violent attacks upon each other, and were at war. Jesus deliberately passed among them because He loved everyone unconditionally and wanted to show His followers how to love their enemies.

Along the way, one Samaritan village refused to welcome Jesus because He was heading toward Jerusalem where their enemies, the Judeans, lived. When James and John heard this, they asked Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" (Luke 9:54). Jesus had just commanded them to practice universal love and creative nonviolence, to love even their enemies, yet here they were—ready to kill their enemies. They preferred the teachings of the prophet Elijah, who called down fire from heaven and killed his enemies.

Luke says simply, "Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village," (9:55).

Jesus rebuked the disciples because they wanted to call down fire from heaven. He absolutely forbids even the thought of it. He rejects violence of all kinds, including retaliation and warfare. He will not tolerate it among His followers. Jesus wants us to be as nonviolent and loving as He is, come what may. We are not allowed to kill people.

Two thousand years later, here in New Mexico, we not only want to call down hellfire from heaven, but we have also actually built the most destructive weapons in history to do it, and then we used them to kill hundreds of thousands of sisters and brothers in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then, we have built tens of thousands of more nuclear weapons that can destroy the entire human race. We have surpassed James and John, who wanted to call down hellfire from heaven. We have done this and continue to prepare to do this.

I suggest that Jesus is rebuking us. If He rebuked James and John for wanting to call down fire from heaven, He certainly rebukes us for having done it and preparing to do it again.



I think we need to hear the great rebuke of Jesus. Nuclear weapons are not the will of the nonviolent Jesus, and it is time that we took His rebuke seriously. If we listen, we can hear

“If Jesus rebuked James and John for wanting to call down fire from heaven, He certainly rebukes us for having done it and preparing to do it again.”

Most Reverend John C. Wester  
(+JCW)

Jesus’ voice crying out today: Stop building nuclear weapons, do not prepare for nuclear war, dismantle your nuclear weapons, and welcome God’s reign of universal love and peace.

In the next chapter of the Gospel, Jesus sends the 72 disciples ahead of Him to start a conversation on peace (Luke 10:1-12). “I am sending you like lambs among wolves,” He says. Then Jesus tells them to greet every household with words of peace and to offer them blessings of peace, as they proclaim God’s reign

of peace. Later when they return, they are rejoicing because it worked. When Jesus sees that they obeyed and fulfilled His mission of peace, He too rejoices.

When He gets close to Jerusalem, however, Jesus breaks down crying, saying, “If today you had only understood the things that make for peace” (Luke 19:41-42). He can see that their culture of violence and injustice would only lead to greater violence, which came true in the year 70 when the Romans marched in and destroyed Jerusalem. Today, with the threat of nuclear weapons, Jerusalem has become the world. We are heading toward total destruction unless we learn the things that make for peace.

In Jerusalem, Jesus takes nonviolent, direct action to confront systemic injustice in the Temple. His nonviolent action provokes His arrest. We could ask ourselves: if Jesus was upset by the Temple, what would He say about our nuclear weapons production?

At the Passover meal, Jesus takes the bread and says, “My body broken for you.” He takes the cup and says, “My blood shed for you.” Jesus does not say, “Go break their bodies for me; go shed their blood for me.” Instead, He says, “My body broken for you, my blood shed for you, do this.” Here Jesus offers the new covenant of nonviolence. Those of us who partake of the Eucharist enter into the way of the nonviolent Jesus, which is the preference of suffering and dying, rather than killing.

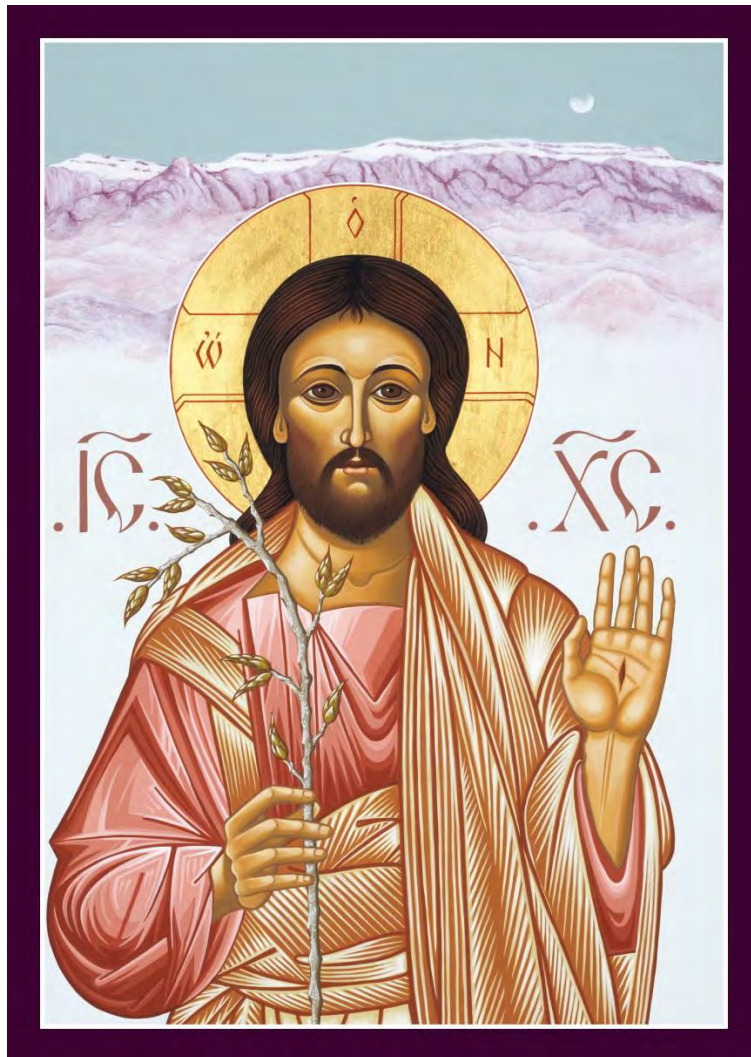
“We’re heading toward total destruction unless we learn the things that make for peace.”

+JCW

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as the soldiers arrive to arrest Jesus, we are told that Peter violently takes up the sword to defend Jesus. He thinks his violence is justified. As he goes to strike the soldiers, Jesus issues His final commandment: “Put down the sword.” These are the last words of Jesus to His community, to the church, before He was killed; it is the last thing they heard Him say. Suddenly, they realize how serious Jesus is about nonviolence, and so they all abandon Him.

Throughout His arrest, trial, torture, and execution, Jesus maintains His nonviolence, and even forgives those who killed Him. When Jesus rises from the dead, He is still nonviolent. He does not call for revenge or retaliation. Instead, Jesus greets His friends with words of peace, and sends them out again to carry on His mission of peace and nonviolence.

I invite us to have a conversation together about what it means to follow the risen, nonviolent Jesus who calls us to be peacemakers, put down the sword, and love everyone, even the enemies of our nation. Certainly, these commandments challenge us to face the violence that is being prepared in our name here in New Mexico, and to start the process of nuclear disarmament so that no one ever again calls down hellfire from the sky. As Dr. King concluded, “May we hear and follow Jesus’ words—before it is too late.”<sup>20</sup>



*Nuestro Salvador de las Sandias, © by Fr. William Hart McNichols,  
<http://frbillmcnichols-sacredimages.com>*

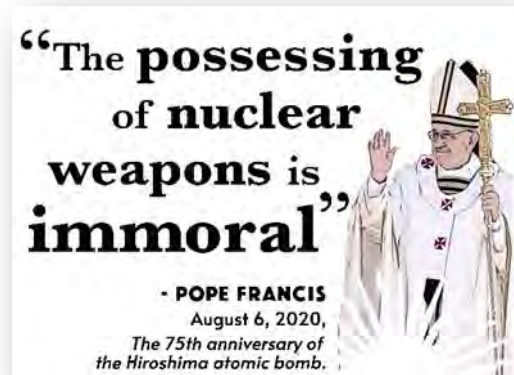
“I invite us to have a conversation together about what it means to follow the risen, nonviolent Jesus who calls us to be peacemakers, put down the sword, and love everyone, even the enemies of our nation.” +JCW

## Part II

# Why We Need to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe is named for the “Sacred Faith” of Saint Francis, the patron saint of the environment and tireless advocate of peace and for the poor. Pope Francis takes his papal name from Saint Francis of Assisi and has repeatedly called for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Ironically, the U.S. government probably spends more on nuclear weapons within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe than any other diocese in the country and perhaps the world.<sup>21</sup>

Pope Francis has been unequivocally clear: “The possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral.”<sup>22</sup> In the past, the Vatican took the position that the possession of nuclear weapons could be justified for the purpose of “deterrence” in preventing others from using them. However, in 2015, the Holy See declared that:



...it must be admitted that the very possession of nuclear weapons, even for purposes of deterrence, is morally problematic. While a consensus continues to grow that any possible use of such weapons is radically inconsistent with the demands of human dignity, in the past the Church has nonetheless expressed a provisional acceptance of their possession for reasons of deterrence, under the condition that this be “a step on the way toward progressive disarmament.” This condition has not been fulfilled—far from it. In the absence of further progress toward complete disarmament, and without concrete steps toward a more secure and a more genuine peace, the nuclear weapon establishment has lost much of its legitimacy... Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition.”<sup>23</sup>

In reality, the United States and the USSR (now Russia) never possessed their huge stockpiles for the sole purpose of deterrence. Instead, their nuclear weapons policies were always a hybrid of deterrence and nuclear war fighting ability, both of which threaten global annihilation to this very day. For example, after the Obama Administration concluded a high-level Nuclear Posture Review in 2010, the Defense Department declared that, “...[t]he new guidance requires the United States to maintain significant counterforce capabilities against

potential adversaries. The new guidance does not rely on a ‘counter-value’ or ‘minimum deterrence’ strategy.”<sup>24</sup>

This continuing implementation of nuclear warfighting capabilities was augmented by the Trump Administration’s 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. It added a more usable low-yield submarine-launched warhead; new sea-launched cruise missiles to replace those withdrawn in the early 1990s; and continuing retention of the United States’ largest 1.2 megaton<sup>25</sup> nuclear bomb which was previously slated for retirement.<sup>26</sup> The Biden Administration is now preparing a new Nuclear Posture Review scheduled for release in early 2022. It is not expected to reverse the nuclear powers’ quest for new nuclear warfighting capabilities.

Moreover, the U.S. and Russia continue to keep thousands of nuclear weapons instead of just the few hundred needed for only deterrence. This endless search for competitive warfighting capabilities is driving the huge nuclear weapons “modernization” programs of the nuclear powers, in which the U.S. plans to spend at least \$1.7 trillion over the next 30 years.<sup>27</sup>

All of this is contrary to the abolition of nuclear weapons that Pope Francis directs us to undertake. Given the prominence of nuclear weapons in the land entrusted to our spiritual care, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has a special responsibility to advocate for and provide guidance toward a future world free of nuclear weapons, as our savior Jesus Christ and the Sacred Faith of Saint Francis would want us to do.

We ask for their blessings on the long road ahead toward a future world free of nuclear weapons.

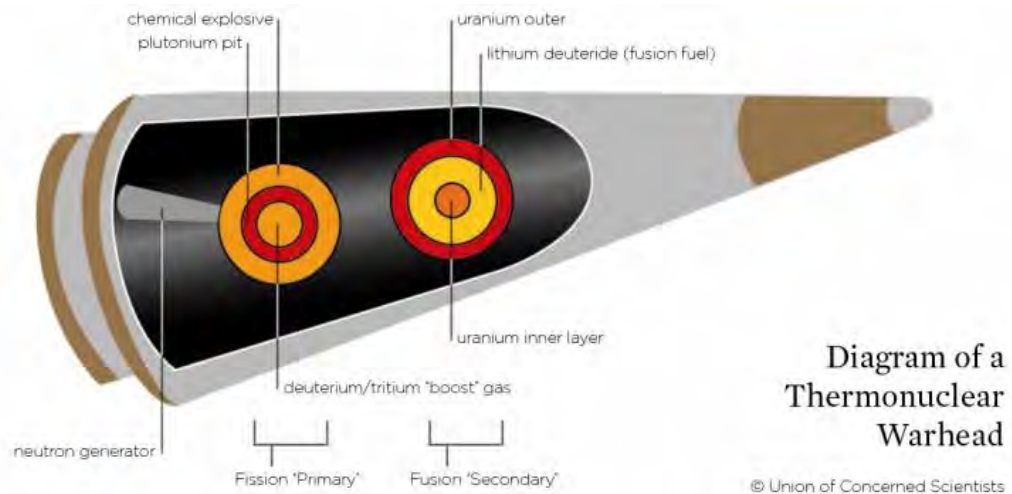
### **The New Nuclear Arms Race**

There is a widespread debate among historians about why the United States dropped the atomic bomb in the first place. Many, such as Gar Alperovitz, argue now that the Japanese Emperor Hirohito was about to surrender on August 15, 1945 and that the U.S. government knew this. Indeed, many key people in the Truman Administration were against the atomic bombing and knew they did not need to drop these horrific bombs to end the war. Instead, some historians now claim the U.S. dropped these weapons of mass destruction on Hiroshima and Nagasaki not to end the war, but to prove to the Soviets that the United States was militarily superior, thus beginning the nuclear arms race. Indeed, some historians now suggest it was not until the early 1950s that the War Department created the myth “the atomic bomb saved lives,” and that it prevented the possible death of one million Americans who *might* have died in an invasion that November. That myth remains widespread today and needs to be discussed.<sup>28</sup>

Today the entire human family, and indeed the whole planet, is in peril because we did not sufficiently learn from the first nuclear arms race. We are now entering a second nuclear arms race as indicated by:

- The termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces and Open Skies Treaties between the U.S. and Russia.

- The U.S. still has 3,750 nuclear weapons in its active stockpile, a number sufficient to destroy the planet many times over, while dismantlement has slowed to only some 75 warheads a year. The U.S. now plans to rebuild existing nuclear weapons with new military capabilities and produce newly designed warheads as well.



New production plants are expected to be operational until at least 2075 and new heavy bombers, submarines, and ballistic and cruise missiles are being built to deliver the new nuclear warheads. Key to all this is the expanded production of up to 80 plutonium “pit” bomb cores each year at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Seventy-two percent of the Lab's \$4 billion fiscal year 2022 budget is for core nuclear weapons research and production programs.<sup>29</sup>

#### Central Mission of Los Alamos National Laboratory



Los Alamos  
NATIONAL LABORATORY  
Operated by Los Alamos National Security, LLC for NNSA

UNCLASSIFIED

NNSA

- Russia has also been engaged in a major “modernization” program. President Vladimir Putin has announced new advanced nuclear weapons that he claims the U.S. will never be able to defend against. International tensions are increasing over a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine, with one U.S. senator openly stating that nuclear war is not off the table.

- China is building hundreds of new hardened silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles and has tested what appears to be a new hypersonic delivery vehicle. International tensions are escalating over Taiwan, which could conceivably draw the U.S. into a nuclear war. The Chinese buildup will almost certainly cause the Biden Administration's pending Nuclear Posture Review to adopt a more hawkish position than it would otherwise do. It could also set off a tri-party nuclear arms race between India, China, and Pakistan.
- The United Kingdom and Pakistan are numerically expanding their arsenals while the U.S. and the United Kingdom have announced plans to share nuclear submarine technology with Australia.
- After the U.S. terminated the nuclear deal with Iran, the latter country has reportedly enriched uranium close to bomb-making capability. Both the U.S. and Israel have vowed that Iran will never be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons. Israel has repeatedly threatened preemptive military action against Iran, though Israel has never acknowledged its own nuclear weapons stockpile.
- North Korea is estimated to have approximately 45 nuclear weapons and continues an aggressive schedule of missile testing. In addition, a conventional weapons arms race is accelerating between North and South Korea which could potentially break out into a nuclear war under South Korea's U.S. nuclear umbrella.

A nuclear arms race is inherently self-perpetuating; a vicious spiral that prompts progressively destabilizing actions and reactions. Consistent with that, both Russia's and China's new nuclear weapons are in large part a long-term reaction to President George W. Bush unilaterally terminating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2001. During his presidency, President Ronald Reagan spoke directly to the people of the Soviet Union, saying, "There is only one sane policy, for your country and mine, to preserve our civilization in this modern age: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The only value in our two nations possessing nuclear weapons is to make sure they will never be used. But then would it not be better to do away with them entirely?"<sup>30</sup>

"A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought... would it not be better to do away with them entirely?"

President Ronald Reagan, 1984  
State of the Union Address

The only solution that ensures enduring global safety is the multilateral and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons that both President Reagan and Pope Francis have directed us toward.

## The Dangers of Nuclear Weapons

The obvious dangers of nuclear war are well known from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which killed approximately 200,000 people, overwhelmingly non-combatants. However, in gauging the potential nuclear dangers of today, those horrifying experiences must be multiplied by the fact that the world now has more than 13,000 nuclear weapons, some of which are up to 100 times more powerful than the two bombs dropped on Japan. An estimated 2,000 U.S., Russian, British, and French warheads remain on high alert, ready for use on short notice.<sup>31</sup>

Less well-known adverse consequences of possessing nuclear weapons are:

- The effects of uranium mining for nuclear weapons are estimated to have led to some 1,000 deaths in the U.S. from lung cancers, disproportionately affecting Native Americans (including the Diné and Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico).<sup>32</sup> Hundreds of abandoned uranium mines continue to contaminate the Diné homeland.
- Many nuclear weapons workers became seriously ill or died from radiation and chemical exposures. Nationwide over 130,000 workers or their families filed claims. Within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, 17,595 claims have been filed for the Los Alamos National Lab (LANL) and 6,239 for the Sandia National Lab.<sup>33</sup>
- More than 75 years of nuclear weapons research and production at LANL has resulted in about 900,000 cubic yards of radioactive and hazardous wastes buried in unlined pits and shafts.<sup>34</sup> There are no plans for comprehensive cleanup. Regional groundwater has been seriously contaminated with more contamination expected.<sup>35</sup>
- Fallout from nuclear weapons testing is estimated to have caused between 215,000 to 430,000 cancer deaths worldwide for those living between 1945 and 2000. It will increase to between 1.2 million to 2.4 million eventual deaths due to long-lived carbon-14 fallout.<sup>36</sup> Trinity Test downwinders in New Mexico have never been compensated.
- The U.S. has invested more than \$10 trillion into nuclear weapons,<sup>37</sup> with an estimated \$1.7 trillion to be reinvested in “modernization” of the nuclear weapons stockpile and delivery systems over the next 30 years. That is money that could be used to better the lives of those who are sick, poor, and vulnerable. The costs of a nuclear war would be incalculable.



Figure 4: Radioactive and toxic wastes placed for burial in an unlined pit at LANL

- On top of all this, there is the catastrophic consequence of a long “nuclear winter” after a nuclear war, a topic that has been well examined over the decades. For example, a May 1998 United Nations report concluded, “The direct effects of a major nuclear exchange could kill hundreds of millions: the indirect effects could kill billions.”<sup>38</sup>

### Accidents and Miscalculation Can Cause Nuclear Catastrophe

In 1957, a 42,000 pound hydrogen bomb, one of the most powerful ever made, was accidentally dropped on our own Archdiocese of Santa Fe, four and a half miles south of the Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque.<sup>39</sup> Had it been fully armed, it would have destroyed central New Mexico.

An even more serious accident occurred over Goldsboro, North Carolina on January 23, 1961, when two four-megaton bombs fell from a disintegrating B-52 bomber. A Sandia Labs nuclear weapons expert “found that on the second bomb, three of the four safety systems that were designed into it to keep it from detonating accidentally failed. The fourth, a simple, low-voltage switch, was all that stopped Armageddon from happening in North Carolina that day.”<sup>40</sup>



Figure 5: The Trinity Test, July 16, 1945, the dawn of the Atomic Age

During the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, one Russian submarine officer out of three refused to authorize the launching of nuclear torpedoes when his sub was attacked by U.S. destroyers. That fortunately vetoed the near-certain beginning of an all-out nuclear war.<sup>41</sup>

In 1979, a North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) training tape simulating a full-scale Soviet nuclear attack was mistakenly inserted into the early warning network. Over the next two years, U.S. warning systems generated three more false warnings.<sup>42</sup>

On September 26, 1983, a colonel at the Soviet early warning system acted on instinct, intuitively judging that two reports of incoming U.S. ballistic missiles were false. He deviated from established protocol, arguing that it was best to wait for ground radar confirmation before notifying higher authorities to launch a counter-attack. His insubordination likely saved the world.<sup>43</sup>

In 1995, Russian Strategic Forces mistook a U.S.-Norwegian rocket carrying scientific equipment for a nuclear-armed missile. Reportedly, Russian President Boris Yeltsin activated his “nuclear football” for the first time before the missile’s trajectory was calculated to be nonthreatening.



We are fortunate that, to date, global nuclear catastrophe has been avoided. Nuclear weapons command and control and safety mechanisms have been improved since the incidents mentioned above. However, we cannot take comfort thinking that nuclear war is unlikely until we abolish every single nuclear weapon. Until then, the real threat of nuclear war remains, and is growing.

This second nuclear arms race is arguably more dangerous than the first because:

- It is no longer just a simple bilateral nuclear arms race between Russia and the U.S.; there are more countries investing in nuclear arms.
- There is an increased chance of regional nuclear wars or use of nuclear weapons by terrorists or sub-state actors.
- New cyber warfare techniques could cripple defenses and/or hijack command and control of nuclear weapons.
- Technological advances in hypersonic delivery platforms and artificial intelligence will introduce new uncertainties.
- Climate change will likely cause massive disruptions and human migrations around the world that increase the chances of conflict, including nuclear war.



*Part III*  
*A People Living in Darkness Have Seen a Great  
Light:*  
*The Only Real Alternative Is Nuclear Disarmament*

**The Failure to Abide by the Non-Proliferation Treaty**

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), commonly referred to as the cornerstone of the world's nonproliferation regime, went into effect in 1970, signed by 189 countries (more than any other treaty). Its grand bargain was that non-nuclear weapons states forswore the acquisition of nuclear weapons, in exchange for which “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...”<sup>44</sup>

*“Only insofar as the nuclear-armed states move toward disarmament will the rest of the world regard the nonproliferation regime as just.”*

*The Holy See, 2014*

More than a half century later, not only have none of the nations with nuclear weapons honored that solemn commitment, but they have increasingly moved in the opposite direction by implementing massive “modernization” programs designed to indefinitely preserve their nuclear weapons.

In 2014, the Holy See declared:

World leaders must be reminded that the commitment to disarm embedded in the NPT and other international documents is more than a legal-political detail, it is a moral commitment on which the future of the world depends... If there is little or no progress toward disarmament by the nuclear states, it is inevitable that the NPT will be regarded as an unjust perpetuation of the status quo. Only insofar as the nuclear-armed states move toward disarmament will the rest of the world regard the nonproliferation regime as just.<sup>45</sup>

The 2015 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty ended in failure, making no progress whatsoever toward nuclear disarmament. Further, there has been much backwards movement since then. Future NPT Review Conferences are expected to be hopelessly deadlocked between the nuclear weapons powers and non-weapons states, again resulting in no progress.

## The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The Catholic Church has been a leading proponent of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) from the beginning. When ban treaty negotiations began in March 2017, Pope Francis formally expressed his wish that the treaty-making process may “constitute a decisive step along the road towards a world without nuclear weapons” which is “not beyond our reach.”<sup>46</sup> In September 2017, the Vatican was the first nation-state to sign the Treaty, which entered into force on January 22, 2021. It is the first legally binding international agreement to ban nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal of their total

“The Archdiocese of Santa Fe has a special responsibility not only to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, but to encourage its active implementation.” + JCW

elimination. This ban treaty has much precedence in ban treaties for other types of weapons of mass destruction, in particular the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. It should be further noted that the Treaty has particular relevance to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in that it recognizes “the disproportionate impact of nuclear-weapon activities on indigenous peoples” and that “Each State Party... shall take necessary and appropriate measures towards the environmental remediation of areas so contaminated.”<sup>47</sup>

Given all this and the deep nuclear weapons history of our land, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has a special responsibility to not only support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, but also encourage its active implementation, including by the United States of America.

### New Mexico’s Unique Role in Keeping Nuclear Weapons Forever

New Mexico hosts two of the nation’s three nuclear weapons laboratories, the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories. During World War II, much of the land for the Los Alamos Lab was seized from Native American ancestral lands and Hispanic homesteaders without adequate compensation, continuing the legacy of colonialism, racism, and systemic violence.

The Los Alamos National Laboratory was the birthplace of nuclear weapons, designing and producing the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Trinity Test, the world’s first atomic explosion, was conducted in south central New Mexico. New Mexico, aptly nicknamed the Land of Enchantment, has the country’s largest repository of nuclear weapons with an estimated 2,500 warheads held in reserve underground at the Kirtland Air Force Base less than two miles south of the Albuquerque International Airport. If New Mexico were a separate country, it would be the third largest nuclear weapons power in the world.<sup>48</sup>

According to federal budget documents, Department of Energy facilities in New Mexico are slated to receive \$8 billion in FY 2022, higher than the entire State's operating budget of \$7.34 billion. Seventy-five percent (\$6 billion) is for core nuclear weapons research and production programs under the Department of Energy's semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). That is 39% of the NNSA's total nationwide nuclear weapons budget of \$15.5 billion spent in New Mexico alone, more than double the next closest state.<sup>49</sup>

The production of plutonium "pit" bomb cores has been the choke point of industrial-scale nuclear weapons production in the U.S. after a 1989 FBI raid investigating environmental crimes abruptly stopped production at the Rocky Flats Plant near Denver. In 1996, the Department of Energy transferred the pit production mission back to LANL but capped it at 20 pits per year. NNSA is now aggressively expanding production at the Los Alamos Lab to at least 30 pits per year with a surge capacity of up to 80 pits per year. LANL is receiving \$1 billion in FY 2022 alone for expanded pit production<sup>50</sup> for speculative new-design nuclear weapons. These weapons cannot be full-scale tested because of the global testing moratorium, or worse yet may prompt the U.S. back into testing, after which other nations would surely follow.

At the same time LANL plans to "cap and cover" about 900,000 cubic yards of radioactive and toxic wastes,<sup>51</sup> leaving them buried in unlined pits and trenches three miles uphill from the Rio Grande. Those wastes will remain a permanent threat to regionally shared groundwater.

New Mexico also hosts the nation's only deep geologic dump for radioactive wastes, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The NNSA has declared that half of WIPP's future capacity will be reserved for radioactive wastes from future plutonium "pit" bomb core production for new nuclear weapons.<sup>52</sup>

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed."

President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Even though New Mexico has never had a nuclear energy power plant of its own, the nuclear energy industry is seeking to dump more than 100,000 tons of lethal high-level radioactive wastes in our state for so-called "Consolidated Interim Storage."<sup>53</sup> This is not likely to be "interim" when there has not been a fix for permanent high-level waste disposal in 65 years of commercial radioactive waste generation.

## **Nuclear Weapons Rob from the Poorest Among Us**

The New Mexico congressional delegation has historically supported the nuclear weapons industry in large part because of the direct and indirect jobs it produces. Yet the Land of Enchantment always ranks near the bottom of all 50 states in key socioeconomic indicators. Does the nuclear weapons industry really benefit New Mexicans as a whole rather than a privileged few? The evidence indicates no. During the 79 years the nuclear weapons industry has been in New Mexico, Census Bureau data shows that our state has slipped in

per capita income from 37<sup>th</sup> in 1959 to 49<sup>th</sup> in 2019.<sup>54</sup> Further, a recent economic study concluded that the presence of the Lab is a net economic drain on the seven county governments surrounding Los Alamos County.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, U.S. Census Bureau data rank Los Alamos County as the fourth wealthiest county in the U.S. in terms of median household income.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, New Mexico is 48% Hispanic and 12% Native American. Los Alamos County is 79% non-Hispanic White and has more millionaires per capita than any other county in the U.S. In contrast, New Mexico has the highest percentage of children and seniors living in poverty. Further, the Land of Enchantment was recently ranked as 49<sup>th</sup> among all states in overall child well-being. All of this is evidence of the economic inequality and institutional racism that is endemic to our country.

In 2014, the Holy See wrote:

Since the end of the Cold War more than twenty years ago the end of the nuclear stand-off has failed to provide a peace dividend that would help to improve the situation of the world's poor. Indeed, enormous amounts of money are still being spent on "modernizing" the nuclear arsenals of the very states that are ostensibly reducing their nuclear weapons numbers.<sup>56</sup>

The cost of nuclear weapons "modernization" in the U.S. has risen dramatically since then to include not only the entire stockpile, but also enormous sums for new missiles, submarines, and bombers to deliver the new warheads. Further, the entire nation is experiencing increasing economic inequality between the rich and the poor. As President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously said:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.<sup>57</sup>

In 2014, the Holy See declared:

For decades the cost of the nuclear polyarchy to the world's poor has been evident. Fifty years ago, the Second Vatican Council declared, "[T]he [nuclear] arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an incredible degree." Today, the production, maintenance and deployment of nuclear weapons continue to siphon off resources that otherwise might have been made available for the amelioration of poverty and socio-economic development for the poor. The prolongation of the nuclear establishment continues to perpetuate patterns of impoverishment both domestically and internationally.<sup>58</sup>

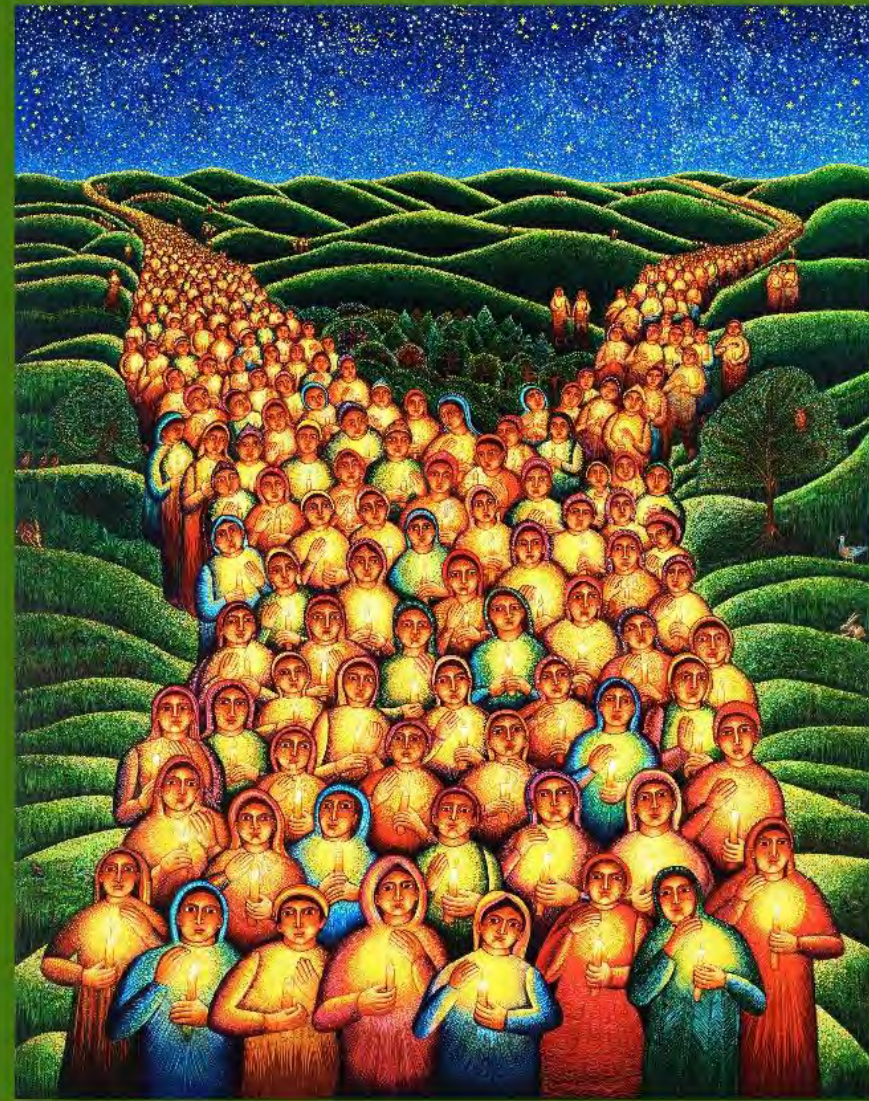
In 2019, Pope Francis declared:

Here in this city [Nagasaki] which witnessed the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of a nuclear attack, our attempts to speak out against the arms race will never be enough. The arms race wastes precious resources that could be better used to benefit the integral development of peoples and to protect the natural environment. In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered and the fortunes made through the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance and sale of ever more destructive weapons, are an affront crying out to heaven.<sup>59</sup>

In light of these statistics and realities, I agree with Pope Francis and many others that the time has come to commit ourselves globally to the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. We should end all these massive financial investments for building and maintaining these weapons of mass destruction--investments which make only a few individual and corporations enormously wealthy--and instead invest those massive funds in education, healthcare, environmental cleanup, addressing the climate threat, rebuilding our infrastructure, and providing vaccinations for everyone everywhere against future pandemics.

With those funds, we could end poverty and hunger, maybe even the causes of warfare itself by funding real international conflict resolution programs to prevent future wars. More, the reality of catastrophic climate change means we can no longer waste our resources on preparing for nuclear war when the whole planet is facing global destruction. We need a complete about-face. It is time to take up the hard work of nuclear disarmament and move toward the creation and building of a new culture of justice that cares for our planet and offers peace for everyone.

# *A world without nuclear weapons*



*is a goal shared by all nations and echoed by world leaders,  
as well as the aspiration of millions of men and women.  
The future and the survival of the human family hinges on  
ensuring that this ideal becomes a reality.*

— From Pope Francis' statement sent to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, December 8, 2014

Poster and Art by John August Swanson, 2015

# Part IV

## A Way Forward:

### Suggestions for Reflection, Dialogue, and Action

I invite everyone in New Mexico and across the nation to join this conversation about the urgent need for nuclear disarmament. I invite us to pray together, study together, dialogue together, and take concrete steps together that we might cut back and soon abolish our nuclear weapons.

For decades, many Catholics in New Mexico have been praying for peace, engaging in creative dialogue, and calling upon the National Labs to stop building nuclear weapons. Beginning in 1982, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe sponsored an annual ecumenical and interfaith Prayer Pilgrimage for Peace from the Santuario de Chimayó to Los Alamos that continued through the early 2000s.<sup>60</sup>

During the 1980s, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe also hosted dialogues that included parishioners, clergy, employees of both the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories, and members of the military, where together we reflected on scripture, Catholic social teaching, and the Vatican II documents.

In the last 15 years, a group of Catholics and other New Mexicans have kept an annual vigil every August 6<sup>th</sup> in Ashley Pond Park in Los Alamos, the site where the original Hiroshima bomb was built, and called for nuclear disarmament. They cite the book of Jonah, which records how Jonah called upon the people of Nineveh to repent of violence, and how the people of Nineveh did so by sitting in sackcloth and ashes. These New Mexicans walk through Los Alamos to mark each Hiroshima anniversary and sit down on the sidewalks in sackcloth and ashes and silent prayer for 30 minutes as the people of Nineveh did, “to repent of the sin of war and nuclear weapons and beg the God of peace for the gift of nuclear disarmament,” as they put it. They want to see the Labs end their nuclear weapons production and engage only in nonviolent work that cleans up nuclear waste, heals the environment, and improves human health. They say the goal is to transform New Mexico and the world from a land of violence into a new land of nonviolence.

If we agree that nuclear disarmament is beneficial for everyone, and a requirement for all the faithful who follow the nonviolent Jesus, then what concrete steps can we take now to begin the process of nuclear disarmament, starting in New Mexico? As I move toward my conclusion, let me encourage you to focus on several themes in your conversations.

We can agree there must be a massive comprehensive cleanup of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. That would be a real win-win for New Mexicans, providing hundreds of well-paying jobs for decades while permanently protecting the environment and ground water.



We can agree those with the expertise at the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories could stop work on nuclear weapons development and instead begin the long, technical process of dismantling the weapons; planning for a world with multilateral verifiable nuclear disarmament; and verifying that the world's nuclear weapons are gone, never to reappear. Nonproliferation programs at both the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories should focus on and prioritize advanced technologies for the remote sensing, accounting, and monitoring of nuclear weapons and materials that will enable a future world free of nuclear weapons. Improved verification technologies will be needed to support future arms control treaties. The design expertise of both labs will always be needed for the dismantling and disposal of existing nuclear weapons. All of these technical means are necessary to underpin a verifiable, future world free of nuclear weapons while providing high-paying jobs into the future.

We can agree catastrophic climate change is now a real national security threat, and even more, a real global security threat. Transferring the billions of dollars spent on nuclear weapons production and maintenance to prevent further environmental destruction and loss of life should become the primary focus of our national and global work. As Pope Francis states in his 2015 Encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, "climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day."<sup>61</sup>

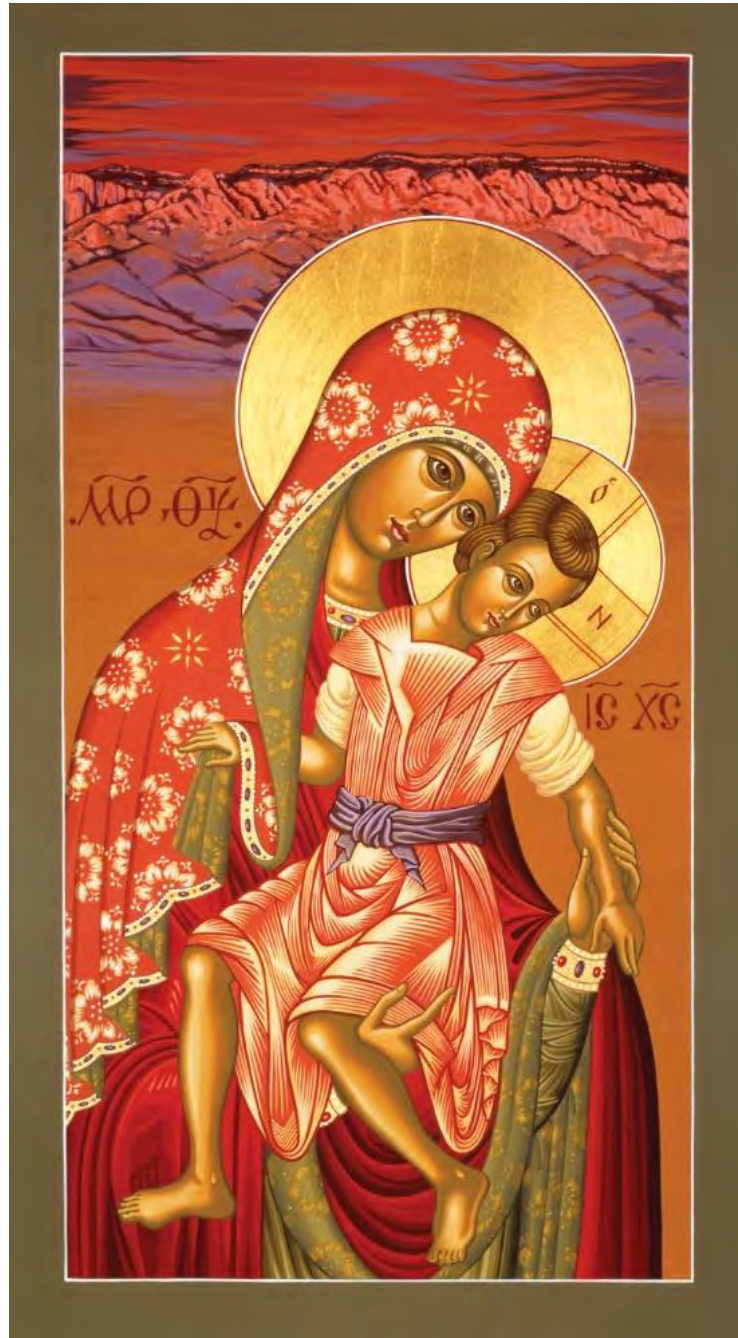
Specifically, we could mobilize the resources used for nuclear weapons in New Mexico for solar, wind, and geothermal resources, which will be needed as we stop extracting fossil fuels. At the moment, Department of Energy funding for renewable energy research in New Mexico is only 0.4% of its nuclear weapons budget in our state.<sup>62</sup>

In March 2019, the New Mexico State Legislature passed the Energy Transition Act which requires the doubling of renewable energy use by 2025, 50% renewable energy use by 2030, and 100% carbon-free electricity generation by 2045. It is expected to create up to 8,830 new jobs in New Mexico's clean energy economy and stimulate over \$4.6 billion of new investment in the state in 2030.<sup>63</sup> Just like comprehensive cleanup at the Los Alamos Lab, expanding renewable energy would be a win-win for northern New Mexicans, helping to mitigate adverse climate change while providing high-paying jobs.

Further, we can agree the time has come to transfer the massive funds spent on preparation for nuclear war to ending poverty and hunger, beginning here in New Mexico and then throughout the world. Also, imagine the good that would happen if we invested massive funds in international conflict resolution programs. Perhaps we might be able to get at the root cause of war itself and prevent future wars if we spend our resources on pro-active global peace-building and peace-making efforts. Specifically, we must all do our best to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We must work to provide New Mexicans with employment and economic opportunities that do not require morally problematic nuclear weapons jobs. That is not only the right thing to do but also entirely feasible. All we need is the political will to do so. The Archdiocese of Santa Fe specifically calls upon the New Mexico congressional delegation and the governor to work ceaselessly toward that end.

All our conversations should be respectful, rooted in prayer, based in nonviolence, and centered in the hope and belief that nuclear disarmament is achievable. We can do this, and with the God of peace with us, we can do this soon.



*Nuestra Señora de las Sandías*, ©Fr. William Hart McNichols,  
<http://frbillmcnichols-sacredimages.com>

# Epilogue

Dear friends,

In this letter, I have shared the impact that my experience in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had on me; the call of Pope Francis for nuclear disarmament; and the Gospel teachings of Jesus on peacemaking, nonviolence, and universal love. I have outlined the reality of the nuclear threat, the reasons why we must address this crisis, and what possible solutions and steps we can take toward nuclear disarmament. I now invite you to join me in this conversation on nuclear disarmament, that we might heed Pope Francis' call to take new steps to end the production and maintenance of nuclear armaments in New Mexico and create a new future without nuclear weapons.

In Pope Francis' 2021 Christmas *Urbi et Orbi* address, he underlined the importance of dialogue and conversation:

The Word became flesh in order to dialogue with us. God does not desire to carry on a monologue, but a dialogue. For God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is dialogue, an eternal and infinite communion of love and life. By the coming of Jesus, the Person of the Word made flesh, into our world, God showed us the way of encounter and dialogue. Indeed, he made that way incarnate in himself, so that we might know it and follow it, in trust and hope.

On the international level too, there is the risk of avoiding dialogue, the risk that this complex crisis will lead to taking shortcuts rather than setting out on the longer paths of dialogue. Yet only those paths can lead to the resolution of conflicts and to lasting benefits for all.<sup>64</sup>

I am convinced this dialogue that Pope Francis speaks of is what is needed in our world today. The solution to our divisions and controversies is not violence and war, but the honest and sincere efforts of human beings to encounter one another in fruitful conversations that lead to peace. A dialogue about nuclear disarmament is an essential part of this conversation.

When Jesus sent the 72 disciples ahead of Him, He told them to speak the words of peace to those they met. At His last supper, He spoke again of peace, saying "My peace is my gift to you." When He rose from the dead, His first words to His disciples were words of peace. As followers of Jesus, I hope we can speak the words of peace with one another and translate that Gospel conversation into concrete action for nuclear disarmament here in New Mexico and across the world.

As I conclude my letter, I think again of those young school children in Japan who ran to the window to see the bright light of the Hiroshima bomb just as they were incinerated. That light was not the light of peace but a false light of death and destruction.

Jesus came into the world as the true light. He came to lead us out of the darkness of violence, death, and destruction. In doing so, He is the "light of the world." His light is the exact opposite of the bright light of a nuclear weapon. His light is the true light of universal love, the light of universal compassion, the light of universal peace. His light is the light of total nonviolence. His light of peace enables us to see a way forward on the path of life toward a new future of peace, a world without nuclear weapons.

The Hiroshima bombing occurred on August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration. In the story of the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36), Jesus takes three disciples up the mountain, and there is transfigured into bright, white light. His disciples are terrified and fall to the ground as if dead, but He touches them and says, "Rise, do not be afraid." These witnesses saw who Jesus really is—the light of the world and the healing light of peace.

As His followers, we choose not to live in the darkness of violence and in the shadow of the threat of nuclear war anymore. The light of Christ's peace is leading us out of the valley of the shadow of death where we have wandered far too long, building and developing thousands of nuclear weapons in preparation for nuclear war. In the light of Christ's peace, we can see a new promised land of peace, love, and nonviolence. If we dare follow the transfigured risen Christ, we can put aside our fears, rise and walk forward into that promised land of peace and into a new world without nuclear weapons, starting right here in New Mexico.

In the light of Christ's peace, we see one another as brothers and sisters. God did not create us to be enemies of each other, but rather as members of one human family, all God's children, sharing this beautiful common home. We need not threaten anyone, anywhere, any longer with nuclear warfare. We must take concrete steps to begin the process of nuclear disarmament: to dismantle our weapons, to clean up our land, and to spend those enormous resources on structures of international nonviolent conflict resolution. These steps can end the causes of warfare itself, such as hunger, poverty, racism, and greed.

In the light of Christ's peace, we can see a new future for New Mexico, our nation, and the world. We can see a new nonviolent New Mexico where we do not build and store nuclear weapons, a new world where everyone can live in peace without the threat of nuclear war. In this new New Mexico, we spend our resources ending hunger and poverty, improving our schools and healthcare, securing life-giving employment for everyone, and teaching everyone the life of peace and nonviolence. If we pursue this conversation and take up the task of nuclear disarmament, we will not only make our land and our world more peaceful and more secure, we will also finally learn to live fully in the light of Christ's peace.

In Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, *God's Grandeur*, he tells us that the earth is constantly renewed "Because the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."<sup>65</sup> The light of those bright wings is filled with wisdom, prudence, and courage that enable us to sustain a fruitful conversation on peace that will renew, refresh, and invigorate our poor world, so often bent by violence and the threat of nuclear war. The light of those bright wings is the light of Christ that "shines in the darkness" (Jn. 1:5). It is Christ, the Morning Star, "who, coming back from death's domain, has shed his peaceful light on

humanity” (*Easter Exsultet*).<sup>66</sup> It is in this light, the light of Christ’s peace, that we undertake this conversation on nuclear disarmament. We pray that we will vanquish the instruments of war by ourselves becoming instruments of Christ’s peace.

But it is not enough that we become instruments of peace, as important as that is. No, we must take up the cause of worldwide nuclear disarmament with an urgency that befits the seriousness of this cause and the dangerous threat that looms over all of humanity and the planet. I call on all of us in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, as well as all residents of New Mexico to take up the challenge of nuclear disarmament by engaging the vital conversation that will lead to concrete action steps toward this goal. I know I am asking quite a lot, but so did Jesus when He sent out the disciples two by two on their mission of peace. And like those disciples, we are missioned by Christ, empowered by Christ, and strengthened by Christ for the task at hand.

One of the first titles given to the image of our Blessed Mother, brought from Spain to New Mexico in early 17<sup>th</sup> century, was “Nuestra Señora de la Paz.” I humbly ask you to join me in this new conversation that will lead to nuclear disarmament, praying that Our Lady of Peace will intercede for us and show us the way to live in the Light of Christ whose gift to us is peace.

Your brother in the Light of Christ’s Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ John C. Wester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend John C. Wester  
Archbishop of Santa Fe  
January 11, 2022

4000 St. Joseph’s PI NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87120

# Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your  
peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so  
much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.



(© "St. Francis of Assisi" by Br. Mickey McGrath, OSFS,  
Courtesy of Trinity Stores, [www.trinitystores.com](http://www.trinitystores.com),  
800.699.4482)

## *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.

# Appendix I

## Suggestions for Study, Reflection, and Action

### Websites to Visit

Alliance for Nuclear Accountability  
<https://ananuclear.org/>

Arms Control Association  
<https://www.armscontrol.org/>

Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety  
<http://nuclearactive.org/>

Federation of American Scientists  
<https://fas.org/issues/national-security/>

The Holy See  
<https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en/search.html?q=nuclear+weapons>

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons  
<https://www.icanw.org/>

Nuclear Watch New Mexico  
<https://nukewatch.org>

Pax Christi USA  
<https://paxchristiusa.org/nuclear-disarmament/>

Union of Concerned Scientists  
<https://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear-weapons>

United Nations  
<https://www.un.org/en/site-search?query=nbuclear+weapons>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
<https://www.usccb.org/committees/international-justice-and-peace/nuclear-weapons>



## Legislative Advocacy

The congressional delegation of New Mexico is especially influential in nuclear weapons issues given the Land of Enchantment's key role in the U.S. nuclear weapons complex. I urge citizens to make their views known to them on the need for multilateral, verifiable nuclear disarmament. Related is the need for life-affirming jobs in cleanup, nonproliferation programs, and a new green economy instead of nuclear weapons production. Additionally, a new public site-wide environmental impact statement is needed for the expanding nuclear weapons programs at the Los Alamos Lab because of increasing safety, radioactive waste disposal, and wildfire concerns since the last study in 2008.

Senator Martin Heinrich  
(202) 224-5521  
<https://www.heinrich.senate.gov/contact/write-martin>

Senator Ben Ray Lujan  
(202) 224-6621  
<https://www.lujan.senate.gov/contact/contact-form/>

Representative Melanie Stansbury, NM-1  
(202) 225-6316  
<https://stansbury.house.gov/contact>

Representative Yvette Herrell, NM-2  
(202) 225-2365  
<https://herrell.house.gov/contact>

Representative Teresa Leger Fernandez, NM-3  
(202) 225-6190  
<https://fernandez.house.gov/contact>

## More Ideas for Action

- Join the dialogue! Talk about the presence of nuclear weapons in New Mexico with family, friends, co-workers, your pastor, and other parishioners.
- Share this letter and start a conversation about how we can work for the abolition of nuclear weapons.
- Hold an evening session (perhaps virtually) with your parish to discuss this letter.
- Pray daily for the abolition of nuclear weapons in New Mexico and everywhere on earth.
- Express your support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that is similar to ban treaties on chemical and biological weapons.
- Read and study Pope Francis' recent documents such as *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*. Start a study group in your parish.
- Practice and study the nonviolence of Jesus daily so we can decrease our violence and become peacemakers.
- Ask your pastor to include prayers for the abolition of nuclear weapons and for world peace at Mass in the Prayers of the Faithful.
- Hold public peace and prayer vigils for nuclear disarmament.
- Ask anyone you know who works at the Los Alamos and Sandia National Labs to consider changing their job so that they no longer participate in preparations for nuclear war.
- Teach young people the Gospel lessons of peace and nonviolence. Encourage them to be peacemakers, to practice nonviolence, and to work for a more peaceful world.
- Learn about the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize winners and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) at <https://www.icanw.org/>
- If you have investments, please use your money consciously. See <https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/> on how to NOT invest in nuclear weapons.
- Contact your local congressperson, senator, and governor and ask them to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to take leadership in creating cleanup, nonproliferation programs and green energy jobs. You can also ask them to support a new site-wide environmental impact statement for continued operations at the Los Alamos Lab. The last one was completed in 2008 and much has changed since then, including expanded plutonium pit production, ongoing nuclear safety concerns, and increased wildfire risks.

- Make your views known in the public square. Write a letter to a New Mexico newspaper. Some media outlets are:

Albuquerque:

*Albuquerque Journal*

<https://www.abqjournal.com/letters-to-the-editor>

Carlsbad:

*Carlsbad Current Argus.*

<https://static.currentargus.com/lettertoeditor/>

Gallup:

*Gallup Independent*

[letters@gallupindependent.com](mailto:letters@gallupindependent.com)

Las Cruces:

*Las Cruces Sun News.*

<https://static.lcsun-news.com/lettertoeditor/>

Santa Fe:

*Santa Fe New Mexican*

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/site/forms/online\\_services/letter/letter\\_editor/](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/letter_editor/)

*Santa Fe Reporter*

[editor@sfreporter.com](mailto:editor@sfreporter.com)

Taos:

*Taos News*

[https://www.taosnews.com/site/forms/online\\_services/letter\\_editor/](https://www.taosnews.com/site/forms/online_services/letter_editor/)

## Appendix II

### Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion

- 1) What do you think of these statements by Pope Francis? “The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today, more than ever, a crime not only against the dignity of human beings but against any possible future for our common home,” he said. “The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possession of atomic weapons is immoral.”
- 2) In what ways was Jesus nonviolent and what does that mean for us? What does it mean to be a peacemaker today? How are we to love our enemies today? Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s stated that “Jesus was not an impractical idealist. He was the practical realist.” What do you think of this statement?
- 3) Reflect on the story from Luke 9:54-55. What does Jesus’ rebuke of James and John, who want to call down hellfire from heaven, mean for us today in New Mexico and throughout the world? What would Jesus think of our preparations for nuclear warfare today?
- 4) As quoted in the letter from the Federation of American Scientists, “The world now has more than 13,000 nuclear weapons, some of which are up to 100 times more powerful than the two bombs dropped on Japan. An estimated 2,000 U.S., Russian, British, and French warheads remain on high alert, ready for use on short notice.” What do we do about this? What does Jesus want us to do about this? How can we work together, as Pope Francis urges, to abolish all nuclear weapons and end the threat of nuclear war?
- 5) Reflect on and discuss this statement from Archbishop Wester: “The Archdiocese of Santa Fe has a special responsibility not only to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons but also to encourage its active implementation, including by the United States.” How best can we support the Treaty?
- 6) Reflect on and discuss this statement from Archbishop Wester: “The peoples of America and the world would be better served if their governments diverted investments in ever-advancing weapons of mass destruction to education, rebuilding societal infrastructure for the benefit of all, addressing environmental and climate change threats, and in particular global vaccinations against pandemics.” How can we encourage government investments in life-affirming endeavors?
- 7) Reflect on and discuss this statement from Archbishop Wester: “We must work to provide New Mexicans with employment and economic opportunities outside of morally problematic nuclear weapons jobs. That is not only the right thing to do but is also feasible if there is the political will to do so. The Archdiocese of Santa Fe specifically calls upon the New Mexico congressional delegation and the governor to work tirelessly toward that end.” How can we help New Mexicans find new employment doing pro-human work instead of building and maintaining nuclear weapons?
- 8) What does it mean for us to live in the light of Christ’s peace?

## Suggested Readings

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# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This quote is commonly attributed to Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
- <sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, November 24, 2019 at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco\\_20191124\\_messaggio-incontropace-hiroshima.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20191124_messaggio-incontropace-hiroshima.html) He repeated this on August 6, 2020, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> *Pope Francis calls for a world free of nuclear weapons*, August 6, 2020, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-08/pope-francis-calls-for-world-free-of-nuclear-weapons.html>
- <sup>5</sup> Pope Saint John XXIII, *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*, nos. 109, 112- 113, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html)
- <sup>6</sup> *Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World (Gaudium Et Spes) Promulgated By His Holiness, Pope Saint Paul VI*, December 7, 1965, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)
- <sup>7</sup> In *The Popes and the atomic threat: Appealing to world's conscience*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-01/the-popes-and-the-atomic-threat-appealing-to-world-s-conscience.html>
- <sup>8</sup> “Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the General Assembly of the United Nations,” June 7, 1982, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/pont\\_messages/1982/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19820607\\_disarmo-onu.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/pont_messages/1982/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19820607_disarmo-onu.html)
- <sup>9</sup> *The Challenge of Peace*, USCCB, no. 196, <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/nuclear-weapons/upload/nuclear-weapons-and-our-catholic-response-study-guide.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, USCCB, 1993, <https://www.usccb.org/resources/harvest-justice-sown-peace>
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- <sup>18</sup> King, Jr., Martin Luther. *Strength to Love*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press edition, 1981), p. 48.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 55.
- <sup>21</sup> This is because the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories and the Air Force's Nuclear Weapons Center at the Kirtland Air Force Base are located within the boundaries of Archdiocese of Santa Fe.
- <sup>22</sup> Pope Francis, November 24, 2019 at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco\\_20191124\\_messaggio-incontropace-hiroshima.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20191124_messaggio-incontropace-hiroshima.html)
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- <sup>24</sup> Report on Nuclear Employment Strategy of the United States, Specified in Section 491 of 10. U.S.C. Department of Defense, June 2013, page 4 (quotation marks in the original), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/us-nuclear-employment-strategy.pdf>
- <sup>25</sup> One megaton is the equivalent of one million tons of TNT. This 1.2 megaton bomb is 80 times more powerful than the 15 kilotons Hiroshima bomb.
- <sup>26</sup> Nuclear Posture Review, Defense Department, 2018, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>
- <sup>27</sup> In 2017 the Congressional Budget Office estimated a \$1.2 trillion cost for nuclear weapons "modernization" in *Approaches for Managing the Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2017 to 2046*, CBO, October 2017, Summary, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/53211-nuclearforces.pdf> In an update, *Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2021 to 2030*, CBO raised the estimated cost of the first rolling decade by 28% but noted that an unspecified percentage was due to inclusion of more expensive years as modernization efforts accelerated and a quarter of the increase was due to just inflation. Applying a 14% increase to \$1.2 trillion = 1.36 trillion. At the same time, CBO noted substantial uncertainty stemming mainly from the fact that future plans for many programs are not yet fully determined and that costs are uncertain even when the plans are fully determined, which as rule always go up, not down (for an example, the cost estimate for a plutonium pit production plant recently more than double to \$11 billion). There is general agreement that U.S. nuclear weapons modernization will cost \$1.7 trillion and likely more.



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<sup>29</sup> Dept. of Energy FY 2022 "Laboratory Tables," pages 44-46, <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/doe-fy2022-budget-laboratory.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> President Ronald Reagan, 1984 State of the Union address, relevant section at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gqz9TMSBBk>

<sup>31</sup> *Status of World Nuclear Forces 2021*, Federation of American Scientists, <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>

<sup>32</sup> *Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources*, 101 Cong, 2nd Session (1990) (testimony of V. E. Archer).

<sup>33</sup> *EEOICP Program Statistics*, Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, Department of Labor, <https://www.dol.gov/owcp/energy/regs/compliance/weeklstats.htm> and [https://www.dol.gov/owcp/energy/regs/compliance/statistics/WebPages/ALBUQUERQUE\\_OPS.htm](https://www.dol.gov/owcp/energy/regs/compliance/statistics/WebPages/ALBUQUERQUE_OPS.htm)

<sup>34</sup> Area G Corrective Measures Evaluation Rev3 (150 MB), LA-UR-11-4910, page G-9, LANL, September 2011, <http://permalink.lanl.gov/object/tr?what=info:lanl-repo/epr/ERID-206324>

<sup>35</sup> "Future contamination at additional locations is expected over a period of decades to centuries as more of the contaminant inventory reaches the water table." LANL's Hydrogeological Studies of the Parajito Plateau (1998-2004), p. 5-15, <http://www.worldcat.org/title/los-alamos-national-laboratorys-hydrogeologic-studies-of-the-pajarito-plateau-a-synthesis-of-hydrogeologic-workplan-activities-1998-2004/oclc/316318363>

<sup>36</sup> *Radioactive Heaven and Earth*, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and the Institute for Environmental and Energy Research, 1991, pages 36 & 40, <https://ieer.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/1991/06/RadioactiveHeavenEarth1991.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> This is derived from *Atomic Audit, The Costs and Consequences of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Since 1940*, (Edited by Steven Schwartz), which in 1998 pegged the 1940-1996 costs at \$9.2 trillion (page 3, adjusted for inflation). *Atomic Audit* also estimated post-Cold War annual costs at \$50 billion (page 1, subtracting cleanup programs and adjusted for inflation). That would be an additional \$1.3 trillion for the 27 intervening years giving a grand total of more than \$10 trillion (in adjusted fiscal 2021 dollars) that the U.S. has spent on nuclear weapons to date.

<sup>38</sup> *Study on the Climatic and Other Global Effects of Nuclear War*, Report A/43/351, 1998, United Nations, New York, Paragraph 24, p. 16, quoted and referenced at <http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/pdf/RobockAmbioNW.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> *B-36 LOOSED HUGE H-BOMB ON NEW MEXICO IN '57 ERROR*, August 28, 1986, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/28/us/b-36-loosed-huge-h-bomb-on-new-mexico-in-57-error.html>

<sup>40</sup> *The Day the U.S. Air Force Almost Nuked North Carolina*, [http://www.unmuseum.org/goldsboro\\_bomb.htm](http://www.unmuseum.org/goldsboro_bomb.htm)

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- <sup>47</sup> Text of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, <https://undocs.org/A/CONF.229/2017/8>
- <sup>48</sup> For the number of estimated nuclear weapons held in active reserve at the Kirtland Air Force Base see *United States Nuclear Forces, 2020*, Hans Kristensen and Matt Korda, Federation of American Scientists (FAS), *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00963402.2019.1701286>  
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