

MANNA *in the wilderness*

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Pope Rejects Possession of Nuclear Weapons

by Susan Gallagher

“To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence,” Pope Francis said in his January 2017 World Day of Peace message. The issue of nonviolence has particular urgency in this moment, when more nations are acquiring nuclear weapons, when reckless, bellicose rhetoric prevails, and when false alerts of incoming missiles in Hawaii and Japan have provoked profound alarm until the erroneous messages could be retracted. Even now the Pentagon is revising its Nuclear Strategy Review with the proposal to allow “first use” of nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear attacks. These draft rules, which have been sent to the White House for review, propose to allow the United States to use a nuclear first strike in response to such things as a cyber attack or an attack on the power grid. Asked by reporters about his concerns regarding nuclear war, the Pope answered on January 15, 2018 that he feared the world stood at “the very limit.” The call to nonviolence has been a continuing focus of the Holy See and recently there has been a significant shift in the Church’s thinking on nuclear deterrence, which has culminated in a rejection of not only the use but even the possession of nuclear weapons.

“The church is in the midst of a fundamental reappraisal of how to balance the Christian obligation to nonviolence with the need to resist evil in the world,” said Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego, speaking after Pope Francis’s remarks at a Vatican conference on nuclear disarmament held in November 2017.

At the conference in Vatican City, which was attended by representatives from the United Nations, NATO, diplomats from many countries including Russia, the United States, South Korea and Iran, representatives from many faiths, numerous professors and experts, as well as 11 Nobel Peace Laureates, Pope Francis spoke of nuclear weapons and said that “the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned.”

Because their “catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects” make their use indefensible, possession of nuclear weapons create “nothing but a false sense of security,” Francis said. Furthermore, he argued, that as a result of resources being



PHOTO BY ROBERT MAJORS

Holding the banner at our weekly peace vigil in front of the downtown Federal Courthouse, from left: William O’Connell III, Sr. Carol Gilbert, Sr. Ardeth Platte. Dominican Sisters Carol and Ardeth talked to students at UNLV Tam Alumni Center Grand Hall on March 6 about the U.N. Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons.

devoted to developing and maintaining arsenals, “the real priorities facing our human family, such as the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace, the undertaking of educational, ecological and healthcare projects, and the development of human rights, are relegated to second place.”

Pope Francis’s increasingly urgent call to go beyond nuclear deterrence is also evidenced by his strong support for the nuclear ban treaty talks that resulted in a U.N. Treaty in July 2017. The treaty, which called for worldwide, verifiable nuclear disarmament, was signed by 122 countries, although the United States, Russia and most other nuclear nations refused to participate.

The Church has, of course, long decried the use of weapons of mass destruction. The Second Vatican Council argued that modern weapons of mass destruction go beyond acceptable self-defense due to their “massive and indiscriminant destruction” and expressed deep concerns about the policy of deterrence, saying that it could not produce a secure and authentic peace. (Gaudium et Spes #80-81). Nevertheless, the Church did express a conditional acceptance of the possession of nuclear weapons as part of a balance of power intended to deter the actual use of the weapons. In his 1982 message to the U.N. Special Session (which was in turn quoted in the 1983 pastoral letter of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*, #173), Pope John Paul II stated that “‘deterrence’ based

on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way to progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable.”

By condemning even the *possession* of nuclear weapons, Francis’s statement is a development from the Church’s earlier position. In his letter to the UN in support of the worldwide treaty to ban nuclear weapons, Pope Francis asserted the need to “go beyond nuclear deterrence” and described the need to eliminate nuclear weapons totally as both a “challenge” and “moral and humanitarian imperative.” The teaching of United States bishops has kept pace. Stephen Colecchi, director of the office of international justice and peace of the United States Catholic Bishops noted that teaching regarding nuclear arms has moved from an “‘interim ethic of deterrence’ to an ‘interim ethic of disarmament.’”

Excerpted from: *Houston Catholic Worker Newspaper*, Jan. - Mar. 2018

6800 U.S. Nuclear Warheads

Rebuilding all three legs of the so-called nuclear triad (submarine, aircraft, missile) and refurbishing weapons labs would cost an estimated \$1.2 trillion over the next 30 years.

SOURCES: TIME MAGAZINE, FEDERATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS; SIPRI

Right: UNLV Students from the Newman Center at St. Thomas Aquinas come Friday mornings to our morning prayer and then out to the soup line to volunteer. This picture is taken in the garden in front of the Catholic Worker. After the soup line, the students come back to the house to help us clean up.



Left: Our neighbor Cecelia taught us how to make tamales for our Hospitality Day. In this photo, volunteers are getting ready to serve tamales, rice, beans and salad to the 20 people who come on Wednesdays to our two adjacent homes to take showers, wash clothes and gather together for lunch and fellowship.

Right: Mark Kelso (on left) pulls a wagon full of bag lunches made by volunteers each Thursday at St. John Neumann Catholic Church. Gary Cavalier (on right) carries a large bag full of lunches. Each week volunteers from the church drop-off 50 lunches and we distribute them to the homeless at various encampments.



Left: Each morning at our soup line, a simple stepstool is placed with candles where the homeless can light a candle for their intentions, or take prayer cards or rosary beads.

PLEASE JOIN US:

- Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.:** Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
- Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:** Breakfast served to 150-200 poor & homeless people.
- Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.:** Hospitality Day, we invite 20 homeless men home for showers, to wash clothes and for a great lunch.
- Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.:** Vigil for Peace in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. S.
- Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:** 50 lunches taken to the homeless.
- Second Saturday of the month:** Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast to the homeless.
- Third Saturday of the month:** Deliver food boxes to homes in need.

In 2017, Over 1/3 of U.S. Homeless Live in 10 Cities:

New York City	76,501
Los Angeles (city and county)	55,188
Seattle / King County	11,643
San Diego (city and county)	9,160
Washington, D.C.	7,473
San Jose/Santa Clara (city & county)	7,394
San Francisco	6,858
Las Vegas / Clark County	6,490
Boston	6,135
Philadelphia	5,693

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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EMPTY BOWL BENEFIT:

April 14, 2018

Green Valley High School Cafeteria
11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Adults: \$15 / Children 12 & under: \$12