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.”

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. In his 1982 message to the U.N. 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.”

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
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 Break-
fast to the homeless.

Third Saturday of the month:
Deliver food boxes to homes in need.

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: 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 home-
less at various encampments.

Right: 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 adja-
cent homes to take showers,
wash clothes and gather together
for lunch and fellowship.

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

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

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

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

PLEASE JOIN US:
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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