

**VIGIL OF PRAYER
REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS
OF
THE BOMBING OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI**

Community of Sant'Egidio

We Go on Record:
The Catholic Worker Response to Hiroshima
by Dorothy Day
September 1, 1945

Mr. Truman was jubilant. President Truman. True man; what a strange name, come to think of it. We refer to Jesus Christ as true God and true Man. Truman is a true man of his time in that he was jubilant. He was not a son of God, brother of Christ, brother of the Japanese, jubilating as he did. He went from table to table on the cruiser which was bringing him home from the Big Three conference, telling the great news; “jubilant” the newspapers said. Jubilate Deo. We have killed 318,000 Japanese.

That is, we hope we have killed them, the Associated Press, on page one, column one of the Herald Tribune, says. The effect is hoped for, not known. It is to be hoped they are vaporized, our Japanese brothers – scattered, men, women and babies, to the four winds, over the seven seas. Perhaps we will breathe their dust into our nostrils, feel them in the fog of New York on our faces, feel them in the rain on the hills of Easton.

Jubilate Deo. President Truman was jubilant. We have created. We have created destruction. We have created a new element, called Pluto. Nature had nothing to do with it.

Created to Destroy

“A cavern below Columbia was the bomb’s cradle,” born not that men might live, but that men might be killed. Brought into being in a cavern, and then tried in a desert place, in the midst of tempest and lightning, tried out, and then again on the eve of the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ, on a far-off island in the eastern hemisphere, tried out again, this “new weapon which conceivably might wipe out mankind, and perhaps the planet itself.”

“Dropped on a town, one bomb would be equivalent to a severe earthquake and would utterly destroy the place. A scientific brain trust has solved the problem of how to confine and release almost unlimited energy. It is impossible yet to measure its effects.”

“We have spent two billion on the greatest scientific gamble in history and won,” said President Truman jubilantly.

The papers list the scientists (the murderers) who are credited with perfecting this new weapon. One outstanding authority “who earlier had developed a powerful electrical bombardment machine called the cyclotron, was Professor O. E. Lawrence, a Nobel prize winner of the University of California. In the heat of the race to unlock the atom, he built the world’s most powerful atom smashing gun, a machine whose electrical projectiles carried charges equivalent to 25,000,000 volts. But such machines were found in the end to be unnecessary. The atom of Uranium-235 was smashed with surprising ease. Science discovered that not sledgehammer blows, but subtle taps from slow traveling neutrons managed more on a tuning technique were all that were needed to disintegrate the Uranium-235 atom.”

(Remember the tales we used to hear, that one note of a violin, if that note could be discovered, could collapse the Empire State Building. Remember too, that God’s voice was heard not in the great and strong wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but “in the whistling of a gentle air.”)

Scientists, army officers, great universities (Notre Dame included), and captains of industry – all are given credit lines in the press for their work of preparing the bomb – and other bombs, the President assures us, are in production now.

Great Britain controls the supply of uranium ore, in Canada and Rhodesia. We are making the bombs. This new great force will be used for good, the scientists assured us. And then they wiped out a city of 318,000. This was good. The President was jubilant.

Today's paper with its columns of description of the new era, the atomic era, which this colossal slaughter of the innocents has ushered in, is filled with stories covering every conceivable phase of the new discovery. Pictures of the towns and the industrial plants where the parts are made are spread across the pages. In the forefront of the town of Oak Ridge, Tennessee is a chapel, a large comfortable-looking chapel benignly settled beside the plant. And the scientists making the first tests in the desert prayed, one newspaper account said.

God, Our Creator

Yes, God is still in the picture. God is not mocked. Today, the day of this so great news, God made a madman dance and talk, who had not spoken for twenty years. God sent a typhoon to damage the carrier Hornet. God permitted a fog to obscure vision and a bomber crashed into the Empire State Building. God permits these things. We have to remember it. We are held in God's hands, all of us, and President Truman too, and these scientists who have created death, but will use it for good. He, God, holds our life and our happiness, our sanity and our health; our lives are in His hands. He is our Creator. Creator.

And as I write, Pigsie, who works in Secaucus, New Jersey, feeding hogs, and cleaning out the excrement of the hogs, who comes in once a month to find beauty and surcease and glamour and glory in the drink of the Bowery, trying to drive the hell and the smell out of his nostrils and his life, sleeps on our doorstep, in this best and most advanced and progressive of all possible worlds. And as I write, our cat, Rainbow, slinks by with a shrill rat in her jaws, out of the kitchen closet here at Mott Street. Here in this greatest of cities which covered the cavern where this stupendous discovery was made, which institutes an era of unbelievable richness and power and glory for man

Everyone says, "I wonder what the Pope thinks of it?" How everyone turns to the Vatican for judgment, even though they do not seem to listen to the voice there! But our Lord Himself has

already pronounced judgment on the atomic bomb. When James and John (John the beloved) wished to call down fire from heaven on their enemies, Jesus said:

“You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls but to save.” He said also, “What you do unto the least of these my brethren, you do unto me.”

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PACEM IN TERRIS
Encyclical of Pope John XXII
On Establishing Universal Peace
in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty
April 11, 1963
Causes of the Arms Race

109. On the other hand, 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.

110. There is a common belief that under modern conditions peace cannot be assured except on the basis of an equal balance of armaments and that this factor is the probable cause of this stockpiling of armaments. Thus, if one country increases its military strength, others are immediately roused by a competitive spirit to augment their own supply of armaments. And if one country is equipped with atomic weapons, others consider

themselves justified in producing such weapons themselves, equal in destructive force.

111. Consequently people are living in the grip of constant fear. They are afraid that at any moment the impending storm may break upon them with horrific violence. And they have good reasons for their fear, for there is certainly no lack of such weapons. While it is difficult to believe that anyone would dare to assume responsibility for initiating the appalling slaughter and destruction that war would bring in its wake, there is no denying that the conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance. Moreover, even though the monstrous power of modern weapons does indeed act as a deterrent, there is reason to fear that the very testing of nuclear devices for war purposes can, if continued, lead to serious danger for various forms of life on earth.

Need for Disarmament

112. Hence justice, right reason, and the recognition of man's dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race. The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control. In the words of Pope Pius XII: "The calamity of a world war, with the economic and social ruin and the moral excesses and dissolution that accompany it, must not on any account be permitted to engulf the human race for a third time." (59)

113. Everyone, however, must realize that, unless this process of disarmament be thoroughgoing and complete, and reach men's very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race, or to reduce armaments, or—and this is the main thing—ultimately to abolish them entirely. Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from men's minds. 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. And We are confident that this can be achieved, for it is a thing which not only is dictated by common sense, but is in itself most desirable and most fruitful of good.

At a time when humanity's horizons are widening far beyond the confines of our planet, we refuse to believe that man, animated by such an awareness, is not capable of exorcising the demon of war which threatens to destroy him, even if this demands of him immense efforts and a reasonable renunciation of old-fashioned concepts that continue to set peoples and nations ad odds.

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Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI
For the celebration of the Day of Peace
1 January

TO BE RECONCILED WITH EACH OTHER,
TO EDUCATE THEMSELVES FOR PEACE

And it does prevail. We enthusiastically greet the efforts of modern man to give affirmation, in the world and in present history, to Peace as a method, as an international institution, as sincere negotiation, as self-discipline in territorial and social disputes, as a question that is higher than the prestige of reprisal and revenge. Questions of importance for the victory of Peace are already under discussion: disarmament, first of all, limitation of nuclear weapons, the hypothesis of recourse to arbitration, the substitution of collaboration for competition, peaceful coexistence in diversity of ideologies and forms of government, the hope that a proportion

of military expenditure will be devoted to aid to developing peoples . Thus We see a contribution to Peace in the now universal deploration of terrorism, of torture of prisoners, of retaliatory repression of innocent people, of concentration camps for civilian detainees, of killing of hostages, and so on. The world's conscience no longer tolerates such crimes, the fierce inhumanity of which turns back in dishonor to those who perform them.

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**Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI
To the First Special Session of the United Nations
General Assembly**

Dedicated to disarmament, delivered on June 6, 1978

6. In making our own and expressing to you the hope and anguish of humanity aspiring to the peace it needs, we are aware that the path which must lead to the coming of a new international order capable of eliminating wars and the causes of wars and thus making arms superfluous cannot in any case be as short as we would like it to be.

It will therefore be indispensable in the meantime to plan and promote a strategy of peace and disarmament – a step-by-step strategy but one that is at the same time almost impatient, a strategy that is balanced yet courageous – always keeping our eyes and our wills fixed on the final goal of general and complete disarmament.

We do not have the competence or authority to indicate to you the methods and mechanisms for such a strategy, which in any case presupposes the setting up of reliable and effective international controls systems. We believe however that there is common agreement with you on the need to lay down some principles in

the effort aimed at halting the arms race and reducing the amount of existing arms.

a) Nuclear weapons certainly have first place: they are the most fearsome menace with which mankind is burdened. We appreciate very much the initiatives that have already been taken in this area, but we must encourage all countries, particularly those which have the chief responsibility for it, to continue and to develop these initiatives, with the final goal of completely eliminating the atomic arsenal.

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**Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI
For the Celebration of the World Day of Peace**

1 January 2006

IN TRUTH, PEACE

13. All this must not, however, lead to a naive optimism. It must not be forgotten that, tragically, violent fratricidal conflicts and devastating wars still continue to sow tears and death in vast parts of the world. Situations exist where conflict, hidden like flame beneath ashes, can flare up anew and cause immense destruction. Those authorities who, rather than making every effort to promote peace, incite their citizens to hostility towards other nations, bear a heavy burden of responsibility: in regions particularly at risk, they jeopardize the delicate balance achieved at the cost of patient negotiations and thus help make the future of humanity more uncertain and ominous. What can be said, too, about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is 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.

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Pope John Paul II's Appeal for Peace

“Appeal for Peace at Hiroshima”, Pope John Paul II, 1981

War is the work of man. War is destruction of human life. War is death.

Nowhere do these truths impose themselves upon us more forcefully than in this city of Hiroshima, at this Peace Memorial . Two cities will forever have their names linked together, two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as the only cities in the world that have had the ill fortune to be a reminder that man is capable of destruction beyond belief. Their names will forever stand out as the names of the only cities in our time that have been singled out as a warning to future generations that war can destroy human efforts to build a world of peace.

1. Mr. Mayor, Dear friends here present, and all of you who are listening to my voice, and whom my message will reach,

It is with deep emotion that I have come here today as a pilgrim of peace.

I wanted to make this visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial out of a deep personal conviction that to remember the past is to commit oneself to the future.

Together we recall that it is one of humanity's sad achievements that all across the face of the earth the names of very many – too many – places are remembered mainly because they have witnessed the horror and suffering produced by war: war-memorials, that with the victory of one side also recall the suffering and death of countless human beings; cemeteries where rest those who sacrificed their very lives in the service of their country or in the service of a noble cause, and cemeteries where lie the innocent civilian victims of war's destructive fury; the remains of concentration and extermination camps, where contempt for man and for his inviolable rights reached its most base and cruel expression; battlefields, where nature has mercifully healed the earth's scars, but without being able to blot out past human history of hate and enmity. Hiroshima and Nagasaki stand out from all those other places and monuments, as the first victims of nuclear war.

I bow my head as I recall the memory of thousands of men, women and children who lost their lives in that one terrible moment, or who for long years carried in their bodies and minds those seeds of death which inexorably pursued their process of destruction. The final balance of the human suffering that began here has not been fully drawn up, nor has the total human cost been tallied, especially when one sees what nuclear war has done – and could still do – to our ideas, our attitudes and our civilization.

2. To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future. I cannot but honor and applaud the wise decision of the authorities of this city that the memorial recalling the first nuclear bombing should be a monument to peace. By so doing, the City of Hiroshima and the whole People of Japan have forcefully expressed their hope for a peaceful world and their conviction that man who wages war can also successfully make peace. From this City, and from the event its name recalls, there has originated a new worldwide consciousness against war, and a fresh determination to work for peace.

Some people, even among those who were alive at the time of the events that we commemorate today, might prefer not to think about the horror of nuclear war and its dire consequences. Among those who have never personally experienced the reality of armed conflict between nations, some might wish to abandon the very possibility of nuclear war. Others might wish to regard nuclear capacity as an unavoidable means of maintaining a balance of power through a balance of terror. But there is no justification for not raising the question of the responsibility of each nation and each individual in the face of possible wars and of the nuclear threat.

3. To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future. I evoke before you the memory of August 6, 1945, so that we may better grasp the meaning of the present challenge. Since that fateful day, nuclear stockpiles have grown in quantity and in destructive power. Nuclear weaponry continues to be built, tested and deployed. The total consequences of full-scale nuclear war are impossible to predict, but even if a mere fraction of the available weapons were to be used, one has to ask whether the inevitable escalation can be imagined, and whether the very destruction of humanity is not a real possibility. I wish to repeat here what I said to the United Nations General Assembly: "The continual preparations for war demonstrated by the production of ever more numerous, powerful and sophisticated weapons in various countries show that there is a desire to be ready for war, and being ready means being able to start it; it also means taking the risk that sometime, somewhere, somehow, someone can set in motion the terrible mechanism of general destruction"(no.10)

4. To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future. To remember Hiroshima is to abhor nuclear war. To remember Hiroshima is to commit oneself to peace. To remember what the people of this city suffered is to renew our faith in man, in his capacity to do what is good, in his freedom to choose what is right, in his determination to turn disaster into a new beginning. In the face of the man-made calamity that every war is, one must affirm

and reaffirm, again and again, that the waging of war is not inevitable or unchangeable. Humanity is not destined to self-destruction. Clashes of ideologies, aspirations and needs can and must be settled and resolved by means other than war and violence. Humanity owes it to itself to settle differences and conflicts by peaceful means. The great spectrum of problems facing the many peoples in varying stages of cultural, social, economic and political development gives rise to international tension and conflict. It is vital for humanity that these problems should be solved in accordance with ethical principles of equity and justice enshrined in meaningful agreements and institutions. The international community should thus give itself a system of law that will regulate international relations and maintain peace, just as the rule of law protects national order.

5. Those who cherish life on earth must encourage governments and decision-makers in the economic and social fields to act in harmony with the demands of peace rather than out of narrow self-interest. Peace must always be the aim: peace pursued and protected in all circumstances. Let us not repeat the past, a past of violence and destruction. Let us embark upon the steep and difficult path of peace, the only path that befits human dignity, the only path that leads to the true fulfillment of the human destiny, the only path to a future in which equity, justice and solidarity are realities and not just distant dreams.

6. And so, on this very spot where, 35 years ago, the life of so many people was snuffed out in one fiery moment, I wish to appeal to the whole world on behalf of life, on behalf of humanity, on behalf of the future.

To the Heads of State and of Government, to those who hold political and economic power, I say: let us pledge ourselves to peace through justice; let us take a solemn decision, now, that war will never be tolerated or sought as a means of resolving differences; let us promise our fellow human beings that we will work untiringly for disarmament and the banishing of all nuclear

weapons: let us replace violence and hate with confidence and caring.

To every man and woman in this land and in the world, I say: let us assume responsibility for each other and for the future without being limited by frontiers and social distinctions; let us educate ourselves and educate others in the ways of peace; let humanity never become the victim of a struggle between competing systems; let there never be another war.

To young people everywhere, I say: let us together create a new future of fraternity and solidarity; let us reach out towards our brothers and sisters in need, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, free the downtrodden, bring justice where injustice reigns and peace where only weapons speak. Your young hearts have an extraordinary capacity for goodness and love: put them at the service of your fellow human beings.

To everyone I repeat the words of the Prophet: “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more ” (Is 2:4)

To those who believe in God, I say: let us be strong in his strength that infinitely surpasses our own; let us be united in the knowledge that he calls us to unity; let us be aware that love and sharing are not faraway ideals but the road to enduring peace – the peace of God.

And to the Creator of nature and man, of truth and beauty I pray:

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations;

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war;

Hear my voice when I beg you to instill into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice and the joy of fellowship;

Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and in every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace;

Hear my voice and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with the sharing of self, to war with peace.

O God, hear my voice and grant unto the world your everlasting peace.

February 25, 1981

Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park

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**Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'
Of the Holy Father Francis
On Care of Our Common Home**

Given in Rome at Saint Peter's on 24 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost, in the year 2015

57. It is foreseeable that, once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claims. War always does grave harm to the environment and to the cultural riches of peoples, risks which are magnified when one considers nuclear arms and biological weapons. "Despite the international agreements which prohibit chemical, bacteriological and biological warfare, the fact is that laboratory research continues to develop new offensive weapons capable of altering the balance of nature".[34] Politics must pay greater attention to foreseeing new conflicts and addressing the causes which can lead to them. But powerful financial interests

prove most resistant to this effort, and political planning tends to lack breadth of vision. What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?...

...104. Yet it must also be recognized that nuclear energy, biotechnology, information technology, knowledge of our DNA, and many other abilities which we have acquired, have given us tremendous power. More precisely, they have given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world. Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used. We need but think of the nuclear bombs dropped in the middle of the twentieth century, or the array of technology which Nazism, Communism and other totalitarian regimes have employed to kill millions of people, to say nothing of the increasingly deadly arsenal of weapons available for modern warfare. In whose hands does all this power lie, or will it eventually end up? It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it.

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Address of the Holy Father Pope Francis on Nuclear Weapons

Atomic Bomb Hypocenter Park (Nagasaki)

Sunday, 24 November 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This place makes us deeply aware of the pain and horror that we human beings are capable of inflicting upon one another. The damaged cross and statue of Our Lady recently discovered in the Cathedral of Nagasaki remind us once more of the unspeakable

horror suffered in the flesh by the victims of the bombing and their families.

One of the deepest longings of the human heart is for security, peace and stability. The possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is not the answer to this desire; indeed they seem always to thwart it. Our world is marked by a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust, one that ends up poisoning relationships between peoples and obstructing any form of dialogue.

Peace and international stability are incompatible with attempts to build upon the fear of mutual destruction or the threat of total annihilation. They can be achieved only on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family of today and tomorrow.

Here in this city 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.

A world of peace, free from nuclear weapons, is the aspiration of millions of men and women everywhere. To make this ideal a reality calls for involvement on the part of all: individuals, religious communities and civil society, countries that possess nuclear weapons and those that do not, the military and private sectors, and international organizations. Our response to the threat of nuclear weapons must be joint and concerted, inspired by the arduous yet constant effort to build mutual trust and thus surmount

the current climate of distrust. In 1963, Saint John XXIII, writing in his Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, in addition to urging the prohibition of atomic weapons (cf. No. 112), stated that authentic and lasting international peace cannot rest on a balance of military power, but only upon mutual trust (cf. No. 113).

There is a need to break down the climate of distrust that risks leading to a dismantling of the international arms control framework. We are witnessing an erosion of multilateralism which is all the more serious in light of the growth of new forms of military technology. Such an approach seems highly incongruous in today's context of interconnectedness; it represents a situation that urgently calls for the attention and commitment of all leaders.

For her part, the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to promoting peace between peoples and nations. This is a duty to which the Church feels bound before God and every man and woman in our world. 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. Last July, the bishops of Japan launched an appeal for the abolition of nuclear arms, and each August the Church in Japan holds a ten-day prayer meeting for peace. May prayer, tireless work in support of agreements and insistence on dialogue be the most powerful "weapons" in which we put our trust and the inspiration of our efforts to build a world of justice and solidarity that can offer an authentic assurance of peace.

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. The current state of our planet requires a serious reflection on how its resources can be employed in light of the complex and difficult

implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in order to achieve the goal of an integrated human development. Saint Paul VII suggested as much in 1964, when he proposed the establishment of a Global Fund to assist those most impoverished peoples, drawn partially from military expenditures (cf. Declaration to Journalists, 4 December 1964; *Populorum Progressio*, 51).

All of this necessarily calls for the creation of tools for ensuring trust and reciprocal development, and counts on leaders capable of rising to these occasions. It is a task that concerns and challenges every one of us. No one can be indifferent to the pain of millions of men and women whose sufferings trouble our consciences today. No one can turn a deaf ear to the plea of our brothers and sisters in need. No one can turn a blind eye to the ruin caused by a culture incapable of dialogue.

I ask you to join in praying each day for the conversion of hearts and for the triumph of a culture of life, reconciliation and fraternity. A fraternity that can recognize and respect diversity in the quest for a common destiny.

I know that some here are not Catholics, but I am certain that we can all make our own the prayer for peace attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi:

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.

In this striking place of remembrance that stirs us from our indifference, it is all the more meaningful that we turn to God with trust, asking him to teach us to be effective instruments of peace and to make every effort not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

May you and your families, and this entire nation, know the blessings of prosperity and social harmony!

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Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti
Of the Holy Father Francis
On Fraternity and Social Friendship

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258. War can easily be chosen by invoking all sorts of allegedly humanitarian, defensive or precautionary excuses, and even resorting to the manipulation of information. In recent decades, every single war has been ostensibly “justified”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of the possibility of legitimate defense by means of military force, which involves demonstrating that certain “rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy” [239] have been met. Yet it is easy to fall into an overly broad interpretation of this potential right. In this way, some would also wrongly justify even “preventive” attacks or acts of war that can hardly avoid entailing “evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated”. [240] At issue is whether the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the enormous and growing possibilities offered by new technologies, have granted war an uncontrollable destructive power over great numbers of innocent civilians. The truth is that “never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely”. [241] We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a “just war”. Never again war! [242]...

...262. Rules by themselves will not suffice if we continue to think that the solution to current problems is deterrence through fear or the threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Indeed, “if we take into consideration the principal threats to peace and security with their many dimensions in this multipolar world of the twenty-first century as, for example, terrorism, asymmetrical conflicts, cybersecurity, environmental problems, poverty, not a few doubts arise regarding the inadequacy of nuclear deterrence as an effective response to such challenges. These concerns are even greater when we consider the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would follow from any use of nuclear weapons, with devastating, indiscriminate and uncontrollable effects, over time and space... We need also to ask ourselves how sustainable is a stability based on fear, when it actually increases fear and undermines relationships of trust between peoples. 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... Growing interdependence and globalization mean that any response to the threat of nuclear weapons should be collective and concerted, based on mutual trust. This trust can be built only through dialogue that is truly directed to the common good and not to the protection of veiled or particular interests”. [244] With the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, let us establish a global fund [245] that can finally put an end to hunger and favor development in the most impoverished countries, so that their citizens will not resort to violent or illusory solutions, or have to leave their countries in order to seek a more dignified life.

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Steps toward Inner Peace

by Peace Pilgrim

...I discovered this great truth: unnecessary possessions are just unnecessary burdens. Now I don't mean that all our needs are the same. Yours may be much greater than mine. For instance, if you have a family, you would need the stability of a family center for your children. But I do mean that anything beyond need – and need sometimes includes things beyond the physical needs, too – anything beyond need tends to become burdensome.

There is a great freedom in simplicity of living, and after I began to feel this, I found a harmony in my life between inner and outer well-being. Now there's a great deal to be said about such harmony, not only for an individual life but also for the life of a society. It's because as a world we have gotten ourselves so far out of harmony, so way off on the material side, that when we discover something like nuclear energy, we are still capable of putting it into a bomb and using it to kill people. This is because our inner well-being lags behind our outer well-being. The valid research for the future is on the inner side, on the psychological side, so that we will be able to bring these two into balance, so we will know how to use well the outer well-being we already have....

... Pure love is a willingness to give, without a thought of receiving anything in return. Love can save the world from nuclear destruction. Love God: turn to God with receptiveness and responsiveness. Love your fellow human beings: turn to them with friendliness and givingness. Make yourself fit to be called a child of God by living the way of love.

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Martin Luther King Jr.

December 1957

I definitely feel that the development and use of nuclear weapons should be banned. It cannot be disputed that a full-scale nuclear war would be utterly catastrophic. Hundreds and millions of people would be killed outright by the blast and heat, and by the ionizing radiation produced at the instant of the explosion... Even countries not directly hit by bombs would suffer through global fall-outs. All of this leads me to say that the principal objective of all nations must be the total abolition of war. War must be finally eliminated or the whole of mankind will be plunged into the abyss of annihilation.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Nobel Lecture, December 11, 1964

The quest for peace and justice

... A third great evil confronting our world is that of war. Recent events have vividly reminded us that nations are not reducing but rather increasing their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. The best brains in the highly developed nations of the world are devoted to military technology. The proliferation of nuclear weapons has not been halted, in spite of the Limited Test Ban Treaty¹⁶. On the contrary, the detonation of an atomic device by the first nonwhite, non- Western, and so-called underdeveloped power, namely the Chinese People's Republic¹⁷, opens new vistas of exposure of vast multitudes, the whole of humanity, to insidious terrorization by the ever-present threat of annihilation. The fact that most of the time human beings put the truth about the nature and risks of the nuclear war out of their minds because it is too painful and therefore not "acceptable", does not alter the nature and risks of such war. The device of "rejection" may temporarily cover up anxiety, but it does not bestow peace of mind and emotional security....

...So we must fix our vision not merely on the negative expulsion of war, but upon the positive affirmation of peace. We must see that peace represents a sweeter music, a cosmic melody that is far superior to the discords of war. Somehow we must transform the dynamics of the world power struggle from the negative nuclear arms race which no one can win to a positive contest to harness man's creative genius for the purpose of making peace and prosperity a reality for all of the nations of the world. In short, we must shift the arms race into a "peace race". If we have the will and determination to mount such a peace offensive, we will unlock hitherto tightly sealed doors of hope and transform our imminent cosmic elegy into a psalm of creative fulfillment.

All that I have said boils down to the point of affirming that mankind's survival is dependent upon man's ability to solve the problems of racial injustice, poverty, and war; the solution of these problems is in turn dependent upon man squaring his moral progress with his scientific progress, and learning the practical art of living in harmony. Some years ago a famous novelist died. Among his papers was found a list of suggested story plots for future stories, the most prominently underscored being this one: "A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together." This is the great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a big house, a great "world house" in which we have to live together – black and white, Easterners and Westerners, Gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Moslem and Hindu, a family unduly separated in ideas, culture, and interests who, because we can never again live without each other, must learn, somehow, in this one big world, to live with each other.

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