

A Draft for the Pastoral Letter

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believe the urgent need for control of the arms race requires a willingness for each side to take some first steps; the United States should be prepared, in our view, to take some independent initiatives, beyond those already taken, to reduce some of the gravest dangers and to encourage a constructive Soviet response.

b) Negotiation on arms control agreements in isolation, without persistent and parallel efforts to reduce the political tensions which motivate the buildup of armaments, will not suffice.

Continued insistence on efforts to minimize the risk of non-nuclear war: Working to reduce the likelihood of nuclear war does not of itself remove the threat of non-nuclear war; indeed, negotiated reductions in nuclear weapons available to the superpowers may increase the likelihood of non-nuclear wars, both between the superpowers and in other regions of the world.

a) For this reason we strongly support negotiations aimed at reducing and limiting conventional forces and at building confidence between possible adversaries, especially in regions of major military confrontation, as well as a continuing policy of maximum political engagement with

governments of potential adversaries, providing for repeated, systematic discussion and negotiation on areas of friction. This policy should be carried out through a system of regularly scheduled conferences at several levels of government, possibly including an annual summit meeting. Such channels of discussion are too important to be regarded by either side as a concession or made dependent on the daily ups and downs of international developments.

3. Efforts to develop non-violent means of conflict resolution: Beyond this it is necessary to develop means of defending peoples that do not depend upon the threat of annihilation or upon a war economy.

4. The Role of Conscience: A dominant characteristic of the Second Vatican Council's evaluation of modern warfare was the stress it placed on the requirement for proper formation of conscience. Moral principles are effective restraints on power only when policies reflect them and individuals hold them. The relationship of the authority of the state and the conscience of the individual on matters of war and peace takes on new urgency in the face of the destructive nature of modern war.

B. Suggested actions by the church

1. Formation of Conscience

War, especially the threat of nuclear war, is certainly one of the central problems of our age. How we deal with it will determine the shape, and even the possibility, of life on earth. God made humanity stewards of the earth; we cannot escape this responsibility. We urge every diocese and parish to implement balanced and objective educational programs to sensitize Christians at all age levels to issues of war and peace. These programs should provide a practical framework within which they can discuss the problem and begin to make the moral decisions required. People must be educated in all the currents of our tradition. Development and implementation of these programs should receive a high priority over during the next several years. These programs should be developed in an integral fashion. To accomplish this, this pastoral letter in its entirety — including its complexities — should be used as the framework for such programs.

2. Reverence for Life in the Pursuit of Peace

To have peace in our world we must first have peace within ourselves. As Pope John Paul II reminded us in his 1982 World Day of Peace message, world peace will always elude us until peace becomes a reality for each of us personally. "It springs from the dynamism of free wills guided by reason

toward the common good that is to be attained in truth, justice and love." Interior peace becomes possible only when we have a conversion of spirit. We cannot have peace with hate in our hearts.

3. Prayer

A conversion of our hearts and minds will make it possible for us to enter into a closer communion with our Lord. We nourish that by personal and communal prayer, for it is in prayer that we encounter Jesus, who is our peace, and learn from him the way to peace. In his presence, and gifted with his Spirit, we are enabled to recognize the violence and enmity in our own lives, and to repent of our sin, to know the forgiveness of our God. In prayer we are renewed.

4. Penance

Prayer by itself is incomplete without penance. Penance directs us toward our goal of putting on the attitudes of Jesus himself. Because we are all capable of violence, we are never totally conformed to Christ and are always in need of conversion. The 20th century alone provides adequate evidence of our violence as individuals and as a nation. Thus, there is continual need for our penance and conversion.

V Theological Bases

The pastoral letter is rooted in Christian faith as taught by the Roman Catholic Church. These excerpts reflect some of the theological bases for this document.

The church's mission as peacemaker

The distinctive contribution of the church flows from her religious nature and ministry. The church is called to be, in a unique way, the instrument of the kingdom of God in history. Since peace is one of the signs of the kingdom of God present in the world, the church fulfills part of her essential mission by making the peace of the kingdom more visible in our time.

Because peace, like the kingdom of God itself, is both a divine gift and a human work, the church should continually pray for the gift and share in the work. We are called to be a church at the service of peace precisely because peace is one manifestation of God's word and work in our midst. The recognition of the church's responsibility to join with others in the work of peace is the moving force behind the call today for the development of a theology of peace. Much of the history of Catholic theology on war and peace has focused on limiting the resort to force in human affairs; this task is still necessary, as reflected later in this pastoral letter, but it is not a sufficient response to Vatican II's challenge "to undertake a completely fresh reappraisal of war."

The Kingdom of God

A. Peace and the Kingdom

The roots of our search for peace lie in the word of God as that is given to us in sacred scripture. The scriptures present us with a rich, complex and varied understanding of both the meaning of peace and of the ways in which it is achieved. Constant within that understanding, however, are a conviction that peace is necessary and an intense longing for its realization.

Living in covenantal fidelity with the God who saves also meant living in covenant with one another. God's covenant of peace was also a covenant of compassion and of justice among the people. Thus, God's people came to realize that true peace could not be attained through might or strength, but through forgiveness and reconciliation with God and with each other. Further, this peace could not be maintained for some at the expense of others. Peace among God's people could only be peace for all of God's people — especially the helpless and the needy.

The full manifestation of God's peace on earth, the establishment of the covenant of peace, was an important aspect of the hope and the eschatological vision of the Old Testament. When the fullness of salvation came into being, God would judge and the people "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Is. 2:4) God would speak peace to the people,

and "steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will embrace each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky." (Ps. 85:10-11) At this graced time a messenger of peace would appear: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! . . . Lo, your king comes to you . . . and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea." (Zec. 9:9-10) The reign of God would begin.

As Christians we believe that in Jesus who is our peace (Eph. 2:14), that reign was inaugurated and the ways of peace became visible. We are told that the birth of Jesus was heralded by the heavenly host who gave glory to God and promised peace to those with whom God was pleased (Lk. 2:14). Jesus himself proclaimed the kingdom of God in forgiveness, healing and call to conversion. He made it clear that God's reign is for those who are in need, who suffer in heart and body, who find themselves unreconciled and who recognize their need for the mercy of God. He consistently called people to conversion, to a change of heart and change of allegiance.

B. Kingdom and history

Isaiah's promise of the reign of God (Is. 2:4) in which peace will be a primary characteristic, must be achieved in history. The Christian understanding of history is hopeful and confident but also sober and realistic:

"Christian optimism based on the glorious cross of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is no excuse for self-deception. For Christians, peace on earth is always a challenge because of the presence of sin in man's heart."

Christian hope about history is rooted in our belief in God as creator and sustainer of our existence and our conviction that the kingdom of God will come in spite of sin, human weakness and failure. It is precisely because sin is part of history that the realization of the peace of the kingdom is never permanent or total. Peace must be built in a world where the personal and social consequences of sin are very evident. This is the continuing refrain from the patristic period to Pope John Paul II.

"Although Christians put all their best energies into preventing war or stopping it, they do not deceive themselves about their ability to cause peace to triumph, nor about the effect of their efforts to this end. They therefore concern themselves with all human initiatives in favor of peace and very often take part in them. But they regard them with realism and humility. One could almost say that they relativize them in two senses: They relate them both to self-deception of humanity and to God's saving plan."

Christians are called to live the tension between the vision of the reign of God and its concrete realization in history. The

tension is often described in terms of "already but not yet;" i.e., we already live in the grace of the kingdom but it is not yet the completed kingdom. Hence, we are a pilgrim people, on the way to the kingdom of God but seeking it in a world marked by conflict and injustice.

Catholic theology has used the concepts of sin and grace to interpret our pilgrim existence. Christ's grace is at work in the world; his command of love and his call to reconciliation are not purely future ideals but call us to obedience today. Our belief in the truth and power of the word of God leads us to say with John Paul II: "Peace is possible."

The Christian vocation

We are coming to a fuller awareness that a response to the call of Jesus is both personal and demanding. To be a disciple of Jesus requires that we continually go beyond where we now are. To obey the call of Jesus means to separate ourselves from all attachments and affiliations that could prevent us from hearing and following one's authentic vocation. To embark on the road to discipleship is to dispose oneself for a share in the cross (cf. Jn. 16:20). To be a Christian, according to the New Testament, is not simply to believe with one's mind, it is to become a doer of the word, a wayfarer with Jesus. And this means that we never expect full success within history, but rather we even regard the path of persecution and the possibility of martyrdom as normal.



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