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The pastoral letter implicitly issues a positive call to immediate action in regard to the practice of the values of peace and justice in the Catholic and Christian tradition.

The Second Vatican Council (1965) addressed at length the problem of how the Church is linked with humanity and its history. Jesus died and rose to break the power of evil in the world "so that this world might be fashioned anew according to God's design and reach its fulfillment." Important theological change was to give more emphasis to values of this life and the transformation of this world than had been given in the past.

The reasons for concern for peace are obvious. Nuclear war could devastate the earth. Whether one speaks in terms of a classless society, of the Kingdom of God, or even of the more modest concept and goal of a better world, all hope could vanish if the world is destroyed in a nuclear holocaust. The quest for peace is synonymous to a well-defined, implemented, and on going peace and justice education program in every parish in every diocese for the next 10 years for our survival on the planet Earth.

The pastoral's challenge to develop meaningful and relevant educational programs for the formation of conscience is a major priority and the time is now. It is necessary that all Catholics be involved, i.e., the retired, the teenager, the parent, the pre-school child, the student, the single, the separated, and the married.

Knowledge and understanding are basic to the development of responsibility in decision making and to the practice of ownership of constructive actions on such peace issues as:

- The quality of life in a nuclear world;
- Oppression, deprivation and lack of respect among people;
- Controlling greed, pollution and misuse of the world's resources;
- The creative process of peaceful resolutions instead of conflicts; and
- Examining and dealing with individual feelings and fears about nuclear war and our Christian mission on Earth.

God has given us a choice. God, through his Son, Jesus Christ, has taught us to love and care for one another. This includes love and care for every one who lives on the planet Earth. Viable and effective peace education programs for all Catholics are a pastoral challenge and choice as is the choice of peace or nuclear holocaust.

regard as normal even the path of persecution and the possibility of martyrdom.

We readily recognize that we live in a world that is becoming increasingly estranged from Christian values. In order to remain a Christian, one must take a resolute stand against many commonly accepted axioms of the world. To become true disciples, we must undergo a demanding course of induction into the adult Christian community. We must continually equip ourselves to profess the full faith of the church in an increasingly secularized society. We must develop a sense of solidarity, cemented by relationships with mature and exemplary Christians who represent Christ and his way of life.

All of these comments about the meaning of being a disciple or a follower of Jesus today are especially relevant to the quest for genuine peace in our time.

B. Elements of a Pastoral Response

We recommend and endorse for the faithful some practical programs to meet the challenge to their faith in this area of grave concern.

1. Educational Programs and Formation of Conscience

Since war, especially the threat of nuclear war, is one of the central problems of our day, how we seek to solve it could determine the mode and even the possibility of life on earth. God made human beings stewards of the earth; we cannot escape this responsibility. Therefore we urge every diocese and parish to implement balanced and objective educational programs to help people at all age levels to understand better the issues of war and peace. Development and implementation of such programs must receive a high priority during the next several years. They must teach the full impact of our Christian faith. To accomplish this, this pastoral letter in its entirety, including its complexity, should be used as a guide and a framework for such programs, as they lead people to make moral decisions about the problems of war and peace, keeping in mind that the applications of principles in this pastoral letter do not carry the same moral authority as our statements of universal moral principles and formal church teaching.

In developing educational programs we must keep in mind that questions of war and peace have a profoundly moral dimension which responsible Christians cannot ignore. They are questions of life and death. True, they also have a political dimension because they are embedded in public policy. But the fact that they are also political is no excuse for denying the church's obligation to provide its members with the help they need in forming their consciences. We must learn together how to make correct and responsible moral judgments. We reject, therefore, criticism of the church's concern with these issues on the ground that it "should not become involved in politics." We are called to move from discussion to witness and action.

At the same time we recognize that the church's teaching authority does not carry the same force when it deals with technical solutions involving particular means as it does when it speaks of principles or ends. People may agree in abhorring an injustice, for instance, yet sincerely disagree as to what practical approach will achieve justice. Religious groups are as entitled as others to their opinion in such cases, but they should not claim that their opinions are the only ones that people of good will may hold.

The church's educational programs must explain clearly those principles or teachings about which there is little question. Those teachings, which seek to make explicit the gospel call to peace and the tradition of the church, should then be applied to concrete situations. They must indicate what the possible legitimate options are and what the consequences of those options may be. While this approach should be self-evident, it needs to be emphasized. Some people who have entered the public debate on nuclear warfare, at all points on the spectrum of opinion, appear not to understand or accept some of the clear teachings of the church as contained in papal or conciliar documents. For example, some would place almost no limits on the use of nuclear weapons if they are needed for "self-defense." Some on the other side of the debate insist on conclusions which may be legitimate options but cannot be made obligatory on the basis of actual church teaching.

2. True Peace Calls for "Reverence for Life"

All of the values we are promoting in this letter rest ultimately in the disarmament of the human heart and the conversion of the human spirit to God, who alone can give authentic peace. Indeed, 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 towards the common good that is to be attained in truth, justice and love." (117) Interior peace becomes possible only when we have a conversion of spirit. We cannot have peace with hate in our hearts.

No society can live in peace with itself or with the world without a full awareness of the worth and dignity of every human person, and of the sacredness of all human life (Jas. 4:1-2). When we accept violence in any form as commonplace, our sensitivities become dulled. When we accept violence, war itself can be taken for granted. Violence has many faces: oppression of the poor, deprivation of basic human rights, economic exploitation, sexual exploitation and pornography, neglect or abuse of the aged and the helpless and innumerable other acts of inhumanity. Abortion in particular blunts a sense of the sacredness of human life. In a society where the innocent unborn are killed wantonly, how can we expect people to feel righteous revulsion at the act or threat of killing non-combatants in war?

We are well aware of the differences involved in the taking of human life in warfare and the taking of human life through abortion. As we have discussed throughout this document, even justifiable defense against aggression may result in the indirect or unintended loss of innocent human lives. This is tragic, but may conceivably be proportionate to the values defended. Nothing, however, can justify direct attack on innocent human life, in or out of warfare. Abortion is precisely such an attack.

We know that millions of men and women of good will, of all religious persuasions, join us in our commitment to try to reduce the horrors of war and particularly to assure that nuclear weapons will never again be used by any nation, anywhere, for any reason. Millions join us in our no to nuclear war in the certainty that nuclear war would inevitably result in the killing of millions of innocent human beings, directly or indirectly. Yet many part ways with us in our efforts to reduce the horror of abortion and our no to war on innocent human life in the womb, killed not indirectly, but directly.

We must ask how long a nation willing to extend a constitutional guarantee to the "right" to kill defenseless human beings by abortion is likely to refrain from adopting strategic warfare policies deliberately designed to kill millions of defenseless human beings if adopting them should come to seem "expedient." Since 1973, approximately 15 million abortions have been performed in the United States, symptoms of a kind of disease of the human spirit. And we now find ourselves seriously discussing the pros and cons of such questions as infanticide, euthanasia and the involvement of physicians in carrying out the death penalty. Those who would celebrate such a national disaster can only have blinded themselves to its reality.

Pope Paul VI was resolutely clear: *If you wish peace, defend life.* (118) We plead with all who would work to end the scourge of war to begin by defending life at its most defenseless, the life of the unborn.

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 communion 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 prayer we are reunited in faith and confirmed in our hope in God's promise.

The Lord's promise is that he is in our midst when we gather in prayer. Strengthened by this conviction, we beseech the risen Christ to fill the world with his peace. We call upon Mary, the first disciple and the Queen of Peace, to intercede for us and for the people of our time that we may walk in the way of peace. In this context, we encourage devotion to Our Lady of Peace.

As believers, we understand peace as a gift of God. This belief prompts us to pray constantly, personally and communally, particularly through the reading of scripture and devotion to the rosary, especially in the family. Through these means and others we seek the wisdom to begin the search for peace and the courage to sustain us as instruments of Christ's peace in the world.

The practice of contemplative prayer is especially valuable for advancing harmony and peace in the world. For this prayer rises, by divine grace, where there is total disarmament of the heart, and unfolds in an experience of love which is the moving force of peace. Contemplation fosters a vision of the human family as united and interdependent in the mystery of God's love for all people. This silent interior prayer bridges temporarily the "already" and "not yet," this world and God's kingdom of peace.

The Mass in particular is a unique means of seeking God's help to create the conditions essential for true peace in our-

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