

C. The use of nuclear weapons

Using the principles of just-war conduct explained earlier, the bishops evaluate three circumstances of nuclear warfare. Nuclear weapons may not be used against civilian population centers. Initiation of nuclear war, even on a limited basis, cannot be justified. The possibility of a limited nuclear war not escalating to generalized exchange is very doubtful. Even in retaliation, the probability of expansion of a limited war is so high, that the use of nuclear weapons involves an unacceptably high moral risk.

1. How do the conclusions of the draft on the use of nuclear weapons relate to the principles of just war explained earlier in the draft?

2. What do you think of the NATO policy of first use of nuclear weapons to counter larger Warsaw Pact forces?

3. Do you agree or disagree with the concerns raised about the situation of limited nuclear war?

D. Deterrence in principle and practice

Deterrence persuades adversaries that initiation of attack will result in an unacceptably high level of damage to themselves. Discussing nuclear war, deterrence rather than defense is the focus, because defense against nuclear attack is not possible. The moral issues of nuclear deterrence are five: 1) the possession of weapons of mass destruction; 2) the threat of intention to use them; 3) the willingness to use nuclear weapons on civilians; 4) the moral significance of deterrence through a strategy which could not be morally implemented; 5) the continued escalation of the nuclear arms race and its diversion of resources from other needs. Continued reliance upon the possession of nuclear arms to deter their use by our adversaries is justified only in the context of action toward arms control and multilateral disarmament. (Note: the moral reasoning in this section is specific and detailed, and requires close attention to understand its significance.)

1. Intentions and consequences are key moral concerns here. Can you think of other moral issues, either personal or private, in which intention and consequence play the role which they do in the moral evaluation of nuclear deterrence policies?

2. Continued possession of nuclear arms on the condition that the United States take steps toward disarmament has been a controversial position for some people. Do you think this is a reasonable provision or a refusal to confront the full implications of what the draft has said up to now? What do you think the conditions should be for the Church to continue tolerating possession of nuclear arms by the United States?

III. The promotion of peace: Proposals and policies

Peace is more than the absence of strife and war. It is the mark of conscious social progress. The development of a theology of peace is needed.

• Do you agree with this? What is the "more" which is needed for peace?

A. Specific steps to reduce the danger of war

Six proposals for action are set forth: 1) Accelerated nuclear arms control; 2) continued work to reduce the risk of any war; 3) Reduce the nuclear component and other tension producing factors in regional confrontations; 4) Reevaluate civil defense; 5) Develop non-violent conflict resolution techniques; 6) Form personal consciences on public policy questions pertaining to warfare.

1. What do you think of the suggested actions in each of these sections?

2. What suggestions would you add to those mentioned in the letter?

3. What action is required to support implementation of these suggestions?

B. Shaping a peaceful world

Interdependence, rooted in the common humanity of us all, is the basic underpinning for a moral world order in Catholic social teaching. A more integrated system of international relations is

a goal enunciated by Catholic social teaching and indicated by the myriad of international issues which we face. U.S.-Soviet relations, even under the present adverse circumstances, require conscious attention to arrive at agreement on those points which we share a common concern. The relationship between disarmament and development is a crucial issue for relations among nations.

1. Do you agree with the draft's assessment of the USSR? Can we realistically carry out the suggestions in III. A. in our relations with the Soviets?

2. Do you think the U.S. has given enough support to the United Nations? What improvements do you think are needed at the UN?

IV. The pastoral challenge and response

A. The Church: A community of conscience, prayer, and penance

The discipleship of Jesus requires continuing growth in a world which is increasingly estranged from the values of the Gospel. The threat of nuclear war demands a response from Christians. The church's role in the nuclear debate is to explain the principles of its social teaching and apply those principles to the concrete situation we face. The question for peace is an outgrowth of reverence for life. As Christians, we seek through prayer and penance conversion from the violence in our own lives.

1. Who is the church? How are we to respond to the moral challenge of nuclear war when we are so diverse? What should the role of Catholic social teaching be in the debate of these issues with the Church community?

2. How does the issue of nuclear arms and the danger of war relate to other issues of public policy in which the church has been involved?

3. What is the relationship of prayer and penance to our response to the danger of nuclear war?

B. Challenge and hope

American Catholics are called to a primary loyalty to the peace, justice and security of the human family. "Our national goals and policies must be measured against that standard." Our past use of nuclear weapons must be repented if we are to develop a national will against future use of those weapons. Every Catholic plays some role in confronting the nuclear threat; every Catholic is confronted by questions of conscience stemming from the nuclear arms race, from one's state in life, profession, and/or citizenship.

1. Do you agree that we should repent of our past use of nuclear weapons?

2. What comments apply directly to you? How do you evaluate the impact of the pastoral on your life? What pastoral assistance do you expect from the Church on this issue? What contribution do you think you can make to the aims of this pastoral from your particular situation?

3. What should be different in your parish because of this pastoral letter?

4. What does patriotism mean according to the text?

Conclusion

God respects human freedom and does not impose solutions to human problems. Rather, God's grace helps us to take responsibility for confronting them as we shape creation to the ways of the kingdom of God. The task before us is to subject the power of the nuclear age to human control and for human benefit. This activity is sustained by hope in the final triumph of good over evil and transformation of creations: "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5)

• Faith and action are unified here. Do you understand the presence of Christ as sustaining you as you confront the challenges of life? Do you think that the description of faith in the conclusion accurately describes your experience of faith?

Prepared by the Urban Affairs Commission of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

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