

# Catholic morality and nuclear abolition

**April 21, 2015** – In December 2014, His Holiness Pope Francis sent an [important message](#)<sup>1</sup> to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. He wrote in part, *“I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home.”*

During the same conference, the Holy See contributed a ground-breaking paper, [Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition](#)<sup>2</sup>, which presents a compelling argument to move beyond limits set by political realism: *“Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition.”*

Nuclear weapons have plagued humanity for 70 years. Designed to terrify as well as to destroy, these weapons can, in the hands either of states or terrorists, cause indiscriminate harm to humans and the earth – to the global common good – on a scale that is unthinkable and likely to persist for generations. The use of nuclear weapons has long been strictly prohibited by Catholic teaching. Now, the Holy See has said, *“the very possession of nuclear weapons, even for the purposes of deterrence is morally problematic.”*

As Catholic theologians, ethicists, and leaders of Catholic communities and organizations across the United States, we agree. No justification, whether national security, stability in international power relations, or the difficulty of overcoming political inertia, exists that would allow the continued existence of nuclear weapons, much less their use.

Furthermore, all nuclear weapons possessors, including the United States, are in the process of modernizing their arsenals, investing billions to ensure that they remain ready for use. These funds and tremendous human talent are wrongly diverted from meeting true human security goals and from protecting the integrity of creation.

Continued reliance on nuclear weapons is an affront to human dignity and the sacredness of life. Yet, nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not prohibited by an international convention, even though they have the greatest destructive capacity of all weapons. A ban would not only make it illegal for nations to use or possess nuclear weapons; it would also help pave the way to their complete elimination, strengthening existing non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.

At the Vienna conference, the Austrian government pledged to cooperate with all stakeholders *“to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.”*<sup>3</sup> Many other nations have since expressed support for the Austrian pledge.

We too welcome movement toward a nuclear ban treaty as a way to reject nuclear weapons once and for all through a legal instrument and to reaffirm unequivocally human dignity and our obligation to respect the integrity of creation by rejecting the most indiscriminate, inhumane weapon ever created.

We urge U.S. political decision-makers who are charged with the heavy responsibility for U.S. nuclear weapons policy to remember, in the words of the Holy See, that *“the commitment to disarm embedded in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other international documents is more than a legal-political detail, it is a moral commitment on which the future of the world depends.”*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE VIENNA CONFERENCE ON THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, issued 7 December 2014: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141207\\_messaggio-conferenza-vienna-nucleare.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141207_messaggio-conferenza-vienna-nucleare.html)

<sup>2</sup> NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: TIME FOR ABOLITION, issued 8 December 2014: <http://www.fciv.org/downloads/Holy%20See%20Contribution-Vienna-8-DEC-2014.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Austrian Pledge, issued 9 December 2014: [http://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Abruestung/HINW14/HINW14\\_Austrian\\_Pledge.pdf](http://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Abruestung/HINW14/HINW14_Austrian_Pledge.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: TIME FOR ABOLITION, issued 8 December 2014: <http://www.fciv.org/downloads/Holy%20See%20Contribution-Vienna-8-DEC-2014.pdf>

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Jax Sonja Johnson Joan Johnson Lisa Kittcock Helen Link Mike Madden Bianca Madden Gen Maiers  
Polly Mann Steve McKeown Kate Neis Paul Newpower Kay O'Neil, PBVM Kerry O'Reilly Ronald  
Pagnucco Paulette Pass Mary Peterson Co-burn Porter Ann Redig Ed Rowley Roxanne Schares Gladys  
Schmitz Helen Schroeder Arthur Straub Colleen Vlasisavljevich Bernadette Weber

**MISSISSIPPI** – Kristin Rever

**MISSOURI** – Martha Alderson Sr. Carol Boschert Constance Broderick Kevin Burgess Janice Cebula  
Kim D James Deshotels Maureen Doyle Marilyn Fichtner Mary Funge Loretto Gettemeier John  
Glenski Mary Glenski Mary Hart Mary Ann Hartman Robert Heinz Pat Hinton Susan Jordan Elizabeth  
Kolmer Mary Ann McGivern Alvin McMenemy Karen Monroe Patricia Murphy Ruth O'Neill Honora  
Remes Barbara Roche Donna Ryan RSM Claudette Schiratti, RSM Mary Stein Jean Stemmermann  
Joan Stoverink Christin Tomy Mary Walz

**MONTANA** – Mary Eileen Joyce Pritchard

**NEBRASKA** – Rita Connell Mike Dodd Kathleen Erickson Betty Obal Michael Poulin

**NEVADA** – Nancy Piercy Nan Stevenson

**NEW HAMPSHIRE** – Assunta Riley

**NEW JERSEY** – Christine Backiel Ann Marie Brennan William Broadhurst Richard Byrnes Edith Cheney  
Rosemary Coffey Kay Coll Virginia DeMaria Edward Deren Jacqueline Dewar Carol Fay Thomas Ivory  
Fr. Joseph Keenan, ST Margaret Kling Nicholas Leeper Edna Lord Frank McCann Eileen Croker  
McCann, csjp-a Bill Mead Marie Mead Abigail Metzger Therese Mierswa Maryann Mueller Ellen  
O'Rourke Donald Reilly Brian Reynolds Kenneth Riley Valerie Robertson D. Jean Schneider Bruce  
Segall Lenore Smith-Aman Joseph Stark Patricia Swanton Gloria Thomas Patricia Wall

**NEW MEXICO** – Mike Bennett Kirk Bonds Pacita Calica Catherine Clemons Jeffrey Colledge Phil Dahl-  
Bredine Nana Delanoy Sandra Hareld David Hoover Sharon Hoover JoAnne Hughes Kathy

Nickodemus Geraldine Rohrkemper Dianne Shaw Joseph Sinico John Tischhauser LaVette Ulichnie Jenni Walker

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**NORTH CAROLINA** – Nancy Acopine Michael Fuchs Mary Herr Irma Howarth George Kloster Therese Martin William Martyn, SA

**NORTH DAKOTA** – Margaret Bitz Sen. Tim Mathern Scott Mathern-Jacobson Duane Pribula

**OHIO** – Rebecca Aelker James Bailey Pat Berning Bev Bingle Margaret Bishop, OSF Kathleen Burke Marge Carnahan Jean Cossey Mike Coughlin Patti De Rosa Chuck Deger Kathleen Deger Thomas Derby Jacquelyn Doepker Marie Edrich Jacqueline Emch Miriam Fidelis Sandra Fiedler Arlene Fischer Rose Gansle Sr. Paula Gonzalez Julie Grote Sally Hahn Connie Hammond Karen J. Hartman, SFP Sharon Havelak Kathleen Helbling Paul Helbling Ruth Herman Andrea Inkrott Dan Kane Phyllis Kemper, OSU Leanne Kerschner Joan Lang Mary Lindenberger Marie Manning George Marsh Mary Mehling Suzanne Miller Doris Ann Norris Sr. Geraldine Nowak, OSF Ernest Paquet Neil Pezzulo Christine Pratt Margaret Rabideau Antonia Rode Linda Scheckelhoff Michael Schreiner Rita Schroeder Josie Setzler Elizabeth Siebenaler Sheila Marie Tobbe Benjamin Urmston Ardith Wake Virginia Welsh Robert Wiethorn Stanislav Zadnik

**OKLAHOMA** – Kathy Crews

**OREGON** – Mary Gill Manford Hotchkiss Eileen Kennedy Chris Kondrat Gary LaVenture Cleo Reilly Mary Ryan-Hotchkiss Alicia Schubert Carolyn Snegoski Pat Wieber

**PENNSYLVANIA** – Francis Barr Hope Bauerlin Antoinette Betz Michael Bielecki George Ann Biscan Jeanette Bussen, CSJ Ann Carr James Cassidy Sr. Diane Cauley Susanne Chenot Sharon Costello Colleen Dauerbach, SSJ Ellen DeCarlo John Deegan John Dziak Mary Englerth Fr. John Euker Frank Farsaci Joseph Genito Joseph Grenier James Gutting Bonnie Heh Benedict Janecko, OSB Ann Marie

Judson John Judson Irene King Mary Ann Kropilak Julia Lanigan Sr. Dominica Lo Bianco Patricia Lowery Daniel Madden Jim Mansmann Mary Massaro John McAtee Colleen McCann Sr. Patricia McCann John McDevitt Ellen McElroy Mary Jane Morrison Joseph Mostardi Robert Moyer Jean Murin Frances Murray, OSF Nora Nash Mary O'Connor Sr. Beverly Palumbo, RSM Celine Paramundayil Mary Pellegrino, CSJ Kari Pohl Suzanne Polen Michelle Prah Arthur Purcaro, OSA Catherine Raffaele Jenaro Rodriguez Nancy Ross Patti Rossi Susan Sciarretti Joyce Small Vince Small Thomas James Steimer Marilyn Sullivan Sr. Claire Marie Surmik, OSB Fr. Bernard Survil Suzanne Susany Barbara Wall Carolyn Wiethorn Paul Witte

**RHODE ISLAND** – Noelle Cooper Patricia J. Fontes Art Kubick Beth Kubick Karen Lee Meg McElroy Mary Pendergast Kevin Regan Linda Regan William Waters

**SOUTH CAROLINA** – Sherry Barrett Patricia Nee

**SOUTH DAKOTA** – Gabriella Crowley Mary Geraets Myra Remily Teresa Wolf

**TENNESSEE** – Lawrence Clark Fran Coode Walsh Peter Gathje Alex Hurder Mary Sharp Glenda Struss-Keys Dennis Westmeier

**TEXAS** – Marianne Armstrong Carolyn Bentley Bernadine Carpenter Robert Carpenter Rita Clarke Sarah Connor Andrew Cordell Alice Curran Thomas Curran Sr. JT (Doris) Dwyer Ken Eppes Kelly Epstein Catherine Foley Archie Gress Sylvia Grijalva Patrick Haigh Sandra Haigh Joyce Hall Pamela Hedgecock Irene Herd David Jackson Mre. Lorraine Jamison Denise Landers Kay Lent John Manahan Patricia Matula Michael McDermott Margaret McRedmond Deb Michalewicz David Parsons Margery Race Bob Rankin Ceil Roeger Donald Rohmer Sylvia Searfoss Margaret Smith Cletus Stein Mary Jane Stevenson Nancy Stewart Gerard Sullivan, SM Mary Jean Tague Paul Vander Linden Will Wauters Joan Wharton Laura Wilder Thomas Windberg

**UTAH** – Milagros Federico Germaine Sarrazin

**VERMONT** – Diane M. Small

**VIRGINIA** – Daniel Bieker Michael Boylan John Downing Bill Eigel Tassy Eigel Peter Kashatus Michelle Knight Ted Majdosz Margaret McCabe Jason Miller Kay Patrick Brooke Schaab Peter Spain Dennis Warner Kimberly Williams

**WASHINGTON** – Carol Colleran Charlotte Davenport Margaret Finley Jon Gordon Helen Haigh Lorraine Hartmann Patrick Henry Bryan Johns Sr. Phyllis Kelleher, OP Dr. Cliff J. Kirchmer Clare Lentz Maxwell Lewis Dan Moriarty Mary Pat Murphy Ramon Nacanaynay Mary Patop Judy Pinney Anisa Ralls Tom Reid Jeri Renner Sharon Stangler Louis Topel Lisette West

**WEST VIRGINIA** – Lorena Boyce Kathleen Brooks James Coode

**WISCONSIN** – Sr. Margaret Ann Arnold TL Auman Barbara Bartek Ruth Battaglia Sally Ann Brickner EP Brynda Patty Caraher Mary Lois Carey Ann Coady Marie DesJarlais Vickie Deutsch Kathleen Flynn Catherine Funk Marian Gibbons Marietta Hanus Richard Hart Leane Herda Steve Herro Mary Pat Hill Br. David A. Hirt, OFM Cap Eleanor Hoffmann Catherine Houtakker Frances C. Ibarley Niles Kauffman Michael A. Ketterhagen Jerome Knies Elizabeth Ann Kugi Lillia Langreck Jeanne Lennartz Jackie Maggiore Therese Maher Barbara Martinez Duchesne Maxwell E. Michael McCann Florence Miller Robert Mills Andrew Musgrave Patricia Ostertag Martin Pable James Paradis, OSA Mary Perkins Cathy Peterson Ruth Poochigian Isabel Rafferty Corde Rea Helen Renzelmann Ralph Robers Michelle Roder Patricia Roehrig Marietta Samz Nicholas Schaeve Jerome Schroeder David Schwab Mary Skladanek Rosemary Smyczek Stella Storch MarySharon Sullivan Linda Szocik Don Timmerman Roberta Timmerman Dianna Trush Mary P. Utech Erika Voss Julia Walsh James Zabransky, SVD Michael Zuelke

**WYOMING** – Roxanne Monterastelli

NO STATE INDICATED – Rosemary Ahern Sr. Catherine Artale, CIJ Joan Bleidorn Kathleen Carmody  
Kimberly Clark Fr. Keith Clark, OFM Cap Margaret Dunn Jean Dunne Jack Gilroy Br. Michael Gosch,  
CSV Jovita Harrah Martha Hennessey Sr. Mary Lucille Janowiak, OP Barbara Kubicek Peterson Mary  
Lotts John Lydon Sr. Therese MacKenzie, SHCJ Lucila Malaga Sr. Mary Martens, BVM Lucile Martin  
Jerry Novotny Rev. Martin Pable, OFM Cap Sr. Rosemary Riggie, SSMN Reynold Rynda, OFM Cap  
Selma Troyanoski William Von Ancken Martin Zatsick, TOR