

## In US church, the silent acceptance of unjust war

Tony Magliano | May. 27, 2013 Making a Difference

Thirty years ago, the United States was giving aid to brutal regimes like the military-led government of El Salvador, was committed to building the B-1 bomber and MX missile, was planning the implementation of an anti-ballistic missile shield, and was preparing to deploy Pershing nuclear missiles in Western Europe.

In the midst of all this conventional violent conflict, and accelerated nuclear war preparation, the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote ["The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response"](#) [1] arguably the most radical pastoral letter ever written by the American hierarchy.

"We cannot remain silent in the face of such danger. We are simply trying to live up to the call of Jesus to be peacemakers in our time and situation," wrote the bishops.

They stated that Catholic theology's historical focus on limiting the devastation caused by violent force "the just-war theory" is not a sufficient modern response to the Second Vatican Council's challenge "to undertake a completely fresh reappraisal of war."

The bishops added that a fresh reappraisal of war requires a "developed theology of peace" that involves active, engaging dialogue within the church, and with those outside the church.

Where is this active, engaging dialogue today? The silence is deafening!

Nearly all of our seminaries, Catholic colleges, high schools, churches and pulpits are not actively engaged in developing a theology of peace.

There is instead a silent acceptance of the unjust and insane wars we fight, outrageous military budgets, the very lucrative military-industrial-complex, drone assassinations, torturing of prisoners, R.O.T.C. on Catholic campuses, military bases around the globe and nuclear weapons.

All of this amounts to making the military an idol. And sadly, far too many parishioners support much of the above.

A theology of peace is waiting to be developed.

A major step forward in the development of a theology of peace would declare that nuclear deterrence "the belief that nuclear war can be prevented by possessing nuclear weapons, along with the threat to use them" is an extremely dangerous policy that is totally unacceptable to the Prince of Peace and the Catholic church.

In their pastoral letter "The Challenge of Peace" the bishops stated that their "strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence" was a temporary acceptance. "We cannot consider it adequate as a long-term basis for peace."

But in the 30 long years since then, the U.S. government has continued maintaining and modernizing its nuclear

forces, making it obvious that the American government remains firmly committed to the policy of nuclear deterrence ? as its [2010 Nuclear Posture Review](#) [2] clearly affirms.

It would be encouragingly hopeful if today?s bishops acknowledged that it?s time overdue to declare nuclear deterrence immoral and unacceptable.

In ?The Challenge of Peace? the bishops prophetically wrote:

?We must re-emphasize with all our being, nonetheless, that it is not only nuclear war that must be prevented, but war itself. Therefore, with Pope John Paul II we declare: ?Today, the scale and horror of modern warfare ? whether nuclear or not ? makes it totally unacceptable as a means of settling differences between nations. War should belong to the tragic past, to history; it should find no place on humanity?s agenda for the future.??

Three decades ago, the U.S. bishops offered ?The Challenge of Peace? as a ?first step toward a message of peace and hope.?

It?s time we take the second step!

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