



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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May 6, 2016

The Honorable Rose Gottemoeller
Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Ms. Gottemoeller,

You may remember that we met last August in Japan on the occasion of 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I was there in my capacity as Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Archbishop Joseph Mitsuaki Takami graciously hosted a meeting at his residence in Nagasaki in which the dangers posed by nuclear weapons were discussed as well as the need to work together to promote nuclear disarmament. In that meeting, you had mentioned that you would encourage President Barack Obama to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I am pleased to hear that such a visit is now being planned in conjunction with the President's participation in the G-7 Summit to be held in Japan May 26-27.

In preparation for the President's trip to Japan, I wanted to share with you a letter and a statement I received from Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan (CBCJ). The letter from CBCJ's Secretary General expresses the hope that President Obama's message at Hiroshima "will move the hearts of leaders of the world and numerous people who desire nuclear abolition." The CBCJ statement expresses concern over changes in interpretation of Japan's security laws relating to militarization and the use of force. The Church in Japan, having deep remorse for Japan's actions in World War II and having experienced the suffering caused by nuclear weapons, remains committed to its mission to work for peace. I have also enclosed the statement that the Japanese bishops issued last year to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings.

I trust these documents may prove useful as you assist in preparing the Secretary of State and the President for this momentous visit to Hiroshima.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace

Encls:

April 2016 Letter from Secretary General, CBCJ
April 2016 Statement of Standing Committee, CBCJ
February 2015 Statement of CBCJ "70 Years after the War"

Now especially, peace must not depend upon weapons:

Regarding the enforcement of the security laws

To our Brothers and Sisters in Christ and to All Who Hope for Peace,

On March 29, new national security laws went into effect. (Note 1). In order to fulfill the Japan Catholic Church's mission to work for peace, it is important that we examine these laws to see if they in fact follow the road to the peace that God desires. Toward that end, we ask that all those who hope for peace to once again read last year's statement marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, "Blessed are the Peacemakers – Now, especially, peace must not depend upon weapons."

The following notes may be of help in that rereading.

1. Past statements by Japan's bishops regarding the security laws

In response to the Abe cabinet's announcement on July 1, 2014, that it had decided to recognize a right to collective self-defense, the Standing Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan issued a statement on July 3. We declared that the cabinet decision was a major problem because by a decision of a single cabinet that was in conflict with the fundamental principles of the Constitution it changed nearly 70 years of postwar curbs on militarization and the use of force.

Furthermore, to mark last year's 70th anniversary of the end of the war, the bishops' conference issued the message, "Blessed are the Peacemakers – Now, especially, peace must not depend upon weapons." By approving the Designated Secrets Law and a right to collective self-defense, the government has undermined Article 9 of the Constitution and put us on a path that may lead to the use of military force overseas.

2. The mission of the Catholic Church for peace

When we bishops issued our message marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the war, some asked why bishops were making a political statement that seemed to violate the principle of the separation of religion and state. In this regard, the first paragraph of that message affirmed, "the Church cannot close itself up with merely 'religious' concerns. We have realized that the problems of humanity are our problems." The Catholic Church does not stand for any particular political position. However, as believers, bishops have a duty to speak out when the recent trends of Japanese politics endanger the future of human lives and dignity.

Furthermore, "separation of religion and the state" does not mean the separation of government and religion, but the separation of the government and religious organizations. Thus, specific religious groups may not enter into relationships with the state that involve the exercise of power, nor may they receive special consideration from the state. This is distinct from political activity. And so, based upon our consciences as believers, we have the right and duty to engage in political activities (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 75). So also, when necessary, church leaders have the duty and right when matters of faith and morals are concerned to declare the teachings of

the church as regards politics (Gaudium et Spes, 76; Code of Canon Law, Article 747, Paragraph 2). The security laws are a problem touching upon the lives and dignity of people, and therefore the church cannot remain silent. We must look upon it as a human problem, exercise judgement in light of the Gospel and then act.

The bishops of Japan are acutely aware of our mission to work for peace. This awareness is built upon deep remorse for the attitude of the Japanese Church before and during the war as well as the experience of the horror of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

3. The Constitution of Japan and the renunciation of war

The Constitution of Japan sets out the government structure, basic human and social rights, administrative structures, international relations, the spirit of the law and the system of governance. It puts in place a national policy of pacifism. However, when we look at the current situation regarding the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution as well as moves toward collective self-defense and the passage of security laws, we in fact see reinterpretations that violate the original intent of the Constitution. (Note 2). In addition, we see that attempts to amend the Constitution have suddenly taken on a new vigor. In the face of these realities, we cannot avoid expressing our serious concern for the future.

In addition, the government is working towards amending the Constitution to establish new “emergency provisions.” These provisions include recognizing government authority to set temporary limitations upon individual freedom and rights in emergency situations such as disasters or war. (Note 3).

As a matter of course, the bishops of Japan respect and support the idea of the pacifist Constitution of Japan. For Christians, renouncing war comes as a direct call from the Gospel of Christ, and as religious people who respect life we are convinced that for the sake of the whole human race it is an ideal that must not be abandoned. The Catholic Church believes that peace is not simply the absence of war nor is it maintained by a balance of hostile forces. Rather, it is built upon the practice of love for other people and nations, respecting their dignity. (Gaudium et Spes, 78).

4. The “right of collective self-defense”

Can we claim that the implementation of a law allowing collective self-defense measures is compatible with the Catholic Church’s goal of peace? Such a move increases international tensions and hostility, inclining people to conflict. Under this law, even if Japan were not itself under attack, the nation could become embroiled in the conflicts of others. This differs from Japan’s right to protect itself in the event of an attack, allying the country in the conflicts of other nations in clear violation of Article 9 of the Constitution.

Thus would the great principle of the renunciation of war be overturned and Japan would become a “military nation,” inevitably exposing itself to dangers it has not faced before. In addition, this legislation is basically intended to keep peace through military deterrence. This will lead to an endless arms race with other countries, with increasing defense spending that

will affect our lives. We must consider whether or not protecting peace by limiting military force by military force is even possible.

Brothers and Sisters who desire peace, we are now standing at an epochal crossroads. We know from the experience of World War II the enormous suffering inflicted upon civilians by the mass destruction wrought by modern warfare. Japan was not only a victim of that indiscriminate slaughter, but was also a perpetrator against other countries in Asia. In particular, the suffering caused by nuclear weapons goes beyond words. Having experienced such misery and devastation whose origins were in war, we have come thus far determined to never again cause such horrors and have therefore supported the ideal of pacifism embodied in our Constitution. We have passed this experience from generation to generation, inscribing a desire for permanent peace and pacifism in our hearts.

Now that more than 70 years have passed since the war, we fear that empathy with that tragic experience is weakening as the war becomes merely something of an academic memory. Let us not repeat those mistakes, but rather, as people of this time and as Christians let us reflect seriously upon what it is we are called to do. With prayers rather than armed force, let us move toward peace built on mutual trust.

April 7, 2016

Standing Committee of the
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan

NOTES

Note 1: Two laws are involved. The first amends laws governing cooperation by Japan's Self-Defense Forces with other nations' military in peacekeeping and security operations. The second puts in place the legal framework for such involvement.

Note 2: Though constitutional scholars, former high court justices, cabinet legislative bureau chiefs, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations and many private citizens have protested this fundamental shift in post-war security policy, the government passed it by a forced vote. A constitution exists to limit a government's abuse of power to the detriment of the rights of citizens. For a government at a particular time to unilaterally change long-standing interpretations of the constitution is a denial of the whole constitutional principle.

Note 3: Other countries have emergency security laws, but the new Japanese one contains no limitations on the government. The well-known historical experience of the German Weimar Republic demonstrates the danger of abuse such a law can enable. The Weimar Constitution provided for the president to rule by decree in the event of a national emergency. Hitler took

advantage of that during a period of social unrest to gain unrestricted legislative power. Such historic abuses where extraordinary measures have become standard make plain the necessity of determining who decides when an emergency exists and what provisions are allowed. We must beware of the danger of abuse that national emergency laws present.

70 Years after the War

Blessed are the peacemakers – Now especially, peace must not depend upon weapons

To our Brothers and Sisters in Christ and to All Who Wish for Peace

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan issued messages marking the end of the Second World War in 1995 (Resolution for Peace -- On the 50th. Anniversary of the End of the War) and 2005 (Peace Message After 60 Years From the End of War World II -- The Road To Peace Based On Nonviolence -- Now Is The Time To Be Prophetic). In this year in which we mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the war, we wish to once again declare our commitment to peace.

1. The Church Cannot Remain Silent in the Face of Threats to Human Life and Dignity

For the Catholic Church, this is a noteworthy year because it marks the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

In the first half of the Twentieth Century the Christian Church centered in Europe experienced two world wars and genocide against the Jews by Nazi Germany. Reflecting on these tragedies, the Church cannot close itself up with merely "religious" concerns. We have realized that the problems of humanity are our problems. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, issued at the end of the Second Vatican Council, is a clear example of this insight, opening with the following words.

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."¹

From the end of the Second Vatican Council up to the papacy of Pope Francis today, the Church has actively faced the issues of human life and dignity, especially of those who are excluded or oppressed.²

2. The Decision to Renounce War

Japanese colonial rule on the Korean Peninsula until 1945 as well as acts of aggression against China and other Asian countries caused great suffering and sacrifice among people. The Second World War was a horrible experience for the Japanese people as well. Beginning with the Tokyo air raid of March 10, 1945, large-scale air raids struck many cities in Japan. In addition to the many Japanese and foreign troops who became casualties during land combat on Okinawa, many civilians suffered as well. Then finally there were the atomic bombings of Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. These experiences gave birth to a desire for peace that was codified in the Constitution of Japan promulgated in 1946 based on the sovereignty of the people, the renunciation of war and respect for basic human rights. Following this peace constitution, Japan has striven to build relationships of trust and friendship with the nations of Asia.

Against the background of the Cold War and the subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall, the Catholic Church throughout the world has made increasingly clear its opposition to the arms race and the use of weapons to resolve disputes.

In his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII said, "in this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice"³ Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes* opposed the arms race, and urged peace that does not rely upon military force.⁴ In his Appeal for Peace in Hiroshima in 1981, Pope John Paul II demonstrated this clear renunciation of war when he said, "War is the work of man. War is destruction of human life. War is death."

Given this historical background, it is a matter of course that we Japanese bishops respect the ideals of Japan's no-war Constitution.⁵ For Christians, the renunciation of war is demanded by the Gospel of Christ. It is a respect for life that cannot be abandoned by religious people and an ideal that is held firmly by the whole human race.

3. The Japanese Church's peace vocation

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan knows that it has a special vocation to work for peace. It is not based upon any political ideology. We continue to appeal for peace not as a political issue, but as a human one. Our awareness of this vocation is, of course, influenced by the horrors inflicted by nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it is also born of deep remorse when we reflect upon the attitude of the Church in Japan before and during the war.

During a Mass celebrated on September 26, 1986, at the plenary meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) held in Tokyo, Archbishop Shirayanagi of Tokyo made the following declaration. "We Catholic bishops of Japan, as Japanese, and as members of the Catholic Church in Japan, sincerely ask forgiveness from God and from our brothers and sisters of Asia and the Pacific Region for the tragedy brought by the Japanese during the Second World War. As parties involved in the war, we share in the responsibility for the more than 20 million victims in Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, we deeply regret having damaged the lives and cultures of the people of these regions. The trauma of this is still not healed."

These words were not those of a single bishop. He spoke as president of the bishops' conference, conveying the opinion of the whole conference.⁶ As mentioned above, in their messages on the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the end of the war, the bishops continued to reflect upon the issue of the Church's responsibility before and during the war and from that standpoint have expressed their determination in favor of peace.

4. Problems such as recognition of history and the exercise of collective self-defense

Seventy years after the war, memory of it is fading along with memories of Japanese colonial rule and aggression with its accompanying crimes against humanity. Now, there are calls to rewrite the history of that time, denying what really happened. The present government is attempting to enact laws to protect state secrets, allow for the right of collective self-defense and change Article 9 of the Constitution to allow the use of military force overseas.

At the same time, we cannot overlook growing nationalism not only in Japan, but among the governments of other countries in this part of the world. As tensions rise between nations, a strong commitment to improved relations through dialogue and negotiation rather than increased militarization becomes more important for regional stability.

Domestically, the situation in Okinawa presents a particularly serious problem. Compared to the rest of the country, the number of military bases there is especially high. New base construction is underway, contrary to the wishes of the citizens of the prefecture. This demonstrates an attitude that puts priority on armaments while ignoring people and efforts to build peace.

5. Amidst the serious crises facing the world today

Viewing the world today, the tragedies of military conflict and terrorism occur over and over again in many places. In addition to conflicts between nations and ethnic groups, now violence in the name of religion makes it increasingly seem as if throughout the world dialogue has become impossible. In that situation, women and children as well as ethnic and religious minorities are especially threatened and many lose their lives.

In the face of such worldwide destructiveness, Pope Francis has expressed concern that some people seem to speak of a “Third World War” rather than making sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.⁷ The world faces the sorts of crises that cannot but cause people to wonder if force is the answer. What has become of respect for humanity? However, repeatedly answering violence with violence will only lead to the destruction of humanity.

The world is dominated by the globalization of companies and the financial system. Disparities continue to widen and the poor are excluded. Human economic activity is causing climate change and the destruction of biodiversity. If we wish to realize peace, this situation must change. We cannot ignore the problems of poverty and the environment that produce disparity and exclusion. We are each called upon to overcome our indifference to the world’s problems and change our lives. We cannot solve all the world’s problems at once, but we can patiently continue to work toward peace and mutual understanding.

In Conclusion

We recall the words of Pope John Paul II in his Appeal for Peace in Hiroshima: “Peace must always be the aim: peace pursued and protected in all circumstances. Let us not repeat the past, a past of violence and destruction. Let us embark upon the steep and difficult path of peace, the only path that befits human dignity, the only path that leads to the true fulfillment of the human destiny, the only path to a future in which equity, justice and solidarity are realities and not just distant dreams.”⁸

We are encouraged by the words of Jesus Christ, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mt. 5:9). Seventy years after the end of the war and 50 years after the end of the Second Vatican Council, let us renew our determination to seek peace and to work for peace. We Catholics in Japan are small in number, but in union with other Christians and along with believers of other religions and those throughout the world who wish for peace, we renew our commitment to work to make peace a reality.

February 25, 2015

Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan

¹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* 1965 n. 1.

² Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* (2013) n.182: “The Church’s pastors, taking into account the contributions of the different sciences, have the right to offer opinions on all that affects people’s lives, since the task of evangelization implies and demands the integral promotion of each human being. It is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven.”

³ Pope John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) n. 127.

⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 81.

⁵ The Constitution of Japan, Preamble: “We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world.” Ibid. Article 9: “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

⁶ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan plenary session, June, 1986.

⁷ Pope Francis, Homily at the Military Memorial in Redipuglia, Italy, on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. (September 13, 2014)

⁸ Pope John Paul II “Appeal for Peace in Hiroshima” (February 25, 1981) n. 5.