



Statement on Nuclear Arms from Archbishop Paul D. Etienne

+ October 7, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am increasingly troubled by Russia's war against Ukraine. The irresponsible threats by President Putin to use nuclear weapons are of grave concern. Nearly every day, there is another development that increases international tensions. To reinforce what could happen, this October marks the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the world teetered on the brink of nuclear war.

In this Archdiocese, less than twenty miles west of Seattle on the Kitsap Peninsula, the Bangor Trident nuclear submarine base has the largest number of deployed U.S. nuclear weapons. Because Puget Sound could be on the front line in a nuclear war, I feel an urgent obligation that we review our Catholic teaching on nuclear weapons and the need to sharply reduce these weapons of mass destruction until we can eliminate them.

The manufacture of nuclear weapons has already caused significant damage to humans and God's creation. Within Washington state, production of nuclear weapons contaminated the Hanford nuclear site and areas around two uranium mines near Spokane. Thousands of workers and people living downwind of these contaminated sites were exposed to harmful levels of radiation.

God calls us to build a global community where the whole human family can flourish. The current situation requires a prophetic stance. Pope Francis declared in Hiroshima in 2019: "The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral."

Over the last few months, I have prayed over this situation and reflected on the teaching of the Church. I appeal to everyone to join me in undertaking three actions:

- First, let us intensify our prayer for peace. Pray for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and the renewal of progress toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.
- Second, let us keep educating ourselves on both the international situation and what the Church and other religious leaders are saying about the nuclear peril.
- Third, join me in appealing for peace and nuclear disarmament with your family, friends, neighbors and elected officials. We need to take immediate action to avert nuclear disaster. Each day runs a risk that nuclear weapons will be used, either by intent, miscalculation or accident.

In closing, let us make the words of St. John Paul II at Hiroshima our own: "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."

In the Heart of Christ,

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle