STATEMENT

Feast Day of St. Francis:
Pray for Peace in Ukraine and the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

ALBUQUERQUE – Tuesday, October 4, 2022 – IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, has issued the following statement:

October 4 is the feast day of St. Francis, the tireless promoter of peace and patron saint of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

Pope Francis chose his name in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, and three days ago, he declared:

   The course of the war in Ukraine has become so serious, devastating, and threatening as to cause great concern... [W]hat about the fact that humanity is once again faced with the atomic threat? It is absurd... It increases the risk of nuclear escalation, giving rise to fears of uncontrollable and catastrophic consequences worldwide.

This October is the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, about which then-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara said humanity survived only by luck. Sixty years later, we are facing the most serious nuclear threats since then.

Pope Francis has called for the abolition of nuclear weapons, declaring they can no longer be justified even by the deterrence strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction. The recent Review Conference of the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty, commonly called the cornerstone of global nonproliferation, ended without achieving any tangible results toward the nuclear disarmament pledged a half-century ago.

Many will undoubtedly say it is naïve to believe nuclear weapons can be abolished. It will be extremely hard work, which must be concretely verified. But isn’t it the height of naiveté to believe humanity can continue to survive with nuclear weapons? Counting on luck is not a sustainable strategy given the history of accidents, near misses, and nuclear saber rattling by volatile and threatening world leaders.

No dictator lasts forever, and someday Putin will be gone. But do we have to live with the threat of nuclear weapons forever? We must pray for peace in Ukraine and begin working toward a future world free of nuclear weapons. More money is spent on nuclear weapons research and production in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe than in any other diocese because of the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories. Therefore, this archdiocese has a special responsibility to help lead humanity toward nuclear weapons abolition.

I again renew my call for dialogue on this existential issue. How can we follow St. Francis and eliminate these civilization-destroying weapons? I humbly ask that you pray for peace in Ukraine and walk with me toward abolition. St. Francis says no to nuclear weapons!

For further reading and suggested actions, please see my pastoral letter Living in the Light of Christ’s Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament, or read the summary. –END