

238 Harris Avenue, Needham, MA 02492

June 10, 2017

Sean Cardinal O'Malley
66 Brooks Drive
Braintree, MA 02184

Dear Cardinal Sean,

From June 15 to July 7, 134 non-nuclear nations will gather at the UN General Assembly to continue deliberations begun in March to create a binding Nuclear Weapons Ban treaty. Its goal is to “prohibit the use, possession, development, testing, deployment and transfer of nuclear weapons,” which are considered incompatible with international law, and indicate a deliberate disregard of their potential apocalyptic humanitarian and global consequences. Pope Francis, in a letter to the US Congress in March, pointed out the “devastating, indiscriminate and uncontrollable effects, over time and space” with any use. And yet, all 9 nuclear nations have refused to participate in these negotiations, while legitimizing plans to upgrade their arsenals.

This gathering is unlike any other before as it was initiated by the countries which have rightly concluded that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has failed to rein in the commitment of the US and other nations to maintain vast nuclear arsenals. Though the actual numbers of nuclear weapons has decreased, the US and Russia are in possession of 95% of the approximately 16,000 nuclear weapons now in existence, all qualitatively more murderous and accurate than the ones used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Hundreds are on hair-trigger alert.

These tenuous times of political instability present a crisis for people of faith and for all those of goodwill due to the unpredictable, bellicose nature of some government leaders, and because of rogue alliances of fundamentalist groups. According to the most knowledgeable of scientists, to avoid the catastrophic desecration of the earth and the annihilation of its dear people, we MUST speak out. The recent advancement of the “doomsday” clock to 2 1/2 minutes before midnight by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists symbolically illustrates the fear of a nuclear scenario, either by accident or design.

However, this present crisis also presents an opportunity, while incurring an obligation, to do all in our power to avert nuclear disaster. Pope Francis’ acknowledges that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is “both a challenge and a moral and humanitarian imperative.” thus urging us to invest our energy and passion in the effort. This is

happening at the grass-roots level throughout the world. Pax Christi International has formed Catholics for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, and there are innumerable activist groups disseminating information and urging action. Locally, Pax Christi and other faith-based groups, like the American Friends Service Committee, are linking arms and sharing strategies with Massachusetts Peace Action and others to promote education and resistance. Many people of concern have given over their lives to this commitment

This coming Saturday, June 17, thousands of people will be present in New York City for the “Women’s March to Ban the Bomb,” including a large contingent from Boston. We will walk from Bryant Square to the UN in support of the hard work of negotiation being done there. I will be among those who walk, praying all the way that this Spirited gathering will be a grace and a blessing and lead to a real conversion to a non-nuclear future. I envision us as walking our way toward the creation of the Beloved Kingdom of God, imagining societies where all can live without fear of annihilation.

With this letter, I beg you to share in this passion by speaking out yourself and mandating that all those in positions of spiritual authority within the Massachusetts dioceses educate themselves, and take the risks involved in condemning the nuclear arms race in clear and unequivocal voices. It cannot be God’s will that we persist in ignoring Jesus’s way of nonviolent love of all by supporting weapons of mass destruction. Blessed Franz Jaegerstatter, a young Austrian Catholic conscientious objector during WWII received no support from the Catholic community for his resistance to the Nazi regime. Though he was beheaded for his refusal to serve in Hitler’s army, his words ring true for our church in regard to the infamy of nuclear weapons:

“If the church stays silent in the face of what is happening, what difference would it make if no church were ever opened again?”

In the Peace of Christ,

Pat Ferrone
St. Susanna Parish Pax Christi Committee, Dedham
Co-Chair Pax Christi MA

