



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

Volume 27, Number 2

Spring 2018

Love, Oneness, and America's National Security

Francine Dempsey, CSJ

EXPERIENCE

I was six when World War II ended. We won, of course. God was on our side. America was secure. I was secure.

In my school days I lived through the Cold War, obeying quickly when sister commanded, "Duck and cover," secure under my desk.

As a high school student I marched in the diocesan May Day parade and heard the bishop say, "Rosaries are more powerful than guns made by anti-God forces." God was still on our side.

As a CSJ junior sister, I asked God to help President Kennedy resolve the Cuban missile crisis. How could God not help a Catholic president?

The Vietnam War, some real theology, and prayer taught me that God was not on any side. Wars against "god-less Communism" were, in reality, demonstrations of America's military and economic power against weaker nations. That's why it took so long to

end the Vietnam debacle—we couldn't admit that power's failure.

For some, fear of all-out nuclear destruction transformed into fear of the immorality of nuclear weapons. Since Hiroshima and Vietnam, the voices of groups like Pax Christi and religious congregations, and individuals like Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Kathy Kelly, and John Dear have been a steady undertone calling for pacifism and nuclear disarmament. Over the same years, as President Dwight Eisenhower warned, the military industrial complex has become the lynchpin of America's security and, unfortunately, America's economy.

In 2018 the question of using nuclear weapons for national security has resurfaced. Fear of their destructive power raises some voices, but questioning the morality of America's use of such weapons is still only an undertone. Yet Pope John XXIII, Vatican Council II, and Pope Francis teach their immorality and call for their abolition and the abolition of war.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

National security refers to the security of a national state through both national defense and foreign relations, i.e., diplomacy. It is government's duty to use its economic and military powers, as well as diplomacy, to keep the nation secure from military attacks, cyber-attacks, terrorist attacks, and natural disasters.

In his message to the UN Conference on the Treaty for Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in March 2017, Pope Francis said, "The principle threats to peace and security with their many

Resolutions to Action is an occasional publication of the Global Concerns Committee of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Members of the committee are: Danielle Bonetti, CSJ; Gemma Doll, OP; Susan Francois, CSJP; Alice Gerdeman, CDP; Donna Marie Gribshaw, SCL; Eileen Haynes, SCL; and Ann Scholz, SSND, staff. Please address correspondence to:

LCWR
8808 Cameron Street
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-588-4955
fax: 301-587-4575
ascholz@lcwr.org

LCWR
www.lcwr.org

dimensions in the multipolar world of the 21st century [are] . . . : terrorism, asymmetrical conflicts, cyber security, environmental problems, poverty." He concluded, "Not a few doubts arise regarding the inadequacy of nuclear deterrence as an effective response."

Some would say the threats to America's national security today include: (1) North Korea's missiles and, perhaps, nuclear weapons; (2) tensions with Russia over the election cyberattacks, President Donald's Trump's decision to sell anti-tank weapons to Ukraine, and Vladimir Putin's announcement of Russia's new, superior weaponry; (3) ongoing troubles in the Middle East; (4) Iran's development of nuclear power/weapons; (5) the Syrian civil war, in which Moscow and Washington take different sides; (5) war with China; (6) terrorists' acquiring nuclear weapons; (7) immigration by people of color.

Others argue that the greatest threats to America's national security are (1) the proposed federal budget with its disproportionate spending on militarization, including nuclear weapons; (2) cuts in non-defense spending which through 2028 will result in multiple personal security threats from climate change, economic inequality, racism, and computer security; (3) the current administration's rejection of diplomacy, which resolved the US-Cuban conflict without weapons or a nuclear disaster and in 2015 resolved a conflict with Iran over that country's potential nuclear weapons through a negotiated, multi-national agreement.

REFLECTION

How do love and oneness fit into keeping America secure?

"Thou shalt not kill." "Love your enemy." "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus hoped that disciples would preach his gospel so that "All may be

one." Paul echoes Jesus in Galatians: there is "neither slave nor free person, . . . you are all one." Since Teilhard, scientists and theologians tell us that we are now and always have been one with one another, with the earth and all creatures, and with God.

When may humans kill one another in war? Since Augustine, doctrinal specialists have argued whether there is such thing as a just war, in which participants are allowed to kill one another. Traditionally, Thomas Merton wrote, the church gave a conditional yes, allowing "a defensive war in which force is strictly limited and the greatest care is taken to protect the rights and lives of noncombatants and even of combatants." With modern war's weaponry, Merton argued, since noncombatants cannot be protected from nuclear armaments (or biological and chemical weapons) dropped from the sky, or from ground attacks on non-combatants by well-armed military forces, just warfare is impossible.

That is why Vatican Council II's "Gaudium et Spes" urged nonviolence as the route to peace. Nonviolence practitioners, like Jesus, Ghandi, and Martin Luther King, see no boundaries between people, see oneness. These heroes of non-violent peacemaking moved humanity closer to love and oneness without killing anyone.

Is nonviolence the only route to peace today? There are among us heroic nonviolent pacifists and anti-war movements. But will I join them? Or will fear of terrorism, fear of nuclear attack, hatred of people of another culture, another religion, or my comfortable life close down my conscience?

ACTION

Look at the following and choose your way to build a genuinely secure America:

The environment: Recognize that all creation is one. Support and work with groups promoting living sustainably, whether by reducing carbon emissions, conserving water, or supporting the Paris Climate agreement.

Militarism: For national security, our government builds endless nuclear weapons, sends unmanned weaponized drones, unmanned long-range missiles, and armed robot soldiers to kill defenseless men and women anywhere. Nonviolence, including nonviolent civil disobedience, is the only route to peace. Join Pax Christi or another peace group, local or online.

Refugees: War makes refugees. Millions have been displaced and need assistance. Support the sanctuary movement in your area.

Racism and Inequality: Join the Poor People's Campaign, a continuation of Martin Luther King's efforts to end poverty and inequality. Campaign's leader Rev. William Barber says, "This moment requires us to push into the national consciousness not from the top down, but from the bottom up." In spring 2018 the Poor People's Campaign will call for nonviolent civil disobedience to force a national discussion on systemic racism and poverty, both threats to national security.

Diplomacy: Become a voice for nonviolent diplomacy. Don't allow America's immoral weaponry to replace the moral tactic of talking with any neighbor perceived as "enemy" by the government.

Francine Dempsey is a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Albany Province. She has been a college professor, pastoral minister, and an active promoter for justice and peace. Her articles have appeared in National Catholic Reporter, Albany Times Union Newspaper and Global Sisters Report.