

Catholic Church teaching on Safeguarding Peace and Avoiding War

Pope Paul VI: In his 1972 World Day of Peace Message, in which Pope Paul VI so famously said, "if you want peace, work for justice," he also wrote, "We believe that the idea of Peace still is, and still must be, dominant in human affairs, and that it becomes all the more urgent whenever and wherever it is contradicted by opposite ideas or deeds. It is a necessary idea, an imperative idea, an inspiring idea. It polarizes human aspirations, endeavors, and hopes. Its nature is that of an aim, and as such it is at the base and at the goal of our activities, be they individual or collective."

Pope Francis: "We ask the risen Jesus, who turns death into life, to change hatred into love, vengeance into forgiveness, war into peace. Yes, Christ is our peace, and through him we implore peace for all the world." – Urbi et Orbi message, 3/31/13

U.S. Bishops: The Chairman of the *International Justice and Peace Committee* Shares Solidarity with Pope Francis Calling for Cessation of Hostilities and Greater Humanitarian Access.

"In the context of the global scope and scale of the COVID-19 virus crisis, Pope Francis during his Angelus message on Sunday, March 29 called for a global cease fire in all hostilities. His plea seeks to allow for a deepening of the fraternal bonds of the human family in search for not just a momentary but a lasting peace."

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Safeguarding Peace

2302 By recalling the commandment, "You shall not kill," our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral.

2304 Respect for and development of human life require *peace*. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among people, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquility of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.

2306 Those who renounce violence...in order to safeguard human rights, make use of those means of defense available to the weakest, bear witness to evangelical charity, provided they do so without harming the rights and obligations of other people and societies. They bear legitimate witness to the gravity of the physical and moral risks of recourse to violence, with all its destruction and death.

Avoiding War and "Just War"

2307 The fifth commandment forbids the intentional destruction of human life. Because of the evils and injustices that accompany all war, the Church insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine Goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war.

2308 All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war. However, "as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed." (*Gaudium et Spes* 79)

2309 The strict conditions for *legitimate defense by military force* require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

- the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;
- all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- there must be serious prospects of success;
- the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

(*These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the "just war" doctrine.*)

2310 Those who are sworn to serve their country in the armed forces are servants of the security and freedom of nations. If they carry out their duty honorably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace.

(*See 2311 for "conscientious objection."*)