



THE ARCHBISHOP  
OF YORK

*The Archbishop spoke at a webinar on 23 March hosted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (Holy See) on the title, Blessed are the Peacemaker, Jesus' teaching on 'political love.' The speech follows in full...*

Your eminences and distinguished colleagues, I bring you greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury and your sisters and brothers in the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

Among Christian people it is well known that the 6th August, the day the first nuclear bomb was dropped on the people of Hiroshima, is also the feast of the Transfiguration, that day when the church remembers Jesus' glory: his true identity revealed in dazzling brilliance.

The irony of this is not lost on Christian people. For these two events, held together by the same calendar date, present humanity with a choice. Which, blinding, dazzling light will we follow? Will we allow ourselves to be seduced by those who tell us that an ever escalating and ever more sophisticated arsenal of the most terrifyingly destructive weapons will secure our peace? Or will we see in Christ another way?

For Christ is the one who asks us to turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, give without thought of receiving back, and who says that if your enemy is thirsty you should give him a drink, not a bomb.

His teaching about peace, and particularly in the Beatitudes his teaching that those who are peacemakers are children of God, and that those who hunger and thirst for what is right will be satisfied, resonates in the hearts of all people of faith and of goodwill. His teaching rebukes the complacent and the powerful. He shows us that the peace we long for cannot be found whilst we know that someone's finger is still on the trigger: for so called deterrence only works if we remain determined to fire. Consequently, the churches of the Anglican Communion join with the Roman Catholic Church and other churches in the World Council of Churches in opposing nuclear arms.

The Anglican Consultative Council at its meeting in Hong Kong in 2019 reconfirmed this opposition, particularly lamenting the lack of justice for those nations who had been most impacted by the testing of nuclear weapons.

The General Synod of the Church England passed a motion in 2018 calling upon all "Christians to work tirelessly for a world without nuclear weapons" and welcoming the 2017 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We also called on our own government to respond positively to this treaty by reiterating publicly its obligations under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Sadly, only this week, this that plea has been ignored as the government of the United Kingdom has made the dangerously retrograde step of decision to increase its nuclear Arsenal by 40%.

We also committed ourselves to work with ecumenical partners in addressing those issues which drive some nations to possess nuclear weapons and to, therefore, work towards achieving a genuine peace through their elimination.

Hence it is an honour to be addressing this gathering and to stand alongside the witness for peace offered by the Holy Father in his encyclical Fratelli Tutti.

We also believe that the best way of building security and stability in our world is to invest in each other, increasing international aid and serving the common good, for we know that Christ's call to love to love our neighbour shows us that we belong to each other, we are one global humanity inhabiting one world. My well-being, and the well-being of my neighbour and the well-being of the planet belong together.

As Christians we hold on to a vision of peace that is so much more than the silence after the guns have finished firing and more than the stand-off before they have started. Our Scriptures tell us that on God's holy mountain in God's Kingdom of justice and truth, swords are turned into ploughshares and that peace is reconciliation painfully embraced and justice secured for every nation.

Jesus ask us to be peace makers. This will bring us into conflict with the vested interests, principalities and powers of the world. We therefore need to stand together in our witness to peace. We need to discover our prophetic voice. We need to understand that in the eyes of the world a peacemaker will very often look like a troublemaker. That's what Ahab called Elijah (1 Kings 18.7). It is what the world will call us.

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