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Kansas City Catholic official opposes nuclear weapons plant

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NCR Today

Kansas City area anti-nuclear weapons activists were pleased with a statement by Jude Huntz, director of the Human Rights office of the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph at a public hearing today. The hearing was to consider the construction of a nuclear weapon parts plant in the city. The plant would be a 1.5 million square foot facility. The project represents a relocation and expansion of a current government complex. Huntz opposed it on moral and social grounds.

The following is excerpted from Huntz' testimony

The Catholic tradition has always defended the right of a state to defend itself from unjust aggression. Implicit in that right is the need to equip a trained military force. No one denies this obligation and necessity on the part of any state.

However, the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction ? which this nuclear plant proposes to construct ? constitutes a grave moral danger to the entire planet. Nuclear weapons are by their very nature weapons of mass destruction: their force and impact cannot be contained, and their use affects combatants and non-combatants alike. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and humanity, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation. A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons ? especially atomic, biological, or chemical weapons ? to use them? (CCC #2314; cf. also *Gaudium et Spes* #80). Since the use of such weapons is morally wrong, it follows that the production of such weapons is also morally wrong as well.

Others would argue that to possess such weapons would act as a deterrent to other nations who also possess such weapons. Again, the Church responds to such an objection as well: "The accumulation of arms strikes many as a paradoxically suitable way of deterring potential adversaries from war. They see it as the most effective means of ensuring peace among nations. This method of deterrence gives rise to strong moral reservations. The arms race does not ensure peace. Far from eliminating the causes of war, it risks aggravating them. Spending enormous sums to produce ever new types of weapons impedes efforts to aid needy populations; it thwarts the development of peoples. Over-armament multiplies reasons for conflict and increases the danger of escalation?" (CCC #2325; cf. also Pope Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* #53).

The city of Kansas City is facing a huge budget shortfall this year. Providing this project with \$41 million dollars means further delay of renewing our infrastructure and urban core. The alleged jobs this project would create will be held by people who will live in Johnson County, Kansas. Thus, the city would receive little, if any, tax revenue from the project. Thus, the poor of Kansas City will continue to be neglected with such a project.

Yet, we will continue to stress the Church's constant call for disarmament: "The Church's social teaching proposes the goal of "general, balanced, and controlled disarmament." The enormous increase in arms represents a grave threat to stability and peace. The principle of sufficiency, by virtue of which each state may possess only the means necessary for its legitimate defense, must be applied both by States that buy arms and by those that produce and furnish them. Any excessive stockpiling or indiscriminate trading in arms cannot be morally justified. Such phenomena must also be evaluated in light of international norms regarding the non-proliferation, production, trade and use of different types of arms. Arms can never be treated like other goods exchanged on international or domestic markets" (CSD #508; cf. also John Paul II Message to the United Nations 1985, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace paper "The International Arms Trade" 1994, John Paul II Address to the World of Work 1988).

We have an obligation to think responsibly on this proposed nuclear weapons plant, to think beyond the local and examine the global dimensions of this decision. "Arms of mass destruction " whether biological, chemical, or nuclear " represent a particularly serious threat. Those who possess them have an enormous responsibility before God and all of humanity. The principle of non-proliferation of nuclear arms, together with measures of nuclear disarmament and the prohibition of nuclear tests, are intimately interconnected objectives that must be met as soon as possible by means of effective controls at the international levels" (CSD #509, cf. also *Gaudium et Spes* #80; CCC #2314, John Paul II World Day of Peace #2 1986). Let us make a decision for all of humanity: reject the building of this nuclear weapons plant and seek a peaceful use of the facility.

Huntz was reportedly under considerable pressure not to oppose the project. In this light, the statement is all the more important.

Cheers for Kansas City - St. Joseph Bishop Robert W. Finn and the leadership he is providing on this issue.

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