Bread Not Stones Bishops’ Sign-On Statement

In the preamble of Jesus’ teaching of the Golden Rule, He asks his followers, “Which of you, if your child asks for bread, will give them a stone?” (Matthew 7:9)

The growing gap between the rich and the poor is compounded by a growing gap between our nation’s spending on weapons and preparations for war and our commitment to end poverty. Our poor and marginalized brothers and sisters cry out for the bread of compassion and justice. Shall we continue to offer them stones?

We are told that our military spending secures peace for our people and the Church recognizes the legitimate need for the adequate defense of nations. But our reliance on unfettered military spending is rooted in a mistaken notion of peace and an erroneous understanding of what constitutes true security for our people.

As Pope Paul VI made clear, “For peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men.” (On the Development of Peoples, 1967)

At the gathering of the world’s bishops during the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, the Church made clear that, “The arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race; it is to be condemned as a danger, an act of aggression against the poor, and a folly which does not provide the security it promises.” (The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, #81).

The Church has repeated many times that "the arms race is to be condemned unreservedly," "it is an injustice," "it is a form of theft," "it is completely incompatible with the spirit of humanity and still more with the spirit of Christianity." (The Holy See & Disarmament Reply to an invitation by the General Assembly of the United Nations, 1975)

In our dioceses we hear the cry of the poor who hunger for the bread of compassion and justice. We hear that cry in our Catholic Charities offices, in our food pantries, in our parish St. Vincent de Paul ministries. We hear that cry in our schools, hospitals, homeless shelters, and immigrant outreach efforts.

The U.S. federal budget is a moral document that identifies what we value. We cannot remain silent while our nation squanders hundreds of billions of dollars every year on weapon systems
that add little to our nation’s national security while neglecting the poor and marginalized in our dioceses and around the world.

Our misplaced reliance on new and ever more lethal conventional and nuclear weapons will never bring us the peace for which we long. If we want genuine peace, we must seek justice for the “least of these” (Matthew 25) by beating our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks. (Isaiah 2:4)

Signature: ____________________________________________

Diocese: ____________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________

1. Bishop John Stowe, Lexington, KY
2. Bishop Emeritus Thomas Gumbleton, Detroit, MI
3. Cardinal Robert McElroy, San Diego, CA
5. Archbishop John Wester, Santa Fe, NM
6. Archbishop Thomas Zinkula, Dubuque, IA
7. Bishop Steven Biegler, Cheyenne, WY
8. Bishop John Michael Botean, Eparch of St. George, Romanian Greek Catholic Church
10. Bishop Daniel Garcia, Monterey, CA
11. Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz, Jackson, MS
12. Bishop Mark Seitz, El Paso, TX
14. Bishop Louis Tylka, Peoria, IL
15. Auxiliary Bishop Matthew G. Elshoff, OFM Cap., Los Angeles, CA
16. Auxiliary Bishop Anthony C. Celino, El Paso, TX
17. Bishop Emeritus Donald Hanchon, Detroit, MI
18. Bishop Emeritus Richard Pates, Des Moines, IA
19. Bishop Emeritus Peter Rosazza, Hartford, CT
20. Bishop Emeritus Richard Sklba, Milwaukee, WI