

Final Statement (long version) of Las Vegas Catholic Worker Gathering *(On the 10th Anniversary of the U.S. Bombing and Invasion of Afghanistan)*

We Catholic Workers from around North America gather in Las Vegas on this 10th anniversary of the U.S. bombing and invasion of Afghanistan with the theme: **“From Empire to Servanthood.”** We renounce all war-making as an affront to the God of Creation, and we reject the false gods and religion of empire that dominate our national spirit. We call on our church and nation to join us in repenting for the violence the U.S. has inflicted, and make reparations to all of its victims—at home and in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen and elsewhere.

At this critical point in history, when we face unending wars, nuclear perils, occupations, and economic collapse; when human life and creation itself has become so devalued and killing has become the norm; when greed, exploitation, racism, and discrimination are at the heart of social injustice; when our earth and environment is endangered as never before; we recommit ourselves to the God of creation that calls us to revere all life as sacred, and resist empire and the way of violence and oppression.

As we hear the cry of the poor and suffering of our nation and world, we demand that all resources being squandered for weapons and war instead be spent to meet urgent human needs.

As the U.S. government continues its immoral and illegal occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and its murderous drone attacks—especially in Pakistan—we recall the words of Dorothy Day regarding U.S. war-making during World War II:

"We are at war, a declared war, with Japan, Germany, and Italy. But still we can repeat Christ's words, each day, holding them close in our hearts, each month printing them in the paper... We will print the words of Christ who is with us always, even to the end of the world. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you ...” In the *Catholic Worker* we will quote our Pope, our saints, our priests. We will go on printing the articles which remind us today that we are all called to be saints, that we are other Christs, reminding us of the priesthood of the laity... We are still pacifists. Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount, which means that we will try to be peacemakers."

Yes, we are still pacifists. In the name of Jesus, who calls us to love unconditionally and be peacemakers, we call on all followers of Jesus to embrace and practice gospel nonviolence. We urge our church leadership to break their silence and prophetically proclaim Christ's gospel by calling the entire nation to repent for the war crimes committed in our name. We invite them, and all followers of Jesus, to join us in making the following appeal to the political, military, and economic power structure of our nation:

--end all U.S. war-making and military intervention throughout the world, especially in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Pakistan.

--stop all drone attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen.

--stop demonizing Arabs and Muslims.

– end the U.S. backed Israeli occupation of Palestine, and support self-determination for the Palestinians.

- disarm and abolish all conventional, biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons.
- close and convert all nuclear and conventional weapons facilities, military bases, and military training centers—like the SOA/WHINSEC.
- stop the U.S. militarization of space.
- convert our war-based economy to one centered on serving the common good—alleviating poverty and protecting the environment.
- initiate an equitable redistribution of the earth's resources.
- work to reverse global climate change and bring about environmental justice.
- cultivate respect for the health of the land that feeds us and honors the people that lived on it before us.
- end the practice of torture.
- close the Guantanamo U.S. military prison, the prison at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, all secret “black sites” and detention centers, and end indefinite detention.
- end all ROTC training programs at all levels in Catholic and public schools.
- end the “war on the poor” at home by: abolishing the death penalty; ending the practice of mass imprisonment; eliminate for-profit prisons; providing housing, jobs, adequate food and health care for ALL; taking down the wall on the U.S./Mexico boarder and insuring and protecting human rights of all immigrants.

Mindful of all political prisoners, including those Catholic Workers and other resisters imprisoned for acts of peacemaking, we commit ourselves to nonviolently resist all forms of state-sanctioned violence and oppression. In our efforts to come out of and resist U.S. empire, we concluded our weekend gathering by doing nonviolent direct actions at the Nevada National Test Site and at Creech AFB, center of U.S. drone warfare. In solidarity with sisters and brothers around the world calling for an end to political repression, corporate domination, and militarism, we seek to build a new society in the shell of the old. We commit ourselves to help create the Beloved Community, where all God's people can live together in peace with justice.