Necessary and Possible
By BJ Brown

Seventy-five years ago this month, the United States unleashed an atomic weapon over the Japanese port city of Hiroshima. An estimated 70,000 people died in the fiery blast and its immediate aftermath; 90,000 to 160,000 people died from radiation’s earliest damage by the year’s end. Three days after the that attack, the United States bombed the Japanese ship-building city Nagasaki, instantly killing 60,000-80,000 people. Six days later, Japan surrendered to the United States and the Allies, ending the Second World War.

Incredibly, the world has lived with and somehow managed not to use this particular destructive force since then. Not only the use, but the very existence of nuclear weapons has repeatedly been fiercely denounced by Catholic leaders, from Pope John XXIII’s 1963 call to ban nuclear weapons in his encyclical letter Pacem in Terris, to Pope Francis’s assertion at Nagasaki in 2019 that “a world without nuclear weapons is possible and necessary.”

I wonder sometimes if we as Catholics know how consistently and clearly our church has condemned nuclear weapons. It doesn’t seem to be a front-burner issue. Do we consider peacemaking as the church’s essential mission (The Challenge of Peace, 1983), a requirement of faith to which we are “bound before God and every man and woman in the world (Pope Francis at Nagasaki, 2019)? Do we understand what our faith asks of us, as possession of nuclear weapons multiplies and spreads, and the weapons themselves become (if it is even possible to imagine) ever more deadly?

I have sometimes found the Catholic Church’s teaching on peace to be maddening. I envy the simplicity of historically pacifist traditions: violence is never acceptable, period; war is not the answer, ever. I know that my Catholic faith can bring me to much the same place, but it can seem painstakingly slow. On the solemn anniversary of the deaths of so many innocents in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—not to say during World War II and the countless wars that have followed—let us recall the main points of the Catholic peacemaking tradition, and look for the strengths it can offer.

Catholic teaching on peace begins, as does all Catholic moral teaching, in our reverence for all life as a gift from God and firm belief in the dignity of each human person and all human community. We

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believe that peace is also a gift from God, the fruit of God’s saving activity, promised to those who live by God’s covenant and established forever by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But how to live in peace in this world, in the already-and-not-yet of the reign of God? Here is where Catholic teaching becomes complicated, or perhaps better said, nuanced. This is why the Second Vatican Council speaks of peace as “more than the absence of war” and as the fruit of an ever more perfect reign of justice (Gaudium et Spes #78). This is why the US bishops could say, writing in The Challenge of Peace in 1983, that there is an inalienable obligation to defend peace and there are moral options in how to do so.

The consideration of such moral options relies heavily on what is perhaps the best-known part of the Catholic peace tradition: just war teaching. Just war theory can be understood as a two-part examination of conscience. The first part, known by the Latin phrase *jus ad bellum*, examines what situations can overcome the fundamental moral presumption against war. Traditionally, the criteria for justice in going to war include legitimate authority to declare war, a right intention, proportionality to that intent, probability of success, and that war is a last resort. *Jus in bello*, the second part of the examination of conscience, circumscribes conduct within war, emphasizing the limits of proportionate, discriminate actions and the protection of noncombatants. Entire books can and have been written on each of these criteria. It is at this point in their moral reasoning—*jus in bello*—that the US bishops built their 1983 case against US nuclear weapons policy.

Is it better to arrive at a firm moral commitment to peacemaking in a single step or by many? Is it enough to know that Jesus is our peace, or do we need a developed and developing body of teaching on the conduct of war and waging peace? Is it a strength or a weakness to engage in a process of analyzing social issues, exploring the perspectives of scripture and Catholic experience and weighing and applying our values?

In the end, I am convinced that the Catholic peace tradition offers us two particular advantages: First, it allows us to engage with the complexity of new and unforeseen issues. Just as our tradition once equipped us to condemn the threat of nuclear weaponry, we are also equipped to reject new evils, such as the emergence of terrorism. Second, our moral practice allows us to see connections, to follow the threads that link the development of weapons of mass destruction to environmental destruction, to the theft of the world’s resources from the poor and to the increasing militarization of our national culture.

The strength of our traditional moral practice—of reading the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel—is that it allows us to see that if we want peace, we must work for justice. And then we can be confident that we walk in the ways of Jesus Christ, who is our peace.

*The US Catholic Conference’s policy statements on nuclear weapons can be found on this page of the USCCB website. The full text of their 1983 pastoral letter, The Challenge of Peace, is here. You can also explore Catholic peacemaking at the website of Pax Christi USA.*

*The image on the previous page was taken in Nagasaki after August 9, 1945 by an employee of the United States War Department. It is held in the National Archives and can be accessed on Wikimedia Commons.*
Daily Mass Intentions

Monday, August 17: Charles Marino
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Tuesday, August 18: Old St. Joseph’s Memorial Society
Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ

Wednesday, August 19: Louis Balestrucci
Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ

Thursday, August 20: Fr. Mike Hricko SJ
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Friday, August 21: Geraldine Marren and Family
Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Sunday, August 23
7:30 AM Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ
9:30 AM Presider: Fr. Modrys SJ (livestreamed only)
11:30 AM Presider: Fr. O’Donnell SJ

Archbishop Nelson Pérez’s dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect. As you decide whether to attend public worship, please keep your health and safety, and the health and safety of all who gather for worship, uppermost in your mind. Masks are to be worn and six feet of safe distance kept while in the church.

Please remember our sick and homebound brothers and sisters, our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital and all those who have asked for our prayers.


If you wish to have someone included on the parish prayer list, please call BJ Brown at 215-923-1733 or email bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org.
Announcements

Friends in Need
Our neighbors at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church have been especially hard hit by the economic strains of the pandemic. St. Thomas Aquinas has set up an Amazon wishlist of personal care necessities that are often eliminated when household budgets are stretched thin. Old St. Joseph’s has generously supported the Aquinas Center/St. Thomas Aquinas community through its Advent Giving Tree in years past. Please consider making a special gift now. You can order from their wishlist for delivery to St. Thomas Aquinas at 1719 Morris Street, Philadelphia PA 19145. These items will be distributed along with food boxes by the parish. You may also send ShopRite, CVS and Walgreen’s gift cards to St. Thomas Aquinas’s pastoral associate Clara Jerez at the parish address. Thank you!

Rev. Bryan Massingale’s
Racial Justice and the Catholic Church
If you are reading Father Bryan Massingale’s 2010 book, Racial Justice and the Catholic Church and want to explore his more recent work, consider this video interview with America magazine correspondent Michael O’Loughlin on YouTube. You can also hear an interview between Commonweal writer Regina Munch and Fr. Massingale in Commonweal’s podcast. Also, the National Catholic Reporter article referenced in both interviews is available online.

Discussions of Fr. Massingale’s book (by Zoom) are scheduled for Thursday, September 10 and Tuesday, September 29 at 7:30 PM.

PREP Teachers Needed!
PREP, the Parish Religious Education Program, is seeking teachers for the coming year. Classes will meet via Zoom with the possibility of periodic in-person gatherings. Instructional materials and support will be provided. If you’re interested or want more information, please contact Christine Szczepanowski at prep@oldstjoseph.org or 215-923-1733 x123.

August Special Collections
The following special collections are now active on ParishSOFT Giving through August 30. You may also contribute via text at 215-929-7151 by using the keywords below:

The annual archdiocesan Missionary Cooperative Appeal will benefit the work of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Sr. Jessica Kerber acj wrote about her congregation’s work in OSJ’s August 9 bulletin. The collection’s keyword is MissionCoop.
The collection for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, keyword Assumption, is open online although there will not be a special holy day Mass because the feast falls on a weekend.
The annual collection for Catholic University of America will be taken up in church on August 16; its keyword is CatholicUniversity.
INFORMATION

Pastor
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ (pastor@oldstjoseph.org)

Parochial Vicar
Fr. Francis Hannafey SJ (fhannafey@oldstjoseph.org)

In Residence
Br. Robert Carson SJ
Fr. Ed O’Donnell SJ (edodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)

Pastoral Associate
BJ Brown (bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org)

Business Manager
Eric German (germane@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Music
Mark Bani (music@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Offices
(office@oldstjoseph.org)

Religious Education (PREP) Coordinator
Christine Szczepanowski (prep@oldstjoseph.org)

Faith, Food & Friends Director
Deborah Hluchan (faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Hospital Ministry
Tom Volkert (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Rectory Office Hours
Monday through Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Mass Times
Monday–Friday at 12:05 PM.
Live-streamed at 9:30 AM Sunday; at vimeo.com/osjphl.
Public Mass at 11:30 AM Sunday.

Medical Emergency
In a medical emergency when the need for a priest is urgent, please call the rectory.

Hearing Enhancements
Old St. Joseph’s is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are available in the rear of the church.

Registration
Registration forms are available in the rectory office during normal office hours, on the bookcases in the back of the church and online at www.oldstjoseph.org. They can be returned to the parish office by mail or in person.

Sacrament of Reconciliation
Priests are available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation Monday through Saturday by appointment; please call the parish offices.

Sacrament of Baptism
To arrange a baptism, please contact Fr. Hannafey (fhannafey@oldstjoseph.org) at least two months before the desired date.

Eucharist for the Homebound
To arrange to receive Communion at home, please contact the parish offices.

The Sacrament of Anointing
Homebound or hospitalized persons wanting to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony
If you want to be married at Old St. Joseph’s, please visit our website, oldstjoseph.org and read the material under the heading Weddings. Please call the parish office at 215-923-1766 at least nine months before your desired wedding date.

Rite of Christian Initiation
If you are an adult wishing to be baptized, or to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation, or are a baptized non-Catholic seeking full communion with Catholic Church, please call the parish office or email rcia@oldstjoseph.org.

Mass of Christian Burial
To schedule a funeral or memorial Mass, ask your funeral director to call the parish office.

Parish Pastoral Council
(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Finance Council
Paul Shay, chair

Historic Preservation Corporation Board
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

Adult Education
Rita O’Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo
(adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Eldership
Pat Nelson (eldership@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life
Joe Casey (parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation
Len Mancini (osjspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)

Women, Faith and Fellowship
Rana McNamara (wff@oldstjoseph.org)

Young Adult Community
(osjyac@gmail.com)

Altar Servers
Maria Ramirez (altarserver@oldstjoseph.org)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
Bill Stewart (EM@oldstjoseph.org)

Hospital Ministry
Luanne Balestrucci (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Homebound Ministry
Neal Hébert (homeEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Lectors
Lou Anne Bulik (lectors@oldstjoseph.org)

Ushers
Nikola Sizgorich (ushers@oldstjoseph.org)

Children’s Liturgy of the Word
Peggy Connolly (clow@oldstjoseph.org)
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