



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

5 April 2017

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

On behalf of the American National Catholic Church, and in unity with all persons of good will, I wish to express my horror and profound sorrow at the chemical weapons attack on the northern Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun.

The bombing of the town occurred in the early morning of 4 April. The chemical gas, possibly the deadly nerve agent sarin, killed upwards of 100 children, women, and men, and wounded dozens of others. Many of the victims were still in their beds when the gas, which caused paralysis and suffocation, reached them.

At the height of the Cold War, Jesuit peace activist Richard McSorley pointed out that it's a sin to deploy or even to manufacture and stockpile weapons of war whose very nature is to kill indiscriminately. He was referring specifically to nuclear bombs. But chemical weapons that spread toxic clouds, which afflict every living thing in their path, are also clearly sinful.

The same morning that I awoke to the news of the chemical attack, the appointed Lenten reading was the story in the Book of Daniel of King Nebuchadnezzar casting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace because they refused to worship idols. When the king peered into the flames, he saw that not only were the three young men unharmed, but that they had been joined by a fourth who looked "like a son of God."

Commentator Amy Adams, reflecting on this story, writes this: "We will never know in which atrocities Christ has appeared. But in our faith in a loving God, we must assume it has been all of them."

I know that God was side-by-side with the good people of Khan Sheikhoun on that terrible morning.

As we journey toward Easter in these final days of Lent, let us recall that the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ assures us that God is indeed present with all victims of hatred and violence, sharing their suffering and promising that all things shall be made new. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Rev 21:4)

May the tragedy at Khan Sheikhoun open our hearts to the thousands of children, women, and men throughout the world who endure the horrors of war on a regular basis and who seek refuge in our nation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George R. Lucey, FCM".

Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop