



14 August 2017  
Memorial of Saint Maximilian Kolbe

**A Pastoral Letter from Presiding Bishop George R. Lucey, FCM,  
on Warlike Rhetoric and White Nationalism**

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

The past week has been one that surely has grieved and frightened all persons of good will.

First, the current president alarmed the world with breathtakingly bellicose threats directed at the North Korean regime. In what were reportedly extemporaneous remarks, Mr. Trump warned that the U.S. was prepared to inflict on North Korea "fire, fury, and frankly power the likes of which this world has never seen before." The president's remarks, in response to news that North Korea is now able to launch a nuclear-tipped ICBM missile, led to a speedy and heated escalation of threats and warlike rhetoric from both sides.

Analysts worry that Mr. Trump's intemperate words have brought the U.S. closer to a nuclear confrontation than it's been since the 1963 Cuban Missile Crisis.

In his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, released at the height of the Cold War and addressed to Christians and non-Christians alike, St. John XXIII urged the world's leaders to seek the common good by exercising genuine moral authority instead of "govern[ing] solely or mainly by means of threats and intimidation" (#48). As a Vatican diplomat for much of his adult life, St. John was well acquainted with the dangerous consequences of warlike rhetoric in fraught times of international tension.

The unthinkable horror of nuclear confrontation only underscores the wisdom of his position.

It is my fervent hope and prayer that God enlightens the minds and opens the hearts of the U.S. and North Korea leaders to lead them away from their perilous course of mutual threats and intimidation before they reach a point of no-return.

Second, the nation witnessed a truly abominable display of hatred and violence in Charlottesville, VA, this weekend, when Klansmen, Nazis, and white nationalists marched through the streets to proclaim their own toxic mix of threats and intimidation. Tragically

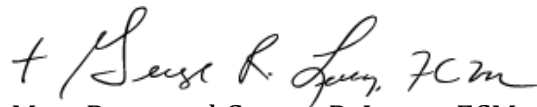
but predictably, their hatred and rage spawned violence that led to the murder of a young woman and the wounding of a score of others.

Thankfully, the vast majority of citizens and politicians in the nation are shocked by this brutal display of hatred. Christians, it is to be hoped, are even more so. We worship and proclaim a God whose incarnation was heralded by angels with greetings of peace and good will to all, and whose resurrected message was likewise one of peace. As his disciples, we are called—we are obliged—to be advocates of peace, exemplifying it not only in our personal behavior but also opposing firmly, but not hatefully or forcibly, those who would threaten it with bellicose intimidation or rupture it with overt violence. For all those who follow the path of violence eventually arrive at death and destruction. As the psalmist tells us,

*They dig a pitfall, dig it deep;  
and in the trap they have made they will fall.  
Their malice will recoil on themselves;  
on their own heads their violence will fall.  
(7: 15-16)*

As followers of the Prince of Peace, let us join with all persons of good will to recommit ourselves to peace and life, and reaffirm our opposition to violence and death.

Signed on this Memorial of St. Maximilian Kolbe, the Franciscan martyr who witnessed to Christ's peace by sacrificing himself for others at Auschwitz.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George R. Lucey, FCM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM  
Presiding Bishop