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Becoming Fully Human: Advancing Nuclear Disarmament

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The terrible power to destroy ourselves and the readiness to unleash it is the backbone of nuclear deterrence. Strategic stability rests on mutual preparedness to do so; today, that means multiple states are thus prepared, signaling the willingness to annihilate humanity and toss creation back to the wasteland of the early stages of Genesis.

Some say that, with proper management, the inherent dangers of nuclear weapons can be controlled and the posture of threatening to use these devices is normal, safe, sane, and acceptable. The situation, however, is, in fact, abnormal, immeasurably dangerous, certainly not sane, and morally unacceptable.

If William Wilberforce, the great British abolitionist, had only called for better management of slavery, that horrible institution would still be shadowing us today.

The possession and threat to use nuclear weapons in the pursuit of security represents unprecedented folly of the highest order and an expression of the law of power in its most raw form.

As Senator Alan Cranston used to say: “The weapons are unworthy of civilization” which must rest on morality and the power of law. That is why we so strongly support Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s call for a nuclear weapons convention or framework of agreements which will establish the verifiable, legally enforceable, universal elimination of nuclear weapons.

Cutting off the production of fissile material, strengthening safeguards and verification measures and so many other threat-reducing steps are part of the process, but the end point must be established clearly now. The political will to move forward can be galvanized once negotiations commence. However long it takes to complete, it is time to start now.

For people of faith this love of the ultimate power is a distortion of our humanity and a fissure of human solidarity. This insight is so clearly expressed in the Holy See’s statement *Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition*. That is one of many reasons we are inspired by Pope Francis’ leadership. His call: “Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition” must be shared in every church, mosque, synagogue, these hallowed halls of the UN, and every parliament and congress everywhere.

We are all called to doing far better than simply getting along. We are called to learn to love one another and become fully human. Let that calling be the magnet that moves the moral compass for the abolition of nuclear weapons. We can and will help move the world’s nations from the hazardous love of power to the life giving power of love.