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www.catholicsforpeace.ca

Open letter to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Dear Bishops,

We, in Catholics for Peace - Toronto, affiliated with Pax Christi International, were puzzled to learn of your refusal to co-sign the August 16th, 2007 ecumenical letter to the Prime Minister regarding Canada's Role in Afghanistan. Particularly surprising is the fact that if our memory serves us well, you have never addressed the evil of modern war. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has endorsed ecumenical statements about war and peace but has never developed a Canadian Catholic position on modern war. Fr. Paul Hansen calls your slow deliberations and silence a "scandal" and we tend to agree with that statement.

We are grateful for the teaching office of the Catholic Church when it states that it must speak the truth of its moral teaching even when it is unpopular. You have provided us with moral direction on a number of key social issues. Therefore, the lack of statements on modern war is indeed disturbing.

Contrary to the gospel values, Stephen Harper, Peter McKay and General Rick Hillier are pushing Canada into a more combative role in Afghanistan. They now treat with disdain the traditional Canadian language of peace. Canada is spending many times more dollars in combat than on aid and reconstruction in Afghanistan. The annual military budget is heading towards a target of \$30 billion.

As an example of only one of the many moral problems in modern warfare, it is acknowledged that the modern munitions used today contain depleted uranium, which is polluting the land and harming civilians and soldiers alike from deadly nuclear radiation with a half-life of 4.5 billion years. A substantial part of that uranium comes from Canada - in transgression of the statutes and regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, which prohibits the use of Canadian uranium in weapons.

Why do we not relate our discipleship to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, with active opposition to war? We ask our bishops to clearly address war as a moral issue.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' silence on this issue is deafening. A pronouncement of the Catholic Bishops providing moral guidance on issues of war and peace - and specifically Canada's situation in Afghanistan, is long overdue.

We started our Advent with the call of Isaiah that we study war no more. We look forward to your timely response.

Yours in Christ,

CATHOLICS FOR PEACE TORONTO

Stephen Barringer
Committee Chairman
(647) 406-4763

Email: catholicsforpeace@rogers.com

NOTE: The document in this email has been mailed under separate cover as well. It is the intention of Catholics for Peace – Toronto to release this open letter to the media next week.