

Pentecost '82 — a

By **ABP. WILLIAM D. BORDERS**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In a well-publicized debate between G. K. Chesterton and famous playwright and agnostic George Bernard Shaw, Shaw stated: "Christianity has been tried and found wanting." Chesterton is said to have replied: "No, George, Christianity has been found difficult and not tried."

The difficulties of Christian living continue to exist. As Christians we are asked to surrender both individual and national pride; we are asked to relinquish selfishness as well as greed for money and power, excessive pleasure, misuse of the gifts of body and soul; we are called to live together in peace.

The histories of countries and races do not offer much solid data to give us the hope that peace will be realized. But, then, history also demonstrates that peace has not been sought for by all persons and all countries and in all places. It has not even been understood in a positive sense.

Even if all military, political, and social confrontation were to suddenly cease, peace would not automatically be attained. Peace is a *positive* gift of God; it is not just the elimination of hostilities.

Writing thousands of years ago; the psalmist understood the nature of peace. We read in the 84th Psalm, "Peace comes from God. It is a gift, a positive entity; not merely a negation, the absence of war."

Pope John Paul II in his World Day of Peace message, speaking nearly 3,000 years after the psalmist, places before us a similar fundamental truth. He states; "Peace is of the very essence of our humanity, involving not a mere balance of opposing interest, but a fundamental (agreement) between people based on respect for the fundamental human rights inherent in every person. God who is the guarantor of these rights is the source of peace."

Even though peace is a gift of God, as the Holy Father points out, it requires active involvement from each one of us.

The Holy Father continues: "God's gift

of peace is, therefore, also at all times a human conquest and achievement, since it is offered to us in order that we may accept it freely and put it progressively into operation by our creative will."

How can we translate the Pope's words into action? How can we make God's gift of peace a reality in our world? To make peace real we must make it a gift of our own life and share our convictions about peace with others.

THREAT TO HUMANITY

We live in an age of increasing nuclear stockpiles. Because such stockpiling of weapons has never occurred in history without eventual use of the weapons, the very existence of humanity is at stake.

The first nuclear weapon was created in the United States, and when I first heard that such a weapon had been dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I was on board a ship sailing from Naples to Newport News. I was a chaplain to what remained of the 91st Infantry Division.

We had fought our way from Anzio to the Brenner Pass in Italy. Now, we were en route to the South Pacific. When the news of the atomic bomb blast in Japan was first heard, the almost universal reaction was: thank God the war is over! We can go home!

Then, information began to come to us as to the nature of an atomic bomb. My reaction quickly reversed itself, because I had lived with massive suffering and death for over a year.

For example, I was in a convoy one night when a bomb dropped on a six-by-six truck behind my jeep. Not one of the 60 men in that truck lived. Half of them died slowly with sulphur-like burns. I remember how totally inadequate I felt as a priest; incapable of even talking briefly or anointing a small portion of these men.

The realities of today surface these horrifying memories; memories I have never mentioned in a talk or a sermon. But even these painful memories pale beside the realities of what a nuclear war would be like.

Archbishop B 'peace sabbat statement on v

Our political leaders would have us believe that stockpiling weapons makes it possible to balance the power of war among nations.

And as they speak our gaze turns toward the South Atlantic. The war over the Falklands or *Islas Malvinas*, forces one to reflect on the limitation and blindness of the leaders of nations, and the emotion-charged judgments of people who give support to these leaders. This conflict supposedly is a limited or controlled war which can be terminated after a few thousand persons are killed.

The Falklands crisis is tragic. But the current war between Britain and Argentina, or any war in the past will be considered only a sad period in human history compared to the devastation that would be unleashed on our world should the current nuclear buildup lead to the accidental or deliberate use of nuclear warheads.

I am not going to present a word picture of what can happen to the totality of the human family if the course and direction by the great powers continues the nuclear build-up. You have read, or hopefully will read, the contents of the research of knowledgeable and concerned persons. However, I will say that history continually proves that a balance of power is only a delaying action.

ENOUGH ON HORRORS

I have perhaps said enough about the horrors of war. We of the Church must recognize a moral imperative: to reach into the minds and hearts of people and help them recognize that despite the horror I have described so briefly, hope exists.

We Christians must have, and we must

message of peace

Borders marks ath' with strong war and peace

help others to know that hope is possible. If all of us take the time to understand and accept the message of the peace of Christ we will enjoy a great insight into the potential we have to live with each other humanly.

Our young people seem to understand. Listen to these words from a 16-year-old girl, a student at the Institute of Notre Dame.

She recently wrote in an essay, "Peace is a gift of God. It has been given to us, for us to enjoy for us to share. It is precious among the many gifts God has given to mankind, but like many others it has been disregarded and abused. "...In a world where insanity and violence seem to prevail over peace and good will, it is easy to conclude that peace is a gift that mankind has refused."

A friend of mine recently shared his worries about peace with me. I remember him saying, "we are no longer a people of cavemen or of barbarians, or of feudal times. We do not live in horse and buggy days. Science and medicine have improved our health; our life span has increased. Modern technology has mastered nature and space. We should be able at this advanced stage of our history to settle disputes or grievances without killing each other."

I have a deep respect for my friend and his thoughts. But as I reflect on what we do now with nuclear weapons I am moved to wonder how far we have come from the thought of the cavemen; how little we have learned from those who lived through barbarian times.

But the cave dwellers and the Barbarians did not know the God of peace. They were unaware of the fires of Pentecost.

Pentecost is a feast of beginning; of hope; of promise. It speaks to us of the Good News and not of despair.

St. Paul tells us that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, poured out on that first Pentecost, are not fulfilled at one time, nor are they transient. They are accepted in the order of time by each generation, and they are not primarily for the individual, but must instead be at the service of the whole Christian community.

The ultimate criteria for peace probably approximates the criteria for receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit: i.e. a recognition and a happy acceptance that Jesus is the Christ; the renunciation of exclusive personal claims to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and a placing of the gifts at the service of the whole community.

ACCEPTING GOD'S PLAN

In the letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul teaches us that we need to listen and accept the plan of creation made in Christ from the beginning and stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit.

In the final analysis, we need to recognize that life and decisions about life have meaning only in relation to eternity. Because we have heard the Good News, we must share it.

The Good News for us, today, can be found in the Gospel of John. We have heard from that reading that Jesus breathed on the apostles and disciples and gave them the gifts of the Spirit. Would that I could breathe those same gifts into all our lives today. I cannot.

But what I can do is to urge you; yes, enable you to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and particularly the gift of peace for our community.

To speak as I have done this morning about the horrors of war and even to reflect that we might return to a time in our lives that seem barbaric, saddens me. But it comforts me to know that so many — here in this cathedral and in churches around the archdiocese are united in our efforts to bring peace to our world. I read week after week about bishops, Christian individuals and tho

of other faiths, families, Justice and Peace Commissions in dioceses all over the world who seek to promote in all of us an awareness of peace.

To live in a world of peace even in the face of nuclear arms is not a hopeless task. We are able to change our world. Our world changes when we change the holocausts in our own lives; when we realize that peace in our homes and peace in our offices goes hand in hand with peace in our world. This may seem simplistic, but peace within is necessary as we reach out to others.

We must speak out against those who would endanger our world with rhetoric about war from our own personal peace. We must challenge our leaders to guide us on the paths of peace. Even as we try to understand the difficulty of their problems, we must urge them to find peaceful solutions to global conflict.

Finally, we know there is hope for peace in our world because we can pray. Perhaps our prayer will open the minds and hearts of people around the world to feel the stirrings of the Spirit within them. And what finer prayer could we find than that which was uttered by our Holy Father:

"Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations.

"Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war.

"Hear my voice when I beg you to instill into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice and the joy of fellowship.

"Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and in every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace.

"Hear my voice and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with the sharing of self, to war with peace.

"O God, hear my voice and grant unto the world your everlasting peace."