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Statement for DOE/NNS A Public Town Hall
July 22, 2024

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Archbishop John C. Wester, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Santa Fe. I regret that I can't attend this meeting in person.

Nuclear weapons were invented here in my archdiocese, and therefore, I feel a special responsibility to address humanity's most urgent threat.

Nuclear disarmament is a right-to-life issue. No other issue can cause the immediate collapse of civilization. In January 2022, I wrote a pastoral letter in which I traced the Vatican's evolution from its uneasy conditional acceptance of so-called deterrence to Pope Francis' declaration that the very possession of nuclear weapons is immoral.

What does this say about expanded plutonium pit production at the Los Alamos Lab? And what does it say about the obscene amounts of money being thrown at pit production, often excused as job creation?

What does this say about the fact that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is pursuing expanded pit production without providing the public the opportunity to review and comment as required by the National Environmental Policy Act? I specifically call upon the NNSA to complete a new LANL Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement.

In two weeks, I travel to Japan for the 79th atomic bombing anniversaries. The bishops of Santa Fe, Seattle, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki have a simple message for world leaders: You utterly failed to begin serious negotiations as required by the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this era, you must demonstrate concrete steps toward multilateral, verifiable nuclear disarmament by the 80th bombing anniversaries a year from now.

I have a simple message for NNSA and the nuclear weapons labs: You're very good at creating them; now, show us how smart you are by demonstrating how to get rid of nuclear weapons. Stop this new arms race that threatens all of civilization. Let's preserve humanity's potential to manifest God's divine love toward all beings.

Yours in Christ's love,

Most Reverend John C. Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe