



Justice and Peace Scotland has commended the Scottish Parliament for its recent majority decision against the proposed renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system. The Commission notes that this view is in line with the consistent teaching of the Church; and with the specific statements of the Scottish Bishops, notably in 1982 and 2006.

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Scottish Catholic Church welcomes the recent vote in the Scottish Parliament opposing the renewal and upgrading of the Trident nuclear weapons programme. We particularly welcome the cross party nature of the large parliamentary majority in favour of the motion rejecting renewal.

The motion is in keeping with the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church and the Scottish Bishops' Conference, whom we represent. This teaching emphasises that the use of any weapons of mass destruction could never be morally justified. It also emphasises that the intention and constant readiness to use, which is at the root of the policy of nuclear deterrence, is no less immoral. If nuclear weapons cannot be used either directly or as the threat of deterrence, then their possession becomes irrelevant. The moral principle here is absolute.

In recent times it has been emphasised, at the highest levels of politics, strategy and the military, that possession of nuclear weapons is more about status than about defence. Nuclear weapons are an expensive irrelevance, even on their own terms, to the defence requirements of contemporary geopolitics. They are a source of destabilisation and suspicion; as well as an impediment to much needed reconciliation in a conflict ridden world.

Nuclear weapons programmes are also a diversion of huge and much needed resources in a time of economic stringency. The Common Good cannot be served by a technology whose aim and effect is vast and indiscriminate destruction. One of the great possibilities resulting from this Scottish parliamentary motion being carried is that it sets a benchmark. It is possible for a parliament, in proper subsidiarity, to make a decision that reflects the views of its electors on a matter of immediate and local importance.

None of us individually, however provoked, would feel we had the right to obliterate our neighbour. There is no way such an attitude can be reconciled common sense, far less with the Gospel. As Justice and Peace Commission we are therefore pleased to welcome this decision of the Scottish Parliament: and not simply because it is in line with the views and teaching of the Catholic church and other Christian and religious bodies in Scotland.

We welcome this decision because it turns away from violence and destruction as legitimate motives for good government and responsible citizenship. It allows us to see our fellow humans on this small planet as potential neighbours rather than viewing them simply as competitors and enemies.

Signed: Bishop Peter Moran

President, Justice and Peace Commission of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland