

## THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE

The following are excerpts from the 1983 document “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response.” Think about your response to these statements and incorporate them when possible in your written response to the Journal Assignment, page 121.

**Military Service:** All those who enter the military service in loyalty to their country should look upon themselves as the custodians of the security and freedom of their fellow countrymen; and when they carry out their duty properly, they are contributing to the maintenance of peace. (p. iv)

**Conscientious Objection:** It seems just that laws should make humane provision for the case of conscientious objectors who refuse to carry arms, provided they accept some other form of community service. (p. iv)

**Non-violence:** We cannot but express our admiration for all who forego the use of violence to vindicate their rights and resort to other means of defense which are available to weaker parties, provided it can be done without harm to the rights and duties of others and of the community. (pp. iv–v)

**Nuclear War:** We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear war, on however restricted a scale, can be morally justified. (p. v) Good ends (defending one’s country, protecting freedom, etc.) cannot justify immoral means (the use of weapons which kill indiscriminately and threaten whole societies). (p. vii)

**Peace:** At the center of the Church’s teaching on peace and at the center of all Catholic social teaching are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God’s presence in the world; all of the Church’s work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God’s creative work and the meaning of Christ’s redemptive ministry. Christians approach the problem of war and peace with fear and reverence. God is the Lord of life, and so each human life is sacred; modern warfare threatens the obliteration of human life on a previously unimaginable scale. (#15) We are called to be a Church at the service of peace, precisely because peace is one manifestation of God’s word and work in our midst. (#27)

### **The Old Testament:**

*On War:* God is often seen as the one who leads the Hebrews in battle, protects them from their enemies, makes them victorious over other armies. The metaphor of warrior . . . enabled [the people] to express their conviction about God’s involvement in their lives; . . . they had a God who would protect them even in the face of overwhelming obstacles. (#31)

*On Peace:* Peace is always seen as a gift from God and as fruit of God’s saving activity. . . . True peace implied a restoration of the right order not just among peoples, but within all of creation. (#32)

*Fidelity to the Covenant:* If Israel obeyed God’s laws, God would dwell among them. . . . God would strengthen the people against those who opposed them and would give peace in the land. (#33)

*Hope for the Future:* God’s people clung tenaciously to hope in the promise of an eschatological time when, in the fullness of salvation, peace and justice would embrace and all creation would be secure from harm. (#38)