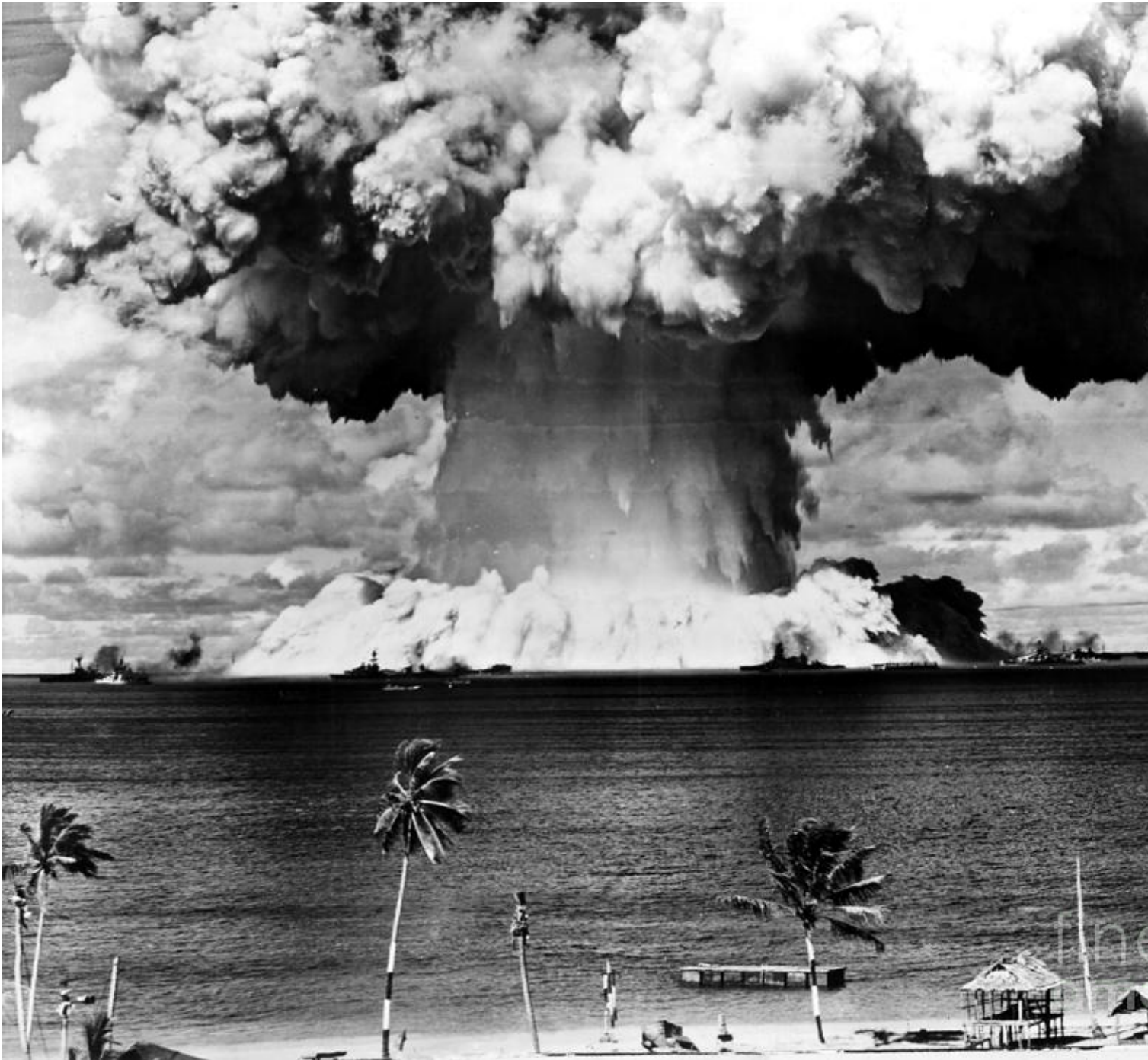


Pope's nuclear speech reveals development of Church teaching

Pope Francis has gone a step further and is keen for the Church to take a more active role internationally in trying to rid the world of nuclear arms. Pope Francis outright [condemnation of nuclear weapons](#) today marks an evolution in the Catholic position on this topic.

While his predecessors have said nuclear arms should never be used, John Paul II told the United Nations in 1982 that use of these weapons as a deterrence was “morally acceptable” on the step towards disarmament.



But Francis has gone a step further and is keen for the Church to take a more active role internationally in trying to rid the world of nuclear arms.

Back in July, the Holy See cast its first ever [UN vote](#) in favour of nuclear disarmament treaty forbidding states to “develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.”

While the Holy See only has observer status at the UN, on this occasion it was granted full member rights to vote and before the gathering took place to negotiate the treaty the Pope wrote to them saying “we must commit ourselves to a world without nuclear weapons.”

Two months after the vote Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican’s foreign minister equivalent, travelled to the UN in New York to sign and ratify the treaty making the Holy See first sovereign entities to put its name to the agreement.

In his speech at the Vatican disarmament gathering today, the Pope parsed the “historic vote” at the UN stressing that it “filled a significant juridical lacuna, inasmuch as chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-human mines and cluster bombs are all expressly prohibited by international conventions.”

He added that it came out of a “significant alliance between civil society, states, international organisations, churches, academies and groups of experts.”

The Pope and the Vatican view the UN as a vital institution in helping to tackle the major humanitarian crises across the world but would believe it could do far more. As a way of pushing things forward, Francis is willing for the Church to “come off the fence” and play a more active role inside the organisation.

With tensions between the United States and North Korea mounting, Francis has warned that a nuclear conflict could destroy a good part of humanity and therefore it is essential that an international effort is made to prevent disaster.

Today’s speech further underlines how Francis’ papacy is firmly rooted within the Church’s tradition of non-violence as set out by John XXIII who in a landmark papal encyclical “Pacem in Terris” called for nuclear weapons to be banned.

This Pope made a passionate appeal for an end to armed conflicts in his 2017 New Year message titled [“Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace”](#) while has tried to mediate peaceful resolutions in countries such as Central African Republic, Venezuela and Colombia.

He has also repeatedly condemned the arms trade and called for the theory of Just War - the Church’s teaching about whether armed conflict can be justified - to be [re-assessed](#).

- [NUCLEAR WEAPONS SERVE A 'MENTALITY OF FEAR' SAYS POPE](#)

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