

## **U.S. Cardinals: Questioning Trump's Politics of Force**

*di Marcello Neri*

**Three American cardinals — B.J. Cupich (Chicago), R.W. McElroy (Washington), and J.W. Tobin (Newark) — have signed a joint statement calling for a thorough review of the Trump administration's international policy.**

“The events in Venezuela, Ukraine, and Greenland have raised fundamental questions about the use of military force and the meaning of peace. The sovereign rights of nations to self-determination appear all too fragile in a world of ever greater conflagrations. The balancing of national interests with the common good is framed in starkly polarized terms. Our country's moral role in confronting evil around the world, sustaining the right to life and human dignity, and supporting religious liberty are all under examination.”

Echoing Pope Leo's words to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, the cardinals emphasize that diplomatic efforts to promote “dialogue and consensus among all parties are being replaced by a diplomacy based on force, by either individuals or groups of allies. War is back in vogue, and a zeal for war is spreading.”

Today, the United States is the agent of this subversion of the world order, using national security arguments based on “partisan categories that encourage polarization and destructive politics.”

According to the three cardinals, at stake is the moral foundation of U.S. international action, which is “beset by polarization, partisanship, and narrow economic and social interests.” In light of this state of affairs, Pope Leo's recommendations serve as an “ethical compass” to guide American foreign policy in the coming years.

Pope Leo advocates for peace as a “gift and desirable good in itself” rather than a condition imposed to assert dominance through violence. He also advocates for investing in international aid to guarantee the most central elements of human

dignity to much of the world's population and protecting the right to religious freedom without sacrificing it in the name of ideological or religious purity that crushes freedom itself.

The pastoral commitment affirmed by the three cardinals in their statement is, at the same time, a commitment to full American citizenship on the part of the Catholic faith. "As pastors and citizens, we embrace pope Leo's vision for establishing a genuinely moral foreign policy for our nation. We seek to build a just and lasting peace—the peace that Jesus proclaimed in the Gospel. We renounce war as an instrument of narrow national interests and proclaim that military action must be considered only as a last resort in extreme situations and not as a normal instrument of national policy. We seek a foreign policy that respects and advances the right to human life, religious liberty, and the enhancement of human dignity throughout the world, especially through economic assistance."

This decisive political commitment expressed by the three cardinals evokes the biblical image of the watchman who watches over the night of the world, so that the American nation may rise again to a "higher level" of moral responsibility and political wisdom on which peoples and nations can rely to begin weaving the fabric of a world order that desires peace as a gift and a good in itself.