



## Archdiocese of Santa Fe

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### NEWS RELEASE

#### **80 Years Later, New Mexico Faith Leaders Return to Trinity Site to Pray for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament**

Jornada del Muerto, NM — July 16, 2025 — As the sun rose over the Jornada del Muerto desert, the site of the world's first nuclear explosion stood eerily silent — except for the quiet prayers of nine faith and lay leaders gathered to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Trinity Test.

The historic and solemn gathering, led by Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, marked a spiritual reckoning with the dawn of the atomic age. Joined by Most Reverend Peter Baldacchino, Bishop of Las Cruces; Most Reverend James Wall, Bishop of Gallup; and other ecumenical and lay leaders, the small delegation prayed for an end to war, nuclear proliferation, and the violence that continues to afflict the world.

"We gather on this day as we remember the 80th anniversary of the bombing in Hiroshima," Archbishop Wester reflected. "We remember all those who lost their lives, and recall the lasting effects of war on God's holy people. We remember those who gave their lives to help those suffering after the bomb and who died of radiation sickness. But we must not lose hope, for when the darkness covers the land and all seems lost, Christ's light still shines for us. The light of Christ is still present to us and can show us the way."

In a poignant moment of the commemoration, church bells across New Mexico rang out at 5:29 a.m., the exact time of the detonation in 1945, as a public call to prayer for peace and nuclear disarmament.

Archbishop Wester emphasized the ongoing relevance of the gathering:

"I think it's important to remember that what we commemorate here today has not stopped. When we talk about the chain reaction of that first nuclear bomb, it is continuing, and we need to pray that it stops."

Allen Sánchez, Executive Director of the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops, described the experience of standing on the historic site:

"Arriving there was like returning home. It was as if the site was waiting for me all those years to come and say, 'I'm sorry for my humankind that left you radioactive, killed everything that was living here, and then started the arms race that has diverted so many resources from the poor and the needy.'"

Leslie M. Radigan, Director of Communications for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, shared:

"It was impactful knowing the entire world was commemorating the 80th anniversary of the detonation of the first atomic bomb, and we were the only nine people in the world to stand and pray on the very site where it happened. It was emotional and enlightening. We have so much work toward peace we have yet to do."

Later that evening, the community gathered again in Tularosa for a Mass at St. Francis de Paula Catholic Church, celebrated in remembrance of those affected by the detonation and its fallout. Following the Mass, attendees joined for a dinner and reception featuring remarks from former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján, and U.S. Congressman Gabe Vasquez.

The commemoration culminated in a candlelight vigil at Veterans Park, where over 1,000 luminarias illuminated the night, honoring the lives lost and the countless victims affected by the radioactive fallout from the Trinity Test. Hundreds of participants gathered in silent remembrance, holding candles and prayers for peace.

The date also coincided with the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, a Marian feast day in the Catholic Church. The bishops urged the faithful to invoke her intercession for peace, protection from war and nuclear threats, and for a global conversion of hearts away from violence.

During Masses throughout the state, clergy were encouraged to offer the following Prayers of the Faithful:

- *For the people of Japan and the United States as we remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that we may be united in upholding human rights and peace in our world, we pray to the Lord.*
- *For the leaders of the Church and all who guide us in the way of faith, may they seek to promote the basic rights of dignity and respect as the foundation for a sure and lasting peace in our world, we pray to the Lord.*
- *For world leaders, that they might find ways to bring an end to wars, violence, and nuclear threats, and work to promote the peace and development of all nations, we pray to the Lord.*
- *For all people, that we may work for peace and justice in our world, we pray to the Lord.*
- *For the victims of the bombing, that they may rest in eternal peace and rise to glory, we pray to the Lord.*

In attendance at the Trinity Site were:

- Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe
- Most Reverend Peter Baldacchino, Bishop of Las Cruces
- Most Reverend James Wall, Bishop of Gallup
- Conrad Rocha, Stated Clerk/Synod Executive, Synod of the Southwest Presbyterian Church
- Sharon Jones, Executive Assistant to Bishop Baldacchino
- Army Staff Sergeant Maduro
- Leslie M. Radigan, Director of Communications, Archdiocese of Santa Fe
- Allen Sánchez, Executive Director, New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Bernadette Zamora, Director of Social Justice & Respect Life, Archdiocese of Santa Fe

This unprecedented gathering reflects the Church's continued call for disarmament, justice, and a renewed commitment to peace — not just in remembrance, but in action.

To view photos from the day, visit the [ASF Photo Gallery](#).

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