

Happy Monday to all,

One year ago, on May 18, 2025, Russia launched 273 drones - its largest attack on Ukraine since the beginning of the war. The intended target was predominantly the central Kyiv residential region. The drone strikes killed a 28-year-old woman and wounded three others, including a 4-year-old child.

Catholic social teaching concludes the Russia-Ukraine war is “unjust” primarily because it violates core principles of Just War Theory—specifically by being a war of aggression lacking just cause, failing the test of proportionality, and failing to protect civilians. While the Church acknowledges a nation's right to defend itself, the Church continues to urge a return to negotiations and international law to achieve peace.

Closer to home, the U.S.-Iran conflict is also deemed unjust by Catholic leaders because it fails to meet the strict criteria of last resort, proportionality, and the avoidance of massive civilian destruction. There are few more expert in “just war” theory than Cardinal Robert McElroy, the archbishop of Washington.

In an interview with the Catholic Standard, the cardinal listed the six criteria for a just war:

(<https://www.cathstan.org/us-world/in-interview-cardinal-mcelroy-says-u-s-entry-into-war-with-iran-not-morally-legitimate-citing-catholic-just-war-teaching>)

1. Just cause: The war must be undertaken in defense against an attack that is grave and certain on a nation, its allies or a defenseless human community.
2. The legitimate authority in the country contemplating war must declare war.
3. The country goes to war with right intention, namely to redress the specific just cause and restore peace.
4. War is the last resort to repel the aggression.
5. The expected destruction from the war must not outweigh the expected good.
6. There is a reasonable hope of success.

For a war to be just, it must fulfill **each** criterion.

McElroy said “The criterion of just cause is not met because our country was not responding to an existing or imminent and objectively verifiable attack by Iran. Catholic teaching does not support preventative war”.

He continued, “The criterion of right intention is not met. One of the most worrying elements of the first days of the war in Iran is that our goals and intentions remain unclear and seem to be in a constant state of fluctuation.

“Finally,” he concluded, “our current war effort does not meet Catholic just war teaching because it is far from clear that the benefits of this war will outweigh the harm which will be done. We are seeing this already with the deaths and destruction caused by the war, as well as the economic consequences.”

On Palm Sunday Pope Leo XIV declared “Jesus is the King of Peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war. He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them.” In response to push-back comments from some US leaders, Pope Leo doubled down, stating: “the primary

task of pastors is to bear witness to God, refusing to let concerns or trends undermine us through compromise". The USCCB clarified further that the Pope speaks as the "supreme pastor and Vicar of Christ, not merely offering opinions.". Bishops, of which the Pope is one, are the chief teachers, sanctifiers, and shepherds of God's people.

Although Catholic Charities does not have a program directly designed to advocate for peace, many of our programs assist those who suffer the consequences from fighting in wars or living in regions currently experiencing war, violence or persecution. Examples include our Veterans Program, Immigration Program, Mental Health/Family Crisis services, and healthcare access for those harmed by the effects of war and weapons.

The Holy scripture states, "You shall love ... your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27). Our neighbor is defined as anyone we encounter who is in need, regardless of race, religion, or social status, whom we have the opportunity to love and help. Jesus defines a good neighbor through the Parable of the Good Samaritan as someone who shows mercy to others, transcending boundaries to act with compassion.

Only through ongoing, generous donations to Catholic Charities can our diocese continue to provide these essential services. September 13, 2026, is our annual Catholic Charities Appeal. Please, walk with us on this journey. Make a prayerful donation to Catholic Charities. Together, we can build a more compassionate future.

Blessings

Deacon Mike