

## NJPN Comment in the Catholic Universe – Bruce Kent: Good news and bad news

In many ways the end of 2020 is a gloomy time. Covid is on an upward move, with already over 70,000 deaths in this country alone. Worldwide, hundreds of thousands more. Aged 91, I am told to be very careful. Neighbours keep at a distance. My admiration for those brave people – doctors, nurses, and workers of all sorts in the NHS – is unlimited. A quick dash around the local park is all I am allowed to manage. Sunday Mass is possible but only if zoomed in from somewhere else. That's enough gloom for the moment. There IS great news for the whole world, but it doesn't seem to have been noticed by very many. On Friday 22nd January an international treaty comes into force. The possession and deployment of nuclear weapons will become illegal in over 120 countries which have signed up to the new Treaty so far. The nine countries now possessing nuclear weapons will have to be careful where and how they move them. That is a new logistical problem. More important, the message is now clear. About two-thirds of the world thinks it is illegal to have them at all. In our British case it is stupid as well. We boast about having independent nuclear weapons. What an illusion. We do make those mass murder warheads, but we have to borrow the missiles on which to put them from the United States. It's as 'independent' as a family car for which one has to rely on some distant neighbour for the wheels! Pope Francis has shone a very powerful light on the immorality of nuclear weaponry. He has gone far beyond rejecting the actual use of such weapons, as other Popes have done before. In November 2017 at a meeting in Rome he went much further: "If we take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error or any kind, the threat of their use, as well as their very possession is to be firmly condemned." Pope Francis tells us that "security" based on nuclear weapons is an immoral illusion. Real human security is about food, health, human rights, and opportunities for everybody on the planet. Let us follow Pope Francis and take positive action in 2021 to get our government to sign up to the new treaty.

*Bruce Kent is a vice-president of both Pax Christi and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Pax Christi England and Wales celebrates Peace Sunday on 17th January. See <https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-sunday-2021>*

