

Holy See: Technology should better human life, not take it

Archbishop Ettore Balestrero spoke recently at a UN forum in Geneva on the need to closely monitor the development of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), colloquially called “killer robots”. The Holy See’s Permanent Observer to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva addressed the second session of the 2024 group of government experts on emerging technologies in LAWS on August 26.

Opening his speech, Archbishop Balestrero repeated Pope Francis’ words to G7 leaders in June 2024 about the need to ban LAWS.

On that occasion, the Pope said human beings must always remain in control of any weapon system, adding: “No machine should ever choose to take the life of a human being.”

The Archbishop said the Holy See seeks a legally binding agreement to regulate research into the weaponization of artificial intelligence (AI) and a moratorium on their development and use.

He lamented that countries are using theatres of war to test LAWS. “It is profoundly distressing,” he said, “that, adding to the suffering caused by armed conflicts, the battlefields are also becoming testing grounds for more and more sophisticated weapons.”

Archbishop Balestrero said the Holy See supports UN efforts to analyse the “potential functions and technological aspects of autonomous weapons systems” in order to correctly assess whether they conform to existing norms and international regulations.

The Archbishop added that the Holy See maintains that LAWS can never be considered “morally responsible entities.”

“The human person, endowed with reason, possesses a unique capacity for moral judgement and ethical decision-making that cannot be replicated by any set of algorithms, no matter how complex,” he said.

Archbishop Balestrero pointed to the ethical difference between a “choice” and a “decision.” A decision, he said, requires practical evaluation that goes beyond a simple choice and involves consideration of values and duties.

“While pointing out that machines merely produce technical algorithmic choices,” he said, “Pope Francis recalled that ‘human beings, however, not only choose, but in their hearts are capable of deciding.’”

Therefore, noted Archbishop Balestrero, the Holy See calls for deliberate language that refers to human dignity and ethical considerations.

He said international agreements must “to ensure and safeguard a space for proper human control over the choices made by artificial intelligence programs: human dignity itself depends on it.”

In conclusion, the Holy See’s representative in Geneva said the development of more sophisticated weapons is not the solution to the world’s problems. “The undoubted benefits that humanity will be able to draw from the current technological progress,” he said, “will depend on the degree to which such progress is accompanied by an adequate development of responsibility and values that place technological advancements at the service of integral human development and of the common good.”

Source: vaticannews.va

Pure Religion

Today’s Gospel casts Jesus in a prophetic light as one having authority to interpret God’s law.

Jesus’ quotation from Isaiah today is ironic (see Isaiah 29:13). In observing the law, the Pharisees honor God by ensuring that nothing unclean passes their lips. In this, however, they’ve turned the law inside out, making it a matter of simply performing certain external actions.

The gift of the law, which we hear God giving to Israel in today’s First Reading, is fulfilled in Jesus’ Gospel, which shows us the law’s true



meaning and purpose (see Matthew 5:17).

The law, fulfilled in the Gospel, is meant to form our hearts, to make us pure, able to live in the Lord’s presence. The law was given that we might live and enter into the inheritance promised to us—the kingdom of God, eternal life.

Israel, by its observance of the law, was meant to be an example to surrounding nations. As James tells us in today’s Epistle, the Gospel was given to us that we might have new birth by the Word of truth. By living the Word we’ve received, we’re to be examples of God’s wisdom to those around us, the “first fruits” of a new humanity.

This means we must be “doers” of the Word, not merely hearers of it. As we sing in today’s Psalm and hear again in today’s Epistle, we must work for justice, taking care of our brothers and sisters and living by the truth God has placed in our hearts.

The Word given to us is a perfect gift. We should not add to it through vain and needless devotions. Nor should we subtract from it by picking and choosing which of His laws to honor.

“Hear me,” Jesus says in today’s Gospel. Today, we’re called to examine our relationship to God’s law.

Is the practice of our religion a pure listening to Jesus, a humble welcoming of the Word planted in us and able to save our souls? Or are we only paying lip service?

Scott Hann



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
Pastoral Area

PARISHES OF
THE ENGLISH MARTYRS, Didcot
ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, Wallingford
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22ND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME YEAR B (II)

Entrance Antiphon Ps 85:3, 5

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long. O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of mercy to all who call to you.

First Reading: Book Deut 4:1-2, 6-8

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 14

The just will live in the presence of the Lord.

Second Reading: Letter of Saint James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

Gospel Acclamation: Jn 6:63,68

Alleluia, alleluia!!

Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life; you have the message of eternal life. **Alleluia!**

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Communion Antiphon: Ps 30:20

How great is the goodness, Lord, that you keep for those who fear you.

SATURDAY 31th August ... St Aidan & All Saints of Lindishfarne

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Katherineena RIP (Sonya Mathew) ... **Confession after Mass**
4:30 pm Adoration & Confessions will take place prior to the Vigil Mass St John’s Wallingford
5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John’s Wallingford
5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot
6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Jennifer Fishwick’s intention (Carolyn Fishwick)

SUNDAY 1st September ... 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Corazon Manosca RIP (Perlita Polley)
11:00 noon Mass St John’s Wallingford
6:00 pm Benediction ... Didcot

MONDAY 2nd September ... NO MASS

TUESDAY 3rd September ... St Gregory The Great

12:00 noon Adoration before mass St John’s Wallingford

WEDNESDAY 4th September ... St Cuthbert

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot
6:00 pm Mass English Martyrs Didcot

THURSDAY 5th September

9:30 am Mass St John’s Wallingford ... Louisa Ime Ubong RIP

FRIDAY 6th September

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot
3:00 pm Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

SATURDAY 7th September ... Our Lady

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Raymond & Marie Traynor RIP (Anne-Marie) ... **Confession after Mass**
4:30 pm Adoration & Confessions before Vigil Mass St John’s Wallingford
5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John’s Wallingford
5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot
6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Eric Fishwick RIP (Carolyn Fishwick)

SUNDAY 8th September ... 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot
11:00 noon Mass St John’s Wallingford



In your prayers, please remember: Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, David Woodley, Ann Furlong and all the sick and housebound of our churches.



Apostolic Nuncio Visit
 The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendia will be visiting the Diocese of Portsmouth on Friday 6th September 2024. As this is an important celebration for the diocese, the bishop has requested the presence of as many priests as possible at the Mass of Thanksgiving at 12:15pm at the Cathedral, on Friday 6th September 2024. Hence, there will be no mass in Didcot.

Our Centenary Celebration is 22nd September
 Our Parish Church in Wallingford, St John the Evangelist will celebrate 100 years standing, 22nd September. This is about us, the faith and the community, the celebrations of the sacraments, vocations to the married life and the priesthood. Well done to everyone, living and dead. To celebrate this remarkable achievement, our team has chosen 22nd September as the big day. Activities leading up to this day shall be in our newsletter henceforth. Any fantastic idea, speak with Fr Dominic.



A Day of Prayer and Retreat for the Ladies
 Saturday 12th October with the Cor et Lumen Christi Community Chertsey, Surrey in person and also online. See Anne-Marie Kershaw for more details or visit <https://coretlumenchristi.churchsuite.com/events/zk2guxqa>

CAFOD's UK Summer Reach Out Raffle 2024
 Last chance to play the CAFOD Reach Out Raffle. The closing date is 30 August 2024. The draw date is 13 September 2024. The raffle helps CAFOD to reach out to more people who are experiencing poverty, social injustice, conflict, and climate disasters.



Play online at www.cafod.raffleentry.org.uk/entries where you will also find the rules for eligibility.

Vatican reveals theme for 2025 World Day of Peace
 “Only from a genuine conversion on all levels – personal, local and international – will true peace be able to flourish,” says the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in its statement on the theme for the 2025 World Day of Peace.
 In Thursday’s statement, the Dicastery adds that peace comes not only from an end to conflicts, “but also in a new reality in which wounds are healed and each person’s dignity is recognised”.
 The World Day of Peace is observed each year on January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Since its establishment in 1967 by Pope St Paul VI, the Popes have taken the occasion to offer magisterial reflections in Messages for the day, dealing with topics such as the United Nations, human rights, diplomacy, and economic development.

The theme chosen by the Holy Father for the World Day of Peace for 2025 is, “Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace”, corresponding to “the biblical and ecclesial understanding of the Jubilee Year”.

Hope and forgiveness at the heart of the Jubilee.
 In its statement, the Dicastery says the theme is inspired by Pope Francis’s encyclical letters *Laudato si’* and *Fratelli tutti*, “and above all by the concepts of Hope and Forgiveness, which are at the heart of the Jubilee, a time for conversion that calls us not to condemn, but instead to bring about reconciliation and peace”.

The Dicastery goes on to note by “considering the reality of conflicts and social sins afflicting humanity today in light of the hope inherent in the Jubilee tradition of the forgiveness of sins and the cancellation of debts, together with the reflections of the Fathers of the Church in this regard, concrete principles emerge that can lead to a much needed spiritual, social, economic, ecological and cultural change”.

Environmental Conference: Saturday 14th September, 10am-1pm
 As part of the Season of Creation the diocese is holding an environmental conference, ‘To Hope and Act with Creation’ at St Peter’s and Winchester Martyrs parish on Saturday 14th September, 10am-1pm. We have John Paul de Quay from the Ecological Conversion Group Charity speaking on ‘Fellowship of believers, how faith should motivate us in caring for our common home?’. There will be updates from COP28 and preparation for COP 29 and practical actions for parishes. For more information please visit the website.

Children’s Liturgy Poster Competition
 Calling Children of ALL Ages.
 Have fun designing a Poster we can use to advertise our Children’s Liturgy and Masses.
 Return your entry by Sunday 8th September 2024.
****Prizes for Winner and runners up**** Good Luck To All
 For more info speak to Jacquie or Gay (Children’s Liturgy Group).

The New Lectionary
 A new edition of the Lectionary, the book which contains the readings which are proclaimed at Mass, will come into use in England and Wales on the First Sunday of Advent 2024.
 It will use the English Standard Version – Catholic Edition for the scripture readings and the Psalms and Canticles for the Responsorial Psalms. The Lectionary will be published by Catholic Truth Society. A variety of publishers will provide resources and participation aids.
 We plan to place orders for our churches in Didcot and Wallingford. Also, we shall place orders for the new people’s missals (Sunday Missal) which you can buy from the repository.
 This is to thank those who have offered to pay for the Church Lectionary. If you are interested in donating towards the purchase, do speak with Father Dominic.



St Amand’s Invites You
 St Amand’s Catholic Primary School - The new school year begins on Wednesday 4th September. Please keep our students and staff in your prayers. We welcome visits to our happy and flourishing primary school. Please call the office on 01235 833342 to arrange a visit. <https://www.st-amands.oxon.sch.uk/home>.

Seniors’ Lunch Is Here Again
 The Thursday of 19th of September will kick off a string of Seniors’ Lunch organised by our wonderful chefs. Watch the board and the newsletter for dates and menus. The Tearoom at 12noon will host those who have put their names down. If you have not, no worries it is just up, put down your name. If you have neighbours you think will benefit from our warmth and friendship, kindly invite them to come along.
 The menu is choice of steak pie or salmon wellington, served with mashed potatoes, cauliflower and carrots. Dessert will be jelly and ice-cream or fresh fruit. Of course, the usual tea and coffee as top ups. These are served amidst banter, laughter, jokes and friendship. Please come and share in our love. Jacquie & Kim

Learning Skills
 Do you know anyone in primary school with learning or skills disability, who is dyslexic and require extra time and attention to their learning strategies and support with sounds, words and reading? Young people with multiple learning disability need support to help them with some areas of their life, such as eating, washing or personal care. But most of all friendship and a supportive environment. Please contact Janice Hassett via email ... janicehassett@hotmail.co.uk or call her on 07759911595.

We Need Support for “Ride and Stride” for Churches
 This year’s Ride and Stride for churches, will be held on 14th September 2024. People can be sponsored to visit churches, many of which will be open that day to welcome visitors, or they can help by welcoming people to our own churches in Didcot and Wallingford. If you have any questions, please contact Douglas Henderson (in Didcot), or Raymond and Lilandia Eaton (in Wallingford, 14 September 2024 from 10am to 6pm). Donations are spent in grants to churches of all denominations for repairs and improvements.
 Please, if you wish to help out as welcomer in Wallingford, kindly put your name down at the back of the Church on the paper provided.



Are You Registered In The Parish?
 When you register or fill out the parish membership form, you gain a sense of belonging and identity in the parish community. It is a commitment to practice your faith.
 *Registration enables the parish priest and staff to get to know you better, to welcome you and to minister to you. This is especially important during a time of crisis so that the pastoral staff can attend to your spiritual needs and the needs of your family.
 *Registration helps you stay connected with your parish and helps your parish stay connected with you. Providing your contact information is important so that parishes provide you timely updates via email, direct mail, phone, etc. Also, if you use offertory envelopes, online giving or the digital plate, the parish may be able to claim 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you give, if you are a registered tax payer. Once you are registered, please notify the parish office of any changes in address or phone number. Your data is SAFE.
 *Registered active members are eligible for sponsor/godparent validation.
 *Registered active members are sometimes eligible to rent parish facilities.
 Census numbers may determine how many priests are assigned to a parish and how many Masses and enrichment programs are planned and scheduled. These numbers helps in how much levy we pay to the diocese.

Parish Safeguarding Rep
 Our Safety Officer for all adult and child safeguarding issues is Stefania Harford, please contact Stefania via the parish office on 01235 812338, if there is no response and in an emergency then dial 999.

Our Church, St John the Evangelist, Wallingford is open daily for private prayers between 8am and 6pm.