

# The Journal of Social Encounters

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Volume 6  
Issue 2 *Peace Bishops: Case Studies of  
Christian Bishops as Peacebuilders*

Article 12

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2022

## Remembering Drew Christiansen, S.J., Distinguished Advisor on Peacebuilding for the U.S. Catholic Bishops

Gerard Powers

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### Recommended Citation

Powers, Gerard (2022) "Remembering Drew Christiansen, S.J., Distinguished Advisor on Peacebuilding for the U.S. Catholic Bishops," *The Journal of Social Encounters*: Vol. 6: Iss. 2, 123-124.  
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**Remembering Drew Christiansen, S.J.,  
Distinguished Advisor on Peacebuilding for the U.S. Catholic Bishops**

**In Loving Memory of Rev. Drew Christiansen, S.J.  
Gerard Powers\***

The world has lost a leading Catholic peacebuilder. [Rev. Drew Christiansen, S.J.](#), died on April 6, 2022, at the age of 77.

A Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Human Development in Georgetown's School of Foreign Service and a Senior Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Drew served on the Steering Committee of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network since its founding almost two decades ago. While a theology professor at Notre Dame in the 1980s, he was deeply involved in the early development of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, which hosts and funds the Catholic Peacebuilding Network's secretariat.

A Jesuit through-and-through, Drew personified what it means to be a Catholic peacebuilder.

I am just one of many who considered him their best – and most demanding! – teacher. I have spent two decades as a professor trying to be for my students what Drew was for me. He was a student's teacher. He cherished his students and challenged us to do and be our best. He inspired me and a generation of young people at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkley, the University of Notre Dame, and Georgetown University to embrace our Christian vocation to transform the social order in light of the Gospel.

A renowned Catholic social ethicist and prolific writer, he made significant contributions to Catholic thought on the church's role in international affairs; the ethics of nuclear weapons, war, and peacebuilding; and environmental ethics. The breadth of his contributions are evident in just a few of his recent publications:

- [“The Once and Future World: Global Catholicism amid the Decline of the Liberal World Order”](#);
- [“Just War in the Twenty-First Century: Nonviolence, Post Bellum Justice, and R2P”](#);
- [“A Cyclone of Hope: The Globalization of Hope and the Culture of Peace”](#);
- [“Jacob and Esau Embrace: An Orthodox Rabbinic Declaration on Christianity.”](#)

He was not content to be an excellent teacher and scholar, however. He also dedicated his life to efforts to contribute to policy debates on pressing issues of justice and peace.

In recent years, much of his time was devoted to nuclear disarmament. He helped lead CPN's [Project on Revitalizing Catholic Engagement on Nuclear Disarmament](#). He addressed the [Vatican conference on disarmament](#) in 2017, and co-edited the publication of the [proceedings](#) of that conference, as well as a forthcoming book, [Beyond Deterrence](#), on the moral, pastoral, and policy implications of Pope Francis' condemnation of nuclear deterrence. He hosted numerous other [events](#) on nuclear disarmament. An advisor to the Holy See on nuclear weapons issues, he was

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especially proud to serve on the Holy See's delegation during the negotiations of the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

He served as director of the U.S. bishops' Office of International Justice and Peace and later as their advisor on Middle East issues. He helped draft [The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace](#) (1993), a major statement on the post-Cold War order. He often highlighted the document's treatment of the growing role of nonviolence, specifically its concluding question: "One must ask, in light of recent history, whether nonviolence should be restricted to personal commitments or whether it also should have a place in the public order with the tradition of justified and limited war." As a follow-up to that document, he co-edited [Peacemaking](#) (1994), a book on religion, ethics, and the post-Cold War order.

Among his many accomplishments while at the bishops' conference, he was responsible for the especially delicate work on [Israel-Palestine](#). At the behest of the Holy See, he initiated and led efforts to coordinate and deepen Catholic solidarity with the Church in the Holy Land, efforts that continue to this day. In a tribute to Fr. Drew, Latin Patriarch Michel Sabah notes that, "due to him," the U.S. bishops led in accompanying "us on our hard road towards justice and peace." He adds, "I found in him always a true support, a priest who understood the situation, the challenges we were facing, and the daily life difficulties."

Also while at the USCCB, he helped develop the bishops' first ecology pastoral, [Renewing the Earth](#) (1991), helped initiate their Environmental Justice Program in 1993, and co-edited the book, *And God Saw That It Was Good: Catholic Theology and the Environment* (1996).

As editor-in-chief of the Jesuit publication, *America*, he played a [critical role](#) in saving and reviving that influential journal when its future was in doubt. He died on *America's* 113<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

These and many other contributions can be summed up in a phrase: *peacebuilding was his vocation*.

Those of us who were fortunate to be his students will miss his life-long mentorship. Those of us who were fortunate to be his colleagues will miss his generous collaboration on endless initiatives. Those of us who were fortunate to benefit from his pastoral guidance, will miss his sense of lived Christian spirituality. And those of us who were fortunate to count him as a friend, will miss his kindness and faithfulness.

Thank you, Drew, for all you have done for us, for the Church, and for the world. May you rest in eternal peace, a hint of which you devoted your life to building!

*\* Dr. Gerard Powers is Coordinator, Catholic Peacebuilding Network, and Director of Catholic Peacebuilding Studies, Kroc Institute, Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. He formerly served as director and policy advisor, U.S. Bishops' Office of International Justice and Peace, 1987-2004.*