

LIVING OUR FAITH at St Philip Neri

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Remembering Hiroshima & Nagasaki. This August marks the 60th Anniversary of the bombing of these two Japanese cities by the United States of America. At 8:15 am on August 6, 1945, Hiroshima became the first city in the world to suffer a nuclear attack. At 11:02 am on August 9, Nagasaki became the second city to be hit by an atomic bomb. This issue of the Peace & Justice Commission newsletter is intended to commemorate the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As Pope John Paul II said on a visit to Hiroshima in 1981: "To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future. To remember Hiroshima is to abhor nuclear war. To remember Hiroshima is to commit oneself to peace."

Across the globe, nuclear weapons still pose a grave threat to human life, and to the life of the planet itself. We are still learning the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"We recall ... the fateful days on which America became the first and last among the world's nations to use an atomic weapon. Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain permanent reminders of the grave consequences of total war and symbols of our continuing struggle to balance determined action for justice with a profound responsibility to live Christ's peace. Even now, when Cold War politics is for so many a distant and fading memory and nuclear war only the vaguest threat, the permanent graves of Hiroshima and Nagasaki compel us to declare once again our rejection of total war and our commitment to the advance of Christ's peace in the furthest reaches of the globe."

*- Bishop Wilton Gregory, August 6, 2004
Past President, US Bishops Conference*

Our parish Peace & Justice Commission encourages you to use the anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a focus for prayer, reflection and action on behalf of peace and nuclear disarmament. In this issue you will find information about the bombings, the effects of nuclear weapons, Catholic Social Teaching on nuclear weapons, prayer and reflection materials and suggestions for action.



On August 6, 1945, on the orders of President Harry Truman, a US bomber dropped an atomic bomb called "Little Boy" on Hiroshima. "Little Boy" had an estimated equivalent explosive force of 12,500 tons of TNT. It is estimated that 140,000 people died.

On August 9, 1945, a second atomic bomb called "Fat Boy" was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. The original target city, Kokura, could not be reached because of weather problems and Nagasaki was selected as the alternative target. Estimates generally put the number of deaths around 80,000. "Fat Boy" was more powerful than "Little Boy," but was accidentally dropped on the outskirts of the city, lessening the amount of deaths.

It is estimated that out of every 6 deaths in the bombings, 5 were civilians and 1 was military.

Catholic Social Teaching on Nuclear Weapons

During the immediate post World War II period, Pope Pius XII, Pope John XXIII, and the Second Vatican Council all spoke out clearly against the use of nuclear weapons and against the arms race.

Applying traditional Catholic teaching that the use of force - even in legitimate self defense - must also distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, the Second Vatican Council condemned any use of nuclear weapons as indiscriminate and therefore immoral.

"Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unhesitating condemnation" (*Gaudium et Spes*, #80).

"Justice, then, right reason and consideration for human dignity and life urgently demand that the arms race should cease; that the stockpiles which exist in various countries should be reduced equally and simultaneously by the parties concerned; that nuclear weapons should be banned; and finally that all come to an agreement on a fitting program of disarmament, employing mutual and effective controls." (*Pacem in Terris*, #112).





Prayer of Remembrance

Lord, we remember the death and suffering caused by use of atomic bombs sixty years ago. Even as we feel great sadness over the lives that were lost, we ask for your hope so that instead of despairing, we can stand in solidarity with the victims of this tragedy. Give us the strength to work to prevent weapons of mass destruction from ever being used again. Let us not listen to the voices of revenge, death, and violence in our world, but instead give us the wisdom to see that the nuclear arms race cannot bring real peace and security and use us to be voices for international peace, solidarity and justice. Amen.

A Visit to Hiroshima

by Jackie Yerby, *Peace & Justice Commission Co-Chair*

I visited Hiroshima in August 1991 on vacation from my job as a high school English teacher in Japan. It was a powerful and moving trip that left an indelible mark on me.

The day that my friends and I visited the Peace Park was beautiful and sunny. In contrast to the beautiful weather, I remember feeling a sense of foreboding as we approached the Peace Park near ground zero. I felt a weight on my shoulders from being from the only country that had ever dropped an atomic bomb. My friend, Diane, also an American, felt it too. No one there blamed us for what had happened. Instead they welcomed us and expressed gratitude that we had come. They were peacemakers who seek to educate the world so that what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki will never be repeated.

The hardest and most moving part of the trip was going to the Peace Museum. I saw the profound impact the bomb had on the lives of ordinary people. I walked through the museum with a lump in my throat. There was the watch that stopped at 8:15 a.m., the time when the atomic bomb was dropped. There was the wall with the shadow of the person who had been standing in front of it only moments before the bomb blast. There were the pictures showing whole parts of the city that had been completely destroyed. There were the personal stories of the survivors. One elderly woman told of losing her two children in the bomb blast. Her husband later died from the after effects of the radiation. My friends and I cried as we listened to these stories.

I took comfort in the words that Pope John Paul wrote on his visit to Hiroshima. I added my own words of sorrow and hope. My hope is that others will learn from what happened in Hiroshima. When faced with unimaginable devastation, the people of Hiroshima embraced our common humanity. They turned to peace, not vengeance.



Suggestions for Action

- ☉ Remember the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, along with all victims of war, in your individual or communal prayer during August.
- ☉ Keep a peace candle lit from the time of the Hiroshima bombing (August 6) to the time of the Nagasaki bombing (August 9).
- ☉ Commit to learning more about current U.S. policy on the production, stock-piling and use of nuclear weapons.
- ☉ Commemorate the bombings by making greeting cards with peace images and messages, and sending them to family and friends.
- ☉ Make paper cranes to be sent and placed before the Children's Peace Monument in Hiroshima. See below for details.

Cranes for Sadako. Sadako Sasaki was two years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Although she appeared not to have been injured in the blast, nine years later she suddenly developed signs of an illness. The following year she was diagnosed with leukemia and was admitted to the Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital.

On August 3, 1955, multi-colored paper cranes were sent to the hospital to encourage the patients by people in the city of Nagoya. Inspired by the bright, cheerful cranes, many patients in the hospital began to fold their own. Believing that folding paper cranes would help her to recover, Sadako folded them until her death on October 25, 1955, following an eight-month struggle with leukemia.

Sadako's death inspired a campaign to build a monument to pray for world peace and the peaceful repose of the many children killed by the atomic bomb. Later, the story of Sadako and the paper cranes spread across the world, and now, approximately 10 million cranes are offered each year before the Children's Peace Monument in Hiroshima.

The City of Hiroshima invites people from around the world to participate in the action of paper crane offerings for peace. Just send your cranes to the following address. Be sure to include your name, organization, mailing & e-mail addresses, number of cranes submitted and any message you wish to submit.

Peace Promotion Division
The City of Hiroshima
1-5 Nakajima-cho Naka-ku
Hiroshima 730-0811 Japan.

Sources: Educating for Justice Website, Center of Concern Social Development & World Peace Website, USCCB

