

A Prayer to Remember, to Repent, to be Afraid

God of life,
we turn to you in these days
of remembering the horror
of hearing the stories
about atomic fire raining down on
Hiroshima and Nagasaki
of unrelenting loss.

Forgive us for forgetting the cost, the loss,
the heartache, the suffering.

We see the fading photos of death
thousands of burned bodies,
stunned and silent or not-silent people.
tombstone buildings, a cathedral standing on holy ground
Hiroshima, Nagasaki.

Forgive us for the violence we have inflicted
On so many sisters and brothers, on the earth.

One shoe, a tricycle, a lunchbox, burned uniforms
hair, nails, depictions of melting skin, bleeding mouths,
a mother burned to death still standing in flight carrying her baby.

What the Japanese people
could not bear to think of as lost forever
in a nuclear war
was lost seventy-five years ago.
Eternity.

Forgive us for our blindness,
for forgetting to fear the nuclear threat, still so real.

Peace, peace, the City of Peace
the Cathedral of Peace, peace in every language.
Peace Park at ground zero
a monument, a museum, a tribute, a plea.

Forgive us for forgetting the cost, the loss,
the heartache, the suffering.

Scattered across the park are thousands of monuments —
memorial stones placed there by families and friends
to remember loved ones, like
Guatemala, El Salvador, Rwanda digging up the bones
Painfully sacred ground covers the earth — city wide, and thick.



Forgive us for the violence we have inflicted
on so many sisters and brothers, on the earth

But death does not have the last word
one tree, the phoenix tree in Peace Park
carries deep wounds from the bombing,
but is still alive, protecting its wounded trunk,
putting out new, strong shoots year after year

Determined, dear God, like us to shape a peaceful world.

Help us to remember
what we too cannot bear to think of as lost forever
in a nuclear war.
Help us to build a more just and peaceful world. Amen.

By Marie Dennis, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace