

Prayer Service for Remembrance and Repentance

75th Anniversary of the Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki



This prayer service was prepared by Madeline Labriola and the Pax Christi Rhode Island local chapter for the upcoming August 9th Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The service is made available for anyone who wishes to hold a family, community or individual remembrance of the atomic bombings over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Please feel free to adapt it to your needs.

PRESIDER: We welcome you to our service of remembrance and repentance on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Japan. One of Pax Christi USA's (PCUSA) priorities is the abolition of nuclear weapons. The readings you will hear today were written by several different groups including the Network of Christian Peace Organizations, Christian Campaign for Nuclear disarmament, PCUSA, Art Laffin and many others. Readings have been previously used in other years to commemorate this day. We are grateful for their writings and reflections.

READER 1: Opening Prayer

God our creator and sustainer, we gather to pray as a broken people who today remember the darkness and the shadow of death and destruction caused by nuclear weapons. We know that we deal falsely with the world and with ourselves, healing wounds too lightly by saying "peace, peace" when there is no peace. Let there be sown in us anew the unity, the light and the peace which passes all understanding. Be with us today and keep our minds and hearts in you and in your peace. (From the Network of Christian Peace Organizations)

LIGHTING OF CANDLES: Presider invites participants to light a candle.

OPENING SONG: "Make Me A Channel of Your Peace"

READER 2: The anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a time of remembering the horror, repenting the sin and reclaiming a future without nuclear weapons. It is a time to recommit ourselves to the work of disarming and dismantling the machinery of mass destruction. Nuclear weapons are sinful and idolatrous. Their research, production, possession, deployment and use are a crime against God and humanity. We decry the fact that the U.S. government plans to commit a trillion dollars to modernize its existing nuclear arsenal over the next thirty years.

On this August 6 and 9, we gather with people of faith and conscience across the globe to mark the anniversary with a daily presence of prayer and action. As citizens of the United States, we invite people to publicly ask God for forgiveness for the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which caused the immediate death of more than 200,000 people, and hundreds of thousands more who died in the aftermath as a result of radiation poisoning. Pope Paul VI, in his 1976 World Day of Peace Message, described the bombings as "a butchery of untold magnitude."

We apologize to the people of Japan—and to the survivors of the bombing, the hibakusha—for our country's bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and we ask forgiveness for these atrocities. We repent for the continued proliferation of nuclear weapons at the expense of unmet human needs. Further, we offer repentance for threatening to use nuclear weapons and keeping many of them on a first-strike hair-trigger alert. We firmly resolve, with God's grace and mercy, to reject the false idols of nuclear weapons, and to embrace the life-affirming work of abolishing these weapons of terror.

Now is the time to pursue non-violent alternatives to war and proclaim mercy, as both the Scriptures and Pope Francis suggest: to restore justice for the poor; to lay the foundations for peace; and to seek a nuclear-free future for our children. In that spirit, we renew our commitment to the biblical vision of peace, a world without weapons or war, expressed so well by the prophet Isaiah: On that day, "God will rule over all nations and settle disputes for all peoples. They will beat

their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not raise sword against nation; nor will they train for war anymore” (Is 2:4). — (From Scott Wright)

PRESIDER: We listen to the testimony of Yamada Reiko who survived the first atomic bomb.

READER 3: Yamada Reiko was an 11-year-old girl, 5th grader of a primary school on 6th August 1945 when the first atomic bomb was dropped. She is now Vice Chairperson of the Tokyo Federation of A-bomb sufferers Organizations. “My father was inside a school building about 1km away from the center of the explosion. He was rescued from under a fallen building and managed to make it back home. But he was bloodied all over his body due to wounds caused by pieces of broken glass. Even years later, fragments of glass would emerge from his skin and make him faint. Twenty years after the bombing, he developed lung cancer and leukemia simultaneously. Despite blood transfusions and bone marrow transplants donated by me, my father died in a flurry of convulsions.” “Almost every family in my neighborhood had victims of the bomb. They got injured or burned and many were missing. A good friend of mine in the neighborhood was waiting for her mother to return home with 4 brothers and sisters. On the second day after the bombing, a moving black lump crawled into the house; they first thought it was a big black dog, but soon realized it was their mother. She collapsed and died when she finally got home, leaving her 5 children behind.”

ALL PAUSE FOR ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE.

READER 4: The second reading is from the prophet Isaiah 1:12-20

When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?

Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations,
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

Your New Moon feasts
and your appointed festivals
I hate with all my being.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I hide my eyes from you;
even when you offer many prayers,
I am not listening.
Your hands are full of blood!

Wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
stop doing wrong.
Learn to do right; seek justice.

Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord.
“Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.



If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land;
but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword.”
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

ALL PAUSE FOR ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE.

PRESIDER: We will now pray, the Prayer of Repentance by Art Laffin from the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker in D.C.

READER 5: Thomas Merton, in his *Original Child Bomb*, describes the firepower, death and destruction that was unleashed on Hiroshima: "The bomb exploded within 100 feet of the aiming point. The fireball was 18,000 feet across. The temperature at the center of the fireball was 100,000,000 degrees. The people who were near the center became nothing. The whole city was blown to bits and the ruins all caught fire instantly everywhere, burning briskly. 70,000 people were killed right away or died within a few hours. Those who did not die at once suffered great pain."

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons Now.

READER 6: The powers that be want us to believe that nuclear weapons were used to save American lives and end WWII. This is a fallacy! Both General Eisenhower, and Admiral Leahy, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, opposed using the atomic bomb. They declared that Japan was already defeated and on the verge of surrender and, as Eisenhower stated, "that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary" and "no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives."

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons Now

READER 1: The U.S. has never repented for the use of these barbarous weapons of indiscriminate mass murder. The violence unleashed at Hiroshima set in motion a trajectory of unrelenting violence by the U.S. in the wars of aggression that it has waged over the last seven decades in many countries, claiming untold lives. Moreover, the U.S. has continued to build even deadlier weapons which endanger all of creation. Beginning with the Manhattan Project in 1940, the U.S. has spent over \$10 trillion on its nuclear weapons program.

Today the U.S. possess over 6,000 nuclear weapons, many of which are on hair-trigger alert, and proposes to spend an estimated \$1 trillion over the next 30 years to modernize its existing nuclear arsenal. This deadly venture not only endangers the world but represents a direct theft from the poor of our nation and world.

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons Now

READER 2: The U.S. practices a double standard by calling on other nations to disarm while, at the same time, it refuses to disarm and instead is rapidly expanding its own arsenal.

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons Now.

READER 3: On July 7, 2017, at the conclusion of a special “UN Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons 122 countries voted in favor of historic treaty to legally prohibit nuclear weapons. To date 40 countries have ratified it. The "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," bans nuclear weapons and establishes a framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons programs—including warheads, materials, delivery systems and facilities.

We call on the U.S., the only country to have ever used nuclear weapons, to endorse this treaty and to lead the way to total worldwide nuclear disarmament.

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons Now.

READER 4: Pope Francis declared: "If we also take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use, as well as their very possession is to be firmly condemned... Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family...The total elimination of nuclear weapons is "both a challenge and a moral and humanitarian imperative" of our time.

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

READER 5: Today, we witness in solidarity with all who are holding commemoration actions and events during Aug. 6-9, including in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as at nuclear weapons facilities throughout the U.S. We also remember in a special way the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 who have been sentenced in the U.S. District Court in Brunswick, GA. They face prison for their April 4, 2018 plowshares witness to disarm the Trident submarine program at the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in St. Mary's, Georgia.

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

READER 6: The A-Bomb Survivors (Hibakusha) plead to the world: "Humankind can't coexist with nuclear weapons." We invite all Pentagon workers--military and civilian—to join with us and all those worldwide who are working to abolish nuclear weapons. May the mortal sin of using nuclear weapons never be repeated again!

ALL: We Repent for the Nuclear Sin-Abolish Nuclear Weapons Now.

PAUSE FOR ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE.

SONG: "World Peace Prayer" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxTiRnF3_lg)

READER 1: "Shadow on The Rock," by Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

At Hiroshima there's a museum and outside that museum there's a rock, and on that rock, there's a shadow.

That shadow is all that remains of the human being who stood there on August 6, 1945 when the nuclear age began. In the most real sense of the word, that is the choice before us.

We shall either end war and the nuclear arms race now in this generation, or we will become Shadows on the Rock.

PRESIDER: Now, we give our attention to Mr. Akihiro Takahashi and truly listen to his words.

READER 2: Mr. Akihiro Takahashi was 14 years old, when the bomb was dropped. He was standing in line with other students of his junior high school, waiting for the morning meeting 1.4 km away from the center. He was under medical treatment for about year and half. And even today black nail grows at his fingertip, where a piece of glass was stuck.

"The heat was tremendous. And I felt like my body was burning all over. For my burning body the cold water of the river was as precious as the treasure. Then I left the river, and I walked along the railroad tracks in the direction of my home. On the way, I ran into another friend of mine, Tokujiro Hatta. I wondered why the soles of his feet were badly burnt. It was unthinkable to get burned there. But it was undeniable fact the soles were peeling, and red muscle was exposed. Even I myself was terribly burnt; I could not go home ignoring him. I made him crawl using his arms and knees.

Next, I made him stand on his heels and I supported him. We walked heading toward my home repeating the two methods. When we were resting because we were so exhausted, I found my grandfather's brother and his wife, in other words, great uncle and great aunt, coming toward us. That was quite a coincidence. As you know, we have a proverb about meeting Buddha in Hell. My encounter with my relatives at that time was just like that. They seem to be the Buddha to me wandering in the living hell."

ALL PAUSE FOR ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE.

READER 3: PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Healing God, so many communities have been left in ruins as a result of the destruction of war. We pray for the healing and rebuilding of communities torn apart by war and violence. We cry out for peace!

God, Father and Mother of this world, we pray that you would inspire us to create a peaceful world. Help us call our leaders to accountability and to remind them that more weapons and war do not bring peace. Make us a peaceful people in a peaceful world. Amen.

READER 4: THE LORD'S PRAYER — (Provided by Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament CCND)

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
We ask forgiveness for our nation's policy of nuclear deterrence,
our reliance on weapons for our security and our neglect of the poor,
by squandering resources on these weapons.
We ask forgiveness also for the failure to respond to international calls
for disarmament in our unwillingness to engage
with the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty negotiations at the United Nations.
In sorrow, we pray.

TOGETHER, ALL PRAY THE OUR FATHER.

READER 5: Hallowed be Thy Name. We praise and thank You and rejoice in the beauty of Your creation, the potential of every human being and the love that surrounds us. In hope we pray for a successful outcome of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty negotiations so that ultimately, earthly creation will not continue to be threatened by nuclear weapons. In the joy and hope of the resurrection, we pray.

TOGETHER, ALL PRAY THE OUR FATHER.

READER 6: Thy Kingdom Come; Thy Will be done." In praying that our nation may see and follow the way of true peace and trusting in you sufficiently to follow the nations of the earth towards disarmament, we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit so that we may be shown the way forward and strengthened in our resolve and actions.

TOGETHER, ALL PRAY THE OUR FATHER.

PRESIDER: Now, we pause to listen to the words of Ms. Akiko Takakura, who was 20 years old when the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

READER 1: Ms. Akiko Takakura was 20 years old when the bomb fell. She was in the Bank of Hiroshima, 300 meters away from the hypo center. Ms. Takakura miraculously escaped death despite over 100 lacerated wounds on her back. She is one of the few survivors who was within 300 meters of the hypo center. She now runs a kindergarten and relates her experience of the atomic bombing to children.

"Many people on the street were killed almost instantly. The fingertips of those dead bodies caught fire and the fire gradually spread over their entire bodies from their fingers. A light gray liquid dripped down their hands, scorching their fingers. I, I was so shocked to know that fingers and bodies could be burned and deformed like that. I just couldn't believe it.

It was horrible. And looking at it, it was more than painful for me to think how the fingers were burned, hands and fingers that would hold babies or turn pages, they just, they just burned away. For a few years after the A-bomb was dropped, I was terribly afraid of fire. I wasn't even able to get close to fire because all my senses remembered how fearful and horrible the fire was, how hot the blaze was, and how hard it was to breathe the hot air. It was really hard to breathe. Maybe because the fire burned all the oxygen, I don't know. I could not open my eyes enough because of the smoke, which was everywhere. Not only me but everyone felt the same. And my parts were covered with holes."

ALL PAUSE FOR ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE.

SONG: “I Come and Stand” (Lyrics can be read by the presider.)

I come and stand at every door,
But no one hears my silent prayer,
I knock and yet remain unseen,
For I am dead, for I am dead.
I'm only seven although I died, In Hiroshima long ago.

I'm seven now as I was then,
When children die, they do not grow.
My hair was scorched by a swirling flame,
My eyes grew dim, my eyes grew blind,
Death came and turned my bones to dust,
And that was scattered by the wind.
I need no fruit, I need no rice,
I need no sweets nor even bread,
I ask for nothing for myself,
For I am dead, for I am dead.

All that I ask is that for peace,
You work today, you work today,
So that the children of this world,
May live and grow and laugh and play



READER 2: PRAYER FOR COURAGE AND PEACE

We pray for the courage to respond to Jesus' call to live non-violently. We pray for the courage and creativity to challenge the policies that oppose nuclear disarmament. We pray for the courage to question and challenge those things which oppress our sisters and brothers—poverty, violence, indifference... We celebrate and encourage those who work for peace, especially those who have ratified the UN Nuclear Ban Treaty Negotiations. We pray that we will root ourselves through prayer and reflection in the teaching of the nonviolent Jesus.

PRAYER OF REMEMBRANCE — (Adapted: Rev. Loey Powell, United Church of Christ.)

LEFT SIDE: O God, tender and just, the names of Hiroshima and Nagasaki cut through our denial that we are capable of destroying the earth and all that dwell therein. Forgive us—and help us to always remember.

RIGHT SIDE: We must remember because this must never happen again. We must remember because you would have us live in harmony with each other, seeing the joy of your creation in our sisters and brothers.

LEFT SIDE: Holy God, God of all the ages, lead us from death to life, to the stockpiling of hope, and of possibilities, and of love rather than the stockpiling of weapons, and of hate.

RIGHT SIDE: We pray for the healing of the earth and of its peoples, especially for our sisters and brothers upon whom a nuclear rain poured down.

ALL: Help us to imagine that another world is possible and guide our actions towards the peace you envision, the peace you have already given us. In the name of the One who came so that we might have life, and have it abundantly, we pray.

PRESIDER: Eiko Taoka's recounts how many suffered the immediate, as well as long-term effects of the atomic bombing.

READER 3: Eiko Taoka, then 21, was one of nearly 100 passengers said to have been on board a streetcar. At 8:15, as the streetcar approached Hatchobori Station, an intense flash and blast engulfed the car, instantly setting it on fire. Taoka's son died of radiation sickness on August 28. The survival of only ten people on the streetcar has been confirmed to date.

"When we were near in Hatchobori and since I had been holding my son in my arms, the young woman in front of me said, 'I will be getting off here. Please take this seat.' We were just changing places when there was a strange smell and sound. It suddenly became dark and before I knew it, I had jumped outside.... I held [my son] firmly and looked down on him. He had been standing by the window and I think fragments of glass had pierced his head.

His face was a mess because of the blood flowing from his head. But he looked at my face and smiled. His smile has remained glued in my memory. He did not comprehend what had happened. And so, he looked at me and smiled at my face which was all bloody. I had plenty of milk which he drank all throughout that day. I think my child sucked the poison right out of my body. And soon after that he died. Yes, I think that he died for me."

ALL PAUSE FOR A MOMENT OF SILENCE.

READER 4: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew: 5:1-7:29

"When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

PAUSE FOR A MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION.

READER 5: A LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE FROM THE NETWORK OF CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKERS

We remember the 300,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki who died as a result of the atomic bombs: May they rest in peace.

We remember all those who died in the war with Japan, especially those who perished in the prisoner of war camps.

We remember those who gave their lives to help those suffering after the bomb and who died of radiation sickness.

We remember those living in places of war and conflict today.

We pray that you would raise up more peacemakers within those countries and communities. And we ask that nonviolent solutions may be found to heal wounds, and to bring justice and lasting peace.

We remember those who were able to forgive the suffering inflicted on them by their enemies in war. We pray for the same greatness of heart.

We remember the peacemaker visionaries who have come before us, and we will give thanks for their witness and their commitment to life.

PRESIDER: Invites participants to name other peacemaker visionaries (i.e. Rev. Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, St. Edith Stein, Mahatma Gandhi, etc.).

SONG: “We Remember How You,” by Marty Haugen

*We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here;
And we believe that we will see you when you come,
in your glory, Lord, we remember, we celebrate, we believe.*

READER 6: A LITANY FOR PEACE

For supporting the manufacture of arms through the payment of taxes— **All: Forgive us.**

For the unrelieved suffering and hardship which money spent on arms could heal — **All: Forgive us.**

For threatening to commit genocide by holding nuclear weapons as a deterrent — **All: Forgive us.**

For half-heartedness in hearing, living and sharing the way of peace — **All: Forgive us.**

For dividing the world into good and bad, and treating human beings as enemies and objects of hatred or scorn — **All: Forgive us.**

Let us pray that we may be set free from the chains of violence and nuclear death,

Deliver us from the desire for power,

Deliver us from the conspiracy of silence,

Deliver us from the worship of weapons,

Deliver us from the celebrations of killing,

Deliver us from peace that is no peace,

Deliver us from security that is no security,

Deliver us from the politics of terror,

Deliver us from the spiral of armaments.

All: Deliver us.

By hunger and thirst for justice,

Grant us peace by reconciliation of enemies,

Grant us peace by gentleness and nonviolence,

Grant us peace for an end to nuclear weapons

Grant us peace by the power of love.

All: Grant us peace.



ALL PAUSE FOR ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE.

READER 1: PRAYER FOR AN END TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Peaceful God, we come to you from the midst of a broken world where nations raise weapons against nations and mothers and children are the innocent victims of violence. We cry out for peace!

Wise God, share your wisdom with the leaders of the world who continue to stockpile dangerous weapons, giving other countries the incentive to do the same, despite their commitment to the Nuclear-Non- Proliferation Treaty.

We pray for the ability to overcome our brokenness, cooperating, instead of competing, across borders and boundaries. We cry out for peace!

Healing God, so many communities have been left in ruins as a result of the destruction of war. We pray for the healing and rebuilding of communities torn apart by war and violence. We cry out for peace!

God, Father and Mother of this world, we pray that you would inspire us to create a peaceful world. Help us call our leaders to accountability and to remind them that more weapons and war do not bring peace. Make us a peaceful people in a peaceful world. Amen.

PRESIDER: Reads or sings the final prayer, “Universal Prayer for Peace.”

Lead us from death to Life, from falsehood to Truth,
Lead us from despair to Hope, from fear to Trust,
Lead us from hate to Love, from war to Peace,
Let Peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.

CONCLUDING REMARKS BY PRESIDER: Thank you all for joining us to ask for forgiveness for the horrific acts of violence, we as a nation have brought upon others. Please let this prayer service inspire you to go forward in peace.

Consider joining Pax Christi USA and connecting to your local chapter. Learn more about the following groups working the eliminating of nuclear weapons:

- Pax Christi USA’s Peace Ribbon 2020 Campaign: <https://thepeaceribbon.org/>
- International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN): <https://www.icanw.org/>
- Back from the Brink: <https://paxchristiusa.org/backfromthebrink/>

