

# Prayer Service in Memory of the Victims of Hiroshima & Nagasaki

---

August 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 2005 are the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the days in 1945 when nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. The cities and their people were devastated, with about 200,000 souls losing their lives. Urged on by the *Hibukasha*, the survivors of "hell on earth," the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have called for "A Year of Remembrance and Action for a Nuclear Weapons Free World." Today we join with millions of people throughout the world to remember the victims of nuclear war and to call for an end to all war, injustice and nuclear proliferation.

## Eyewitness Accounts

I heard no explosion. Miles out of the city, people apparently heard a thunderous roar. But like all survivors close to the hypercentre, I heard nothing. There was just a silent flash. The moment I saw it I tried to duck under a desk. But I had a sensation of floating. Together with the building, my body was falling...Lying in the rubble I couldn't move and I knew I was faced with death. Mysteriously I never had a feeling of panic. I felt calm. After a while I started to hear my classmates. In weak voices they were asking for God...

My clothes were tattered and covered with blood. I had cuts and scratches all over me, but all my extremities were there. I looked around me, even though it was morning the sky was dark, as dark as twilight. Then I saw streams of human beings shuffling away from the center of the city. Parts of their bodies were missing and strips of flesh hung like ribbons from their bones...

The strangest thing was the silence. It is the most unforgettable impression I have. You'd think people would be panic-stricken running, yelling. They moved in slow motion like figures in a silent movie, shuffling through the dust and smoke. I heard thousands of people breathing the words "water, give me water." Many simply dropped to the ground and died.

*From "A Silent Flash of Light" by Setsuko Thurlow*

*(Moment of silence.)*

It was in Hiroshima, that morning of August 6...our group passed the Tsurumi bridge, when there was an alert; an enemy plane appeared all alone, very high over our heads...

Was it the flash that came first, or the sound of the explosion, tearing up my insides? I don't remember. I was thrown to the ground, pinned to the earth, and immediately the world began to collapse around me on my head, my shoulders. I couldn't see anything. It was completely dark.

Finally I did manage to crawl free. There was a terrible smell in the air...I rubbed my nose and mouth hard with a towel I had at my waist. To my horror, I found that the skin of my face had come off in the towel. Oh! The skin on my hands, on my arms, came off too. From elbow to fingertips, all the skin on my right arm had come loose and was hanging grotesquely. The skin of my left hand fell off too, the five fingers, like a glove.

I finally saw the Tsurumi bridge and I ran headlong toward it, jumping over the piles of rubble. What I saw under the bridge horrified me. People by the hundreds were falling in the river. I couldn't tell if they were men or women; they were all in the same state; their faces were puffy and ashen, their hair tangled, they had their hands raised and, groaning with pain, threw themselves into the water...as I ran, I shouted my children's names.

I must have wandered for at least two hours before finding myself on the Eastern military parade ground...Around me on the parade ground were a number of grade-school and secondary-school children, boys and girls, writhing in spasms of agony...I heard them crying "Mama! Mama!" as though they'd gone crazy. They were so burned and bloody that looking at them was insupportable...As far as I could see with my failing sight...everything was in flames.

*By Futaba Kitayama*

*(Moment of silence.)*

# Prophetic Voices

Archbishop Fulton Sheen expressed the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki most eloquently, saying "The worst evil the world has witnessed since the crucifixion of Jesus was the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima."

Pope Paul VI called Hiroshima "a butchery of untold magnitude," and said, "Let us pray that the world may never again place trust in such weapons." Echoing his concern, Pope John Paul II urged the nations to work toward nuclear disarmament and to take a unilateral stand against all nuclear weaponry.

In Hiroshima in 1981 Pope John Paul II, said: "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. To remember what the people of this city suffered is to renew our faith in man, in his capacity to do what is good, in his freedom to choose what is right, in his determination to turn disaster into a new beginning."

Bishop Edward Slattery, in commenting about this anniversary said "The evil of war has plagued the world for as long as I can remember. The technological 'advancement' of weaponry devised by man continues to betray the Gospel of Jesus Christ and weakens our witness as peacemakers. Let us pray for a conversion of hearts."

General Omar Bradley, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army during World War II, got right to the point: "We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount." Let's listen again to those words of Jesus, from the Gospel of Matthew:

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

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

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

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

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

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

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

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

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

# Prayers of the Faithful

On this 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and of the end of World War II, let us remember and pray for peace. (*moment of silence*)

With people of every nation we ask God to help us see each other not as enemies or outsiders, but as sisters and brothers.

**God of peace, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the victims of war, for the *hibakusha*, atomic bomb survivors and for all those who continue to become tragic victims of war. May the gentle hand of God touch them with healing power.

**God of peace, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in positions of leadership in government, in world economies, and in the military. Help them bring an end to the suffering caused by war and violence.

**God of peace, hear our prayer.**

We pray for a spirit of repentance. We confess before you that we, your servants, and our churches as the Body of Christ have been lax in our praying and slow in our acting for world peace and reconciliation. Let us pray for God's help, so that we do not build walls, but bridges.

**God of peace, hear our prayer.**

Let us pray that we may be peacemakers; that we do not put our trust in ourselves, or military might, or economic strength or any other human power, but find our security only in you, our Creator and Reconciler.

**God of peace, hear our prayer.**

We know that you bless the peacemakers and sustain them. Cause us in ways both small and large to be strong, and to seek—through study and action—to witness to the gospel call to nonviolence and reconciliation in our relationships, in our communities and in our world.

**God of peace, hear our prayer.**

## Let There Be Peace On Earth

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me,  
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.  
With God as our Father, family all are we,  
Let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now,  
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow,  
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.  
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!

# Stations of the Cross

As you view the posters and reflect on the tragedy of Hiroshima & Nagasaki, we can make a personal pilgrimage by following the Stations of the Cross. The posters provide a clear example of how we have not yet learned the lessons from the passion of Jesus. Let Jesus' suffering be an inspiration to each of us to make the necessary sacrifices to help achieve peace, justice, non-violence and respect for life in a society which glorifies war, oppression, violence and death.

## I. Jesus is Condemned to Death by Pilate

We have all played the role of Pontius Pilate at one time or another. We choose what is expedient and then wash our hands of any guilt. In Pilate's act, in contrast to Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples, we see the nefarious deeds of all those who try to hide behind the plea "I was only doing my duty." It is hard to calculate the injustices done to the human spirit throughout history by people saying "I am not responsible." May Jesus teach us to seek the truth and uphold the dignity of all human beings.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## II. Jesus Bears His Cross

The cross is the symbol and the reality of nonviolent love, of suffering love, of voluntary postponement of gratification on behalf of others, of hurt endured in order to serve, to forgive - to be merciful. Our hearts go out to all those who carry a cross in our times: the poor, the homeless, displaced refugees, addicts of all types, the mentally ill, the victims of child abuse and rape, and all others who stumble and fall repeatedly. May the Holy One lighten their burden with the knowledge that they are not alone, that others care and hope for their recovery.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## III. Jesus Falls the First Time

Jesus teaches that when, for whatever reason, we fall under the humanly impossible burden of the cross of nonviolent love, our task is not to give up, stay down, walk away or change direction. Our task is to get up and to continue in the spirit of Christ. Lord, our societies often 'fall' into a cycle of accepted violence. Help us to move people from uncomfortable silence in the face of such violence to an active non-violent way of life.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## IV. Jesus Meets His Mother

Mary runs to help Jesus as he kneels on the ground, not knowing whether he has the strength to go on. In that moment, Mary stands in for all mothers who have lost sons and daughters to repressive regimes, war, and injustices of all kinds. She stands in for all mothers who have seen their children die before them. Lord, you looked into the eyes of your mother and knew the anguish in her heart. May her love for you reach out through us to all families experiencing broken, fearful hearts for the lives of their children.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## V. Jesus is Helped By Simon

To serve without desiring reciprocation is hard. To suffer without desiring retaliation is hard. To reconcile without desiring domination is hard. Thank God for the Simons of the world who reach out to help those who are suffering and can barely go on. May Simon's spirit animate us to serve in homeless shelters, visit the sick, reach out to those in prison, and send our loving prayers to all who feel abandoned and helpless.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## VI. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Veronica saw the true face of God incarnate because she saw pain and did what she could to relieve it, wiping the face of Jesus, a condemned prisoner. Women wiping the tears of those who are broken-hearted, tending the wounds of those who are injured and in pain, going into places of danger to love and serve those in great need, responding with mercy, showing true nonviolent love, also will see the face of God. Bless those who show the courage to come forward and be seen. Protect them as they show mercy and compassion for your people.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## VII. Jesus Falls a Second Time

The burden of the cross again overwhelms Jesus and he falls a second time. How often can we pick ourselves up and start again when we are overwhelmed by fear and oppression, knowing the fate of those who tried to take a stand before us? Lord, give us the courage to believe in the future, and to act in the belief that this time we will succeed. People enduring conflict are bruised and battered, and some are without hope. Raise their eyes to a new future, give them confidence in their own strength and belief, that they can make a difference for themselves and for their future.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## VIII. Jesus Speaks to the Women

As Jesus, brutally beaten in body and forced to carry the instrument of his own execution looked at the women, what did He see in their eyes? Disbelief? Sadness? Confusion? Despair? How often have we in our failures, fears and faint-heartedness looked at the price tag of nonviolent love and said 'this is too much, I cannot pay it. There has to be a less expensive way to redeem the world.' But what is this other way? Will hate drive out hate? Will violence drive out violence? We know better. There is only one road back from evil and it costs more than anything else in the world to travel it.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## IX. Jesus Falls a Third Time

Did Jesus fall only three times or was it in reality four or ten or twenty? How many times each day do I feel crushed under the weight of the cross of nonviolent love? Whether I forgive or refuse to forgive, serve or refuse to serve, pray or refuse to pray, the burden seems to increase. The greatest of the saints, after a lifetime of effort, often saw themselves as the greatest sinners, evidence that nonviolent love is a cross whose weight increases the more intensely one becomes aware that it is the will of God to personal and universal salvation. With this realization sin, the intentional rejection of the cross of nonviolent love, takes on insufferable gravity.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## X. Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

There is nothing tasteful or tactful about Jesus' crucifixion. He was brutally beaten and stripped naked, just as millions of other oppressed people have been over the centuries, and as many still are today. The powers of this world always strip naked those they wish to control, humiliate, delegitimize, discourage and destroy. To hide from Christ stripped of his garments is to hide from the reality of the cross of nonviolent love. Lord as we gaze upon the stripped people of this world, let our gaze be compassionate and may their suffering evoke in us the will to fight for peace with justice wherever on Earth there is conflict.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## XI. Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

To those who do not believe in Christ's cross of nonviolent love, its truth is folly, a scandal, an unrealistic waste of life's time. To those who believe, it is nails, thorns, spears, suffering for others until the blind can see, until the lame can walk, until the imprisoned are freed, until the hungry are fed, until the oppressed are liberated, until the naked are clothed, until the sick are healed, until the rich are saved, until the homeless are home, until the unlovable are loved, until all sins are forgiven.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

## XII. Jesus Dies on the Cross

Jesus cried with a loud voice and called up His spirit. Today, many voices are yelling out in suffering from war, terrorism, torture, oppression, abuse, hunger and poverty. Lord, remind these victims that you are there with them, taking on their pain. For those who suffer and die with you, may they share in the loving peace of heaven. Let our compassion and mourning for these victims of violence transcend the distance that often separates us, and drive us to live lives of nonviolent love."

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

### XIII. Jesus is Taken from the Cross

Viewing the mutilated body of the beloved is the most grief-ridden experience of human existence. It is incontrovertible evidence of evil in our world. Yet this scene draws out our feelings of compassion for all victims of torture, violence and abuse. Yet we also recognize that we ourselves are often fascinated by violence and have known some of the blood lust exhibited by the crowds yelling for more. May God have mercy on us for ignoring the plight of the victims of violence and for denying the existence within ourselves of the tendency to inflict pain out of anger, frustration, or just to go along with the crowd.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

### XIV. Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Jesus is still being buried today in the plight of mothers, children, the poor and all oppressed persons as poverty, hunger, violence, war and terrorism continue to kill thousands of God's children every day. Lord, so many are standing by gravesides wondering how to rebuild life without the one they love, victims of a world that does not practice nonviolent love. May they find your hope in the midst of their grief, that their loved one did not die in vain and that they are safe, free from pain and fear, at rest with God forever.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***

### XV. Jesus is Raised from the Dead

"Peace be with you" and He showed them His hands and His side. Peace is the gift of death endured, of the struggle for justice, of forgiveness rendered to friend and enemy alike, of the poor and the unwanted ministered to and welcomed into our lives. Peace is the gift given to us this day, and every day, the fruit of nonviolent love. The way of the cross is the clear path to peace.

***Let us take up the cross and follow you, Lord Jesus,  
for by so doing we share in the liberation of the world.***