



“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.”

Pope John Paul II,
Hiroshima, Japan,
February 1991

**PRAYER SERVICE COMMEMORATING HIROSHIMA/NAGASAKI
AUGUST, 2006**

**Mission Effectiveness Office, School Sisters of Notre Dame, St. Louis
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Environment:

- *Bells for the call to prayer and reflective music*
- *Place a bowl with water in the center of the prayer area. Have ready several candles, like tea light candles for floating in the bowl.*

CALL TO PRAYER: Leader rings bell and says:

Hiroshima

6 August 8:15 AM

Little Boy bomb, dropped by the U.S. B-29 Enola Gay, explodes with the force of 15 kilotons of explosive delivering a shuddering and massive blow to Earth . . .

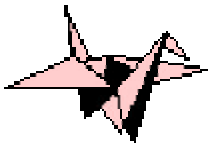
Leader rings bells a second time:

Nagasaki

9 August 11:02 AM

Fatman bomb, dropped by the U.S. B-29 Bock's Car, explodes with the force of 22 kilotons of explosive delivering a second shuddering and massive blow to Earth . . .

More than 200,000 people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lay dead from the use of the first atomic bombs and our good Earth scorched and plundered was wounded beyond belief. Since August 1945, many thousands more have died, and continue to die from the radioactive fallout of the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Earth, affected as much, will never be the same.



SILENCE

Leader continues:

Today we are called to remember who we are and why we were born into this world. Today we remember that the Community of All Life is truly sacred. We call to mind the wars raging on our planet Earth this day and long for good and wise people to negotiate an end to them.

Here in the present, we are called to say “Never Again” to nuclear war. In this dialog of war and peace, words are not enough. Neither are votes. We must find ways to make our lives speak for peace. Being here today at prayer is one of those ways.

- Let us remember that God is a peace-filled presence in our midst.
- We acknowledge your presence, creator of the universe.
- Forgiving God be with us now.
- Mary, Queen of Peace inspire us with courage and hope.

Someone lights a candle and floats it in the bowl of water.



OPENING PRAYER: All

Dear God,

Our blessed foundress Theresa said that *"Where there is peace there is God, where there is God there is every good."* Her words echo our belief that you are the giver of every good gift; you are our hope; you are our peace and our reconciliation. We thank you. We praise you. We call on you to hear us as we pray.

SING: "God of Day and God of Darkness" vs 1-3 or a hymn of Light

Leader:

In the summer of the 50th anniversary year of World War II our sisters in Japan took time to reflect on their childhood experiences during and immediately after the war. They expressed themselves in the simple sentences of children. They said their little sentences revealed much about hunger, loneliness, and fright. They also showed the capacity of children to enjoy life and beauty in an environment of war.

THEIR WORDS *DURING* WAR:

Those at prayer read a sentence each leaving space between sentences. When all the sentences are read everyone prays together three times:

"GOD, YOU ARE MY ONLY HOPE; I TOTALLY DEPEND ON YOU."

- "I remember that so many bombs were dropped from the airplanes that the western sky turned red."
- "One of the members of my family was killed by the atomic bomb."
- "Because we didn't have enough to eat, we even ate the vines of the sweet potatoes."
- "When I graduated from kindergarten, I received a memorial pencil case. It was made of paper."
- "I was hungry."

Someone lights a candle and floats it in the bowl of water.

- "I was afraid."
- "I had only my mother, but she died when we were evacuated, so then many other people helped me."

- “Some bombs fell in our cucumber garden, but luckily, we had run away.”
- “The day after the atomic bomb exploded, there was a lot of burning ash falling from the sky. Children were sick with diarrhea, and many students were absent from school.”
- “One good point about being evacuated was that in the country I could enjoy nature.”

Everyone prays three times: “GOD, YOU ARE MY ONLY HOPE; I TOTALLY DEPEND ON YOU.”



Pause for reflection: Silence or music conducive to reflection

Leader:

Our Japanese sisters wrote: “As we read through what we had written in the context of prayer, we heard not only our own voices as children but also the voices of millions and millions of children all over the world from past to the present –children who, like us, experience the terrible tragedy of war and the social turmoil which follows it.”

THEIR WORDS AFTER WAR:

Those at prayer read a sentence each leaving space between sentences. When all the sentences are read everyone prays together three times:

“O GOD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND YOUR SALVATION.”

- “After the war we didn’t hear air raid sirens anymore and we didn’t have to cover our lamps with black cloth, either. We had light! We didn’t need to be afraid anymore. I was so very happy and I felt at peace.”
- “Because I had been evacuated to Kyoto, I received much grace at Baptism, and entered the SSND’S.”
- “My father had a very hard time with finances, and we lived in poverty.”
- “I couldn’t believe that Japan lost the war.”
- “ Even though the war ended there were many terrible things, so we were

always nervous and uneasy.”

- **Someone lights a candle and floats it in the bowl of water.**
- “I heard many things about the war that pained my heart.”
- “I wish to have real peace without any armaments.”
- “I got malaria and thought I was dying.”
- “Tokyo was destroyed. As far as my eye could see, there were destroyed fields.”
- “After we returned to Japan from the colony, we lived in the country side. We were very poor, but we lived close to natural beauty, so we were a little happy.”

Everyone prays three times: “O GOD, SHOW US YOUR MERCY AND YOUR SALVATION.”



Response: Revelation 21: 4-5

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. And the One who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

Leader: In Hiroshima, there is a river running through the city. After the blast, people jumped into the river to try to save themselves from the fire storms. For weeks the river was filled with thousands of bodies. Every year since, on the evening of August 6th, the people of Hiroshima go to the river and launch candle floats to remember the dead.

Light two candles and floats them in the bowl of water.

As a sign of our belief in peace and justice, and our belief that new life will flow, come forward and dip your hand into the water. Bless yourself and pray for our Earth, the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and all people of the many countries where bombs are exploding daily especially the Middle East

Reader: POEM “Gathered at the River” by Denise Levertov

As if the trees were not indifferent . . .

A breeze flutters the candles but the trees give off
a sense of listening, of hush.

The dust of August on their leaves.
But it grows dark. Their dark green
Is something known about, not seen.

But summer twilight takes away
only color, not form. The tree-forms,
massive trunks and the great domed heads,
leaning in towards us, are visible,

a half-circle of attention.
They listen because the war
we speak of, the human war within ourselves,
the war against ourselves,

the war against earth
against nature,
is a war against them.

The words are spoken
of those who survived a while,
living shadowgraphs, eyes fixed forever
on witnessed horror,

who survived to give
testimony, that no-one
may plead ignorance.
CONTRA NATURAM, The tree,
the trees are not indifferent.

We intone together, NEVER AGAIN,

we stand in a circle,
singing, speaking, making vows,
remembering the dead
of Hiroshima,
of Nagasaki.

We are holding candles: we kneel to set them
afloat on the dark river
as they do
there in Hiroshima. We are invoking

saints and prophets,
heroes and heroines of justice and peace,
to be with us, to help us
stop the torment of our evil dreams . . .

Windthreatened flames bob on the current . .

They don't get far from shore. But none capsizes
even in the swell of a boat's wake.

The waxy paper cups sheltering them
catch fire. But still the candles
sail their gold downstream.

And still the trees ponder our strange doings, as if
well aware that if we fail,
we fail also for them:
if our resolves and prayers are weak and fail
there will be nothing left of their slow and innocent
wisdom,
no roots,
no bole nor branch,

no memory
of shade,
of leaf,

no pollen.

Petitions:

May we and our sisters and brothers around the world learn to channel our anger
for construction, not destruction. we pray. . .

Response: O healing God, send us your living waters to give us courage and
strength. Nourish us in this land and all on Earth with hope and love.

May we learn to treat all people as beloved children of God, to honor the whole
Community of Life on Earth and to love Earth, desiring only good for them. we
pray. . .

Response: O healing God, send us your living waters to give us courage and
strength. Nourish us in this land and all on Earth with hope and love.

May we learn to address our fears by welcoming diversity and by enhancing

human connections. we pray. . . .

Response: O healing God, send us your living waters to give us courage and strength. Nourish us in this land and all on Earth with hope and love.

May we be united in our grief over the damage to families, communities and our good Earth that war causes, we pray. . .

Response: O healing God, send us your living waters to give us courage and strength. Nourish us in this land and all on Earth with hope and love.

All: Closing Prayer:

May Mary, Mother of Jesus,
inspire us with courage and hope.
Queen of peace, in your song for the poor you call us to share in their struggle,
that soon the hungry of earth will be richly blest,
and your promise of mercy we will know now and forever.
With you we proclaim the greatness of God,
the God who dances in creation,
who embraces us with human love,
who shakes our lives like thunder,
blesses us and drives us out with power
to fill the Earth with her justice and peace,
and to flower the integrity of creation.
Amen.

Concluding Hymn: “God of Day and God of Darkness” vs 4-5s or any other hymn of your choice.



Adapted from Pax Christi USA material and
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Closing Prayer adapted from “Pentecost” by Janet Morley in “All Desires Known”