

Prayer for the End of the 40-Day Fast for Christian Nonviolence
August 9th, 2024
Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing of Nagasaki, Japan and
The Executions of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)
And Blessed Franz Jaegerstaetter

Introduction: For the past 40 days, many people have participated in a fast against the violence that plagues our world. Today, the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, the largest Christian community in Japan at the time, we draw the fast to a close as we commemorate that bombing and pray for the abolition of nuclear weapons and all weapons of war—be they bombs or bullets, hatred, fear, vengeance, or greed. Let us pray.

(Please use the prayer service alone or in community whether you fasted or not. Feel free to add music, a time for silent meditation, and/or your own “prayers of the faithful.”)

Opening Prayer from “A Paraliturgy of the Hours” by Rev. Robert Beck

O God, we turn to you with closed hearts that beg to be opened. We ask you to teach us our complicity in the cruelties of this age, but teach us wisely. We ask you to open our eyes to the darkness of our own shadows, but teach us gently that we may learn, that we may admit the darkness and claim it, and turn our hearts toward peace.

The First Reading from the “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Members of the Diplomatic Corps,” January 8th, 2024

Wars ... are able to continue thanks to the enormous stock of available weapons. There is need to pursue a policy of disarmament, since it is illusory to think that weapons have deterrent value. The contrary is true: The availability of weapons encourages their use and increases their production. Weapons create mistrust and divert resources....

Among the threats caused by these instruments of death, I cannot fail to mention those produced by nuclear arsenals and the development of increasingly sophisticated and destructive weapons. Here, I once more affirm the immorality of manufacturing and possessing nuclear weapons....

To pursue peace, however, it is not enough simply to eliminate the implements of war; its root causes must be eradicated.

The Mediterranean [and the whole world] should instead be a *laboratory of peace*, “a place where different countries and realities can encounter each other on the basis of the humanity we all share.”

Prayers of the Faithful from the Archbishop Wester Mass on the Occasion of the Second Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, November 29th, 2023 taken from a novena created by members of Pax Christi Maine

The response is: *God, make us instruments of your peace.*

For the determination never again to use atomic energy as weapons of war. May we heed Pope Francis's call "for prayer and commitment to a world completely free of nuclear weapons." Let us pray...

For solidarity with all Indigenous peoples impacted by uranium mining, atomic bomb testing, and the long-term storage of nuclear waste on their sacred lands. May we work toward real solutions to rectify these many wrongs done to our siblings. Let us pray...

For the people impacted by nuclear weapons research, development, testing, and use, here in the United States and around the world. May we understand the real human, financial, and environmental costs of developing, maintaining, and expanding nuclear arsenals, even as many continue to suffer from a lack of basic human needs such as food, clothing, housing, education, and healthcare. Let us pray...

For forgiveness, especially for those times when we have opted for violence instead of reconciliation. May we follow God's way of encounter and dialogue for the resolution of all conflicts. As stated by Archbishop Wester of Santa Fe, "All our conversations should be respectful, rooted in prayer, based in nonviolence, and centered in the hope and belief that nuclear disarmament is achievable. We can do this, and with the God of peace with us, we can do this soon." Let us pray...

For the wisdom to understand fully the devastating consequences of using nuclear weapons, and for the fortitude never to justify their use again. Let us pray...

The Second Reading from "To Young Mothers" by Sachiko Nichio in *Prayers for Peace: Recollections of Schoolgirls in Hiroshima*

I was thirteen, in my first year of junior high school in Hiroshima.

On August 6th, two hundred twenty-three of my classmates were working outside cleaning up demolished houses.

The bomb exploded above their heads.

Many of them died instantly, but a few of them escaped to Koi Elementary School. "Mother! Please come and save me!" they cried out but they were all dead by the end of the day.

Those who couldn't keep up stumbled about in the flames and died solitary deaths.

They would never know that the war would end 10 days later.

Can we allow the continued production of weapons capable of killing all human beings on the planet?

If we can make nuclear weapons, then we must have the power to eliminate them.

The Third Reading from *Choosing Life* by Dorothee Soelle

There is a sentence in the Bible which has become very important.... It runs: "All things are possible to the one who believes" (Mark 9:23)....

I am a Christian if I believe that everything is possible. The blind learn how to see.... The lame walk, the deaf hear, the poor hear the news of liberation.... I am a Christian because I believe that what was promised to everyone is possible.

Psalm 85:9-14

I listen to God speaking:

God is speaking peace, peace to faithful people who turn their hearts to God.
Salvation is coming near; glory is filling our land.

Love and fidelity embrace; peace and justice kiss.
Fidelity sprouts from the earth; justice leans down from heaven.

God pours out riches; our land springs to life.
Justice clears God's path; justice points the way.

Prayer Response by Rev. Loey Powell from "No Faith in Trident" Prayer Service, Pax Christi UK, 2016

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, or stones to throw, or of hate.

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. Amen.

The Fourth Reading, a Reason to Hope

In Nagasaki, Japan on the 78th anniversary of its atomic bombing, Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, the birthplace of nuclear weapons; Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Seattle, Washington, the place from which the most nuclear weapons in the U.S.A. are deployed; Bishop Alexis Mitsuru Shirahama of Hiroshima, Japan, the first city to suffer from the horrendous atomic attacks; Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Mitsuaki Takami and current Archbishop Peter Michiaki Nakamura of Nagasaki, the second and hopefully the last city to suffer from the atomic attacks, formed a partnership to work for nuclear disarmament. On November 27th, 2023, they followed up with a "Statement in Support of the Second Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."

In part they wrote:

In September 2017, the Vatican was the first nation-state to sign this Treaty, which bans nuclear weapons just like other long-accepted treaties have banned other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has now been signed by 93 countries and ratified by 69. (update: 96 and 70, respectively)

... the entry into force of the ban treaty in January 2021 was a great step toward the light of peace and brought hope to those who seek a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons....

[While] the international legal force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is limited to those states that have formally joined the Treaty ... its moral power does not recognize boundaries between nations nor lines on a map—the moral power of this Treaty is global and universal.

.... This is another historic step on the journey toward hope, toward the light, toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

(Read the full statement here:

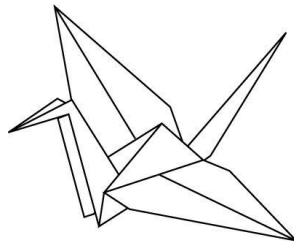
https://archdiosf.org/documents/2023/11/231122_TPNW_Statement_ASF.pdf)

And it is not just for the nations to nourish this hope. As Bishop Shirahama wrote in his homily this past Fourth Sunday of Lent attended by his local Hiroshima congregation and 11 Pax Christi pilgrims, “It is human beings who created nuclear weapons that destroy themselves, and it is human beings who press the button to use them. The enemy that people must fight is not the people of other nations, but the sin of our hearts and the carelessness of our minds.... The way to true peace is for us to acknowledge our sins, forgive each other, and be reconciled.”

And so we pray...

Closing Prayer from a prayer by Monseñor Pedro Rubiano Sáenz in *Prayer without Borders: Celebrating Global Wisdom*

God, you offer us peace as a gift and peace as a responsibility that we must realize with your help. Give us the grace to reach out for peace, to have attitudes of peace, that our words may be words of peace, and our works be works of peace. Then may we build the peace that we and our nations need.



Prepared by Rosemarie Pace, Ed.D., Coordinator, Pax Christi New York State