

PRAYERS FOR HIROSHIMA DAY/ FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION 2023

Introduction

In 1945, the United States detonated a nuclear weapon over the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6. It is also the Feast of the Transfiguration, and I have used my reflection which follows repeatedly here to connect the two.

Hiroshima Peace Day aims is to remember the between 90,000 and 146,000 people who died after the first ever use of a nuclear weapon. It also aims to bring about world peace and ban nuclear weapons. One might look into how many nuclear weapons we have on earth; and how many, we know, would be sufficient even for those who argue for a nuclear deterrent. This leads to reflection on military expenditure...

Each year, on this day, the Mayor of Hiroshima reads a special Peace Declaration. His message is sent to every country in the world pleading leaders to abolish nuclear weapons. At 8:15 a.m., the time the atomic bomb was dropped, the Peace Bell is rung and all in Hiroshima observe silence for one minute.

The story of the Transfiguration is the story of Jesus climbing a mountain with his closest friends. There Jesus has a profound experience. There is a dazzling light, a cloud that overshadowed them, and they were terrified by the cloud, and a voice.

We read the story of the Transfiguration on the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6) with some ambivalence. Before the fifteenth century, a few Christian communities had been keeping the feast of the Transfiguration on August 6. But we would probably not be celebrating that date if it wasn't for a terrible battle. On the sixth of August 1456 news was announced in Rome that John Hunyady had overcome the Turks near Belgrade and the bells of many countries still ring at midday to commemorate the slaughter. Pope Callistus ordered the whole church to commemorate the victory by celebrating the feast of the Transfiguration.

But the ambivalence of August 6 is highlighted, because on this day in 1945, someone climbed not a holy mountain, but into the cockpit of a plane – a machine of war. There had been a lull of a week in the fighting between America and Japan. The Americans had a new secret weapon and they wanted to use it with the maximum psychological effect. They had prepared three atomic bombs. On the 16th of July, one had been tested in New Mexico. Now on August 6 one was dropped on Hiroshima, and three days later the last one was dropped on Nagasaki. The bomb had more than 2,000 times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam" till then the largest bomb ever used in the history of warfare. Between 90,000 and 146,000 people in Hiroshima, and 39,000 and 80,000 people in Nagasaki lay dead. Other people later died from the effects of atomic radiation. 75,000 buildings were destroyed. Two cities were devastated. The world will never be the same.

Here we have a new voice booming from heaven. Here too was brightness, brilliant as burning magnesium. Here too is a cloud that has come and has covered us all with shadow. Truly, under the shadow of this new cloud, we are right to feel afraid.

The shape of that cloud hangs now forever in our sky. Look at the shape of that cloud. It is the new tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We have eaten of its fruit and we shall never be the same again.

We in Aotearoa-New Zealand, who pray and work for a Nuclear free world, remember that the seed of that tree was planted in this land. Rutherford's good knowledge of the workings of God's beautiful creation has been turned to evil and annihilation.

We today commemorate Hiroshima day, world peace day, by telling again the story of another climb, another light, another voice, another cloud. Jesus there was speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Jesus was speaking of his death, his destruction by another tree, the cross. And we meet today below that cross, to break bread and proclaim the victory of Christ's death over every evil, even the total annihilation by human evil.

We began this service by confessing our sins, conscious that Jesus would say today: "you have learnt that nuclear war is evil, but I say this to you, do not war at all, do not hate, do not harbour a grudge, do not envy, do not bully, do not gossip for all these are the seeds of which the bomb is but the fruit".

When Jesus was baptised a voice was heard from heaven: "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." Here today, as Jesus is at prayer, God's voice is heard again "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" At the crucifixion, the climax of Jesus' story, we wait in expectation for the voice to ring out again.

But we wait in vain. God's voice does not sound again. Nor does it sound today as we gather around this cross, this table. For now it is we who must proclaim who Jesus is. By our lives, by our actions, and by our words.

We who gather here are challenged with a choice. Do we declare to the world that Jesus is God's beloved Son, that we follow him, we listen to him. We have with open eyes seen the symbols of the human heart: the mushroom cloud of power, control and hate, and the rough wooden cross of service, love and sacrifice.

Which one do you choose?

Anglican Church in Aotearoa-New Zealand

Christ our only light,
before whose bright cloud
your friends fell to the ground:
we bow before your cross
that we may remember in our bodies
the dead who fell like shadows;
and that we may refuse
to be prostrated
before the false brightness of any other light,
looking to you power alone
for hope of resurrection from the dead.

Janet Morley, "All Desires known."

75th Anniversary of Hiroshima Day August 6th 2020

Prayer Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Source: *Pax Christi UK, paxchristi.org.uk*)

God our creator and Sustainer, we gather to pray in the midst of a broken people who 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.

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 those who died in the war with Japan, especially those who suffered and died 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. May their faithful and loving witness inspire us to compassion.

We remember the people of the Middle East, where each day brings news of more violence. We pray that nonviolent solutions may be found to heal wounds and bring justice and lasting peace to them.

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

In the name of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Amen.

Poem – Transfigured and Transfixed (Father Rob Esdaile - Source: Pax Christi UK, paxchristi.org.uk) Hiroshima Day is August 6th. In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, August 6 is also the Feast of the Transfiguration. A catholic priest has written the following poem in the light of this juxtaposition:

Noon in Galilee, dawn by the Japanese sea.

The Spirit hovers silently,
while the Enola Gay drones away.

Four men on a mountain top; 350,000 down in the valley.

The Son of Man and a bomb christened “Little Boy.” Silently the cloud descends; just as silently a parachute unfurls.

Four men see nothing but Jesus, while 75,000 are never seen again.

Whiter than any new bleached cloth the face of Christ,
Brighter than a thousand suns the flash. “This is my beloved Son, listen to him.” This is the nuclear age, be very afraid.

And the clouds weep their atomic rain.

Christ transfigured and the world transfixed,

The dawning of the light of Christ,

The beginning of the nuclear winter.

God of our weary years and our silent tears,

This day of solemn remembrance, we remember the destruction wrought on Hiroshima, on Nagasaki, and we pray “never again.”

Yet, so many long years since witnessing the dreadful cost of nuclear war, we are still divided, still at risk, still unwilling to lay aside weapons of mass destruction.

A real threat of nuclear warfare is risen among us and it is clear we are still afraid

We confess to you, God of Peace, our ongoing participation in cultures of death the ways we benefit from military might and the threat of nuclear destruction, our

failure to resolve simmering disputes and build a future for all children free from fear.

Forgive, O loving God, the failure of your children that is represented in all war. In your loving mercy forgive our failure to make peace with one another. Grant pardon and turn to a new way, to all who have contributed to war's progress through ambition, belligerence, falsehood, suspicion, arrogance, animosity, and terror.

We thank you for those who even now work for peace and healing through diplomacy. And we praise your name for the gifts of generosity, healing, courage, wisdom and love which are daily demonstrated by those who aid those who are uprooted, injured and dying in war's terrible wake. Grant them strength. Triune God, grant us strength, mercy, and peace:

...the strength of your love that conquers fear and evil

...the mercy of your Son, who rebuked the way of violence by laying down his life

...the peace of your Spirit, beyond our divisions, to bind us together as one family

in your kingdom of mercy and peace.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Amen.

Presbyterian Church USA