

*Remembering*  
**Hiroshima/Nagasaki**

*August 2007 marks the 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary  
of nuclear weapons use*

Cameron Park  
La Crosse WI  
7 – 8 PM August 5, 2007

order of program:

1. Readings – pages 2 and 3
2. Litany – page 4
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afterwards  
you are invited to light a candle  
from the Hiroshima Flame



On August 6, 1945, the morning started with a cloudless blue sky characteristic of the summer. In March, the big Tokyo air raid had killed 120,000 citizens. Many other cities in Japan were also violently bombed and burned by the American air attacks so that many non-combatants continued to be cruelly killed. In April, American armed forces landed on Okinawa and the whole island became a battlefield. 90,000 Japanese soldiers were killed and 100,000 civilians died. Japanese people cried loudly that they would fight a decisive battle on the mainland.

Hiroshima remained unharmed. A wild rumor spread that the Americans were not bombing in Hiroshima because it was a religious city with many Buddhist believers. Though not known at the time, in fact, the American military had ordered that Hiroshima be spared from bombing raids in order to later calculate accurately the full effects of the A-bomb.

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Before daybreak of August 6<sup>th</sup>, an air raid alarm was given in Hiroshima. At 7:00 AM, another air raid alarm was sounded. But at 7:31 AM, the all-clear was given. Soldiers at the anti-aircraft machine guns on the roofs of the military installations and munitions factories were released by an air defense order.

Just before the fateful moment the seven rivers which ran through the city looked stagnant because of the high tide. They reflected the deep blue of the summer sky. Wearing work clothes and gaiters, with air defense hoods thrown back, people were running on the big and small bridges throughout the city. One of these was the Aioi Bridge, an unusual T-type bridge. It was the target of the A-bomb.

The mobilized students, even school girls, were hurrying to the munitions factories by streetcar. A horse-drawn farmer's cart, taking nightsoil from the city to outlying farms, passed by at a leisurely pace with a clop-clop noise. Small clouds of dust rose here and there among the crowded, tile-roofed houses.

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The A-bomb, which was nicknamed "Little Boy," was dropped from the B-29, Enola Gay. It exploded 570 meters above the ground with a light blue flash. The diameter of the fireball was 100 meters and the temperature at its center was 300,000 degrees Centigrade.

Soon after the explosion, black and white smoke covered the whole city and rose thousands of meters high. The pressure of the blast directly under the center of the explosion was from 4.5 to 6.7 tons per square meter. Wooden houses within a radius of two kilometers of the hypocenter collapsed and completely burned from the wind and heat. The fires continued for two days.

Some people who were near the center of the explosion literally evaporated and only their shadows remained. Others were turned to charred corpses.

Those who survived were badly burned. Usually their clothes were scorched and burned so they were practically naked. Their skin peeled off and hung down. They rushed to nearby fire prevention water boxes and river banks, seeking water. Friends and relatives trapped under collapsed houses were crying for help. But flames surrounded them so closely that they were about to burn.

Later, large black drops of rain poured down. It was a deadly rain which contained mud, ash, and other radioactive fallout. Through burning flames and pouring black rain there was an endless line of injured people heading for the outskirts of the city. The burns on their hands made the skin hang down. Their hands looked like those of ghosts.

Of 150 doctors in the city, 65 were already dead and most of the rest were wounded. Their offices and hospitals were destroyed, their equipment scattered, and their own bodies incapacitated in varying degrees.

Of 1,780 nurses, 1,654 were dead or too badly hurt to work. In the biggest hospital, that of the Red Cross, only six doctors out of 30 were able to function, and only 10 nurses out of more than 200.

Before long, patients lay and crouched on the floors of the wards and the laboratories and all the other rooms, and in the corridors, and on the stairs, and in the front hall, and under the porch, and on the stone front steps, and in the driveway and courtyard, and for blocks each way in the streets outside. Wounded people supported maimed people; disfigured families leaned together. Many people were vomiting.

In a city of 345,000, nearly 100,000 people had been killed or doomed at one blow; 100,000 more were hurt.

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A history professor who looked back at the city after the explosion remarked later, "I saw that Hiroshima had disappeared."

As the fires sprang up in the ruins, many people, having found injured family members and friends, were now forced to abandon them to the flames or to lose their own lives in the firestorm. Those who left children, husbands, wives, friends and strangers to burn often found these experiences the most awful of the entire ordeal.

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What is now called radiation sickness soon appeared. People began suffering from diarrhea as if they had dysentery. They lost clumps of their hair. Purple spots developed on their skin, making them look like a map. Such people soon died.

Those who were looking for their relatives walked around in the still-smoldering city with the rescue parties. What they saw were dead bodies piled up on the ground and filling up the rivers. Figures of mothers who died protecting their own children were especially heartbreaking.

People were deeply scarred by the indiscriminate cruelty of the new-styled bomb, and the dreadfulness of war itself.

Among those who entered the city later, there were a large number of people who were affected by lingering radioactivity, and died.

Cremation of dead bodies continued for many days throughout the city. On top of some wood dead bodies were piled up, oil poured on them, and a fire was lit. The smell of dead bodies and the wail of sutra-chanting spread over the vast scorched desolation.

And on August 9, the second A-bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

*-compiled from **Hiroshima** by John Hersey*



## In Remembrance

Litany for Hiroshima Day of Remembrance

*August 5, 2007, Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

- One: Infinite and Eternal God, who created the universe and pronounced it good, we often take the good and turn it into deeds that take, kill, and maim life in your universe. For being complicit and sometimes intentional in destroying what you have created and for killing living beings,
- Many: Forgive us, O God.**
- One: Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
- Many: Accept our repentance, Lord.**
- One: For being a nation that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki and killed hundreds of thousands of innocent children, women and men,
- Many: Forgive us, O God.**
- One: For stockpiling enough nuclear weapons to destroy the earth many times over,
- Many: Forgive us, O God.**
- One: For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,
- Many: Accept our repentance, Lord.**
- One: For the Hibakusha, the survivors of the destruction of the Atomic Bombs in Japan, in Micronesia, and in New Mexico, and for those who survived the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl,
- Many: We pray to you, O God.**
- One: For our nation that we will disarm as we compel other nations to disarm,
- Many: We pray to you, O God.**
- One: God of Justice and Peace, we know you as a forgiving God and a loving God. Enable us to be a forgiving and a loving people, doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with you.
- Many: We pray to you, O God.**
- One: Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;
- Many: Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.**