

## “August 6 and 9: Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Never again”

--Adapted from "Our Prayers Rise Like Incense," published by Pax Christi USA

Set up an “altar,” a focal point where several pictures of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are displayed. Have flowers available that people will later place around the pictures.



### We Remember the Past

**Opening Reading:** “Gathered at the River” by Denise Levertov (From *Peace: A Dream Unfolding*, edited by Penney Kome and Patrick Crean, c. 1986, Somerville House Book published by Sierra Club Books, San Francisco.)

As if the trees were 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, 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 with ourselves, the war against earth, against nature, is a war against them. The words are spoken of those who survived awhile, living shadowgraphs, eyes fixed forever on witnessed horror, who survived to give testimony, that no one may plead ignorance. “Contra naturam” The trees, the trees are not indifferent.

We intone together, NEVER AGAIN, we stand in a circle, singing, speaking, making vows, NEVER AGAIN, remembering the dead of Hiroshima, Nagasaki...

**Song:** “Cry of Ramah” (By Colleen Fulmer, c. 1985, Loretto Spirituality Network.)

**Reading:** A verse by Michiko Ogina, age 10 at time of bombing (Adapted from *Peace: A Dream Unfolding*)

Under a fallen house my sister was madly crying. The beam would not move a bit even a soldier had gone saying, “Nothing can be done.” I noticed a person coming like an arrow. Like a woman it looked. She’s naked, she’s discolored. Why mamma! Now I felt free from danger. Our neighbor tried with all his might, but the beam would not move a bit. “You must give up, nothing can help it.” So saying, he went away, too, pitying us.

The flame flared up! Mamma’s face went ashy pale. Mamma looked down at my sister; Sister’s small eyes looked up from under. Mamma’s eyes followed the beam. She fit her right shoulder to the beam; “Yo, heave, ho, yo heave ho” She endeavored with might and main. Crack! Crack! Crack! Free did legs of my sister become. But down did Mamma drop Never to get up.

Mamma was bombed at noon. When getting eggplants in the field. Short, red, crisp her hair stood. Tender and red her skin was all over. Peeled off was the skin over her shoulder that once lifted the beam off my sister. Constant blood was spurting from the sore flesh appearing. Soon Mamma began to struggle with pain and agony. With pain and agony, she left the world for heaven that evening.

**Song:** “Cry of Ramah” (Refrain only.)

(Moment of silence.)

**Reading:** “A Silent Flash of Light” by Setsuko Thurlow (From *Peace: A Dream Unfolding*)

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 awhile 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.

*(Moment of silence.)*

### **We Confront the Present**

**Song:** "I Shall Be Released" (By Bob Dylan, c. 1974, Columbia Records.)

### **We Hope For the Future**

**Placing of Flowers:** (Place the flowers next to the pictures of the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.)

**Song:** "Down by the Riverside" (Public Domain)

**Reading:** Excerpt from *Lightning East to West* by Jim Douglass (c. 1983, Crossroad.)

Faith is a belief in a Reality, and a transformation, through which it is possible for us to live deeply enough to choose new life rather than nuclear death. A lived faith will stop the Bomb.

The decision to act in faith is always at hand. We live alongside the steady preparation for nuclear holocausts, as unseeing as were the onlookers of Nazi genocide. Yet the decision to act on faith is more possible for us in a liberal capitalism than it was for those who lived in fear alongside the barbed wire fences and guard towers in Europe in the forties. Because they didn't act, they gave up hope for the rest of their world. Despair at political change comes from the heart. Given hearts rooted in faith, barbed wire fences can themselves become openings to the belief that there is hope for our world.

**Closing Prayer:** By Dom Helder Camara (From *The Desert is Fertile*, c. 1974, Orbis Books.)

**All:** Let us open our eyes. Let us begin at once to fight our selfishness and come out of ourselves, to dedicate ourselves once and for all, whatever the sacrifices, to the nonviolent struggle for a more just, more human world. Let us not put off the decision till tomorrow. Let us begin today, now, intelligently and firmly.

Let us look about us and recognize our brothers and sisters who are called like us to give up their ease and join all those who hunger for the truth and who have sworn to give their lives to make peace through justice and love.

Let us not waste time discussing who shall be our leader. What is important is for us to unite and go forward remembering that time too is our enemy.

Let us give the best of ourselves to helping create moral pressure for freedom to bring about necessary change. Let us gather information on the situations we wish to change. Let us spread this information by all reasonable means at our disposal and let the information be truthful, able to stand up to criticism and disturb the consciences of all good people.

Let us through all this stand firm without falling into hatred, let us be understanding without conniving at evil. Amen.

**Closing Song:** “Imagine” (By John Lennon, c. 1971, Capital Records.)

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