

Partnership for a World without Nuclear Weapons

78th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing

Archbishop's House of Nagasaki

Partnership for a World without Nuclear Weapons

On the 78th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we, the bishops of four Catholic arch/dioceses in areas impacted by nuclear weapons, declare that we will begin working together to achieve a “world without nuclear weapons.” We urge that there be concrete progress made by August 2025, the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings.

In the spirit and teaching of Pope Francis, we recognize that even the possession of nuclear weapons is immoral. Therefore, we call upon the leaders of the world, as we urged the leaders of the G7 leaders meeting in Hiroshima in May 2023, to also undertake the following concrete steps toward the abolition of nuclear weapons:

- Acknowledge the tremendous, long-lasting human suffering that the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings inflicted upon hibakusha;
- Acknowledge the tremendous, long-lasting human suffering and environmental impacts caused by uranium mining and nuclear weapons research, production and testing around the world;
- Reiterate that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, as well as emphasize that, as the G20 agreed to in November 2022, the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons are “inadmissible;”
- Announce and commit to concrete steps to prevent a new arms race, guard against nuclear weapons use, and advance nuclear disarmament;
- Honor the international mandate to enter into serious multilateral negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament, pledged to more than a half-century ago in the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty;
- Support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was first signed and ratified by the Vatican.

At the same time, in recognition of our own responsibility as religious leaders to exercise leadership, we have agreed to create a new initiative to promote the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. In the spirit of “remembering, walking together, and protecting,” as Pope Francis said in his message in Hiroshima on November 24, 2019, we will work hand-in-hand with our four arch/dioceses as well as with other dioceses and other faith traditions to build an interfaith partnership.

To remember is to learn from our painful history, to examine the current situation, and to build a culture of peace. To walk together is to pray together, to support each other, and to act. To protect is, among other things, to help all victims of nuclear weapons, to restore the environment destroyed by nuclear weapons, and to protect our common home, the earth.

We invite all religious traditions to develop specific activities in accordance with the spirit of this partnership introduced above.

In our four arch/dioceses, more specifically,

(1) In order to remember,
we will listen to and dialogue with hibakusha, uranium miners, peace activists, nuclear engineers, military personnel, diplomats, and others on a regular basis;
we will create opportunities to learn about the threat of nuclear weapons and the devastation caused by nuclear weapons.

(2) In order to walk together,
we will ask for God's help as individuals and as community with specific prayers (as introduced at the end of this declaration);
we will offer Mass at least once a year with a special intention for a world without nuclear weapons and, wherever possible, call for a special collection to support nuclear victims and to restore the environment destroyed by nuclear weapons.

(3) In order to protect,
we will promote the signing and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons;
we will urge the leaders of the world to redirect the funds spent on the development and maintenance of nuclear weapons toward helping vulnerable populations and addressing environmental issues.

We, the bishops of four arch/dioceses in areas that have experienced the devastation caused by nuclear weapons, call on our priests, religious, and lay people to participate actively in this partnership to “remember, walk together and protect” so that we may create a legacy of peace for current and future generations.

The road to peace is difficult—we cannot travel it alone.

We conclude by calling upon Christ, the Prince of Peace, our Partner and Companion on the journey, to bless our partnership, and we ask for the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace.

Prayer for World Peace
(Adapted from Saint Pope John Paul II's prayer)

O great and merciful God, Lord of peace and life,
You have a plan for peace, not suffering.
You condemn war and violence.

You are for those who are near and those who are far away.
You will bring peace to those near and far, and to all races and nations.
You sent Jesus to bring peace to those near and far, to make all races and nations one family.
War threatens every creature in the created world,
We do not want a cycle of violence and death that threatens all creatures of creation.
Hear, O God, the heartfelt cry of all people.
We ask you to end the wars and conflicts that are taking place on this earth as soon as possible.

We ask that those who hold the keys to humanity's destiny not use the logic of revenge and retribution.
Help ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again on this earth.

Send the Holy Spirit so that we may find new ways to solve problems through dialogue, patience, and courage.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace

O Mary, Mother of Christ, Queen of Peace,
We ask for your help in bringing about the peace that Christ, our Redeemer, has brought to this earth.
May Christ remove from the hearts of all people everything that threatens peace.
May Christ transform us into witnesses of truth, justice, and love.
May Christ shine his light into the hearts of the political leaders of the nations so that they may bring about not only the welfare of people, but also peace without fear of nuclear annihilation, the precious gift of peace that protects all life.
We pray to Christ, Prince of Peace, through your intercession, Mary, Our Mother.
Amen.

+ John C. Wester

Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe

Paul D. Etienne

Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Seattle

+ Peter Michiaki Nakamura

Archbishop Peter Michiaki Nakamura of Nagasaki

+ Alexis Mitsuru Shirahama

Bishop Alexis Mitsuru Shirahama of Hiroshima

+ Joseph M. Takami

Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Mitsuki Takami of Nagasaki

August 9, 2023

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