



"No more war"

20th Sunday of the Year - 17 August 2025

Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh

"Look on the face of your anointed one" (Psalm 83.11)

This week we have been recalling the 80th Anniversary of dropping atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945. It is estimated that about 200,000 people died in the horrifying events, which has become known as VJ, Victory over Japan. On "Catholic Sat" on X (formerly Twitter) there are striking images of the Pontifical Mass in 1949 in honour of the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of St Francis Xavier and Christianity in Japan, in the ruins of St Mary's Cathedral in Nagasaki, "the Rome of the East", destroyed by an atomic bomb on the 9th of August 80 years ago. On 9th August this year at 11.02 am the twin bells of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral rang out for the first time since 1945. After many downpours Saturday morning, the rain stopped shortly before a moment of silence and ceremony in which Nagasaki's Mayor Shiro Suzuki urged the world to "stop armed conflicts immediately." He said "Eighty years have passed, and who would have imagined that the world would look like this? A crisis that could threaten the survival of humanity, such as a nuclear war, is looming over each and everyone of us living on this planet." After a Peace Memorial Mass at Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki on 9th August, the 80th Anniversary of the bombing of the City, people participated in a torchlit procession to Nagasaki Peace Park (cf OSV News). As the Peace Memorial Mass (concelebrated with Cardinals from the United States) began at Urakami Cathedral, Archbishop Nakamura blessed with incense two damaged religious artifacts that had been recovered in the rubble of the original Cathedral after the bombing – the head of a wooden statue of Mary and a wooden crucifix with the figure of Jesus missing his head and limbs. These two items were displayed near the altar during the Mass, and the Archbishop framed his Homily around them. "It was our hands that started wars and created weapons of Mass destruction" Archbishop Nakamura said. Noting that people use their hands, feet and minds to hurt others, Nagasaki's Archbishop said, "We must work together with the hands of Jesus. More than that we must live as the hands of Jesus ... Our hope lies in God's hands. Let us live as God's hands".

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Concluding his Homily, Archbishop Nakamura said, “Our peace depends on what we do ... Our peace depends on how we walk. It depends on our feet, our way of thinking, our perspective, and our way of life. In other words, our peace depends on living like Christ. This means thinking, speaking, acting and loving like Christ. For that reason, let us once again begin our true journey by gazing upon Jesus and Mary who survived the bombing, and considering how they became like this for love of us”.

During the Mass, Archbishop Francisco Escalante Molina, the Vatican’s Apostolic Nuncio to Japan, noted that people (many from the US) had journeyed together to communicate the Anniversaries of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, “to offer our prayers for those who suffered, and those who died, and for lasting peace among all peoples A prayer that must never end.

Archbishop Molina brought with him a special message from Pope Leo XIV: “Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain burning reminders of the profound horrors wrought by nuclear weapons. Their streets, schools and homes still bear scars – both visible and spiritual – from that fateful August of 1945,” the Pope said. Quoting words often spoken by Pope Francis, he said: “War is always a defeat for humanity.”

How are we to understand then the words of Our Lord in the Gospel of the 20th Sunday (Year C): “Do you think I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” The Loyola Press Commentary reminds us of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple where Simeon said: “Master now you can let your servant go in peace” when he saw the child, but then he turned to Mary and said that the Child would be “destined for the rise and fall of many and to be a sign that will be contradicted ... and a sword will pierce your own soul also.”

Peace is the ultimate end of the Kingdom of God, but peace has a price. Jesus is warning the crowd that wherever the Word of God is heard and acted upon, division occurs. In last Sunday’s Gospel we were urged to be ready for the coming of the Lord and the Judgement which requires us to look at the implications of our commitments. A commitment of Faith requires us to change our attitude to material possessions and to take even more seriously our moral responsibilities. Here he reminds the crowds that those who commit to him will find it affects the way they relate to family and friends.

Last Saturday we had the Feast of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) who was gassed in Auschwitz on 9 August 1942. Brought up a devout Jew, she converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite. “Her mother was never reconciled to her decision”, writes Fr Ferlita in “The Paths of Life”. »But, a few

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years later, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, when Edith was renewing her vows, she confided to one of her companions: “When my turn came to renew my vows, my mother was next to me. I clearly felt her nearness.” That same day a telegram arrived announcing the death of her mother. Mother Teresa once said: “Never let anything fill you with sorrow as to make you forget the joy of the risen Christ.”

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