**9th August Reading Reflection and Prayers**

**The Collect**

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, Amen.

**August 6, 1945- 8:15 a.m.**

The first nuclear weapon used in human history, nicknamed “Little Boy” was dropped from the Enola Gay. After falling for approximately 43 seconds, it exploded mid-air in a nuclear eruption approximately 600 meters above the Shima Hospital, slightly southeast of the Aioi Bridge which was the target. In the moment it exploded, and a gigantic fireball appeared, intense heat rays were emitted, causing the ground temperature of the surrounding area reach to temperatures between 3,000 to 4,000 degrees centigrade. Also, the intensive bomb blast created maximum wind speeds of 440 meters per second at the hypocentre. The blast spread out rapidly and swept the entire city in about 10 seconds.

Although the heat rays were only emitted for a short period of time, their extreme intensity caused anyone within a one-kilometre radius from the hypocentre either to die on the spot or to receive multiple severe burns. Even people over three kilometres away from the hypocentre were burned on the parts of their bodies that were not covered by clothing. Wooden structures located within two kilometres of the hypocentre were completely destroyed, and there were people left trapped under the remains.

**Sharing the Story Hiroshima’s reconstruction**

**Reconstruction just after the atomic bombing**

The atomic-bombing completely destroyed the city, including buildings as well as the public infrastructure, such as transportation and communication facilities and water and sewage systems. The reconstruction of Hiroshima City first began with development of urban infrastructure under the national government’s wad-damage reconstruction project as one of the 115 war-damaged cities in Japan.

August 8, 1945 (two days after the bombing): the Japanese National Railways Sanyo Line was reopened between Hiroshima and Yokogawa (a station next to Hiroshima Stations).

August 9, 1945 (three days after the bombing): Streetcar operations partially resumed in one section

August 10, 1945 (four days after the bombing): Water pumps resumed operations. However, water leaked and spouted at many places in the city; and repairing the waterworks was an arduous task. It is said that it took nine months to restore the water supply to the outskirts of the city.

As for the city’s reconstruction plan, 34 reconstruction plans proposed by citizens, government officials, and foreign people were published at the Hiroshima City Reconstruction Council and in newspapers. It was thought that reconstruction of the city from the ruins would be nearly impossible; but the reconstruction plan pursued the highest ideals attainable at the time, with ambitious plans for roads, including 100-meter wide roads, parks, green areas, and land readjustments to secure land for infrastructure. At that time, Hiroshima City was having financial difficulties with its budget. Citizens and those who were engaged in the reconstruction had to work hard and at times heavy burdens were imposed on citizens for the sake of reconstruction. At the same time, various forms of aid and support from overseas helped Hiroshima citizens to overcome the crisis that followed in the aftermath of the bombing.

**Finding Hope**

**The Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law 1949: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law was enacted**

Initially, the reconstruction planning (Hiroshima Reconstruction City Planning) encountered many problems such as financial difficulties, lack of human resources and shortages in materials and public land. Due to the catastrophic damage from the bombing, tax revenue was minuscule in Hiroshima City. In order to cope with these conditions, Hiroshima mayor Shinzo Hamai, city council members, and other local people concerned made strenuous efforts to find a way and lobbied the national government.

Enactment of this special law paved the way for special assistance from the national government, the transfer of national government properties and pushed reconstruction efforts forward. In addition, Hiroshima City was designated a “peace memorial city” under Article 1 of the law stating, “Hiroshima is to be a peace memorial city symbolizing the human ideal of the sincere pursuit of genuine and lasting peace.”

**Reading Psalm 133**

Mercy and truth are met together,
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

1 Behold how good and pleasant it is ♦
to dwell together in unity.

2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, ♦
running down upon the beard,

3 Even on Aaron’s beard, ♦
running down upon the collar of his clothing.

4 It is like the dew of Hermon ♦
running down upon the hills of Zion.

5 For there the Lord has promised his blessing: ♦
even life for evermore.

Mercy and truth are met together,
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Grant to your people, good Lord, the spirit of unity, that they may dwell together in your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reflection**

There are moments in history that echo in our hearts and memories. Hiroshima is one of these. The image of the explosion had a strange beauty. The wide cloud like mushroom shape seemed to have a softness about it. But there was nothing soft in the devastation created in the wake of the explosion.

In the work of a moment the bomb was released, and the world would never be the same. Not because of the resulting damage and death, bad as it was. The world could never be the same as we saw how all was destroyed, those who were innocent, the children, those who held a bright and caring future, wiped out of existence, the land as a place of beauty and nurture gone, the animals and plants, gone. A human being, or more rightly a chain of human beings made the decision to push a button that denied life, future and hope for others. A human being, or a chain of humans, together acted in full knowledge of the response of exploding a nuclear bomb. That is what we can never forget – the ability of humankind to enact wholescale evil.

In God’s story we hear again and again of the sins of humankind. The sins of greed, power hungry people wanting to have all things for themselves, wanting to shape the world their way. Wanting to be in control, and in judgement. Wanting to be affirmed that their desires, their thoughts, their actions are right and just.

In God’s story of the world, God tries to reach us, God sends messengers and they are rejected. God tries to speak to the people, but they won’t or can’t hear. God sees the world growing further away from love, from justice for the weak and voiceless, growing cold to the stranger. In a final bid to make the world understand, God decides to come, to become one of us. In Jesus we see the humanity and the divinity of God. It would have been enough to show people how to love. It would have been enough to show people how to care, how to act for one another, how to get close to God. It would have been enough.

But it was not enough for God. God’s story of the world gives the world a rescue plan, Jesus’ life death and resurrection set in place worldwide aftershocks, sin was trampled. Forgiveness and redemption won and continues to win over sin and decay. Death is vanquished and hope secured.

Each time we have to make a choice between good and bad, or to choose to create or destroy, we are walking in the way of Christ when we take the road of life, but walking in the pathway of the nuclear attack every time we choose badly. For each bad choice smooths the long path to a nuclear attack, each bad choice makes the next one easier to take.

For me, I wonder how God views our world. How God weeps at our inhumanity. How God sees the person whose finger is poised to destruction, and weeps with love for them. Lord have mercy on us. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

**Prayers of Intercession Michelle Brown**

Lord Jesus, today we commemorate the feast of your Transfiguration, when you revealed your unimaginable and infinite glory to Peter, James and John. It inspired them to follow you, not as it then seemed to shared glory but to the blood-stained cross and the tomb and to sufferings of their own on the Way of the Cross. We pray that we too may follow in your footsteps, through grace, and to rise each time we fall and fail in our love towards others and to you.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We are created by you, we owe all that we are and can be to you, without need of burnt offerings. And yet we mar your image in us. For on this day we also commemorate the anniversary of the nuclear holocaust - a burnt offering of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – to secure peace. We join our words of prayer to those inscribed on the stone at the site of the blast in Hiroshima: ‘Yet those who died still cry out to heaven and earth, even to those who do not remember the headlines or the news from that day: Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil.’

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Lord, we know that life is messy and that we find ourselves in situations of dilemma and darkness that we never dreamt would face us. Help us to learn the lessons of the past, to avert such horrors from happening again. Help us not to fight fire with fire and become what we hate.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We remember those in regions torn by tension and war, by disaster, famine, poverty and disease, for refugees, for those persecuted for their faith or because of their witness to justice and peace. We ask that they may not be broken by their bodies’ pain or by the deafness of the world to their cries but come to see hope and know that they are heard by you and those you inspire to do good.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Loving Father, into your hands we commend our earth and all life, ever threatened with disaster and sickness, yet enduringly beautiful and wondrous. In the name of your Son, our Saviour, and in the animating power of the Spirit, strengthen our will for peace and justice; increase our faith and work for your kingdom where we are transfigured, where “love and faithfulness will meet, righteousness and peace will embrace” and may your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven, where all is made pure and whole and all tears shall cease.

*Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord,* *Amen.*