

Commemoration of the Victims of Nagasaki

August 8, 2025, Nagasaki; Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL

Dear friends, brothers and sisters, esteemed guests,

We come together on sacred ground. Tomorrow marks eighty years since that dreadful moment – 11:02 am on August 9, 1945 – when a single atomic bomb claimed tens of thousands of innocent lives here in Nagasaki. We stand here not only in remembrance, but in repentance, reflection, and deep hope.

May all who died here on that day, and in the days that followed be at peace and know the comfort of our prayers.

We gather as a people of conscience, as members of one human family, who believe in the dignity and sacredness of every human life.

Nagasaki holds a unique place in history. It was here, tragically, that so many people, ordinary citizens perished under a man-made sun, in the flash of an atomic bomb. Among those who died that day were entire families, children walking to school, the elderly at prayer, and workers beginning another day of labor.

And so, today, we remember.

But memory alone is not enough. As Pope Francis reminded us on his pilgrimage to Nagasaki in 2019, *“A world of peace, free from nuclear weapons, is the aspiration of millions of men and women everywhere.”* And yet, that dream remains unrealized. Our world still teeters on the brink of destruction, and violence still seduces the powerful with its false promises of security.

Peace is not simply the absence of war. It is the presence of justice. It is the practice of mercy. It is the patient labor of respectful dialogue and reconciliation. The beatitudes remind that building peace requires action which creates harmony in all relationships of the one human family: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”*

We are here to honor the dead. Perhaps their greatest legacy will be the leaven which leads to the conversion of the hearts and minds of the people of today. Let us honor our deceased and create a world which no longer lives under the threat of nuclear weapons. The lives lost in Nagasaki cry out - not for vengeance, but for vigilance – for the courage to

break cycles of violence, to renounce weapons of mass destruction, and to build what Pope Saint John XXII called a “*universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty.*”

Let us be clear: Peace is not passive. It is prophetic. It calls each of us to conversion. It demands that we disarm not only our arsenals, but also our hearts – of hatred, suspicion, indifference, and fear.

So today, as we remember the victims of Nagasaki, we also renew our call to be instruments of peace. We remember and honor them by the way we speak, advocate, teach, and live as brothers and sisters of the one human family of God.

Let the names of the dead not fade into silence. Let their memory kindle in us a fire – a fire and ‘revolution of love’.

May Nagasaki, city of sorrow and of faith, continue to be a light to the world – a beacon warning us of the cost of war, and guiding us along the path of peace.

Let us pray:

Creator of all, grant us perseverance to live in harmony with you, with one another, and with all that You bring to life. Grow within us a deep respect for all life and grant us the ability to ‘forge bonds of fraternity, to recognize the dignity of each human being, and to work together to care for our common home’. (see *Dilexit Nos*, No. 217 – Pope Francis).

AMEN