

REMEMBERING HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI: 60 YEARS LATER

Background Information for Faith Communities

Excerpt from "Remembering Hiroshima", Francois Bugnion, International Review of the Red Cross.
<<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng>>

"A flash **a thousand times brighter than the sun** set the sky afire, immediately followed by an incandescent heat and, a few moments later, a whirlwind which swept away everything in its path... The fire spread from neighborhood to neighborhood before dying out from lack of fuel, around the middle of the afternoon. By that time **the entire city was gone**... All around, within four or five kilometers of the bomb's epicenter, houses had been reduced to rubble, trees uprooted, vehicles hurled about, and railway lines twisted as if by some supernatural force. In all, **90% of the buildings were destroyed or badly damaged**. Windows shattered as far as 27 kilometers from the point of impact.

About **80, 000 people were killed** in the explosion and almost as many suffered serious injuries. **Many were to die** in the weeks and months that followed, in **terrible agony** from the **burns** they sustained or from the effects of the **radiation, internal hemorrhaging, cancer, leukemia**... **There was nothing but death and desolation.**"

Excerpt from "Why Remember Hiroshima?", By Dennis Rivers, 1997.
<<http://www.nonukes.org/whyremem.htm>>

"As we remember the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 60 years ago, **we must ask ourselves what the taking of innocent civilian life means to us**. We continue to euphemize and depersonalize with terms such as 'collateral damage.' Collateral damage consists of all the people we have killed or injured, whom we did not particularly intend to kill or maim... According to various sources, **there were at least half a million civilian casualties in Japan**... Only by acknowledging how vulnerable we ALL are to these murderous enthusiasms, confusions and self-deceptions, to which **the souls of Hiroshima dead bear silent witness, can we avoid repeating the moral catastrophes of our past.**"

Excerpt from remarks by Joe Volk, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Arlington, Virginia, March 6, 2004.

"No moral imperative can ever justify the mass extermination of a people just because of their race. And no moral imperative can ever justify the use of nuclear weapons against cities to win a war and thereby save others' lives. We should be very skeptical that anything is a moral imperative, but the abolition of nuclear weapons is an exception. **Abolition of nuclear weapons is a moral imperative**. By design nuclear weapons, if used, **will exterminate masses of people--not armies but civilians**. ..Some of the major religions have issued statements on the question of nuclear disarmament. **One does not have to be from an historic peace church to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons.**"

For links to a wide range of religious perspectives on nuclear issues see:
<<http://www.zero-nukes.org/religiousstatements3.html>>