

LIVING WITH EVIL: SEVENTY YEARS ON

Wed 22 July 2015

Seventy years ago on 6 and 9 August, the evil of nuclear weapons was revealed with the devastation of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the death of over 200,000 people, many dying days and weeks later from the effects of radiation.



Photo: At 11:02 a.m. on Aug. 9, 1945, St. Mary's Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, then the largest Christian church in East Asia, was at the centre of the most Christian city in Japan and at ground zero.

August 6 is also the Feast of the Transfiguration. In the transfiguration, Jesus is seen by three of his disciples in a radiant light speaking with Moses and Elijah and the event reveals Jesus as the Son of God, and a bridge between heaven and earth. The transfiguration is considered as one of the five major milestones in the life of Jesus. This is a pivotal point where human nature meets God.

How extraordinary? The transfiguring power of evil was revealed on the anniversary of the day when Christians observe the transfiguring power of the Son of God. How stark is the choice that reality presents?

On this seventieth anniversary, nine countries together possess more than 15,000 nuclear weapons. The United States and Russia maintain roughly 1,800 of their nuclear weapons on high-alert status – ready to be launched within minutes of a warning. Most are many times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. A single nuclear warhead, if detonated on a large city, could kill millions of people with the effects persisting for decades.

Nuclear weapons are the most destructive, inhumane and indiscriminate weapons ever created. Both in the scale of the devastation they cause, and in their uniquely persistent, spreading, genetically damaging radioactive fallout, they are unlike any other weapons. A single nuclear bomb detonated over a large city could kill millions. The use of tens or hundreds of nuclear bombs would disrupt the global climate, causing widespread famine.

Five months after Hiroshima, the international community recognised the evil that had been unleashed. The first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 24

January 1946 calls for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and sets up a commission to deal with the problem of the atomic discovery. Today, sixty eight countries support a global ban on nuclear weapons.

In Australia, there is strong support for the elimination of nuclear weapons. A Nielsen poll in April 2014 showed that **84 per cent of Australians** want the government to join international efforts to ban nuclear weapons. There is also significant political support. More than 100 Australian parliamentarians have signed the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) **parliamentary appeal** for a nuclear weapons ban.



Many prominent Australians, including 800 recipients of the Order of Australia have signed an ICAN appeal to the prime minister to support a global ban on nuclear weapons. The appeal states in part:

There is a growing consensus among world leaders on the urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons. The increasing risks of nuclear weapons proliferation and use in our region and beyond mean there has never been a more important time for Australian initiative and leadership in global efforts to free the world from nuclear weapons.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged governments to consider negotiating a convention to outlaw nuclear weapons and provide for their elimination within an agreed time frame. We, the undersigned recipients of the Order of Australia, call upon the Australian government to adopt a nuclear-weapon-free defence posture and to join other nations in working to achieve a comprehensive, verifiable treaty to abolish nuclear weapons.

On the seventieth anniversary of Hiroshima, let's join with Christians from around the world in a prayer issued by the World Council of Churches and call on our Government "to join inter-governmental initiatives, and affirm civil society endeavours, to ban the production, deployment, transfer and use of nuclear weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law and in fulfilment of existing international obligations". Let's do it for our kids and grandkids!

[Thanks to ICAN for many of the facts included above.]

Russell Rollason AM is a parishioner at Holy Covenant, Jamieson and a member of the Diocesan Public Issues Commission.