

December 2020

*She shall give birth to a Son, and he shall be called "Emmanuel" (meaning "God is with us")."*ⁱ

Christmas Greetings!

Everyone has heard of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. August 1945 gave rise to events that continue to be debated by politicians, military strategists, philosophers and theologians.

What is not generally known is that the plutonium "Fat Man" that was dropped on Nagasaki landed primarily on the city's Christian district. 8,500 of the 12,000 Catholics living there were killed; a quarter of the total death toll.ⁱⁱ Murder by nuclear bomb is not made worse by the religion of its victims. The decimation (*quartamation?*) of a faith community speaks to the tragedy of all wars.

Suffering – from violence or viruses – has no ethnic or cultural allegiances.

What is striking about the Nagasaki story is the response of the Christian community. They pleaded for peace and forgiveness; advocating love as the way forward.ⁱⁱⁱ On Christmas Eve, 1945, a small group of survivors knelt before a makeshift altar in the bombed-out shell of St. Mary's Cathedral. There, they sang the Japanese version of "Silent Night."^{iv} The Rev. Angela Tilby remarks that, "*nothing could have stopped them celebrating midnight mass, even an atomic bomb.*"^v

Thankfully (and hopefully), the horrors of nuclear war are behind us. But there are still crises and catastrophes that must be endured. The SARS-CoV-2 virus being the latest. From the Western Front of 1914 to the Covid sickbeds of today, the words of "Silent Night" give us hope. Light and Love and Peace are being reborn – right here, right now. God IS with us.

Wishing you deepest Christmas blessings,
Brenda

ⁱ Matthew 1: 23 The Living Bible

ⁱⁱ Brother Anthony Josemaria, "The Catholic Holocaust of Nagasaki," Catholic Culture, Aug/Sep. 2010

ⁱⁱⁱ Takashi Nagai, "The Bells of Nagasaki," quoted in Josemaria.

^{iv} Angela Tilby, "Covid exiles need armour of light", Church Times, 12/4/2020

^v Ibid.