



## **Pax Christi Asia-Pacific's Solidarity Statement on the Visit of US Bishops to Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

Pax Christi Asia-Pacific stands in solidarity with Archbishop John C. Wester and Seattle Archbishop Paul Etienne as they undertake their "Pilgrimage of Peace" to Japan to promote nuclear disarmament. The urgency of their mission reflects our anxiety that nuclear arms are still part of military planning. They are calling upon all people to engage in an "urgent conversation" about the continued risks posed by the stockpiling and development of nuclear weapons.

The events of August 6 and August 9, 1945, forever altered the course of human history with the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As we commemorate these anniversaries, we must reflect on the devastating consequences of nuclear conflict and recommit ourselves to preventing such a tragedy from ever happening again.

Archbishop Wester's assertion that people have been "lulled into a false sense of complacency" regarding nuclear dangers resonates deeply. It is imperative that we resist this complacency and acknowledge the grave threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity. As he rightly points out, there is no middle ground when it comes to nuclear war - either we entirely avoid it, or we face utter destruction.

We stand united in our belief that nuclear disarmament is not only a moral imperative but also a matter of global security and survival. The dangers posed by these weapons cannot be understated, and the time to act is now.

Furthermore, we commend Pope Francis for his efforts to shift Catholic teaching away from acceptance of the global system of nuclear deterrence. His leadership in advocating for nuclear disarmament inspires us to follow the path of peace and justice.

In this spirit of solidarity, we call upon all nations to engage in meaningful dialogue and take concrete steps towards disarmament. It is incumbent upon us to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons, where peace, diplomacy, and cooperation prevail. On the sixtieth anniversary of Pope John XXIII's encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), let us reflect on his words written for an atomic age: "it is contrary to reason to hold that war is now a suitable way to restore rights which have been violated". This is the same Pope who played a significant role in helping de-escalate the Cuban missile crisis that had brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war.

Let us remember the innocent lives lost in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and honor their memory by advocating for a future that rejects the threat of nuclear war. In this respect, we urge all States, including Japan, to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We must ensure that the tragedy of those fateful days serves as a reminder of the horrors of nuclear conflict and motivates us to build a world free from the threat of nuclear annihilation.