

## Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony & Peace Message Lantern Floating Ceremony

The experience of watching the warm lights of some 10,000 lanterns as they float tranquilly down the river in the dark of *Hiroshima Peace Memorial* night, each bearing wishes for peace from *Hiroshima*



*Peace Memorial Ceremony* the gathered attendees, has a powerful, almost other-worldly quality. The participants in this event include not only Hiroshima locals, but also many visitors who come from far and wide.

Some 50,000 local citizens and visitors, as well as ambassadors and dignitaries from around 70 countries, gather here in the morning to console the spirits of those killed by the atomic bomb and also to pray for lasting world peace.

Held virtually every year since 1947, just two years after the atomic bomb was dropped, this ceremony features speeches with entreaties for peace from the Prime Minister of Japan, the Mayor of Hiroshima and other noteworthy figures. At 8:15 on the morning of August 6th, marking the exact moment when the atomic bomb was dropped, bells ring out at temples, sirens wail throughout the city and the citizens of Hiroshima observe a solemn moment of silence in remembrance.

Remembering the 140,000 irreplaceable human lives that were lost, either on the day of the bombing or in the ensuing months, and the numerous atomic bomb survivors who still suffer from its after effects even to this day, one cannot help but be left with a strong sense of the horrors of nuclear weapons and a strong hope for world peace in one's heart.

The pictured "Peace Message Lantern Floating Ceremony" is held on the evening of August 6th. Anyone is welcome to write messages of peace on the lanterns, which will be set afloat down the Motoyasu River, where they will pass directly in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome.

In 2013 in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis delivered this message for our reflection.

*"Is it possible to walk the path of peace?"*

*Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death?*

*Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace?*

*Yes, it is possible for everyone! . . .*

*How I wish that all men and women of good will would look to the cross if only for a moment!*

*There, we can see God's reply: violence is not answered with violence, death is not answered with the language of death. In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, and peace is spoken."*