



LITANY of REMEMBRANCE:

Introduction: In 1995, the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Japan reflected on their childhood experiences during and immediately following World War II and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The following are some of their experiences expressed in the simple voices of girl-children, who experienced the terrible tragedy of war and the social turmoil, which followed it. (Briefly pause after the reading each statement.)

*As I walked through the burned city, I tried not to see the many dead bodies.

*One of the members of my family was killed by the atomic bomb.

*For a week I stayed in a cave with the bleached bones of the dead.

*My cousin was 16 years old. As she was running away with us, she was shot by an American soldier and died. My grandmother's mother and also two aunts died in the bomb raids.

*I saw for the first time what remained of a family; four dead bodies that were blackened as a result of the fires started by the bombs.

*I saw many dead bodies that were burnt, loads and loads of them.

*We had an underground hole which we made into a shelter. We went into this shelter many times during the night because of the bomb raid sirens. One night my father said that even if the bombs dropped on us, we wanted to stay at home and die with the whole family together. After that, we stayed together in bed at home, and didn't run into the shelter hole during the night anymore.

*After the atomic bomb dropped, we were living in the underground shelter even during the daytime.

*I saw many people who were living in makeshift houses made of what they had salvaged from the ruins of the fires.

*My 7 year old cousin's parents had tuberculosis, so my parents took care of him. We were living with 17 people for several years.

(Pause for a moment of silent prayer.)

All sing: Kyrie eleison

*When I was born, I was small because my mother didn't have enough food. She never expected me to grow up. She was so sure that I would die, that she did not register my birth at the city office.

*Sometimes I had to eat even the stems of grass because I was so hungry.

*We were without food for three days. (I had that experience many times.)

*My skin shriveled from malnutrition.

*I was always hungry and my mother wept because she couldn't give us enough food.

*I stole something to eat from the fields because I was so hungry.



*When it was supper time, my mother didn't join us. She was working in the kitchen because she had given her food to her children.

*For lunch we had just three beans each, so I chewed them many times.

*I ate grasshoppers and many kinds of grass, but it was very difficult eating these.

*We raised potatoes and pumpkins to eat. Today I dislike them. My mother told me that when I was a child I ate potatoes and pumpkin every day, so that's why I probably hate them now.

(Pause for a moment of silent prayer.)

All sing: Christe, eleison

*My mother sold her clothes to buy food for us.

*To this day I cry when I remember how hard it was for my mother after the war.

*I got a skin disease all over my body and my undershirt was full of patches.

*My uncle was made to stay in Siberia and he never came back so my mother's family name became extinct and the family lost all their property.

*When my city was bombed, we sought shelter under a bridge. I saw red and yellow bombs fall from the sky.

*When we were in an underground shelter, bombs dropped so close that the earth cracked. I thought that we would be buried alive.

*The day after the atomic bomb exploded, there was a lot of burning ash falling from the sky. Children were sick with diarrhea, and many students were absent from school.

*We were bombed over and over. I was afraid.

*Bombs destroyed our house.

(Pause for a moment of silent prayer.)

All sing: Kyrie eleison

*I worked very hard helping to make a runway for our airplanes. I became sick from this hard work.

*I worked in a factory making materials so I couldn't study for a year and a half.

*I was questioned by a nurse when I went to visit the religious sisters/teachers who were being kept at Seibo Byoin hospital, then used as their concentration camp. For days, how seriously I worried thinking I might be arrested by the military police.

*I had to endure many hard things during the war. I was crushed by my suffering at that time. I don't know how to share about these experiences because they are too sad to share.

*My younger brother became so sick that my mother and I took turns holding him in our arms all night.



*We didn't have enough firewood to heat bath water, so we didn't take a bath every day. When we did take a bath, my mother invited the older neighbors, so that, when it was my turn, the water wasn't very clean.

*My father didn't like to talk about the war.

*We worried about what the American soldiers would do to us when they came.

*I knew that many people became mentally ill because of the effects of the war.

*I couldn't go to school for one year after the end of the war because I had had such horrible experiences during the war.

*After it was announced that the American forces had landed, one of our friends came to our rural district looking for a safe place to hide her daughters from them.

*There were many uneasy situations, but I remember that American soldiers were very kind to women and children.

(Pause for a moment of silent prayer.)

All sing: Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

Even to our death.