Opinion
Guest Voices



Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, N.M., speaks during a peace gathering in Hiroshima, Japan, Aug. 5, 2025, the eve of the 80th anniversary of the United States dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. At left is Cardinal Robert McElroy of Washington. (OSV News/Catholic Standard/Mihoko Owada)



by John Dear

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This week on "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," John Dear speaks with Archbishop John Wester of Sante Fe, New Mexico, about his pilgrimage of peace last month to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, for the 80th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing, and his groundbreaking work of reconciliation with the bishops and church in Japan.

Wester became archbishop of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in 2015 after serving as bishop of Salt Lake City, and before that, auxiliary bishop of San Francisco. His Jan. 11, 2022, pastoral letter called, "Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament" is the first official document in U.S. church history calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Wester spoke about his first visit to Hiroshima a few years ago, and returning home to Santa Fe and seeing the place where the scientists worked on the actual Hiroshima bomb. "I felt the Lord calling me to do something about multi-lateral verifiable nuclear disarmament," he said.

"We commemorate this anniversary," he said, "so that it will never happen again. We're not just commemorating the past but trying to preserve the future."

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During his meetings with the Japanese bishops and other church leaders, he and others launched a new organization, "A Partnership for a World Without Nuclear Weapons," to promote solidarity and cooperation between the Japanese and American church for nuclear disarmament.

He quoted Army Gen. Omar Bradley: "Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount."

"Pope Francis changed the whole discourse in the Catholic Church on nuclear weapons," Wester said. "He said that even possessing nuclear weapons is immoral.

But we've become inured to war, violence and starvation. Over 60,000 have died in Gaza; we read about it, sip some coffee and go on with our daily business. We have to join our voices with others to get rid of nuclear weapons and end our wars."

Listen to the full episode here.

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