

THE DAY OF DESTRUCTION

An Eye-Witness Account of the A-Bomb over Hiroshima

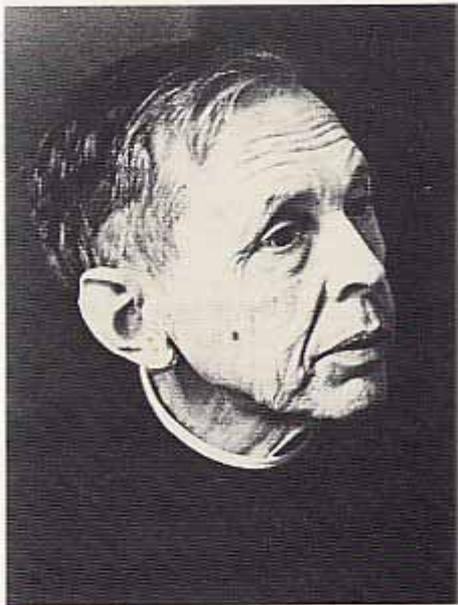
HUBERT CIESLIK, S.J.

Translated from the Japanese by Francis Mathy, 1997

(An article from Francis Britto's *All about Francis Xavier*)

(1) NOBORICHO

In June of 1945 I moved from the novitiate at Nagatsuka, on the outskirts of Hiroshima, where we Jesuits who were still in studies had been sent when the bombing of Tokyo became very severe, to our church in the middle of the city. I had a boil on a finger of my right hand that would not heal and I had to go almost every day to the clinic of Dr. Fujii, which was near the church.



P. Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle SJ
* 11. 11. 1898
† 7. 7. 1990

At that time the church at Noboricho was an old Meiji-style Japanese building. In front of it stood five pine trees. It had once immediately faced the street, but when Fr. Weisenfels built the new priests' residence, he had moved the church to its present location further into the compound. On the left side of the building was a rather spacious chapel with a matted floor; on the right, rooms for teaching catechism, where in 1941 Fr. La Salle began the kindergarten of Our Lady. (The partitions between the right and left sides and between the rooms on the right side could all be opened to make the church larger on special occasions such as Christmas and Easter.) Soon after Fr. Ogihara had come to replace Bishop Ross as head of the Okayama-Hiroshima Diocese, he had had a small tower built on the roof of the church. This, together with the pine trees, gave the church compound a rather solemn appearance.

The priests' residence, built in 1937, stood at the left of the church. When the Hiroshima Diocese was set up in 1923, out of what had been part of the diocese of Osaka, the new bishop made his residence in Okayama, since there was no suitable place for him to live in Hiroshima. Fr. Weisenfels, thinking it would be to the advantage of their apostolic work in the Hiroshima area to have the bishop living in that city and to have a commodious residence there for him and the priests who assisted him, built a very sturdy building of wood and mortar. His next project was to have been the building of a cathedral for the new diocese, but the war intervened. There took place the Shanghai Incident and then the Pacific War began. Fr. Weisenfels' dream of building a new church was never realized.

To the right of the church was the home of Mr. Hoshijima, the resident catechist.

When I went to live in Noboricho, Fr. Ogihara, the vicar apostolic of the diocese, was away on government business: he had been sent to the distant island of Flores in Indonesia and charged with the mission of getting the Catholic Indonesians on the island to warm up to their Japanese conquerors. During Fr. Ogihara's absence, Fr. La Salle was acting vicar of the diocese. He was also the superior of all the Jesuits in Japan. Living with him in the residence besides myself were Fr. Kleinsorge, pastor of the church, and Fr. Hubert Schiffer, who had come from Nagatsuka to join the community in July. Thus, we were at four priests. Also living in the house were a seminarian from Nagasaki by the name of Takemoto and Kanji Fukai, secretary to the vicar apostolic, who had once been an Anglican priest. After his conversion to Roman Catholicism he had first been one of the central pillars of the *Catholic Science and Thought Institute* in Okayama, and then he had followed Bishop Ross to Hiroshima. At one time during the war there had been a plan to ordain him a priest, to help alleviate the shortage of priests, but the plan was never realized.

Behind the priests' residence lived Mrs. Murata, whose job it was to find provide our daily meals and who, even in a time when food had become very scarce, always managed to come up with something. Even beyond that, she knew the favorite food of every priest in the diocese and on the occasion of his visit to Noboricho would go to great lengths to obtain it for him. She hailed from an island in Nagasaki Prefecture and when she went on a visit to her native village, she would return loaded down with provisions to augment our slender rations. The only trouble was that before leaving she would nail down the cupboards in the kitchen so that during her absence of one week no one could even get at the salt or soy sauce.

One morning in July I came upon Mrs. Murata standing immobile in the back yard with a broom in her hand and looking very confused. When I asked if something was the matter, she told me: "I had a dream last night. The church was a sea of flames. I'm sure that something terrible is going to happen soon." She assured me that this was no ordinary dream. She had seen everything so clearly!

Also living in the church compound were the catechist, Mr. Hoshijima, and his family. Since now during wartime the job of catechist was not a very highly esteemed occupation, and also, undoubtedly, because he wanted to serve his country, on weekdays, accompanied by his oldest son, he would go to help out at the prefectural offices. Living in one room of Mr. Hoshijima's house were two kindergarten teachers that Fr. La Salle had called to Hiroshima from the Sophia Settlement in Tokyo.

(2) THE OBSERVATION PLANE, THREE TIMES A DAY

Since moving to Noboricho, my most important "work", apart from preparing for my final exams in theology, was to go every day or every other day to Dr. Fujii's clinic in Hashimoto-cho. After he had pierced the boil, the treatment was taking much longer than I had expected. It may have been because I was undernourished, but the wound would not heal. I got to know Dr. Fujii very well and to enjoy his company. I would sometimes visit him in the evening and in pleasant conversation with him forget about the war.

Every night without fail the warning sirens would sound at about 9 o'clock and the radio would announce that "some 40 enemy planes have been spotted flying in a northwesterly

direction.” ”Right on time,” Dr. Fujii would say laughing. Then he would begin his preparations for a possible bombing and I would rush back to the church.

“Right on time!” Three times every day the American planes came “right on time.” They were more punctual than our wartime trains. Usually 20 or 30 planes from an airplane carrier would fly over, but occasionally it would be big B29 bombers. The planes would pass over us at 10 o’clock in the morning, 4 o’clock in the afternoon, and 10 o’clock at night. The sirens would begin to blow an hour before anything could be seen in the skies and there would be an announcement over the radio that the planes were heading for the western part of Honshu. Shortly after that, the actual air raid sirens would ring, making a very unpleasant sound. At that signal everyone was to enter an air raid shelter. But these planes had been flying over us three times a day like this for several months and not a single bomb had been dropped. So now the people no longer ran for their shelters but looked up at them and wondered where they were going. Then seeing the proud and stately advance of the planes, acting as if they owned the skies, some would raise their fists and shout angry words.

But the people could not remain disinterested observers. Their nerves began to fray. Newspapers and radio reported the places that had been bombed the previous day, and visitors to Hiroshima gave lively eyewitness accounts of the great devastation caused by the bombs that had fallen on their cities. They heard of the continuing bombing raids on Tokyo, Kobe, and Osaka. By July all the adjacent cities of any importance had been bombed, one after another: Okayama, Fukuyama, Kure, Iwakuni. When the Navy’s oil tanks in Tokuyama were set on fire, the black smoke covered the skies of Hiroshima for an entire day. When we opened up a map and took stock, we could see that almost all of the cities of Japan had been hit. There remained only Kyoto, Nagasaki, and Hiroshima!



B-29 Showering Bombs

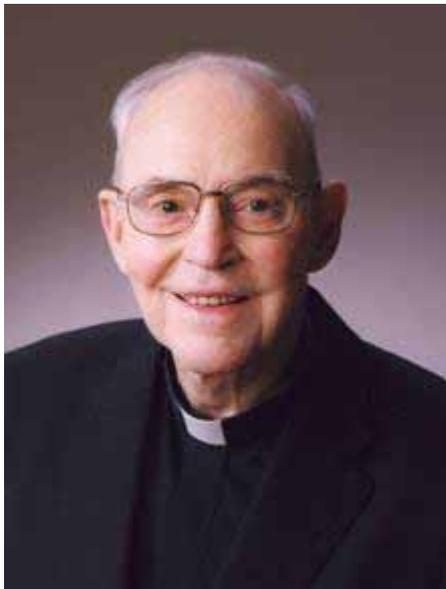
We felt greater and greater unease as we observed dozens of bombers fly over Hiroshima each day and still not a single bomb dropped. What could this mean? After nearby Kure was bombed, Hiroshima became a ghost town every night, as people, in the evening after the day’s work, formed a long procession leaving the city in order to find shelter for the night with relatives and friends in outlying areas. Those who had no other place to go spent the night in the open fields and returned to the city in the morning. One night when the air raid siren sounded, I noticed that no one remained in our neighborhood except people connected with the church. When would Hiroshima’s turn come?

In between air raid warnings we tried to get our work done at the church. We were not lacking catechumens. In the past half year Fr. Kleinsorge had been able to administer baptism to as many as ten people.

The church had a special attraction that drew the people: a record concert every Saturday. At the time of the concert the biggest room in the residence was always full. Some fifty or sixty

people crowded into the room and listened with deep satisfaction to classical music, for that brief hour trying to forget about the war. This hour was an oasis in the desert for their hearts. When he was introducing the music, Fr. La Salle never failed to say a word to them about the meaning of man and the purpose of human life. The good effects of his talks can be seen in the fact that most of the people baptized at this church immediately after the war had been of the group attending the record concerts.. Among them were also some who later entered religious orders and others who led their entire families to Christ. Thus the seeds sown during that period of air raid warnings produced abundant fruit. Soon after the record concert ended, about 9 PM, the sirens would ring and the planes would fly over. The people hurried back to their homes and to the harsh reality of their lives. But the interesting thing is that the concert was never canceled because of the threat of air raids. The last concert was held on Saturday, August 4, two days before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

On July 1 there were ordinations to the priesthood at our seminary in Nagatsuka. Bishop Fukahori came all the way from Fukuoka to ordain Fr. Luhmer and Fr. Erlinghagen. When he arrived, we would never have recognized him had we not been expecting him, since he was



Karl Luhmer, S.J.

wearing the drab uniform that all patriotic citizens of that day were expected to wear. It was a very impressive day. All of us from Noboricho were present, as was also Fr. Sanada, who had come up from Kure. Since we were well away from the city, we ignored the 11 o'clock planes. We got through the Mass and the ordinations without incident, except that during the Mass word came that the pigs had escaped from their pen and there were a few minutes of confusion. After the Mass, Bishop Fukahori joined us in our reception dinner for the two newly ordained priests. It was really quite a feast. The Jesuits at Nagatsuka had been preparing a long time for this day, saving food by skimping on their meals; and Fr. Minister, Fr. Nebel, had done some very successful scrounging for the feast.

In the afternoon I returned to Hiroshima with Fr. Sanada, accompanying him partway to the railroad station, from which he was to take a train for Kure. He was carrying a large *furoshiki*, which, he told me with a beaming face, contained potatoes given him at Nagatsuka. We parted: I walked on to our church in nearby Noboricho, and he returned to his in distant Kure. But the potatoes which he had been so happy to take back with him from Nagatsuka were never served at his table. He reached his church in Kure by nightfall. He had just opened his breviary and begun to pray Vespers when punctually at their usual time in the evening the planes flew over the city. But that night they were not headed for another city: it was Kure's turn to be bombed. Fire bombs were dropped all over the city and the port. The church was burned down. All that remained of the church buildings the following morning was the washroom, with laundry still soaking in water.

After the bombing of Kure, residents of Hiroshima who had occasion to go there and saw with their own eyes the ruins of the burnt out city and the sunken ships in the harbor would return shaking their heads sadly in silence. One evening Mr. Fukai returned from Kure and announced, "We've lost the war!" From that day he was like another person.

All through the month of July we were kept busy digging air raid shelters and taking part in air raid drills, learning what we should do when the attack finally came. Father La Salle, who was a great lover of music, worried less about his own safety than of that of his beloved cello. Under the statue of St. Joseph in the garden he dug a hole large enough to hold this treasured instrument, and every night before going to bed he would place the cello and his records near a door, so that when the bombers came, he could quickly carry them out into the garden and bury them. But, in the event, his preparations proved futile.

In our vegetable garden we buried most of our sacred vessels and the candlesticks, and also some of our kitchen utensils. When the laundry next to the church closed, since the proprietor and his family moved to a safer place in the country, we were able to purchase their coal stock at a good price. This too we buried behind the residence. The seminarians at Nagatsuka often came to Noboricho with carts and hauled back to the novitiate such things as the official records of the diocese, the sacred vestments of the church, and the piano in the parlor.

On Sunday, August 5, a solemn requiem Mass was offered for all who had lost their lives in the war. On this occasion the most splendid black vestments were used and the large German organ, which was the talk of the town, was played. Both the vestments and the organ were scheduled to make the trip to Nagatsuka the following day, but they never made it.

(3) 8:15 IN THE MORNING

August 6, on the liturgical calendar, is the feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The previous night the planes flew over at the usual time, but air raid warnings sounded all night. Only as morning approached did the sirens finally cease. The sun rose that morning in a clear cloudless sky.

After Mass and breakfast I went to my room and opened my breviary to begin Morning Prayer. I was not feeling well. I had had little sleep because of the protracted air raid warnings and my stomach was upset, probably a result of our steady diet of beans. Beans in rice, bread made out of bean powder, everything we ate had beans in it. Despite the summer heat I put a cushion over my stomach and began to intone the psalms.

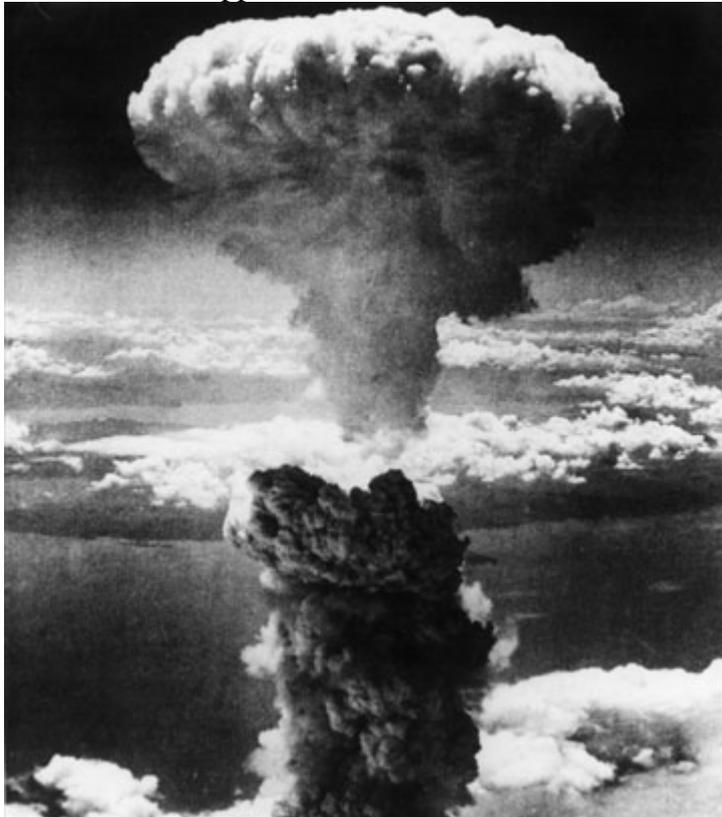
I remember that I had gotten as far as Terce when I heard the sound of B29s flying overhead and I heard Fr. La Salle, at the window of the room above me, say, "Two more planes." I took it for granted that they were also observation planes. Just at that moment the world outside my window lit up with a tremendous light. A bomb has fallen nearby, I thought. Maybe even in the church compound. I fell to the floor in the doorway between two rooms, as I had been taught to do in so many drills. It was none too soon. On all sides objects were falling to the floor and flying through the air. I remained on the floor, not moving, head cradled in my arms for protection. After some time everything became quiet; no sound could be heard. I lifted my head a little and looked around. To my surprise, everything was dark. I wondered if the house had fallen down over me, if I had been buried alive. I noticed that there was dust everywhere. When the dust had settled a little, I looked around me and saw that the room was a mess. From a big hole that had been gouged out of a wall of the room I looked out at a gray sky.

I gently raised my body from the floor and took stock of myself. Fortunately, I was not seriously injured. There was a scratch on my forehead and a splinter of glass had cut into

my left hand, and it was bleeding a little. As I looked around the room, my first impulse was to gather together my most cherished possessions and rush out of the house with them, but in the next moment I realized that people are more important than things. I stepped through the hole in the wall into the garden.

I can never forget the sight that greeted me there! As far as the eye could reach in any direction, all that I saw was a sea of devastation and ruin. The church building, the catechist's house, the wooden houses around us—all, without exception, had been leveled to the ground. It looked as if there had been a tremendous earthquake. All that remained standing were concrete buildings, twisted out of shape, and the priests' residence that I had just come out of. This too was a wooden building but it had been recently constructed and was far sturdier than the usual wooden buildings, thanks to the engineering skill of Brother Groper, who had arrived in Japan shortly after the great Tokyo earthquake of 1923. The mortared walls had been blown away but the structure remained standing. The tiles of the roof had all been blown off. Later we found pieces of our tile as far as 200 or 300 meters away.

But what had happened to the others? I ran around the house and found three of the Fathers



The Atomic Mushroom

standing at the back door. Fr. Schiffer was drenched in blood. He had been sitting reading in the room next to mine, which was the library, and fragments of the glass of the bookcases had cut him in many places and he was bleeding profusely. After a short consultation, we decided to take him to Dr. Fujii's clinic.

But we did not go very far. When we got to the street, we saw that it was overlaid with the debris of the fallen houses and was almost impassable. Then we realized for the first time that Noboricho was not the only place hit but that the entire city had been destroyed. Looking in the direction of Hashimoto-cho, we could find no building that could be identified as Dr. Fujii's clinic. (It stood on the river bank and afterwards we heard that it had been blown into the

river.)

It was only now that we realized that what had hit us was no ordinary bomb. There was no use looking for another clinic. With heavy hearts we returned to the church. Fr. Schiffer decided to go by himself to nearby Asano Park, which had been designated as a zone of refuge.

Meanwhile, Fr. La Salle and Fr. Kleinsorge were digging out the residents of the catechist's house, which had collapsed. Mr. Hoshijima and his son had already left for the prefectural

offices when the bomb exploded, and we never learned what happened to them. The other members of the family, as well as the two kindergarten teachers who were living with them, were buried under the house when it collapsed, but not one of them was injured.

We saw Mr. Fukai at a window opening of the second floor of the priests' residence. I assumed that the stairs had collapsed and he couldn't get down. As I ran behind the house to look for a ladder to rescue him, I heard a moaning voice coming from under the neighboring house. Approaching it, I heard a lady crying out for help. Her house had fallen down on her and she could not get out. I hastened to move the roof tiles and wood planks covering her. The wind that followed the explosion had demolished this house too, and the heavy tile roof, typical of Japanese wooden houses had fallen in to top the mess. It was no easy task to rescue someone pinned under such a roof, especially to do so in such a way as not to injure the one being rescued. I was finally able to open up a path downward. Imagine my delight when I caught sight of the face of the lady.

In the midst of all this horror, there was also some humor. Although this lady lived next door to us, I had never seen her face before. She may have been a newcomer to Hiroshima. Seeing my blood-stained face, she took fright. "Please call a Japanese," she cried. She probably thought I was an enemy soldier that had parachuted down into the city. But there was not even time for a chuckle. I managed to remove the wood around her head and the other parts of her body, but a heavy beam lay across her chest. It would take the strength of more than one person to remove it. Besides, the cut on my hand was bleeding again. I had to find help. I asked her to wait and went to look for someone. Thinking she was being abandoned, she began to cry out for help again in a most pitiful tone of voice. The people fleeing down the streets paid not the least attention to her cry.

Finally, near the priests' house I ran into Fr. La Salle. The cuts on his legs seemed to be bleeding badly, but he returned with me to the neighbor's house. It took great effort, but we were finally able to remove the heavy beam and free her. The woman, surprised and frightened at the sight of the blood-covered bodies of these two foreigners, jumped up and ran off as fast as she could without ever looking back.

When I reflect upon this incident, I realize that most of the people who were pinned under their fallen houses were not badly injured. But since there was no one to dig them out, they were unable to escape before the fire reached them, and they burned to death.

When Fr. La Salle and I returned to the back entrance of the priests' house, the others were all assembled there. The occupants of the catechist's house had already left to look for a place of refuge. All the people who had been in the church compound at the time of the bombing were accounted for and safe. Our next concern was the church. We should bring out the Blessed Sacrament. But tongues of flame were already



A disfigured crucifix

lapping at the church here and there. We did not know where the fire had come from, but it was spreading rapidly. It was now all around us: all the neighboring houses were on fire. Looking further in the distance, we saw that the houses on both sides of the single route that led to Asano Park, the garden along the river that had been designated as a place of refuge in case of a bombing raid, were also on fire. There was no time for us to dig under the roof of the church and find the tabernacle. It was no sacrilege to allow the Blessed Sacrament to be burned; human life had priority, we decided after a short consultation. Then we all left the compound together.

(4) A SEA OF FIRE

The fire continued to spread. The first flames to leap from the church wove in and out of the tiles like a serpent and then became a huge river of fire rising to the skies. Across the street from the church compound, the fire extended as far as the eye could see. That huge expanse had been converted into a fiery hell. People were running along the street in search of a place of refuge.

“We’d better hurry. Unless we hurry, we won’t be able to escape.”

But Mr. Fukai made no move to join us. Fr. Kleinsorge and the seminarian Takemoto had managed, not without difficulty, to get him down from the second floor. Since he kept shouting, “I can’t walk. I can’t walk,” Fr. Kleinsorge took him on his back and carried him out of the compound as if he were a baby on his mother’s back. In the past two or three weeks he had been suffering from a deep depression and now this additional shock! “Leave me here, I want to die,” he kept repeating in a whining voice. Even after Fr. Kleinsorge took him on his back, he kept resisting. He must have been a very heavy burden indeed for the good Father.

We left the church behind us and began to make our way to the designated place of refuge. The direct route to Asano Park had already become impassable, so we headed for Sakae Bridge. We thought that the riverside would be the safest place to be. Many people were heading in the same direction. From the collapsed houses on both sides of the street, which were now a sea of fire, could be heard the desperate cries for help of people pinned under their houses.

When we arrived at Sakae Bridge, we found there a black mountain of people. On the other side of the bridge everything was aflame. People from there too were crossing the river and coming to join us on this side. Worn out from his burden, Fr. Kleinsorge set Mr. Fukai on the ground and took a little rest. Fukai insisted that he would go no further. All attempt at persuasion proved unavailing. But to make our way into the park near the bridge, we would have to walk over the debris of the collapsed houses and it would no longer be possible to carry him on our backs. In any case, here from the bridge there were several avenues to refuge. One could enter the park to the left or go down to the open field by the river. So we decided to leave Fukai there and recommended him to the care of the members of the emergency corps who were standing watch on the bridge. But we never heard anything certain about him again. Several months later we did hear that when the houses near the bridge caught fire, someone looking like Fukai was seen in the flames.

The three of us stepped across the debris of fallen houses that threatened to burst into flame at any moment and managed finally to make our way to Asano Park. The park, which was a

famous garden laid out in the Tokugawa era, was now a mess. Nothing remained, of course, of the garden's beauty. But worse, the riverside, the lanes of the park, in fact, every inch of ground was literally covered with refugees, many of them injured, some of them dead. In the shade of some trees on the bank of the river we found Fr. Schiffer. He was lying on the ground, very much weakened by the continued loss of blood. Fr. La Salle also appeared to have lost much blood from the two deep gashes on his leg.

Looking around us, we could see only sorrow and suffering. It was like a reproduction of the hell in Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel. But we were numbed to the pain. Because of shock and physical exhaustion, our nerves were so atrophied that we could view the dead and the wounded—some of them burned beyond recognition—and feel nothing. I seemed to myself to be only half conscious; I lacked the energy to retain in memory the many details of what I saw, heard, and did. All that I recall now is a number of unconnected episodes not bound together by any well-defined chain of connection.

One of the things that has escaped me is the time connection: I cannot recall the exact time schedule of what occurred on that day. It is a certain fact that the bomb was dropped at 8:15 AM. At that moment almost all of the wooden houses in the entire city were leveled to the ground by the wind that accompanied the explosion. I heard later that immediately after the dropping of the bomb fires broke out here and there, but my recollection is that most of the fires began in the kitchen where stoves were lit and spread out from there. In the vicinity of the church, for example, no fires were to be seen at first. Digging out the people who had been pinned under the catechist's house must have taken a good bit of time. I'm sure it must have taken over an hour. It was only after we had dug them out that we noticed fires in the neighborhood of the church.

As we rested beside the river in Asano Park, I noticed that almost all the buildings on the opposite shore of the river had been destroyed, but there was as yet no fire. As I recall, it was quite a bit later that I saw the first slender flames shoot up from the roof of what appeared to be a warehouse. At that point it could have been extinguished by only one bucket of water. But since there was no one to fetch that bucket of water, the fire began to spread before our eyes until finally that area too became a sea of fire.

At one point—I cannot tell you the exact time—there was a series of heavy explosions and the ground shook. It must be another bombing, I thought at first. But it was the munitions dump located near the soldiers' training field. The tongues of flame had reached the gunpowder and there was one explosion after another.

By noon almost the entire city had become a burning hell. In whatever direction one looked, one could see flames jumping high into the sky. No one tried to do anything to fight the fire. Even if someone had, by then it was already too late. The fire was sweeping



A Twisted Chalice

through the city with a fierce energy. Then the worst possible thing happened. The fire and the heat and the wind joined together to create a tornado. Just when we thought we had come to a safe place where we could rest, the sky suddenly became a deep black and from the burning city we heard a horrifying noise approaching the park at great speed. It was a wind stronger than a typhoon. As it moved along, it picked up tiles, wooden planks, sheets of galvanized iron, pieces of furniture, etc., and tossed them 40 or 50 meters into the air. All we could do was to press our bodies as closely as possible to the solid earth and wait for the wind to pass. It took only one instant for it to fly over us to the river, where it raised the water high into the air like a waterspout. It was truly an awesome sight. Then it started to rain—a black rain.

Finally—about 3 or 4 in the afternoon, I think—the force of the fire seemed to weaken somewhat. Of course, even after that, it continued to spread all through that day and night. Places rather far away from the center of town began to burn; there were even numerous mountain fires. All through the night that followed the sky was tainted red.

When the fire around Asanao Park began to weaken, the people in the park suddenly took on new life. They had made it safely to this place of refuge but now they were faced with the problem of survival. Many had died or been gravely wounded. But those who were still in relatively good condition thought of ways of escaping to safety. The pastor of the nearby Methodist Church, Dr. Tanimoto, went into vigorous action. He suddenly appeared at the park with a boat no one knew where he had gotten and made contact with the emergency corps that was in charge there. He was kind enough to take Takemoto, the seminarian who had come with us from Noboricho, across the river, from which place he could make his way to the novitiate in Nagatsuka, tell the people there where we were, and ask them to come to help remove the two injured fathers to Nagatsuka.

That evening Fr. Kleinsorge and I returned to the church in Noboricho. Leaving the park, we saw that the fire had almost died down, except that there were places here and there where it was still burning. The asphalt of the streets was almost too hot to walk on. When we got to the church, we saw that all the buildings were completely burnt down. The priests' house had not collapsed, so the fire had had to make its way from room to room until it had done its job there too. All that remained of the house was about one meter of the concrete of the foundation and the kitchen sink with dirty dishes still in the water waiting to be washed. When I turned on the faucet, water came pouring out. The same was true of other houses. In other words, while the powerful wind caused by the bomb mercilessly destroyed everything above ground, the water pipes underground suffered not the least damage.

But there was no time for idle observation. From the emergency sack we had buried in the air raid shelter in the garden, I took out the rice and then pulled out some of the pumpkins that still remained in our garden. (They had been half-burned by the fire.) and returned to the park.

When I arrived there, I found that someone had brought some emergency rations of rice balls wrapped in seaweed. To this I added the rice and the pumpkins and other people brought food that they had been able to scrounge. We put everything together and several energetic women prepared supper for everyone. The spirit of cooperation, mutual love, and service of others manifested that night in the park was truly extraordinary. And that same beautiful spirit was to be found everywhere in the year that followed. Mutual suffering had a most amazing power for uniting men's hearts.

(5) RESCUE AT NIGHT

Night fell. The rescue party from Nagatsuka ought to have reached the park by now, but it hadn't. We were afraid that they would not be able to find us in the dark, so I went by myself to meet them. I went as far as the crossing at Shirajima. From there to Nagatsuka there were several routes they might take, but all of them would eventually come together here at Shirajima, so there was no danger of missing them if I stayed there and waited.

I don't remember how long I waited. But the sight that met my eyes as I stood waiting was most eerie. Smoke was still rising from the burnt buildings and occasionally a flame would suddenly flare up and illumine the night with a red light. Here and there on the road were strewn dead bodies. An unending procession of refuge-seekers hurried by, mere shadows in the night. Once 20 or 30 soldiers passed by me. I was afraid that someone might see that I was not a Japanese and mistake me for an enemy soldier and cause a great rumpus, so I did my best to conceal my face.

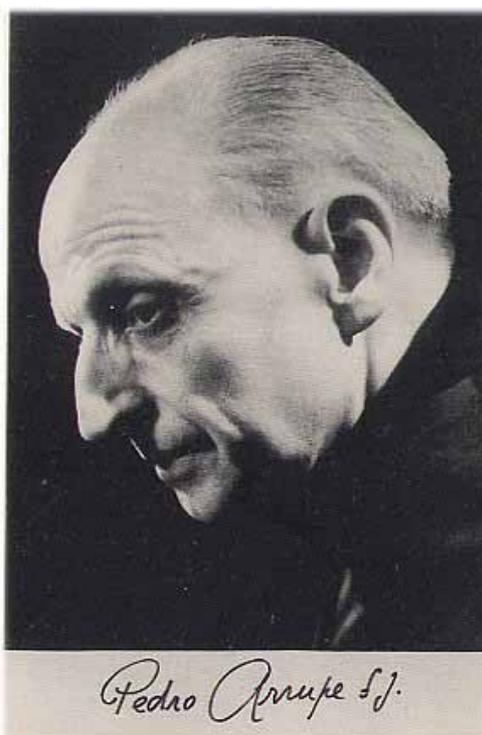
Finally the band from Nagatsuka made its appearance—the rector, Fr. Arrupe, and five others to carry two litters. I led them to our place of refuge in the park. Fr. Schiffer had weakened still further, and the wounds on Fr. La Salle's leg had become so painful that he could no longer walk. We placed them on the two litters and Dr. Tanimoto took us all across the river to Joban Bridge, from which we began our trek back to Nagatsuka. Fr. Kleinsorge decided to remain in the park until the following morning. The next day he too walked to Nagatsuka, taking along with him Mrs. Nakamura, a widow who lived in Noboricho, and her three children.

As we walked in the dark night along the Shirajima road, which we had walked so often, we stumbled many times over the dead bodies of people who had fallen along the way. From the burnt ruins on both sides of the road our nostrils were assailed by smoke and foul odors.

After we crossed Sanjo Bridge, passed through Sanjo, and started up the Kabe road, heading for Nagatsuka, we found ourselves in a sad and silent procession of refugees, many of them wounded. In the mountains across the river mountain fires could be seen here and there and the night sky was red with their flames.

It was after midnight when we reached Nagatsuka.

We had no way of contacting our brother Jesuits in Tokyo and telling them that we were safe. Some of the priests there, we heard later, had immediately said a requiem Mass for us.



(6) RETURNING TO THE CITY OF DEATH

On Tuesday, August 7, I rested the entire day. Some of the priests and seminarians of Nagatsuka once again pulled our cart into town and went to rescue Fr. Kleinsorge and the Nakamuras. The following day, Wednesday, I consulted with Fr. Kleinsorge and we decided to go into the city to inquire after our parishioners. He would cover the territory south of the church, and I, north of the church. We took off immediately after breakfast. I had the Blessed Sacrament in a pyx at my breast. My pockets were stuffed with dry bread and I wore on my head a broad-rimmed straw hat that I had found somewhere. We once again encountered a procession of refugees. Completely exhausted and many of them badly burned, they proceeded at a slow pace along the Kabe Road. We went first to Ushida-machi and visited the houses of the Catholics and other acquaintances that lived there. The university professor, Mr. S., and his family were all safe. When we dropped in on Professor Eto and Professor Tanaka, they were both in the process of repairing their houses, which had received great damage from the wind that accompanied the bomb. Fortunately, Ushida-machi had not been burned.

Then, following the river, we went around Futaba-no-sato and visited Kokuzen Temple. Many of the injured were being taken care of in the spacious halls of this Nichiren temple, so we inquired after Fukai San but could get no news of him.

After that, we visited the ruins of Hiroshima Station. There, as in many other places we visited, we read the messages people had left on “wall newspapers,” notices posted on boards hastily set up at the site of houses that had been destroyed, on walls of railroad stations, or on posts along the street. Before fleeing from the city they had written these notices to tell relatives and friends where they were going, the condition of the family, etc. There, too, we could find no news of Mr. Fukai or of any of our parishioners.

As we walked along observing the devastation on both sides of the street, we were horrified by what we saw, made still more horrible by the stench that was all pervasive. The foul odors issuing from the smoldering remains of the fire and the dead bodies decaying in the hot August sun were almost more than we could bear. For more than half a year, this disgusting smell of destruction and putrefaction continued to assail our nostrils.

Then we went on to the church site. On the way—I have forgotten exactly where—we ran into Fr. Sanada from Kure. On the morning of the bomb he had gone to Kure station to catch a train for Hiroshima, but by the time he arrived there, the train had already left. If he had been on that train, the one commonly used by commuters working in Hiroshima, he would have arrived at Hiroshima station at 8AM, and so he would have been walking to the church when the bomb exploded and would undoubtedly have been burned to death. Later in the day he boarded a bus bound for Hiroshima, but he got no further than Umida. Then on this day, August 8, still very much worried about us, he had finally managed to make his way into the city. He had just arrived. After talking to us and learning of our condition, he parted from us and started off for Nagatsuka, while we continued on to the church. Arriving at Noboricho, we read all the “wall newspapers” at the church and in the immediate vicinity but found no news of Mr. Fukai anywhere.

After visiting the church site I went on by myself to Teishin Hospital in Shirajima. The hospital with its white-tile facing had been quite an imposing building. No longer! It had no windows, and the wind and the fire had ravaged it completely. But it was filled to overflowing

with the injured: they were lying in the sick rooms, in the corridors, and even in the gardens. I went from room to room and read the list of patients posted on the wall, but I could find neither the name of Fukai nor of anyone else I knew.

When I left the hospital, I was very tired. The August noonday heat was almost unbearable, especially since nothing remained standing to cast a shadow. The hot sun beat down mercilessly upon the asphalt streets and the still smoldering embers of the fire. Besides, all I had had to eat since morning was a little dried-up bread. I was in no condition to continue my rounds, so I walked slowly back to Nagatsuka.

On the morning of August 10, I left Nagatsuka again in the company of Fr. Kleinsorge. We went together to Yamamoto Elementary School where we filled out forms indicating our present condition after the bombing. Then Fr. Kleinsorge went on to Hiroshima and I took the Kabe line to Fukakawa and visited Dr. Fujii, who had found refuge there. He was sitting in an easy chair on the veranda with a wet compress on his collarbone, which was broken. He also had received many cuts all over his body. His glasses had been broken and he was at a great loss without them.

It is said that on August 6 there were about 260 doctors in Hiroshima and that about 200 of them died in the bombing, while most of those who did not die suffered great injury. Moreover, all medical equipment and supplies were lost with that one blast. It was absolutely impossible to treat so many seriously wounded patients. The nurse assisting Dr. Fujii returned to the ruins of his clinic and from the emergency pack they had buried there retrieved his stethoscope and other instruments that he used for house calls. She had also found a number of pincers on the grounds and brought these back also. Dr. Fujii polished these, disinfected them, and put them aside for later use. When I returned to Nagatsuka, he gave me a portion of these valuable items to take back with me.



Jesuit Church after the Bomb

Dr. Fujii knew that our novitiate at Nagatsuka had been temporarily converted into a hospital. On the day of the bomb, our rector, Fr. Arrupe, had immediately converted our chapel into an infirmary (despite the fact that the walls had suffered considerable damage and that several of the large pillars had, with the wind that followed the explosion, snapped like match sticks). Before

entering the Society of Jesus, he had studied medicine with the intention of becoming a doctor. Now at last he had an opportunity to put this precious knowledge to use.

But the medical supplies he needed for the proper treatment of the injuries of his patients were lacking. There were no ordinary burns. And he didn't even have any bandages. So we made bandages out of old shirts, sheets, tablecloths, etc. The only medicine we had was boric acid. But Fr. Arrupe had the intuition that the best way to treat this unknown disease was to give

nature a chance to work unimpeded. So all he did was clean the wounds and place boric-acid compresses on them to disinfect them. After that he expected nature to do the rest. The result was beyond all expectations. Of the 90 people treated at our novitiate—some of whom had very severe burns and injuries—only one died.

(7) RADIATION SICKNESS

According to the first official survey made of the extent of the Hiroshima disaster, the number of casualties was 78,150 dead; 37,425 injured; 13,983 whereabouts unknown. These remained for a long time the official figures, and they were published as such by the foreign press. But no inhabitant of Hiroshima ever credited these figures. For many years afterwards, whenever a new construction was begun in the city, skeletons were inevitably dug up when digging the foundation. Some go so far as to say that when the many who died in the following months and even in the following years either as a result of the burns received or of radiation disease, are added to the list of casualties, the figure that emerges is something like 260,000.

Radiation disease. During the month of August, the medical treatment given both at Nagatsuka and at other places where the citizens of Hiroshima had fled was for burns, cuts, and broken bones. But gradually people who had no visible injuries began to show up for treatment. The first symptom to appear was diarrhea. Then their gums began to bleed and their hair to fall out. Finally they came down with a high fever. In two or three days most of them were dead. More surprising still was the fact that people who had not been in Hiroshima the day of the bombing but who had gone there later. Soldiers who had worked in the ruins of the city; Dr. Yoshida, who lived near the church and had gone there to treat the sick; and even people who had returned to Hiroshima one week after the bombing—all these came down with the above-mentioned symptoms and eventually died.

“They inhaled poisonous gas,” people whispered to each other in a worried manner. And there was no way to treat these invalids.

The number of the dying kept increasing. It became necessary to ration wood for the cremation of the corpses, and coffins were unobtainable. There was a crematory on the hill opposite to that of the novitiate, and from morning to evening the smoke of burning corpses rose to the sky, and the valley between us emitted a foul stench such as I had never experienced before.

It became standard practice for us when we awoke in the morning to rush to a mirror and examine our gums and pull at our hair. In the beginning of September both Fr. Kleinsorge and I came down with a severe case of diarrhea. Father Minister, thinking that the trouble must be with our stomachs, restricted our diet to a bowl of rice gruel and one pickled plum. But even after a week of this Spartan diet, the diarrhea continued and we grew weaker and weaker. One morning when we looked into our mirrors, we found that our gums were bleeding. Had we also inhaled poisonous gas, we wondered.

Just at that time Fr. Bitter arrived from Tokyo. At that time he was president of Sophia University and, feeling some responsibility for us, he had come to see how we were. He had also come to consult with our mission superior, Fr. La Salle. I recall how he looked when he

appeared at the entrance to the novitiate: thin, sweating profusely, carrying a huge rucksack on his back.

Seeing the condition that Fr. Kleinsorge and I were in, Fr. Bitter decided to take us back to Tokyo with him. So on September 8 we lay in the novitiate cart and our fellow Jesuits pulled us to Hiroshima Station. For one hour we were drawn over pock holed streets in the old novitiate cart that threatened to fall apart at any moment. But there was no other way of getting us to the station, since we were too sick to walk.

It was 2 o'clock in the afternoon when we reached the station. Someone had gone ahead early in the morning to reserve second-class seats for two invalids. But when we arrived there, we found that the train was already filled to capacity with soldiers who had been discharged from service and were returning home. Thanks to the kind assistance of the station staff, we were able to find seats. We felt greatly relieved when we were finally able to settle down in the train; it had been quite a day and the day was not over yet .

The train finally began to move away from the platform. At that time, of course, there were no express trains. Our train first went to Kure, which was a roundabout route that increased the hours of our journey. After we had left Kure and had entered the Aka tunnel, the engine was unable to pull the train up the rather steep slope. Twice the train slipped back to the Kure Station and then tried again with all its might to climb the slope. Both times it failed. All that could be done was to have another engine sent from Hiroshima. We waited for two hours. When the extra engine from Hiroshima finally arrived, all the fire had gone out in the former engine and it had to be started up again. And so it was not until the morning of the following day that we finally arrived in Kobe. It had taken us seventeen hours.

It was determined that I would remain in Kobe, while Fr. Kleinsorge would go on to Tokyo with Fr. Bitter and enter Seibo Hospital there. I got a room at our Jesuit high school, Rokko, and the next day I was examined by a Kobe doctor. A Hungarian doctor by the name of Stow, with a great reputation for his skill as a physician, had just taken up his practice again in the basement of an almost burnt-out building near Sannomiya.

His diagnosis was that the diarrhea was the result of the enfeeblement of the body. Not only did he take me off my rice-gruel diet but he even urged me to eat as much as I could each day. Following his instructions, I was well in three days.

The ulcer on my right hand was more difficult to heal. It was not deep, but it would not dry up. It took over a month to heal. So for four weeks I enjoyed my stay at the foot of Mt. Rokko and did little more than eat and sleep. At the end of October I returned to Hiroshima.

Since there was no work for me to do in Hiroshima, Fr. La Salle suggested that I begin my tertianship, the third year of novitiate that Jesuits make upon the completion of their theological studies. So under the direction of Fr. La Salle I entered immediately into the 30-day retreat that is the heart of the tertianship.

(8) DUSK OVER THE BURNT OUT PLAIN

When the nature of the bomb that had been dropped upon Hiroshima was made public by the mass media, a terrifying rumor circulated that no life would be able to flourish in that city for a period of 70 years. I heard later that this rumor originated from a mistaken interpretation of an American announcement. What the Americans had said was that life would be unable to flourish there for a period of 70 days—not of 70 years. When we heard this news, we all came together in Fr. La Salle’s room and held a consultation. Then and in the days that followed we puzzled over where we should evangelize. If Hiroshima would not sustain life, then perhaps we had better consider moving to another district. But when we went down into the city, we found that people were already resettling there: they had built primitive barrack-like buildings and were living in them. So we decided to stay on and see what would happen.

There are three so-called “break days” during the 30-day retreat. On each of these days I accompanied Fr. La Salle to Noboricho, and we began to clear out the debris in the church compound. Other priests and seminarians came down from Nagatsuka to help us. On the 10th of December we finished building a simple and small hut where we could spend the night.



Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

On the final break day of the retreat, Father La Salle and I once again departed for Noboricho. On our way back to Nagatsuka after the day’s work we stopped to rest at the ruins of the convent in Sanjo. While we were resting there, Fr. La Salle suddenly made the following proposal: “After you finish your retreat, what about the two of us returning to Noboricho? We can sleep in the small hut we built. Rather than idle away our days in Nagatsuka, I think it would be better for us to move into the city. I suppose the others will think we’re crazy.”

“Fine. I’ll be glad to go with you,” I replied.

As we had expected, when we told the others of our plan, Fr. Arrupe, my rector, and all of the house consultants thought we lacked common sense and might even be a little crazy. But since Fr. La Salle was the superior of the mission, he flew in the face of all opposition and decided to implement his plan.

On the 20th of December we went once again to Noboricho and set ourselves up in the little 3-mat hut we had built. The hut was little more than a small shed. Those who had come with us from Nagatsuka to help carry our supplies, a little furniture and a small stock of food, said goodbye and left the two of us alone in our new home.

In front of the hut we piled up stones and built a simple cooking place. We started a fire and hung our rice tins over it to cook, and prepared our evening meal. I remember clearly the menu of that first meal : rice with slices of radish.

We had no electricity. Every evening when we had finished eating, Fr. La Salle, feeling his responsibility as my tertian master (my tertianship had not yet ended), began his evening conference to his one tertian, with only a candle to light the room. But within ten minutes his head began to nod and he was soon sound asleep. Then the candle went out.

The tertianship schedule called for an additional half hour of prayer every evening. I used to do this prayer while walking alone along the devastated streets of the city. At that hour the town was very quiet. Many came to the city to work during the day, but since the public means of transportation were very poor, they would leave work early to return to their homes. Except for the people living in primitive wooden barracks that had been built here and there, no one was to be seen in the streets. It was an eerie landscape that met my eyes as I walked alone along the silent streets: the macabre ruins of a burnt house standing out against the burnt plain; a stone fence half fallen down; the bare limbs of burnt trees. The scene was as grotesque as I imagined the surface of the moon to be. Even so, the red rays of the setting sun beautified this barren desert and presaged the renovation that would follow the dying, just as the sun setting over Jesus' cross on Golgotha presaged the glory of his Resurrection.

(9) CHRISTMAS 1945

We returned to the church in Noboricho on December 20. In only five short days it would be Christmas.

The first thing we determined was our living arrangements. Our hut was extremely small, and yet it had to serve as chapel, classroom, parlor, bedroom, etc. When we passed through the narrow door, the only window in the room was to our left (south). Beneath it we placed a very simple wooden bench. To the right of the entrance set up our stove, which we had dug up out of the ruins of the priests' residence. The room in which it had been used had been far larger than this one, so it provided us with more than enough heat. Fortunately, the coal which we had buried behind the residence before the bombing had not been disturbed: we could enter this coal mine every day and take out as much coal as we needed. That winter would turn out to be the best heated winter of my life. In front of the wall on the right were two or three old folding chairs. In the middle of the room was a table made of logs and simple boards. Opposite to the entrance we placed our altar, a horizontal board set in the wall at just the right height. Below the board we stored our bedding. In the morning the board served as an altar for offering Mass and at other times we put it to other uses.

When it was time for bed, we set all the furniture outside the hut—table, chairs, bench etc. Then we swept the floor, spread a thin matting over it, and laid down our bedding. When we awoke in the morning, the two of us were well coordinated in preparing the hut for the new day. First, we folded our bedding and placed it neatly under the altar. Then, while Fr. La Salle did his morning ablutions, I got the fire started and put the tea kettle on the stove. Now it was my turn to wash and while I did so, Fr. La Salle prepared the altar for Mass. Gradually the hut became nice and warm. We said Mass each in turn and made our morning meditation. By the time we had completed our spiritual duties, the water would be boiling. When we brewed the coffee beans we had received from American soldiers, the hut was filled with the aroma of coffee and became for us the world's No. 1 coffee shop, elevating our thanksgiving after Mass to an even higher pitch of gratitude. Our coordinated efforts continued as Fr. La Salle arranged the "altar" and I rolled up the matting on the floor, carried the furniture back into the hut, and began preparations for breakfast.

After breakfast, too, we each had our chores. Fr. La Salle, eager to rebuild the church as soon as possible, was busy every day in consultations toward this end. Since I was still a tertian, it was my job to look after the more practical details of our daily living. I poked through the debris of burnt buildings for firewood, worked out the menu for our meals, and then actually prepared them.

Just a little before Christmas I suddenly remembered that when we had buried the sacred vessels in the garden before the bombing, we had buried with them a Bethlehem stable and the figurines of the Holy Family and the shepherds and kings who had come to worship the Christ child. I looked for the spot and began digging. I found the box that contained the figurines, but when I opened it, I discovered that it was water-logged, the result, no doubt, of the flooding at the time of the September typhoons. The figurines were not broken, but mud had seeped into the box, and the paper in which they had been wrapped clung to them. They were in very poor condition. When I tried to wash them and remove the mud and paper, the color also washed off. St. Joseph's white hair was transformed into a bald head; the Blessed Virgin's veil looked like an old rag; and the Child Jesus seemed to have bruises all over him. Still, when I nailed a board on the wall behind the altar and set up the crib, it looked very beautiful. In its undecorated simplicity it reminded us of that first Christmas scene in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. That too had been simple and lacking in ornament.

Now it was December 24 and we still were without electricity. Fr. Schweitzer had come down from Nagatsuka to do our electrical work. When he consulted the electric company, he was told that he was free to draw electricity from the main line if he wished. But to do this he would have to have several hundred meters of wire. While walking about the city during his hour of meditation the previous day, he had seen a considerable amount of electric wire in the debris near the railroad station. So I went with him to the station and we tried to extricate the wire. This was not as easy to do as we had thought. When we were taking a rest after our first strenuous efforts, a man approached us and asked, "What are you looking for?" "Tomorrow is Christmas," I replied, "and we'd like to get electricity to light up the church for our celebration, but we don't have any electric wire." "That's a big job! But do you have shades for your light bulbs?" "No, we weren't thinking about anything so fancy." "Maybe I can do something for you," the man said and then left us.

We finally managed to pick up as much wire as we would need and we took it back to the church. Thanks to Fr. Schweitzer's electrical prowess, our most Bethlehem-like crib was illuminated for the first time on Christmas Eve.

Fr. La Salle celebrated the midnight Mass and I, the morning. That day the Christians were able to come together in church for the first time in six months. Twenty were present, so that the little hut was jam-packed. The children were in the front at my feet. There was barely space to say Mass. But it was a wonderful Christmas that I will not forget for the rest of my life. When I elevated the host at the Consecration, my eyes were level with the crib on the shelf. I felt that the birth of the Son of God in the poor stable of Bethlehem 2000 years ago was a mystery very close to me

Just as the Mass was ending, we heard a great commotion outside. A large fire truck approached, sounding its sirens loudly. It stopped in front of the gate to the church compound. What could it be? I wondered. There was no sign of fire anywhere around us. A large man got down from the fire truck and asked,

“Is this the Catholic Church?”

“Yes, but is there something wrong?”

“Merry Christmas! Last night when I talked to the two foreigners who were salvaging electric wire, I found out that they had no shades for their lights. Since we have four of them at the fire department, we brought one for you to use. Have a nice Christmas!”

Then he presented us with a splendid light shade, jumped onto the fire truck and sped away. I had no idea who he was or from what fire department he had come. But the incident remains alive in my memory as a typical example of the warm love and spirit of cooperation that characterized the people of Hiroshima in the immediate days after the bombing. It is for that reason that the Christmas of 1945 was so wonderful.

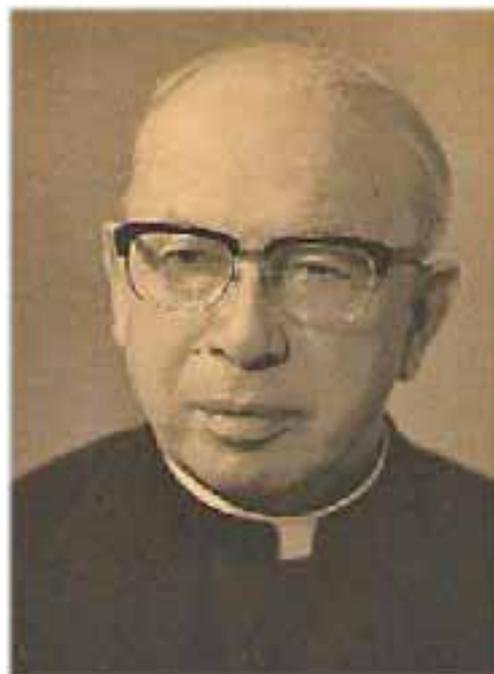
(10) THE LOTUS FLOWER

Planning for the construction of the new church began in earnest after we entered the New Year. In the city, a plan for building 20-mat prefabricated houses for the victims of the atomic bomb began to be realized. Before we knew it, simple wooden buildings were to be seen standing here and there. The rows of such buildings that stood in the former soldiers' training field gave me a feeling of freshness and new beginnings. When one looked down on this village of “barracks” from the window of a train, one got the image of rows of match boxes. The city government built these as a first step toward recovery: they were to provide temporary shelter for a period of two years. Most of them stood there, in fact, for more than twenty years and some are still standing.

Under the same program the church was also given a twelve-mat prefab building. Fr. La Salle and I pulled our cart all the way to Ujina to pick up the wood. Our plan was to divide the building in the following manner: six mats for living quarters, two mats for the kitchen, one mat for storage space, three mats for a kind of entrance lobby. Shortly after this, Fr. La Salle had to leave for Rome to attend a general congregation of the Society of Jesus. While he was away, Fr. Kleinsorge, who had returned from Tokyo, was asked to take his place. He was to live in the six-mat room, but the Sunday Mass would be said there. I returned to Nagatsuka to complete my tertianship.

Then arrangements were made to obtain another twelve-mat building and attach it to the first. As was expected, this gave us a large and splendid church. The front twelve mats served as both chapel and instruction room. Then, behind folding doors that

could be opened on Sunday to enlarge the chapel, was a six-mat room, and behind this a three-mat room and an entrance of two mats. Since we had put the two buildings together, we had some of the wood allotted us left over, so we were able to build a separate lobby to the



Hubert Cieslik, S.J.

church. The last thing the scholastics who had come down from Nagatsuka to help us with the construction did was fix a crucifix on the roof of the church. This crucifix made the church taller than the buildings around it and could be seen from some distance. One day when I was in the streetcar and was passing by Yamaguchi-machi, several people around me pointed to the church and I overheard them ask, "What is that large building?" This made me feel good. The existence of the church had once again come to be recognized by the people of the city.

Fr. Kleinsorge began immediately to set up an evangelization program. He gathered together the Catholics and tried to make contact with the people who, while not as yet Catholics, had made some approach to the church, especially those who had come to the Saturday afternoon record concerts. Before long, the church—now enlarged to the spacious dimensions of eighteen mats, was filled to overflowing every Sunday: more than a hundred people crowded together into that one room.

The first fruits of the new evangelization program were offered to God during the Easter celebration of 1946: two people received the sacrament of baptism. And these two first fruits were truly splendid specimens. One, who was then a student, is the present Father Fujisawa. The other, Ms. Mizue Matsumoto, not only led her entire family to the Church but even elected religious life and entered the Japanese congregation called *Seitai Reihai-kai*.

About that time my tertianship ended and I was assigned to duty at Noboricho. At the urging of Fr. Kleinsorge, I reopened the kindergarten of Our Lady and started a Sunday school. In front of the altar we hung a curtain which we had once used on our stage and which we had sent away for safety. As soon as the Mass ended, we closed the curtain. Now the sixteen mats became splendid classrooms for Christian instruction and kindergarten classes. Some young people of the parish were enlisted to teach in the kindergarten. There was one problem, however. There were no children living in the vicinity of the church. After great difficulty we discovered three children living in nearby barracks, and one of the teachers commuting from Ushida brought four children with her, so that the first kindergarten class had seven children. When on occasion the teacher from Ushida could not come in, the kindergarten class was taught with only three children.

Not long afterward, Ms. Sasaki, the widow who had previously been principal of the kindergarten, was repatriated from Korea and became principal again. Under her expert direction the kindergarten finally got onto the proper tracks and started moving ahead smoothly. The shortage of children was a problem for two or three years. There were so few applicants for the entrance examination that the application numbers were given out of sequence—for example, 96, 105, 112—to conceal the real figures. But soon this too ceased to be a problem.

In spring of 1946 work was begun on a new priests' residence. While he was away in Europe, Fr. La Salle had conceived a plan for building a peace memorial cathedral in Hiroshima and began to canvass the countries of Europe for contributions toward its construction. It was decided to build a priests' residence of approximately the same size as the old one and on the old one's foundations. Until the new church of Fr. La Salle's vision would be completed, the second story of the residence would not be divided into rooms but would serve as the church.

One day that spring I chanced to go by the soldiers' training field. When I looked down into the moat that surrounded it, I saw white flowers in bloom there. From destruction and decay had risen new life; from dirty water, pure white flowers were pushing up their heads. Was that

not the prophecy? That life would be stronger than death, that resurrection would follow upon destruction and disaster?



Text and photos of Jesuits © Jesuits of Japan, 2009. All Rights Reserved. Solely for private use. Not to be edited or altered without permission. Not to be reproduced for any commercial purpose whatsoever. Free distribution is permitted. Contact <francisbritto[At] hotmail.com> for details

Fr. Hubert Cieslik, S.J. was born in 1914 and died in 1988. One of the most respected historians of Japanese Christianity, he has written numerous books and articles on Japanese Church in German, English, and Japanese. Fr. Francis Mathy, S.J., the translator, is Professor Emeritus of Sophia University and a well-known translator of Japanese books and articles. This digital version was prepared, edited, and composed for PDF by Francis Britto.

Cieslik, Hubert. 1997. *The Day of Destruction*. Translated from Japanese by Francis Mathy. Retrieved from Francis Britto's *All About Francis Xavier* at: <http://pweb.cc.sophia.ac.jp/britto/xavier/>