



# **Father Hubert Schiffer's Written Account**

## **Plus: The *Protective Shield* of Our Lady of Fatima**

The explosion of the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima has initiated a new era. In one frightful second a proud city of half a million souls was wiped out from the face of the earth. Nothing remained but an atomic desert, and the word Hiroshima became a symbol of total destruction.

To be a survivor of the first atomic bomb in human history, and to have felt its tremendous concussion within the most deadly one-mile radius, gives me the not enviable advantage of first-hand experience. Experts have told me that I ought to be dead. The experts were almost right, for my fellow Jesuits carried me out of the burning city for a decent Christian funeral.

The atom bomb has not only brought total destruction, but it may well bring a continuing threat and terror upon mankind, a spiritually dividing effect worse than the physical destruction. We all, living in this atomic age, have the responsibility to do something about it. We all want to promote a real peace. But is there a remedy?

We survivors of Hiroshima bring you a message: the bells of St. Mary's at Hiroshima ring a message of faith, and of hope.

### **His MORNING OFFERING**

*O MY God, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary (here kiss your Brown Scapular\*) I offer Thee the Precious Blood of Jesus from all the Altars throughout the world, joining with It the offering of my every thought, word and action of this day.*

*O my Jesus, I desire today to gain every indulgence and merit I can and I offer them, together with myself, to Mary Immaculate... that she may best apply them to the interests of Thy most Sacred Heart.*

*Precious Blood of Jesus, Save us! (Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pray for us! Sacred Heart of Jesus, Have mercy on us!*

We all need and desperately want world-peace. And what do we do to attain it? International conferences, economic measures, defense production, civil defense training. We do almost everything we can think of, except the most important thing: PRAYER.

How would you feel as a human father if your children would whisper or chatter together and then look into every corner for a solution to their difficulties without ever coming to tell you about them? The Shrine for World-Peace in the heart of Hiroshima stands as a symbol of this unity. Let us hope that the children who are now playing in its shadow will grow up into a world of peace which we have prepared for them. Prayer is more powerful than the atom bomb. It promotes and deepens the spirit of human brotherhood. Americans and Japanese, Germans and French, Chinese and British, Buddhists and Christians—they all need to realize that God is our common Creator and Father....

What we need today is a *Crusade of Prayer*, the spirit of prayer everywhere, a renewal of our deepest trust and confidence in God's providence.

**Bishop Fulton J. Sheen said in one of his radio addresses:**

Fatima is not a warning - it is a hope! While man lifts the little atom which he splits to annihilate a world, Mary swings the sun like a trinket on her wrist to convince the world that God has given her the greater power over nature, not for death, but for light and life and hope... There need not be World War III and there will not be one if we set the Woman against the Atom.



The bomb exploded over the city at 8:15 a.m. in the morning. It came as a complete surprise, out of a blue and sunny sky. Suddenly, between one breath and another, in the twinkling of an eye, an unearthly, unbearable brightness was all around me; a light unimaginably brilliant, blinding, intense. I could not see, or think. For one short moment everything was at a standstill. I was left alone swimming in this ocean of light, helpless-and frightened. The room seemed to catch its breath in deadly silence. Suddenly, a terrific explosion filled the air with one bursting thunderstroke. An invisible force lifted me from the chair, hurled me through the air, shook me, battered me, whirled me around and around like a leaf in a gust of Autumn wind.



**(Up in the air, the B-29's co-pilot scribbled in his log:**

"The flash was terrific. About 25 seconds after the flash we felt two very distinct slaps on the ship. We then turned the ship so that we could observe the results, and there in front of our eyes was without a doubt the greatest explosion man has ever witnessed: the city was nine-tenths covered with smoke of a boiling nature, which seemed to indicate buildings blowing up, and a large column of white cloud which in less than three minutes reached 30,000 feet and then went to at least 50 - 60,000 feet. I am certain the entire crew felt that this experience was more terrifying than any human being had ever thought possible. It seemed impossible to comprehend. Just how many Japanese did we kill? I honestly have the feeling of groping for words to explain this, or I might say Oh God! What have we done? If I live a hundred years, I'll never quite get these few minutes out of my mind.")

**The light was suddenly gone. All was darkness, silence, nothingness. I was not unconscious, because I was trying to think what was happening. I felt with my fingers in the total blackness enveloping me. I was lying with my face down on broken and splintered pieces of wood, some heavy load pressed on my back, blood was running down my face. I could see nothing, hear no sound. I must be dead I thought.**

**Then I heard my own voice. That was the most -  
Page 11 - frightening experience of all, because it showed me I was still alive, and convinced me that some horrible catastrophe had occurred.**

**It took only a second: a flash-fearfully frightening-and Hiroshima, home of half a million people, was wiped off the earth. What was left was only darkness, blood, burns, moans, fire and spreading terror.**

Four Jesuit Priests were stationed at the church of Our Lady's Assumption: Father Hugo Lassalle, Superior of the whole Jesuit Mission in Japan, and Fathers Kleinsorge, Cieslik, and Schiffer. We spent the whole day in an inferno of flames and smoke before a rescue party was able to reach us. All four were wounded, but through the grace of God we survived. Nine days later peace came. It was August 15, the feast of our Blessed Mother's Assumption.

On the other side of the world more than a year later occurred a series of events which on the surface appeared to have no connection, but which have since proved to be the most powerful single force in preventing a repetition of the horrible experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Plainfield, New Jersey, U.S.A., a Priest had just finished offering a Requiem Mass when he collapsed at the foot of the Altar, the victim of an extremely serious heart attack. Doctors gave him only a few weeks to live. But the Priest, Rev. Harold V. Colgan, Pastor of St. Mary's Church, Plainfield, completely startled the doctors a few days later when he walked from the hospital a completely cured man, in response to his fervent prayers to the Mother of God. He promised the Blessed Virgin Mary that if she would obtain from God his complete cure, he would spend the rest of his life spreading devotion to her. He has fulfilled this pledge by starting the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, which has spread to some 25 million persons in 57 nations of the world...

One of the few surviving structures was the Jesuit Rectory, next door to the Jesuit Roman Catholic Church dedicated to *Our Lady of the Assumption*. But, it was the only surviving structure which was not made of heavily reinforced concrete. All other wooden structures, except for this house, were destroyed. A community of four Jesuit Priests lived in this Rectory. They were missionaries to the Japanese people and were non-military. The four Jesuit Priests had been sent to Hiroshima in the 1920s and had been living in this Rectory, performing their Priestly Missionary duties and had also been "living" the Fatima Message - which is **God's Peace Plan**. The Priests claimed this is the only reason why they, and the Rectory, miraculously survived a detonation the equivalent of 20,000 tons of TNT because all other wooden buildings were leveled to the ground, possibly at three times the distance from the hypocenter. Yet, this wooden house withstood the blast, but with some damage, although apparently some of the windows had even remained intact!

Their Monastery/Rectory was located just eight blocks away from the center of the devastation, (not ground zero because the atomic bomb detonated in the air). Four Jesuit Priests stationed there survived the searing hurricane of blast and gamma rays during the atomic bomb explosion. These four Priests were:



Father Hugo Lassalle, S.J.  
the Superior,  
[b. in Germany in 1898 -  
d. 1990]  
Superior of the Rectory  
and Church



Father Wilhelm  
Kleinsorge, S.J. ([b.  
in Germany in 1907 - d.  
on November 17, 1977])



Father Hubert  
Schiffer, S.J.

Father Cieslik, S.J.  
(Photo  
Not Available)

The Church was heavily damaged, but the Rectory survived, and so did the four German missionaries who prayed the Rosary in that house faithfully every day.

All four members of the small Jesuit community escaped alive! Most of the City of Hiroshima was obliterated. From a pool of survivors of a fifteen-kilometer radius, the Jesuits were the only people who, after fifteen years, were still alive. All the rest had died due to radiation exposure.

At the time of the detonation and radiation fall-out, the Jesuits converted their Novitiate at Nagatsuka, a suburb by the mountains near Hiroshima, into a makeshift hospital and managed to care for two hundred severely burnt and scarred people. The Jesuits repeated the affirmation that they recited the Holy Rosary daily, to live up to the *Message of Fatima*, a.k.a. *God's Peace Plan*. The Jesuits said:

"We believe that we survived because we were living the Message of Fatima. We lived and prayed the Rosary daily in that Rectory."

Father Arrupe, S.J. was Ordained a Priest in 1936 and was sent to the United States for his doctoral studies in medical ethics. He was unexpectedly sent as a Missionary to Japan in 1939. He was the director for a group of Jesuit Novices living at Nagatsuka which was on the far outskirts of Hiroshima when the atomic bomb fell in 1945. As a physician of both body and soul he led the first rescue party to enter the devastation, building a makeshift hospital and utilizing his medical skills to serve the wounded and the dying.



Father Arrupe,  
S.J.

Father Arrupe was appointed a Superior and Master of Novices in Japan in 1942 and was living at the Novitiate in Nagatsuka, a suburban area of Hiroshima.

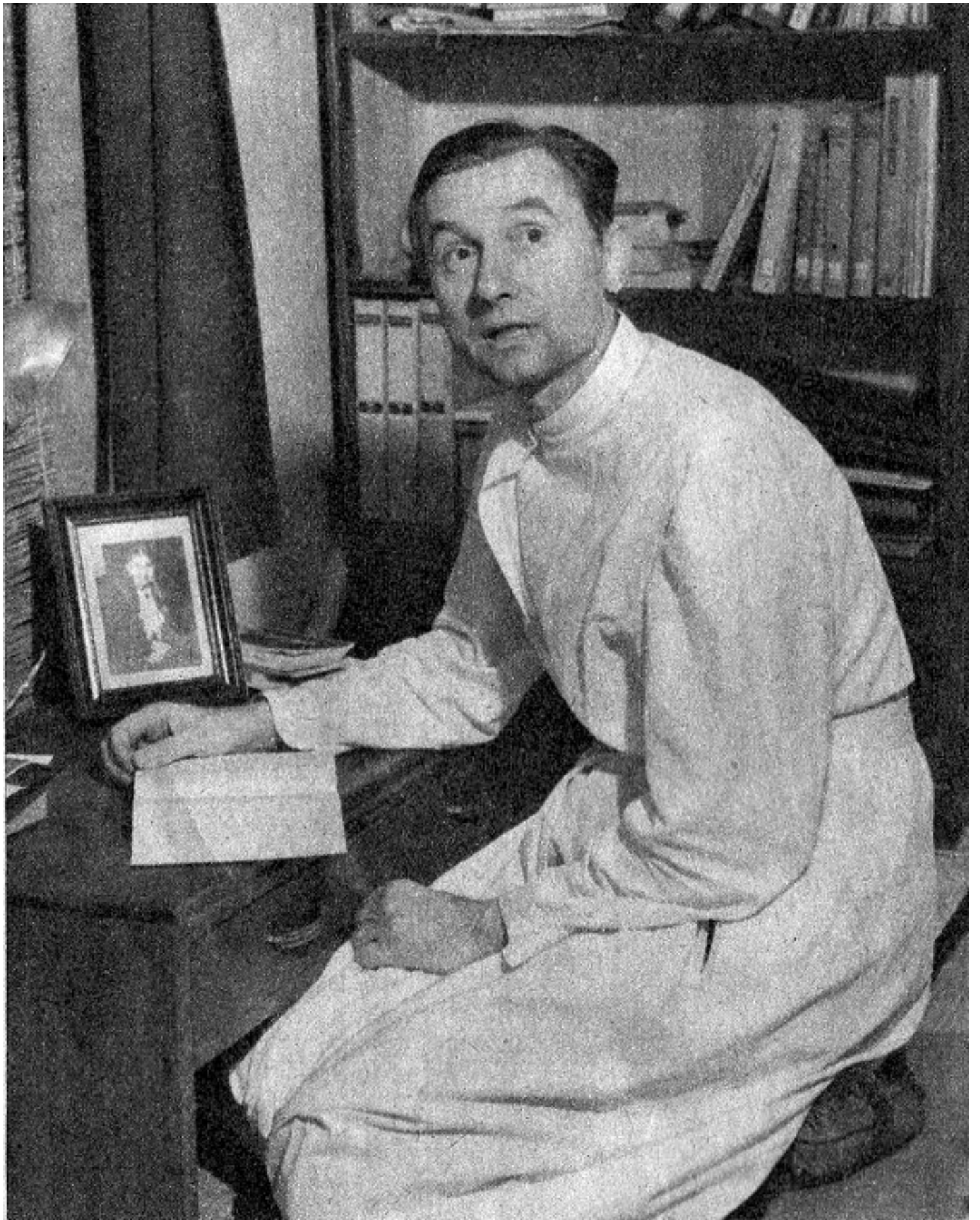
Speaking on American TV, the German Jesuit Priest, Father Hubert Schiffer, S.J., explained why he felt that he received a protective shield from Our Blessed Mother which protected him from all radiation and ill-effects. Father Schiffer attributed this to his devotion to the Blessed Mother and to his daily Rosary and to living the *Message of Fatima*, a.k.a. which Our Lady of Fatima gave to Catholics:

"In that house, the Rosary was recited together every day. In that house we were living the Message of Fatima". After the arrival of the Americans, the American army doctors and scientists explained to him that his body would begin to deteriorate because of the radiation. Many of the Japanese people had blisters and sores from the radiation. But, to the doctors amazement, Father Schiffer's body contained no radiation or ill-effects from the Atom bomb.

BECAUSE of the obvious fact that Our Lady of Mount Carmel put a protective shield around the four Jesuit Priests and their Rectory House at Hiroshima, Japan on Monday, August 6, 1945 to protect them from death, and - to varying degrees - from injury, I was guided by Our Lady to pray everyday that she would continue to keep her protective shield of TOTAL protection - i.e. her mantle of protection - around me and for those whom I include in my brief prayer to her.

excerpt of Fr Schiffer, 1952: There can hardly be a doubt but that much abrupt goodwill has been built up by the quiet example of Christian charity during the tragic weeks after the bombing. The Jesuit Novitiate in the northern outskirts of Hiroshima became a center





for medical first aid and all kinds of assistance. The people will never forget the heroic sacrifices of the Helpers of the Holy Souls. When the whole world seemed to collapse, the Sisters who had lost their convent and all their belongings worked untiringly to help the wounded. And when kind G. I.'s volunteered to build a small convent for the Sisters, they immediately opened a kindergarten and a day nursery to help the poor mothers in the neighborhood.

In 1947, Japanese Sisters were called to Hiroshima to open an orphanage. There was a crying need for such a home for thousands of children were wandering around homeless. They slept in holes, under bridges, or in empty freight cars. Unkempt, unwashed, full of lice and clothed in rags, they looked and acted like alley cats. Stealing food was the only way to survive, and they banded together to still their continuous hunger...

Buddhist temples took up collections of food and mothers from the neighborhood came with tears in their eyes to offer used clothing.

It was in December of 1947, that the Hiroshima Garden of Light began shedding its beams of compassion on homeless children....

Every drop of water needed in the house had to be carried a distance of several hundred yards. The water carrying became especially trying on cold winter mornings, and during the rainy season. It was six months before we had enough money to dig our own well, and the cost was only Thirty-Five Dollars. That amount was akin to a small fortune in the bombed-out city, however.

Our Japanese friends unite their prayers with ours  
This spirit of prayer can and will bring peace. Father Peyton has said so well:

The family that prays together, stays together. Isn't that true also in the family of nations?... Will this come true? - The answer is up to you...

Father Johannes Siemes, SJ, a professor of philosophy at Sophia University in Tokyo, was one of a number of German Jesuits working in Japan during World War II. In 1945, American B-29s were stepping up bombing missions against



Japanese cities. Kobe, Osaka, Nagoya, and particularly Tokyo were being hard hit by nighttime incendiary raids and daytime high explosive raids. The mounting danger had prompted the Japanese government to evacuate many of Tokyo's residents; Siemes and his students had left the city for the relative safety of the Jesuit Novitiate, where the Jesuits' future Superior General, Father Pedro Arrupe, SJ, was rector. The location was just outside Hiroshima.

Here is Father Siemes's account of the events of August 6, 1945, first published in *Jesuit Missions* magazine, March 1946, vol. 20, no. 2.

**FOR A LONG TIME** the people of Hiroshima wondered why they alone were not being pounded by American bombs. Almost daily observation planes flew overhead.



Father Johannes Siemes, SJ,

Occasionally bombs fell, but they did little damage—nothing in comparison with what was happening in other Japanese cities. Fantastic rumors circulated wildly that America had something special in store for us, but no one dreamed of the reality that was to come.

August the 6th dawned bright and clear. About seven o'clock there was an air-raid alarm. A few planes appeared over the city, but no one paid any attention. About eight o'clock, the "all-clear" signal was sounded. I was sitting in my room at the Jesuit novitiate in Nagatsuka, about two and a half miles from the center of Hiroshima, half way up the side of a mountain, overlooking the bright valley which stretches down to the sea. Suddenly—the time was approximately 8:14 — the whole valley was filled by a garish light, like a magnesium flash by a giant photographer.

All at once I became conscious of a wave of heat, but could see only a brilliant yellow light. As I made for the door, perhaps ten seconds after the first flash of light, I heard a moderately loud explosion which seemed to come from directly over our house. Instantly all the windows in the house were broken. Fragments of glass were sprayed all over me. In no time I was bleeding from cuts about the hands and head. Everything around me was confusion—all the windows broken, all the doors forced in, and book shelves tumbled down. Most of the other Jesuits were injured by fragments of glass. A few were bleeding, but none seriously so.

Down in the valley a half mile away, several peasant homes caught fire. Over the city clouds of smoke were rising, and I heard a few indistinct explosions. Perhaps a half an hour later, a long file of desperate people began to stream up the valley from the city. Some came to our house, their steps heavy and dragging, their faces blackened, all of them bleeding or suffering from burns, some with horrible wounds of the extremities and back.

We brought them into the chapel, put them to rest on the straw mats, and gave them all the aid we could, but our small supply of grease was soon used up. Father [Pedro] Arrupe, our rector, had studied medicine before becoming a Jesuit and was everywhere among the injured as long as



the bandages and drugs lasted, but at length we had to be content merely to cleanse the wounds, as more and more of the injured came pouring in to us.

By noon our large chapel and library were filled, but the procession of refugees from the city continued. Among them was Father [Peter] Kopp, bleeding about the head and neck, and with a large burn on his right palm. He was standing in front of the convent of the Helpers of the Holy Souls at the outskirts of the city ready to go home when all of a sudden he became aware of a light, felt the wave of heat and a large blister forming on the palm of his hand. He thought the bomb had fallen on his immediate vicinity. Fire broke out at once all around him so that there was time to rescue only a few things from the convent before the whole district was swept by flames. He and the Sisters had to fight their way back to us along the shore of the river and through the burning streets.

Soon news came that the entire city had been destroyed, that the whole city was on fire. Outside, the roads were jammed with burned, bleeding, frightened people. Among them there were many who were uninjured. Distracted by the magnitude of the disaster, they rushed by without a thought of organizing help for the others. It became clear to us later that the Japanese displayed little initiative, preparedness, and organizational skill in meeting this catastrophe. They despaired of any rescue work when something could have been saved by cooperative effort, and fatalistically they let the catastrophe take its course. When we urged them to take part in the rescue work, they did everything we told them willingly, but on their own they did very little.

Down in the center of the city we knew that Father [Hugo] Lassalle, our Superior, and three of the Fathers were trapped. About four o'clock in the afternoon, we learned that the church, the parish house, and the adjoining buildings had all burned down [N.B. This rumor was apparently not true based upon other eye-witness accounts.], and that Father

Lassalle and Father Hubert Schiffer had been seriously injured and were unable to walk. Six of us hurried with Father Rector down to the city. The closer we got to the city, the greater the destruction, and the more difficult it became to make our way. Twice we were forced down into the river itself to escape the flames.

Large numbers of people had taken refuge in the park, though all the paths and bridges were blocked by fallen trees. Fires still flared up in the distance giving out an eerie light, but finally at the far corner of the park on the river bank itself, we came upon our colleagues. Father Schiffer was lying on the ground, deathly pale. He had lost so much blood from a deep cut behind his ear that we feared for his life. Father Superior had a deep wound on his leg. Father [Hubert] Cieslik and Father [Wilhelm] Kleinsorge had minor injuries but were completely exhausted.

Bit by bit they told us of their experiences. At a quarter after eight, they saw the intense light, and immediately heard the sound of breaking windows, walls and furniture. They were showered with glass splinters and fragments of wreckage. Father Schiffer was buried beneath a portion of wall and suffered a severe head injury. Father Superior [Father Hugo Lassalle] was sprayed with splinters in his back and legs which made him bleed copiously. They, too, had the impression that the bomb burst in their immediate vicinity. All the buildings around them collapsed at once, and from every pile of ruins there arose piteous cries for help. Father Hugo Lassalle and Father Schiffer, despite their wounds, aided as many as they could and lost a great deal of blood in the process, but when fires swept closer and closer, they had to flee for their lives.

Mr. Fukai, secretary of the mission, went almost out of his mind and would not leave the scene until Father Kleinsorge dragged him out of the house on his back and forcibly carried him away. Beneath the wreckage of houses all along the streets many were trapped and screamed to be rescued. They were

beyond hope, for the flames would be upon them before anyone could dig them out of the ruins. Mr. Fukai refused to go further, and has not been heard from since.

We were fortunate to have a rescuing angel who saved us - a Japanese Protestant pastor [Rev. Kiyoshi Tanimoto of the Hiroshima Methodist Church, according to John Hersey in a New York Times article] came by in a boat and insisted on taking our wounded upstream to safety. Father Schiffer, who was more seriously wounded, was taken first. Several children were rescued from the river on the way, but soon died. They had been severely burned. Father Cieslik offered to go home by foot to make room for others in the boat.

By midnight we were still working, caring for the wounded and trying to carry our own back to Nagatsuka [the Novitiate]. Wires, beams, ruins, and rubble blocked every street and every passage. In the dark it was impossible to see. Again and again we fell, carrying the stretchers with us to the ground. Father Schiffer became unconscious. Father Lassalle joked each time he fell, though it must have been very painful because his back was full of fragments of glass. The expedition had taken almost twelve hours. Normally we could have gone into the city and back in two hours. Early in the morning I had two hours' sleep, then said Mass in thanksgiving, for it was the 7th of August, the anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus.

The next day was spent rescuing victims along the roads. There were no rescue parties in evidence anywhere in the city. People we had helped to safety the day before were sitting and lying in the same places we had put them. More than 30 hours passed before the first official rescue party arrived.

By the time we got back to Nagatsuka it was dark again. We had with us 50 refugees, most of whom were wounded, many of them dangerously burned, all of them, even those with less serious burns, very weak and helpless. Our relief work was a greater boost for Christianity in the eyes of the people than all our work in the preceding long years. Few of those

whom we cared for died. In the official aid station a good third or a half of those who had been brought in died. They lay about almost without care-everything was lacking, doctors, assistants, dressings, drugs, etc.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DISASTER that befell Hiroshima on August 6th was only slowly pieced together in my mind. What happened, now that I have a chance to see the whole picture, is this:

As a result of the explosion of the bomb at 8:15 almost the entire city was destroyed at a single blow. Only small outlying districts in the southern and eastern part of the town escaped complete destruction. The bomb exploded over the center of the city.

As a result of the blast, small Japanese houses which made up 99 percent of the buildings in the city collapsed at once or were blown away. Those who were in the houses were buried in the ruins. Those who were in the open sustained burns, resulting from contact with a substance or rays emitted by the bomb. When the substance struck in quantity, fire sprang up and spread rapidly.

The heat which arose from the ground was so intense as to create a minor whirlwind sweeping the fire across the whole city. Those who had been caught beneath the ruins could not be freed in time to escape. Up to three miles from the center of the explosion, all houses were damaged, and many collapsed and caught fire. Even seven miles away windows were broken.

How many people fell victims of this one bomb? Hiroshima had a population of 400,000. Official statistics up to September 1st place the number of dead at 70,000, 130,000 wounded, among them 43,500 seriously so, and many thousands missing.

Thousands of wounded who died later could have been saved if they had received proper treatment, but there was no adequate rescue work during that catastrophe. Many of the wounded died because they had been weakened by undernourishment. Those who had normal strength and who had received good care slowly recovered from the burns occasioned by the Atomic bomb. There



were also cases of wounded people, however, who started to recover and then died suddenly.

Fourteen days after the explosion, their simple cuts had healed normally, but the ones which were still unhealed became worse, and in October were still incompletely healed. There cannot be any doubt but that the rays, whatever they were, had some effect on the blood. I am of the opinion, however, that the general undernourished and weakened condition of so many people was apparently responsible for the large number of deaths. It was rumored that the ruined city would emit deadly rays for some time. I doubt that, because I myself and many others who worked in the ruined area for several hours after the explosion suffered no ill effects whatsoever.

[N.B. Was this also part of the miracles of Our Lady of Fatima at Hiroshima?]

It was an incredible catastrophe, and yet almost strangest of all, the Japanese people here showed no bitterness towards America. Great good can yet be brought out of all this tragedy, and of all the nations on earth today, America is in the best position to help us lead these people to the knowledge, love, and service of the one true God.



During the blast of Nagasaki, a Friary was miraculously spared from the atomic destruction. Father Maximillian Kolbe built the Franciscan Friary of *Mugenzai no Sono* (Garden of the Immaculate) upon a spot, which was Divinely indicated and located behind the crest of a hill.

The Urukami Cathedral in Nagasaki with its two Priests who were hearing confessions and thirty of the Faithful, were cooked to a cinder. The atomic bomb blast was 500 meters from this Church, which was the largest Christian Church in Asia at the time. It had 14,000 parishioners. Most of them were killed or injured, and all of its Priests were killed by the blast.



The Franciscans who survived, attributed this miraculous protection to the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary and their devotion to Our Lady of Fatima - the "Fatima Message".

At Nagasaki, the Franciscan Friary was unharmed and also had no effects from the A-bomb because of special protection from the Blessed Mother, as the Franciscans prayed the daily Rosary and followed *God's Peace Plan*, thereby having no ill effects from the bomb due to the impenetrable "protective shield" of Our Lady of Fatima over them.

The Franciscans were soon called the Immaculate Conception Fathers, named in such a manner after the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, who delivered them from the most destructive weapon known to mankind.





Nagasaki lies at the head of a long bay which forms the best natural harbor on the southern Japanese home island of Kyushu.

The main commercial and residential area of the city lies on a small plain near the end of the bay. Two rivers divided by a mountain spur form the two main valleys in which the city lies. This mountain spur and the irregular lay-out of the city tremendously reduced the area of destruction, so that at first glance Nagasaki appeared to have been less devastated than Hiroshima.

Hiroshima (above church of *Our Lady's Assumption*) with the remains of was a city of considerable military importance. It contained the 2nd Army Headquarters, which commanded the defense of all of southern Japan. The city was a communications center, a storage point, and an assembly area for troops.





Scene of Hiroshima 800 yards from where A-bomb exploded.

Hiroshima.