

### **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.“)



Rev. John A. Siemes, professor of philosophy at Sophia University in Tokyo, and his students had left Tokyo before summer for the safetiness at that time of a Jesuit Novitiate in Hiroshima. It was located about 2 1/2 miles from the epicenter from the bomb explosion. His most famous account is found in THE ATOMIC BOMBINGS OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI assembled under the Manhattan Engineer District. One of his earliest information pieces appeared in the magazine *Jesuit Missions*, March 1946, vol 20, #2. He resided in a novitiate in a suburb called Nagat-suka, halfway up a side of a mountain overlooking the valley which stretched down to the sea. Until I am told to remove it, on my web site is his entire interview as appeared in the special report. What follows is an excerpt for the benefit of brevity. This is a special report, condensed from the original of 1946 issued by the Manhattan Engineer District, however, it begins with 2 paragraphs from the *Jesuit Missions*.

**EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT: THE ATOMIC BOMBINGS OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI)**

**by The Manhattan Engineer District, June 29, 1946**

Hiroshima—August 6th, 1945

by Father John A. Siemes, professor of modern philosophy at Tokyo's Catholic University

"Up to August 6th, occasional bombs, which did no great damage, had fallen on Hiroshima. Many cities roundabout, one after the other, were destroyed, but Hiroshima itself remained protected. There were almost daily observation planes over the city but none of them dropped a bomb. The citizens wondered why they alone had remained undisturbed for so long a time. There were fantastic rumors that the enemy had something special in mind for this city, but no one dreamed that the end would come in such a fashion as on the morning of August 6th.

"August 6th began in a bright, clear, summer morning. About seven o'clock, there was an air raid alarm which we had heard almost every day and a few planes appeared over the city. No one paid any attention and at about eight o'clock, the all-clear was sounded. I am sitting in my room at the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Nagatsuke; during the past half year, the philosophical and theological section of our Mission had been evacuated to this place from Tokyo. The Novitiate is situated approximately two kilometers from Hiroshima, half way up the side of a mountain, overlooking the bright valley which stretches down to the sea. From my window, I have a wonderful view down the valley to the edge of the city.

"Suddenly, the time is approximately 8:14, the whole valley is filled by a garish light which resembles the magnesium light used in photography, and I am conscious of a wave of heat. I jump to the window to find out the cause of this remarkable phenomenon, but I see nothing more than that brilliant yellow light. As I make for the door, it doesn't occur to me that the light might have something to do with enemy planes. On the way from the window, I hear a moderately loud explosion which seems to come from a distance and, at the same time, the windows are broken in with a loud crash. There has been an interval of perhaps ten seconds since the flash of light. I am sprayed by fragments of glass. The entire window frame has been forced into the room. I realize now that a

bomb has burst and I am under the impression that it exploded directly over our house or in the immediate vicinity.

"I am bleeding from cuts about the hands and head. I attempt to get out of the door. It has been forced outwards by the air pressure and has become jammed. I force an opening in the door by means of repeated blows with my hands and feet and come to a broad hallway from which open the various rooms.

Everything is in a state of confusion. All windows are broken and all the doors are forced inwards. The bookshelves in the hallway have tumbled down. I do not note a second explosion and the fliers seem to have gone on. Most of my colleagues have been injured by fragments of glass..

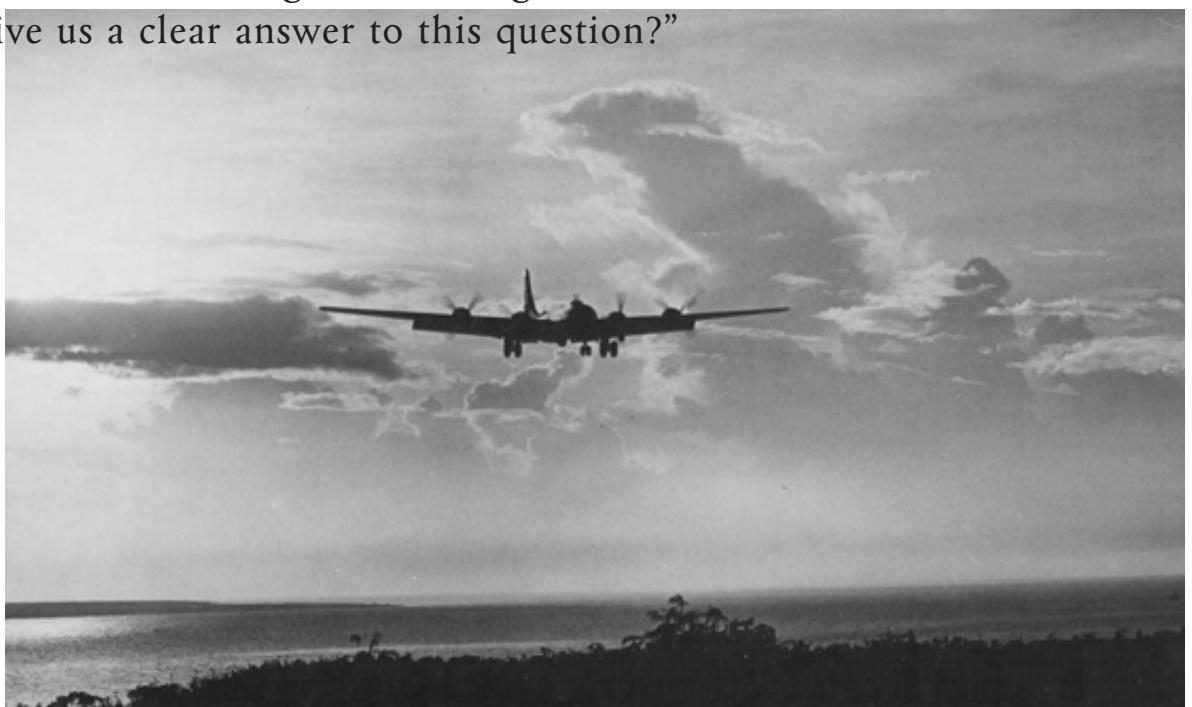
"The blast of air had penetrated the entire house from the southeast, but the house still stands.

"Down in the valley, perhaps one kilometer toward the city from us, several peasant homes are on fire and the woods on the opposite side of the valley are aflame. A few of us go over to help control the flames. While we are attempting to put things in order, a storm comes up and it begins to rain. Over the city, clouds of smoke are rising and I hear a few slight explosions. I come to the conclusion that an incendiary bomb with an especially strong explosive action has gone off down in the valley. A few of us saw three planes at great altitude over the city at the time of the explosion. I, myself, saw no aircraft whatsoever.

"Perhaps a half-hour after the explosion, a procession of people begins to stream up the valley from the city. The crowd thickens continuously. A few come up the road to our house. We give them first aid and bring them into the chapel, which we have in the meantime cleaned and cleared of wreckage, and put them to rest on the straw mats which constitute the floor of Japanese houses. A few display horrible wounds of the extremities and back. "Father Stolte and Father Erlinghagen go down to the road which is still full of refugees and bring in the seriously injured who have sunken by the wayside, to the temporary aid station at the village school.

"The transportation of our own wounded is difficult. It is not possible to dress

their wounds properly in the darkness, and they bleed again upon slight motion. As we carry them on the shaky litters in the dark over fallen trees of the park, they suffer unbearable pain as the result of the movement, and lose dangerously large quantities of blood. 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. He has brought up a boat and offers to take our wounded to a place where progress is easier. First, we lower the litter containing Father Schiffer into Near us there are two barracks, in each of which forty Korean workers lived. On the day of the explosion, they were laboring on the streets of Hiroshima. Four returned alive to one barracks and sixteen to the other. 600 students of the Protestant girls' school worked in a factory, from which only thirty to forty returned. We have discussed among ourselves the ethics of the use of the bomb. Some consider it in the same category as poison gas and were against its use on a civil population. Others were of the view that in total war, as carried on in Japan, there was no difference between civilians and soldiers, and that the bomb itself was an effective force tending to end the bloodshed, warning Japan to surrender and thus to avoid total destruction. It seems logical to me that he who supports total war in principle cannot complain of war against civilians. The crux of the matter is whether total war in its present form is justifiable, even when it serves a just purpose. Does it not have material and spiritual evil as its consequences which far exceed whatever good that might result? When will our moralists give us a clear answer to this question?"



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. They spent the whole day in an inferno of flames and smoke before a rescue party was able to reach them All four were wounded, but through the grace of God had survived. Nine days later peace came. It was August 15, the feast of our Blessed Mother's Assumption.

Centuries ago, all the early Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries were killed, every known Christian was martyred. But, seven generations later, when missionaries were able to return to Japan, they found over 60,000 Catholics hidden in the mountains or in small fishing villages. They still sang the *Ave Maria* in Latin!

On the other side of the world more than a year after 1945 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 Mother 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. It is now known as the World Apostolate of Fatima.