



# Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER, N.Y.

75c

# BOMBS



Bering Sea



North Pacific Ocean

Okhotsk

RUSSIA



Tokyo  
Osaka  
Hiroshima  
JAPAN

## Moralists questioned its use from beginning

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The radioactive dust had not yet settled on Hiroshima and Nagasaki before prominent U.S. Catholic moral theologians questioned the morality of using the atomic bomb on Japanese cities.

"It's just sad that nobody wanted to listen," says Jesuit Father Richard T. McSorley 50 years later. Father McSorley, professor emeritus of theology at Georgetown University, is a longtime peace activist and director of Georgetown's Center for Peace Studies.

The first U.S. atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima Aug. 6, 1945, leveling most of the city. It immediately killed 75,000 people and injured another 75,000. The death toll attributed to the bomb and its after-effects ultimately rose to about 200,000.



Truman

Three days later, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. That day's attack destroyed the harbor and surrounding areas, but the city was spared total annihilation because of the rain.

Fifty years later, Americans still have not come to a resolution of the debate over the morality of the U.S. action to hasten the end of the war in the Pacific.

When the Smithsonian Institution set out this year to mark the 50th anniversary with an exhibit in Washington, parts of the proposed

exhibit containing commentary critical of the U.S. decision were excised because of pressure from veterans' groups who called it an exercise in "America-bashing." Then other critics berated the Smithsonian when the revised exhibit treated the bombing as if there were no critical questions to be raised.

A review of the early August 1945 news files of the National Catholic News Service, forerunner of today's Catholic News Service, shows that even amid the excitement of Japan's imminent surrender, some serious Catholic commentators were sharply critical of President Harry S. Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb. The news service was then, as it is now, the main source of national and international news for U.S. Catholic newspapers.

The main theological treatment story, a 1,200-word piece dated Aug. 9, quoted a Jesuit scientist denouncing the bomb.

On the other hand, another Jesuit scientist and three moral theologians condemned the action.

"This later group is still more clearly mistaken than the bombing of Germany," said Jesuit Father John C. Ford of Boston College in Massachusetts.

Redemptorist Father Francis J. Connell, a well-known theologian who later became dean of the theology school at Catholic University of

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