

ATROCITY AND RELIGION

The Japanese Martyrs

Alec Ryrie

Francis Xavier
(1506-52), co-
founder of the
Society of Jesus
(Jesuits):
a 17th-century
Japanese portrait





A satellite map of the Japanese archipelago, showing the four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. The islands are depicted with green vegetation and brown/white mountainous terrain, set against a solid blue background representing the surrounding ocean. The names of the islands are written in large, red, serif capital letters. Hokkaido is at the top, followed by Honshu in the center, and Kyushu at the bottom. Shikoku is visible as a smaller island between Honshu and Kyushu.

HOKKAIDO

HONSHU

KYUSHU



Oda Nobunaga
(1534-1582)



Alessandro
Valignano (1539-
1606), Jesuit
Visitor of the East







• Nagasaki

Toyotomi
Hideyoshi
(1537-98)



Japanese Christianity under Toyotomi Hideyoshi

- 1587: anti-Christian edict, not enforced
- 1591: Valignano meets Hideyoshi
- 1593: arrival of Spanish Franciscans
- 1594: Franciscan church in Nagasaki
- 1596: *San Felipe* incident
- 1597, 5 February: crucifixion of 26 Christians
- 1598, 18 Sept.: death of Hideyoshi



Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate

The Christian band have come to Japan, not only sending their merchant vessels to exchange commodities, but also longing to disseminate an evil law, to overthrow right doctrine, so that they may change the government of the country and obtain possession of the land. ... These must be instantly swept out, so that not an inch of soil remains to them in Japan.

Tokugawa Ieyasu's decree of 1614

Christianity in Tokugawa Japan

- 1614: anti-Christian decree
- 1616-23: rising persecution and ban on foreign contacts
- 1622, 22 Sept.: 55 executions in Nagasaki
- 1623, December: 89 killed in two mass executions
- 1627: intensification of persecution, shift to use of torture
- 1627-34: c. 1200 executions

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- 1637-8: Shimabara rebellion on Kyushu

Banner of the Shimabara rebels



Fumi-e images, worn by trampling





RELATIONE DELLA GLORIOSA MORTE

DI XXVI. POSTI IN CROCE

*Per comandamento del Re di Giappone, alli 5. di Febraio
1597. de quali sei furno Religiosi di San Fran-
cesco, tre della Compagnia di Giesù, & dici-
sette Christiani Giapponesi*

Mandata dal Padre Luigi Frois alli 15. di Marzo al R. P.
CLAUDIO ACQVAVIVA Generale
di detta Compagnia.

*Et fatta in Italiano dal P. Gasparo Spivilli di Campli
della medesima Compagnia.*



IN MILANO,

Nella Stampa del quon. Pacifico Pontio. 1599.

*Ad istanza di Pietro Martire Locarni, & Gieronimo
Bordone. Con licenza de' Superiori.*



Callos. fec.

Le Pourtrait des premier 23 Martire mis en Croix par la predicaon. de las. foy au Giappone
sous l'Empe. Taicosam. en la Cite de Monsauchi, de l'ordre des freres mineurs. Observantin des S. Francois.



Calloo fec.

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QVO D. PARERANT
CHRISTUM CRUCIFIGI
IDAEIS. SCANDALUM
GENTIS. SYLTIAM.

M. Kager invent.

W. Kilian sculp.

A B R I E F F E
R E L A T I O N
O F T H E P E R S E C V T I O N
L A T E L Y M A D E

Against the Catholike Christians, in the
Kingdome of I A P O N I A ,

Divided into two Bookes .

Taken out of the Annuall Letters of the Fathers of
the Society of I E S V S , and other Authentick
Informations. Written in Spanish, and printed
first at Mexico in the West Indies, the
yeare of Christ M. DC. XVI .

A N D

Newly translated into English by W. W. Gent .

T H E F I R S T P A R T .



Permissu Superiorum , M. DC. XIX .

They be falsely slandered and calumniated in many thinges by the Devil's ministers, and so be you: they be persecuted for their Religion, many of them to death and more to loss of goods, by the enemies of Christ and his holy Church; and so be you. ...

‘To All That Suffer Persecution In England For Catholic Religion’, preface to Pedro Morejon, *A briefe relation of the persecution .. in the kingdome of Iaponia* (1619)

... Finally they for their valour and constancy in God's cause be famous in all those parts of the world, yea, and in Europe also; and you for yours be no lesse glorious, both in all Europe, and in the rest of the Christian world.

‘To All That Suffer Persecution In England For Catholic Religion’, preface to Pedro Morejon, *A briefe relation of the persecution .. in the kingdome of Iaponia* (1619)

Be more careful to commend in your prayers to Almighty God the necessities of those poor afflicted Christians, your Brethren, as also more willing to imitate their admirable examples of valour and courage in the cause of Christ.

‘To All That Suffer Persecution In England For Catholic Religion’, preface to Pedro Morejon, *A briefe relation of the persecution .. in the kingdome of Iaponia* (1619)

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Their resolution is all the more to be admired, since they knew so little of God's word, so that one might term it stubbornness rather than steadfastness. ... It is indeed extraordinary that amongst them are so many who remain steadfast to the end, and endure so many insufferable torments, in despite of their scanty knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

Reyer Gysbertsz, *De Tyrannie ende Wreedtheden der Jappanen* (Amsterdam, 1637)

Commodore Perry's 'Black Ships' in Edo Bay, 8 July 1853







Modern
memorial at
Senninzuka,
Ikitsuki



Nakae no Shima







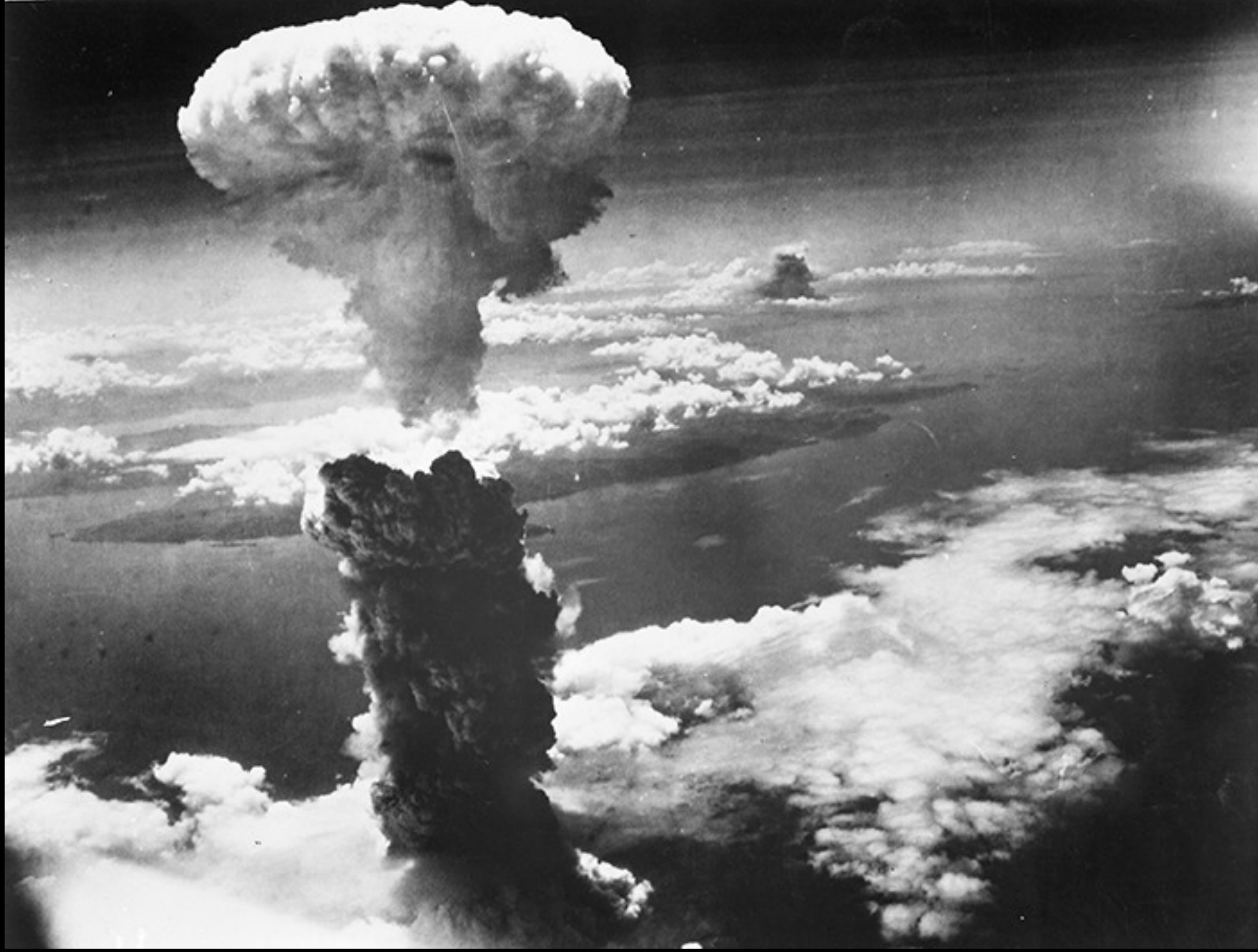
The Twenty-Six Martyrs Monument, Nagasaki



The
Basilica of
the
Twenty-Six
Martyrs,
Nagasaki



Silence (Martin
Scorsese, 2016)







Takashi Nagai
(1908-51)



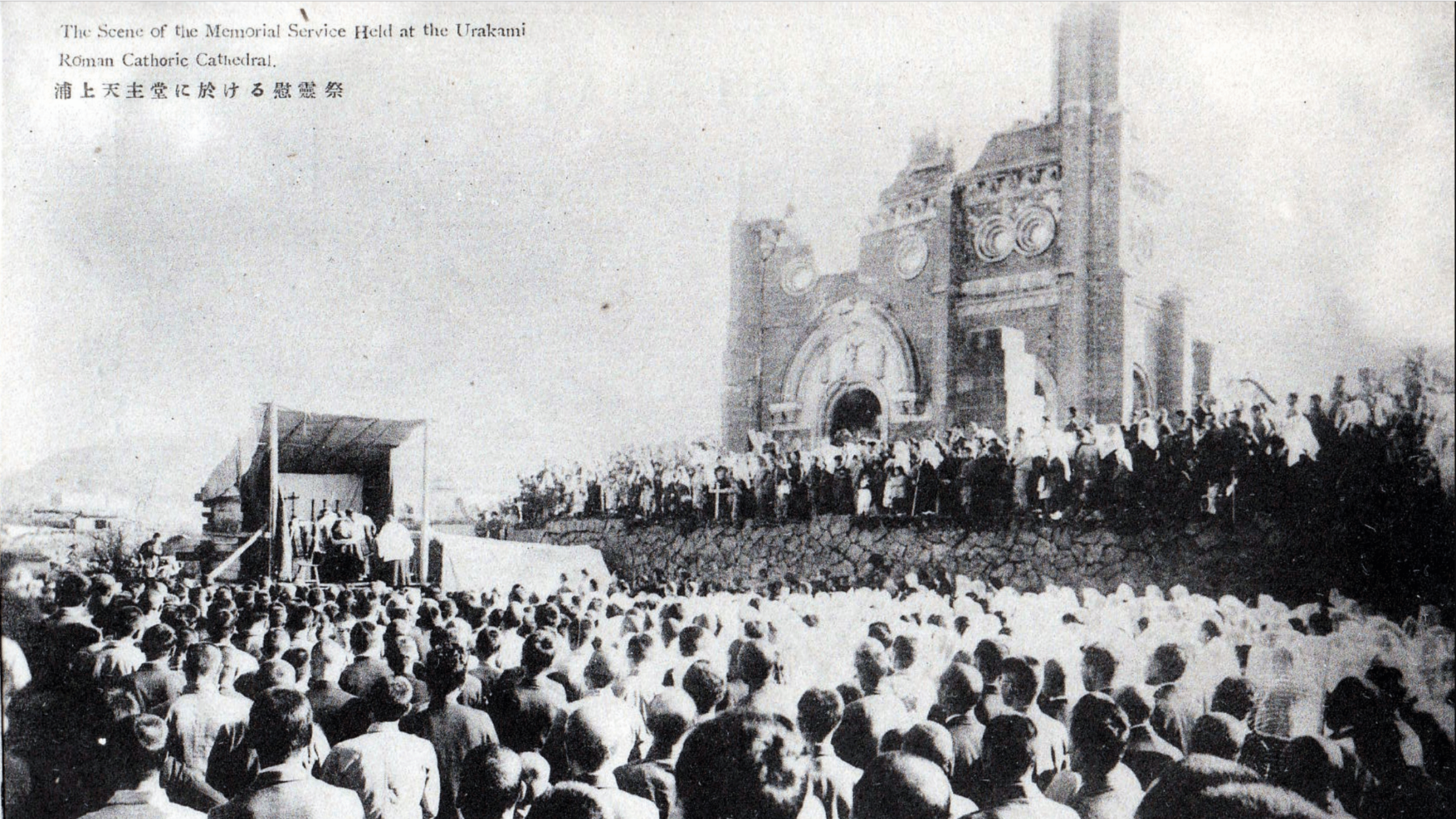
So many martyrdoms, uninterrupted persecution and the atomic bomb ... these are the trials that tell of the glory of God. ... Was not Urakami – the most sacred place in all Japan – chosen as a victim, a pure lamb that had to be slaughtered and burned on the altar of sacrifice to expiate this sin of humanity, the World War?

Takashi Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki* (1948)



The Scene of the Memorial Service Held at the Urakami
Roman Cathoric Cathedral.

浦上天主堂に於ける慰靈祭









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