



1. Three US naval chaplains come to Sophia University

On March 10, 1945, the B29 attack bombers of the American military began to conduct extensive air raids on Tokyo. During their air raid on April 13th, Sophia University suffered considerable damage: the red brick university building was destroyed by fires caused by the bombing, while the auditorium section of Building 1 was burned out. The bombing attacks on May 25th incinerated practically all of the private Japanese-style buildings in the neighborhood of the university. Father Bruno Bitter wrote the following description of the situation:

“Although one of our school buildings has been completely gutted by fire and the other school building has been partially destroyed, if we can acquire the proper materials, it will be possible to rebuild. Everywhere around the university has been changed into scorched earth. We alone rise above the middle of the ruins like a solitary island of peace.”

In such circumstances, a small group of Jesuits protected Sophia University at the risk of their own health. They clung to their lives on a meager diet of soybeans and rice, sometimes supplemented by slices of meat that they had acquired. Finally, on August 15th, the recorded voice of the Emperor flowed over the country. The words of the Emperor caused the exhausted Japanese to beat their breasts in sorrow. The Pacific War was brought to a formal end on September 2nd on the deck of the American battleship Missouri, on station in Tokyo Bay, when Japanese representatives signed the written documents of unconditional surrender.



The upper photograph shows the charred remains of the red brick school building, which was destroyed during the extensive bombing during the early morning of April 13th, 1945. The lower photograph shows parts of the first page of the Asahi Shinbun morning edition for April 15th. The headline complains that incendiary bombs had destroyed part of Meiji Shrine.





This picture is reprinted with the permission of the Museum for the Battleship Missouri. It shows the deck of the battleship during the ceremony of the signing of the surrender documents by the Japanese representatives and their Allied military counterparts.

Actually, this battleship named Missouri had a deep relationship with Sophia University. On each major American warship were stationed one or more chaplains. Two Jesuit priests were assigned to the Missouri: Paul O'Connor and Charles Robinson. Another Jesuit was assigned to the seaplane tender vessel named Hamlin; his name was S. H. Ray. Shortly after the American warships had docked in Yokosuka port, on September 5th the three priests loaded a Navy jeep with food and clothing and drove up to Sophia University. Father (then Mister) Robinson had come to Japan just before the Great Kanto Earthquake and had taught English at Sophia University for about four years. After returning to America, he taught Japanese language at St.

Louis University before entering the Navy as a chaplain in 1943. Based on his work in Japan some twenty years ago, Father Robinson was very worried about the Jesuits who remained in Tokyo and about whether Sophia University had survived the war. The chaplains delivered about a week's supply of food to the Jesuits at Sophia

2. Please do not bother sending food; instead, please send us young Jesuits of excellent promise!

What the chaplains actually found, however, was that the Tokyo Jesuits were not concerned about their bad health, brought on by very bad wartime diets. Instead, the Jesuits exhibited a passionate enthusiasm to immediately reopen Sophia University. Father Paul O'Connor wrote a description of the Tokyo Jesuits to Father Maher, the appointed leader of the Jesuits who could not get into contact with Fr. General in Rome because of the war.

“We asked them what they most wanted. Their requests were not for food but for persons. They said that they wanted young American Jesuits to be sent to Japan, men who could withstand difficulties, men who could teach English, and men who could influence the intellectuals who would participate in the reconstruction of Japan.



This picture shows Father Paul O'Connor in his military chaplains' uniform. He came to Sophia University after the Battleship Missouri docked in Yokosuka. He later became the president of Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.



This photo shows Father Daniel McCoy and a student.

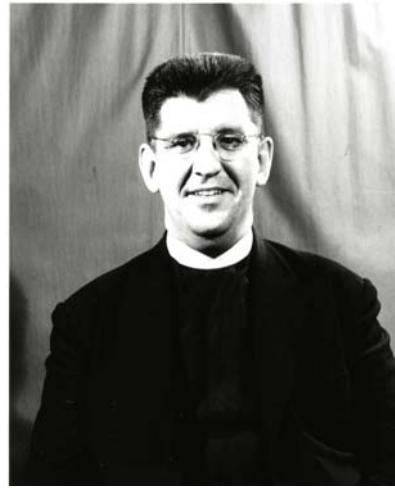
They showed no interest in more food. Their primary request deeply touched our hearts.”

Speaking from the middle of the discouraged isolation of the burnt-out remains at the end of the war, they said: “We need Jesuits who can participate in the reconstruction of Japan.” Such demands were passed around Jesuit communities not only in the United States, but all over the world. As early as November of 1947, the first team of American Jesuits came to Sophia University: Fathers John Blewett, Aloysius Miller, Robert Forbes, and Daniel McCoy. Father Blewett became busy in the department of education,

while Father Forbes established a formidable presence in the department of English. Father Miller also worked in the department of English literature before joining the efforts to establish the International Division. Father McCoy took charge of classes in biological science. After these four pioneers, many Jesuits were sent to Sophia University from all over the world. These included the seventh president of Sophia University, Father Joseph Pittau, and the twelfth president of Sophia University, Father William Currie. Such men formed the underpinnings for the spiritual development of Sophia University.



This is the best picture available of Father Aloysius Miller.



Here we see Father Robert Forbes, wryly smiling.