

The Japan Times  
**NEWS**

NATIONAL

**B-29 pilot asked pope to support Nagasaki atomic bomb victims**

KYODO

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**QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS** – The pilot of the U.S. plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945, asked Pope John XXIII privately in the early 1960s to offer support to the city, relatives of the pilot have told Kyodo News.

Charles Sweeney, a devout Catholic who piloted the B-29 Bockscar in the attack, also made donations to a Catholic-affiliated orphanage in Nagasaki due to his concern for war orphans after visiting the city in September 1945, Sweeney's daughter and brother told Kyodo News ahead of Sunday's 70th anniversary of the bombing.

Before his death in 2004, Sweeney consistently claimed that the atomic bombing was necessary, as it brought World War II to an end.

But his actions, such as making the donations to the orphans, show that he "felt sorry for them deep inside his heart," said Anri Morimoto, a professor at the International Christian University who specializes in religion and ethics.

Sweeney visited the Vatican with his wife around 1962 and asked John, who reigned from 1958 to 1963, for additional support for the Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, which was reconstructed after being destroyed in the nuclear blast, according to Sweeney's second-youngest daughter, Marylyn Howe, 67.

John is known for his efforts that helped the United States and the Soviet Union avert a nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. The following year, he released "Pacem in terris," in which he appealed for the banning of nuclear weapons.

A public relations official at the Vatican said it was difficult to confirm the meeting through official documents.

Howe, who said she often talked about the orphans in Nagasaki with her father between the late 1950s and early 1960s, said Sweeney made the donations to the cathedral because he wished for its reconstruction.

Sweeney's younger brother, William, 74, said Sweeney was willing to send money to a Catholic facility in Nagasaki every year because there had been many casualties there.

Confirming the donations, however, is difficult due to incomplete records and because they were often made anonymously, people close to the church and Nagasaki said.

Sweeney also visited an orphanage near Hiroshima, the first city to be devastated by a U.S. atomic bomb, between November and December 1989 and gave donations via check.

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