

## Notes and Comment

### *The Tsunami of 9 March 1957*

FATHER Bernard Doucette S. J. had just retired for a welcome night's rest when the imperious clang of a bell sounded in his bedroom. The time was 10:32 on the night of 9 March 1957. The alarm bell announced the disturbance of the "Cat's Whisker" on the visual earthquake recorders of the Manila Observatory atop Mirador hill in Baguio.

After the "tidal wave" of 1946 had smitten the Hawaiian Islands and claimed one hundred and fifty-nine lives and destroyed twenty-five million dollars worth of property the need for precautions and warnings against this source of catastrophe was appreciated by responsible authorities. Soon, then, a warning system against tidal waves was established whose purpose was to give, before the onslaught of rising waters, timely alerts to coastal villages, to ocean going vessels in harbors and to planes on beaches. This required the cooperation of suitably located earthquake stations besides the central clearing house at Honolulu. The stations would report at once to the center any quake which might have an associated tidal wave. At present, there are eight active stations in the Pacific system. Of these eight stations six, located in the western hemisphere, are maintained and supervised by governments or large universities. The two member stations in the East are established at Tokyo and at Baguio, Philippines. Only the Manila Observatory station at Baguio under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers operates with private funds in this scientific service.