



Birth
Oct. 2, 1928

Baptism
Oct. 14, 1928

Profession
July 29, 1948

Death
June 7, 2016

Burial
Chatawa Cemetery
Chatawa, Mississippi

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

In Loving Memory

Sister Audrey Mae [Mary Alix] Kihnemann, SSND

Audrey Mae Kihnemann was born Oct. 2, 1928 in New Orleans. She was the eldest of three children born to Mildred (Callahan) and Bernard Daniel Kihnemann. Audrey Mae attended Our Lady of Good Counsel elementary and secondary schools in New Orleans. She could hardly resist being drawn to her teachers, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, for her mother always held them as close friends and her aunt spent many years praying for a vocation in the family. Upon finishing the commercial secondary school at Good Counsel, Audrey told the superior, "Ever since I could remember, I desired to be a sister." She received the candidate's bonnet in the Good Counsel convent chapel in 1944. She then journeyed to Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis in preparation for becoming a religious and a teacher, a School Sister of Notre Dame. She was received into the congregation as Novice Mary Alix in 1947. As she completed her novitiate year, she wrote, "I pronounced my vows, which I hope will last for all eternity."

Her professional ministry found her in St. Louis, in Conway, Arkansas, and in Mobile, Alabama as a teacher of primary grades. With her commercial high school studies and her work experience as a part-time secretary during her last year at home Sister Alix fully expected to pursue a degree in business education. Now she was told she should change her major to primary education. She completed the requirements for this degree in 1954.

"If I had gotten a business education degree, I would probably never have been sent to Japan. A little thing, a change in major, changed the course of my life."

In June 1955 she received a call from Mother Theodosia saying the province was thinking of sending her to Japan to teach English as a second language to primary learners there. "I was so dumbfounded that my part of the conversation was a series of 'Yes, Mother.'" Audrey Mae went on to relate, "As was the custom at that time Mother told me not to tell anyone about Japan until the official announcement in July."

Sister Audrey Mae wrote later, "It is during prayer that one learns to see providence at work in the 'accidents' of life." Surely it was her life of prayer that enabled her to move so smoothly through these next few months. Forget lengthy family goodbyes, culture and language studies. Sister Mary Alix could now make only physical preparations to leave for Japan. The annals of the Japan mission record the arrival of Sisters Emile Nabholz, Clarea Hotze, and Mary Alix Kihnemann in Tokyo on Sept. 23, 1955.

Sister Mary Alix depicted their language learning as an immediate experience, "We had a tutor from September to April. Then we began to teach! I wrote my class in English and with the help of my tutor, translated it into Japanese. Then I memorized it." Evidently the challenges of these sisters were greatly blessed for Sister Mary Alix reported, "As the newly-opened school flourished, enrollment increased and grades were added. I taught English, but I also developed the curriculum and wrote the textbooks." This teaching was in Notre Dame Primary School, Kyoto, Japan.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Audrey Mae Kihnemann



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of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

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Six years later she, with two others, moved to begin the SSND international school in Okinawa. She taught there as an elementary teacher, then moved to the junior high school. The school was international in reality – with a mix of Asian enrollees from several countries with those from the American military base. Sister Mary Alix again pictures a language challenge. “The faculty too was international. Our community communication was in which-ever language the two or three people conversing understood. Our local assemblies had to be translated several times before the entire community had an idea of what the discussion was about.” Sister Mary Alix seemed to have mastered these communication skills for she could still enable conversation between the cultures through the next 40 years.

In 1971, she returned to the United States and to her baptismal name. Sister Audrey Mae was assigned as teacher in Rosary High School in St. Louis. She had earned a master’s degree in education with a focus on counseling from the University of Maryland, Okinawa campus.

In 1972 she returned to the Dallas province, as teacher at Redemptorist High School in New Orleans, then to Immaculata High School in Marrero, Louisiana and St. Scholastica Academy in Covington, Louisiana. In the latter two she held the position of counselor.

The role of campus minister seemed to be a natural progression for Sister Audrey Mae as she moved in 1984 to the Texas Technical Institute in Harlingen and then, in 1986 to the University of Southwest Louisiana in Lafayette.

A call came in 1991 for a short-term English teacher and resource person for the summer session of the SSND school in Bandipur, Nepal. Sister Audrey Mae dreamed she could fill this opening. She applied. The dream became a reality and for eight weeks she was refreshed and energized by the experience. As lagniappe, she was invited to visit our sisters in Kyoto on the way to Nepal. The visit was delightful.

Now in her mid-60s and knowing that she preferred working with adults, she applied for and became associate director of Christian formation for the San Angelo Diocese. Later she served as pastoral associate for Sacred Heart Parish in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

From 1988 to 2005, Sister Audrey Mae was assistant administrator of the Wynhoven Apartments in Marrero, Louisiana. She also served as pastoral care giver at West Jefferson Hospital. Because of the forced evacuation of Wynhoven caused by Hurricane Katrina, Sister Audrey Mae moved to the St. Mary of the Pines community in Chatawa, Mississippi in 2005. She was involved in the community as her diminishing health allowed. In the last months she declined rapidly until her peaceful death on June 7, 2016.

Morning prayer and visitation were held Friday, June 10 at St. Teresa Church in Chatawa. The Mass of Christian Burial followed. Rev. Suresh Thirumalareddy was celebrant. Burial was in the Chatawa cemetery. Sister Audrey Mae was preceded in death by her parents. She is survived by her sister, Sylvia Brooks of Terrytown, Louisiana and her brother Bernard Kihnemann of Cleveland, Tennessee.

By Sister MarieClare Powell, SSND