



## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Mary Karen Tachibana

Hiroko Tachibana was born on January 28, 1934, in Kobe City, Japan to Sakae Kitamine and Kazuko Tachibana. She was baptized on December 24, 1952, at Rokko Church and received the name Maria Sophia. Hiroko entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) candidature at Shishigatani, Kyoto, Japan on September 15, 1960. She was received into the novitiate on March 31, 1962, and given the name Mary Karen. She professed first vows on April 1, 1963, and final vows on April 1, 1968.

In March 1966, she earned a bachelor's degree in history and a teacher's license in social studies and ethics for junior and senior high school at Sophia University.

In April 1964, Sister Karen began her life-long commitment with Notre Dame Jogakuin Junior and Senior High School in Kyoto, where she taught ethics and social studies in the junior high school and Japanese history for high school students. She was actively involved with students as a homeroom teacher, mainly those of the first year of junior high school. She also fostered encounters with the Christians in the school as the advisor of "Christian Family," a group of Christian students, teachers, staff members and parents. As a member of the Educational Welfare Committee, she put her efforts into the planning and management of this committee. Because she cared for the growth of various relationships from these encounters, she kept in contact through correspondence and visiting. She generously looked after the growth of these new relationships.

One example of her rich and varied encounters was planning for and accompanying a group of students of the junior high school to visit survivors of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. Through an encounter with Ms. Ikimi Kikkawa, Sister Karen met young Mr. and Mrs. Deyama, who were planning to make a film about Ms. Kikkawa's life. Sister Karen had an opportunity to be with the crew making the film, "Back of Destiny." This provided an opportunity to get a record of atomic bomb survivors' experiences while they were still alive. Although we do not have many chances to listen directly to their testimonies, the students of Jogakuin can listen to the stories of the atomic bomb and of Mrs. Hishako Deyama, who is herself a survivor.

Another example is an encounter with the Kyoto Mothers' Union to Protect Small Lives. A mother of one of these students joined this organization and Sister Karen invited her for a talk at the school. Sister Karen committed herself to plan and prepare for the annual talk and she also joined the daily activities of this union.

For a long time, she also regularly visited Friendly House, a workplace for those with physical disabilities in addition to Tankai So, an institute for the aged. Her commitment to welfare education was rooted in learning and action on their behalf.

From 1982 until 1993, she supported the Jogakuin as vice-principal to Sister Dolores Ishizaki and Sister Mary Bernard Iwai. Even among these overly busy

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Birth  
January 28, 1934

Baptism  
December 24, 1952

Profession  
April 1, 1963

Death  
September 16, 2021

Burial  
Kinugasa Cemetery,  
Kyoto, Japan

*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

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Tachibana*



days, she never stopped her, “commitment to society by learning and acting.”

After finishing her ministry as a vice-principal, she returned to teaching and had the responsibility of a homeroom teacher. After retirement, she was a part-time teacher, continuing to, “commit to society by learning and acting.” She accompanied the volunteer club activities at the school.

While teaching as a part-time teacher, she took a leave of absence for half a year in 2001 for medical reasons. Even during these days, she continued correspondence with atomic bomb survivors.

In her commitment to the Jogakuin for more than 40 years, she taught a Bible class for parents. It was gradually opened for graduates and parents of graduates. Ashibue no Kai is a place for graduates to share, pray, and learn once or twice a year. She was an advisor to this organization until her last days.

Sister Mary Karen entered Kyoto Hakuai Hospital on August 20, 2021. On September 13, 2021, she was in critical condition and was transferred to Kyoto Second Red Cross Hospital. Three days later, at 2:23 p.m. on September 16, she completed her 58 and a half years as an SSND religious and was called home by God. She was 87 years old. Funeral services were held on September 18, 2021. The burial took place in the Kinugasa Cemetery, Kyoto, Japan.

We are grateful to Sister Mary Karen who completed God’s mission by living out each of her encounters faithfully and carefully wherever she was sent and whatever task was given to her! We thank God, who was always with her through everything, guiding her and blessing her commitment.

*By Sisters Judith Kamada and Maria Dominica Sento, SSND*

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