



**Birth**  
November 26, 1927

**Baptism**  
December 24, 1956

**Profession**  
April 6, 1961

**Death**  
September 9, 2021

**Burial**  
Donated body to science

*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 Mary Leona Kazue Matsushima

Sister Mary Leona Kazue Matsushima was born on November 26, 1927, to Iso (Uemura) and Joseph Matsushima in Osaka, Japan. She was the oldest of seven children. She had four sisters and two brothers. During her childhood, she frequently changed schools as her father frequently changed work. She was a good student and received good grades. She enjoyed sewing and at the age of 13, entered the Osaka No. 2 Seamstress School, which granted her a certificate for teaching sewing. After completion of her studies and due to financial difficulties in the family, she was employed in the Shigino Post Office in Osaka doing clerical work. She later was a dressmaker at the Ogihara Dressmaking Shop in Osaka.

During World War II, their home was burned and they lost everything. Fortunately, all the family members escaped alive. They rebuilt, but their second house was also burned, requiring them to build a third time.

Following the war, she realized that all earthly things came to an end and began searching for God. In 1952, her father was hospitalized and he died while undergoing surgery. A Catholic sister frequently visited him, consoled him and baptized him shortly before his death. The sister's devoted love sparked her interest in the Catholic Church and religious life. However, family responsibilities prevented her from studying the catechism.

Eventually, she decided that she did not want to marry but wanted to be a religious. She began going to church and studied the catechism in 1955. She was baptized on December 24, 1956, at Tamatsukuri Church in Osaka and received the name Cecilia. Just before her baptism, a friend entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) in Kyoto. Cecilia decided to also enter there. Her mother reluctantly consented to her entrance. She entered the candidature on December 7, 1958, at Shishigatani in Kyoto. She was received into the novitiate on April 5, 1960, and given the name Mary Leona. She professed first vows on April 6, 1961, and final vows on April 6, 1966. In 2021, Sister Leona celebrated her sixtieth Jubilee as a School Sister of Notre Dame this year.

After her first profession, Sister Leona worked at the office of Notre Dame Jogakuin in Kyoto for a year and a half, and she taught after-school classes of flower arrangement. Some students continued the class even after graduation. At the same time, she also worked for the Shishigatani community. In March, 1976, she earned qualifications to teach flower arrangement for beginners and offered to teach these classes.

From April 1981 until March of 1993, she was the assistant director of the dormitory at Notre Dame Women's College, where she also taught flower arrangement to interested college students.

After retiring, she moved to Shishigatani Convent and continued community service as well as flower arrangement. The sisters often saw her arranging and taking care of flowers in the chapel at Shishigatani Convent. Sister Leona also used her skills to fashion corsages and beautiful handmade cards, which she presented to the sisters who celebrated Jubilees, birthdays and name days.

*continued*

# *In Loving Memory*

In her later years, she was in the hospital, and there she had very good relationships with her roommates and the medical and care staffs. They were always sad when she was transferred to another hospital. This past year, she could not have visitors because of COVID-19. However, on the day she was dying, two people were permitted to see her at Hakuaikai Hospital in Kyoto. At 9:59 a.m. on September 9, 2021, at the age of 93, Sister Leona went to heaven while sisters offered the Rosary on her behalf. She donated her body to science. May she rest in God's peace as she enters her new life with her God.

*By Sister Maria Dominica Sento, SSND*



*Sister Mary Leona  
Katzue Matsushima*



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