



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma



June 23, 2022

Biography of Death Notice N. 15

The Region of Japan recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Masahiro François-Xavier TOMIKI**, priest, of the Kosei Marianist Community, in Sapporo, Japan, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on April 25, 2022, in Sapporo, Japan, at the age of 89 with 70 years of religious profession.

Masahiro Tomiki was born in Fukuoka, Japan on February 11, 1933, the son of a Konkōkyō priest (Konkōkyō is a sect of Shintō). He often said that he was “naughty” as a child. Without telling his parents, he would take the train to far-off places with his friends. Upon his return home, he was thoroughly scolded by them and sometimes had no meal as a punishment. He was considered so “naughty” that for a year he was even sent from the family home in Fukuoka for a year to live with his aunt in Saga Prefecture. Still of elementary school age, life at his aunt’s home was difficult for the youngster and, because of the experience, he reported that his “naughtiness” was cured.

When he entered Fukuoka Taisei Middle School in 1946, he encountered Catholicism. The school had also just been entrusted that year by the Diocese of Fukuoka to the Society of Mary to administer. (Note: The Society of Mary returned the school to the Diocese in 1969 and the school is presently under Jesuit administration and now known as Sophia Fukuoka Junior and Senior High School). He was baptized as a Catholic in 1949 in his first year at Taisei High School and decided to become a candidate of the Society of Mary. As a Marianist candidate, he entered the 2nd year of the high school program at Gyosei High School in Tokyo in 1950. After finishing high school, he entered the novitiate (March 20, 1951 to March 25, 1952), then in Kiyose outside of Tokyo. He professed first vows on March 25, 1952 and began his life as a member of the Society of Mary. He did his university studies at Jochi (Sophia) University in Tokyo from 1953 until 1958, gaining licenses to teach social studies and religion on the high school/middle school levels. Upon university graduation, his first teaching assignment was to Taisei School, his alma mater. He did his seminary studies (1960-1964) in Fribourg at Regina Mundi. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 14 in 1964 at Collège Saint-Michel in Fribourg. He then spent a year in France studying liturgy at the Institut Catholique de Paris.

From 1965 until 1969, he served as community chaplain and head of the religion department at Meisei School in Osaka, then at Kaisei School in Nagasaki, and finally at Taisei School in Fukuoka. Fr. Tomiki was appointed Novice Director (first at Oiso Mariazan in Kanagawa Prefecture) for the Province in March of 1969. He also became the Provincial Assistant for Religious Life, one year later.

At the age of 41, he was appointed as Provincial and began serving in this position in June of 1974. His first stint as Provincial lasted until March of 1982. He had a gentle personality. In a letter to the Regional Superior and Council, Bro. Stephen Glodek referred to Fr. Tomiki's "grace and kindness." As a teacher, he was loved by his students and their parents and guardians. As Provincial, he led the Society of Mary Province of Japan during that post-conciliar period following Vatican II. He had a strong spirit and led the Society of Mary with that spirit. Some of his fellow-religious also said he had a stubborn streak. His first stint as Provincial was a difficult period for him personally. Among other things was the issue of the establishment of what is now known as Gyosei International School in Kisarazu, Chiba Prefecture. This problem highlighted the

delicate relationship between “religious corporations” and “school corporations” and issues of governance.

He became the Chief Director and Principal of Sapporo Kosei School in 1982. After six years in Sapporo, he returned to Tokyo to become the Director of the Chaminade Marianist Community (1988-1993). During part of that time he also served again as the Provincial Assistant for Religious Life. During those periods in his life when he was ministering in Tokyo, he was also very much involved in work with the Japan Catholic Bishops Conference, first in the work of the Commission for Non-Christian Religions, and then in the area of school education. He also developed an interest in “transaction analysis” and participated in many a workshop on this topic. He also offered a workshop on this to his fellow Marianist Brothers and Sisters.

In January of 1997, after another three-year assignment again to Sapporo as the Director of the religious community and the Chief Director of Sapporo Kosei School (1993-1997), his full-time assignment to work in the General Secretariat of the Bishops Conference was announced. However, the event of March of that same year (i.e., the tragic death of the Provincial), changed those plans. Fr. Tomiki was reappointed as Provincial. That event prompted him to attempt to focus the attention of the Province membership on the need for ongoing spiritual renewal, a recurring theme of Society of Mary Chapters of that time. As Provincial, he also took the initiative in moving the Province to Regional status, something which was realized in 2000. At that time he was appointed for a five-year term as the first Regional Superior. Among other revisions in the Regional Charter made after 2000 was a shift to three-year terms for the Regional Superior. Possibly contrary to his innermost hopes, he was informed by the Superior General that this change in term length would take effect after he completed his full five-year term as Regional.

As Provincial/Regional Superior he took an active interest in the Marianist Family. During his tenure, the Marianist Lay Communities in Japan formed their national organization (1997). The three branches of the Marianist Family then present in Japan (the SM, the FMI, and the MLC) officially established the Japan Marianist Family Council on September 17 in 2000. In 2003 the Marianist Family set up a Joint Vocation Ministry Committee which continued to function until relatively recently.

It was during Fr. Tomiki's term as Regional Superior that contacts with the Region of Korea increased. There were for some years annual joint meetings of the Regional Councils of both Units, periodic gatherings of the Marianist Family Councils of both countries, and exchanges among the SM religious of both Regions. Fr. Tomiki himself had a sabbatical in Korea between March of 2007 and May of 2009 during which he studied the Korean language and lived and ministered with the Marianists in Seoul, something he had personally desired to do for a long time. He was much appreciated by the religious and lay members of the Marianist Family in Korea as expressed by Fr. Dominic Park, current Regional Superior, in a letter of condolence he wrote on receiving the news of Fr. Tomiki's death.

After a year as chaplain to the Marianist Sisters in Chofu, he was reassigned in 2010 to Sapporo, Japan. He went on to serve as the Assistant Chief Director of the school for a number of years. For many years, he was the "voice" of the monthly "First Friday" talks to the school community over the school's PA system. Until the time of his death, he also assisted with priestly ministry services in parishes of the Sapporo Diocese.

As Fr. André-Joseph Fétis wrote in a letter to the Regional Superior right before the General Council visitation of the Region of Japan in May of this year, "he (Fr. Tomiki) played an important role for the Province, during his two periods as Provincial, and then for the Region. He was a man of extreme kindness but also a very spiritual and profound man. This made any meeting with him very pleasant and inspiring. He was a wise man. We will all miss him. We regret that we will not be able to meet him during our next visitation."
