



---

In Memoriam: Father Hugo Makibi Enomiya-Lassalle (1898-1990)

Author(s): Klaus Luhmer

Source: *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 11 (1991), pp. 303-304

Published by: [University of Hawai'i Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1390279>

Accessed: 25-12-2015 10:02 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*University of Hawai'i Press* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Buddhist-Christian Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Father Hugo Makibi Enomiya-Lassalle

(1898–1990)

Father Lassalle, naturalized as a Japanese in 1948 under the name of Makibi Enomiya, was born in Westphalia, on November 11, 1898. At seventeen, he joined the German army and was dispatched to the Western Front. Severely wounded he was withdrawn from the battlefield, serving behind the front until January 1919 when he was released from military service. In that same year he entered the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). He studied philosophy and theology in England and the Netherlands and became a Catholic priest in 1927. In 1929 he went to Japan where he taught at Sophia University.

In 1931, Lassalle started a “settlement” in Tokyo for the poor and destitute. In 1935 he was appointed Superior of the Mission. And in 1939 he moved to Hiroshima where, in addition to his work as a Superior, he took over Noboricho parish as its pastor.

The turning point in his life came in 1943 when some Catholic professors of Hiroshima University convinced him that the only way really to understand the Japanese soul was to practice Zen. In that year, he made his first *sesshin*, or Zen retreat, in the Buddhist temple of Eimyōji. After 1956, he followed the Zen Master Daiun Sogaku Harada (1879–1961). In 1978, he himself was recognized as a Zen Master by a successor of Harada, Kōun Yamada Rōshi in Kamakura.

Another experience which influenced the course of his life, was the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (1945). He was injured by the blast while he was at the mission station in Noboricho, less than one mile from the epicenter of the explosion. Wounded, he escaped to nearby Asano Park. As soon as he recovered, he went back to Noboricho to live in a wooden shack, looking for survivors and rebuilding the church. Then came the inspiration to build a Peace Memorial Church on the same site, which was eventually dedicated on August 6, 1954, and is now the Cathedral of the Hiroshima Diocese.

Father Lassalle gained a great deal spiritually from the practice of Zen; hence he wished to introduce a method of Zen for Christians. On December 17, 1960, he opened a small Zen retreat house, *Shimmeikutsu* (Hall of Spiritual Darkness), near Hiroshima. It was transferred to the outskirts of Tokyo on December 19, 1969. From 1968, Lassalle lived in Tokyo writing and directing Zen retreats in various countries. His *Zen for Christians* has become a classic worldwide and his publications number more than thirty volumes, mostly in German and Japanese.

It was to direct a Zen retreat that he went to Germany in early 1989. While there, the doctors discovered a growth in the intestines and he underwent surgery twice within a short interval. He recovered but was too weak to return to his beloved mission in Japan. On July 7, 1990, he was called to his eternal

reward in the spirit of enlightenment. His image as one who embodied a perfect blend of Western and Eastern spirituality will remain in the hearts of many to whom he was a kind guide and a perfect model.

Klaus Luhmer, S.J.  
*Sophia University*