



ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
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Dearest Sisters,

We received the news that today the Lord visited Ashigara-kami Byoin Hospital in Hiratsuka, Japan to call to himself our sister:

KUSAKAWA KIYOKO – SR. BERNADETTA
born in Osaka, Japan on 11 February 1940.

Sr. Bernadetta entered the Congregation in Osaka on 14 March 1970. After a period of initial formation, she made her novitiate in Tokyo, concluding it with her first profession on 25 March 1974, Feast of the Annunciation.

As a young professed, she worked in the shipping department of Tokyo and also served as cook for that big community. She later carried out the apostolate of collective diffusion with great responsibility and love in Nagoya, Osaka and Hiratsuka. In 1987, she was appointed local superior of the Osaka community. When her term of office ended, she returned to Tokyo and was placed in charge of the stock room—a responsibility she fulfilled with intelligence and dedication. She also promoted the FSP periodical *Akebono* and worked in the book center.

In 2012, Sr. Bernadetta was transferred to the Hiratsuka community so as to receive the care she needed for a serious form of Alzheimer's disease. Her life had become an altar on which she renewed her self-offering to the Lord day after day for the good of humanity. In 2014 she described her life of consecration in the following way to her provincial superior:

"I live my consecration on a daily basis by accepting my illness and by trying to carry out with great fidelity whatever household services I am able to perform in the community. If someone asks me to lead a hymn during the community Visit, I do it very willingly because the Lord has blessed me with a good singing voice."

In 2016, Sr. Bernadetta's health began to rapidly decline and the following year she had to be hospitalized to receive the therapy necessitated by her physical condition. In June 2018, she was placed in a care home because she needed round-the-clock assistance. A few days ago, on 13 March, she was once again hospitalized due to an intestinal inflammation, but her very poor physical state did not allow any medical interventions to alleviate her situation.

Sr. Bernadetta was a kind, discreet, simple and responsible person. She also possessed a good sense of humor. Even in the last years of her illness, she preserved the wit that had always distinguished her. With amusing creativity, she reminisced about her call to the Pauline life: "One day," she wrote, "I suddenly heard a voice piercing my heart with the words: *Take up your cross and follow me...* I tried to reject that invitation repeatedly because I did not think I was worthy of the religious life. Nevertheless, just like boiling water raises the lid of a pot, I was not able to clamp down the lid on that pressing call so I let it do its job." Her words re-evoked those of the prophet Jeremiah, who said: "The words of the Lord are like a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. I grow weary holding it in; I cannot endure it" (Jr. 20:9).

Sr. Bernadetta ends her reflection with the words: "A vocation is truly the initiative of God, who realizes it through the mediation of many people. Consequently, nothing is useless in pastoral work for vocations.... The small and discreet daily efforts of every person are necessary."

Sr. Bernadetta allowed her life to be directed by a reassurance of the Lord that resounds with particular intensity for her today: "I am with you always, to the end of time" (Mt. 28:20). This certainty, which always guided her, was the foundation of the hope that now awaits her in heaven."

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 21 March 2019