



Dearest Sisters,

We received the news that at about 3:00 am (local time), the Lord visited Tokai University Hospital in Hachioji (Tokyo), Japan, to invite to the eternal banquet in heaven our sister:

YOSHIOKA YOKO – SR. MARIA AGNES
born in Osaka, Japan, on 15 March 1933.

Young Yoko belonged to a deeply Christian family. Her mother had instilled in her the need to always do the will of God as perfectly as she could in all things. In fact, even on her deathbed, Mrs. Yoshioka vigorously reaffirmed that people who do the will of God should not be afraid of anything. From an early age, her daughter learned to regard the religious vocation as very special. Yoko was unsure about what religious institute she wanted to enter, so one day, hoping for illumination, she went to the cemetery to pray. On her way out of that holy place, she met a Daughter of St. Paul, Sr. Palmira Bernardini, and their encounter proved to be both enlightening and providential for her. She and her parents went to visit the Pauline missionaries in their home and the spirit of simplicity and inculturation that reigned there convinced her that that little abode was destined to become her home too. So it was that she officially entered the Congregation on 30 June 1952, at the age of nineteen.

She soon had the chance to experience an aspect of the media apostolate when she was assigned to the radio station started by Fr. Paolo Marcellino in Kawaguchi. She said that even during her novitiate she would get up early in the morning to work at the station. Because she disliked studying, she learned the fundamentals of the consecrated life primarily from the example and lifestyle of the sisters. After her first profession on 8 December 1956, Sr. M. Agnes carried out the mission of diffusion in the communities of Osaka and Takamatsu. Afterward, she helped to run the “book nook” the sisters had set up in the Okamasai Nagasaki department store, much to the surprise of its customers, who were astonished to see nuns working in such a busy commercial setting.

In 1961, Sr. M. Agnes made her perpetual profession in Tokyo and then continued to spread the Gospel to schools and families in Osaka, Tokyo and Hiroshima. She was always trying to find new ways to proclaim the Word of God, thanks to the inspiration of Fr. Nemeshegyi, whose advice helped her to never become discouraged: “If you are not welcomed on the first floor,” he would say, “then go up to the second...”

Sr. M. Agnes served as local superior in Nagoya, Osaka and Hiroshima for several terms. She also worked with great love in the Kobe (Osaka) book center and provided various services to the sisters. When the Kobe community closed in 2017, she was transferred back to Tokyo, where she devoted herself to the preparation of mini-media and items for the Liturgy. For this purpose she opened what she called the “Irene Workshop”—a place where older FSPs felt they could continue to make a significant contribution to the Congregation’s mission. Everyone was very happy to work in that apostolic sector, which overflowed with joy and the Pauline spirit.

In early 2020, Sr. M. Agnes’ strength began to decline rapidly, leaving her without sufficient energy to carry out her Workshop activities. The following year she was diagnosed as suffering from liver cancer, which had already spread to the point that an operation would have been useless. She spent the last months of her life in an assisted-living home for the elderly, where she continued to carry out the Pauline mission by means of prayer and self-offering. A few days ago, her condition worsened and she was admitted to the hospital, where she breathed her last.

On this Sunday of the Word of God, may Sr. M. Agnes intercede for all ecclesial communities, asking that they be enlightened by the Word and united by the bond of love so as to be a sign of salvation and hope for those who yearn for light in the darkness. Affectionately,

Roma, 22 gennaio 2023


sr Anna Maria Parenzan