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Dearest Sisters,

At 7:55 a.m. today (local time), the Divine Master visited Saiseikai Hiratsuka Byoin Hospital, Japan, to call to the “other shore” our sister:

MOTOMURA SUMIKO – SR. MARIA GABRIELLA
born in Nagasaki, Japan on 3 September 1928.

Sr. M. Gabriella entered the Congregation in the community of Fukuoka on 21 August 1951. She made her first profession in Tokyo on 30 June 1955, followed by her perpetual profession 5 years later. These were the unforgettable years of our beginnings in Japan, in which Sr. M Gabriella had the chance to get to know M. Thecla and the Founder when they visited our recently-opened communities in that country. Sr. M. Gabriella was deeply struck by M. Thecla’s tender and maternal gaze and she took every opportunity to tell others about Prima Maestra’s joyous attitude toward life. Encouraged to put her thoughts down on paper, she wrote: “Prima Maestra was the heart and soul of every recreation, spreading serenity and a holy atmosphere around her.”

As a young professed, Sr. M. Gabriella carried out the apostolate of capillary and collective diffusion in Nagoya and after her perpetual profession she continued her ministry of spreading the Word of God, this time in the communities of Fukuoka and Hiroshima.

In 1979, she was transferred to Tokyo, where she was asked to carry out the service of cook. Afterward, she returned to the diffusion apostolate with great generosity in Kagoshima and Nagasaki. In 2002, she was made the cook of the latter community—an apostolate she carried out for the next 11 years, until the house was closed in 2013. It was not easy for Sr. M. Gabriella to accept a transfer to Hiratsuka: she found it hard to adjust to life in that large community but she accepted her new assignment with simplicity and docility, viewing it as an expression of the will of God. In her effort to ease the work load of the other sisters, she dedicated herself to many small community services, which she performed punctiliously. She would frequently wash the kitchen dishcloths and if she forgot to hang them up to dry, she would get out of bed in the middle of the night to do so.

Sr. M. Gabriella will be remembered as a simple and serene person who radiated peace around her. She liked to reminisce about her apostolic experiences and in sharing them with the other sisters she would become so animated that she overcame her innate shyness and timidity about expressing herself in public.

In February 2016, it was discovered that Sr. Gabriella was suffering from pancreatic cancer. The tumor was blocking her bile duct and although the doctors tried to drain the bile they were not successful. At this point, nothing more could be done for her from the medical standpoint. Sr. M. Gabriella spent the last weeks of her life in an attitude serenity, prayer and thanksgiving to God. Although very weak, she found the strength to confide to others what she was going through, saying: “I never had any major health problems before this, but now the Lord has given me the chance to offer this great sacrifice to him in reparation for sins, and I want to thank him for it. I am happy to be able to offer myself for the Congregation.” It saddened her that she could no longer help the other sisters in the apostolate but she assured them that she was offering her prayers and sufferings for all their intentions.

Up to the end, Sr. M. Gabriella was guided by the Word of God that had touched her life intimately: “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you” (Jn. 15:16). And today our sister was called to at last behold and contemplate the face of the Master who had chosen and called her from all eternity and to whom she had responded day after day with gratitude and profound love.

Affectionately,

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 8 April 2016