

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO
CASA GENERALIZIA
Via S. Giovanni Eudes, 25
00163 Roma
Tel. 06.661 3039 - Fax 06.661 57 208



Dearest Sisters,

We received the news that at 1:07 p.m. today (local time), one of our sisters who resides in the “Camellia Sakuragaoka” Elderly Care Facility in Kanagawa, Japan, was called to contemplate the face of God forever:

**YAMANO KEIKO –SR. MARIA JOSEPH
born in Miyazaki (Oita), Japan on 20 December 1933.**

She entered the Congregation in the house of Fukuoka on 1 May 1951, three years after the community was opened, making her a member of one of the first groups of Japanese Daughters of St. Paul. In the same year, together with Sr. Giustina Rossi and another postulant, she was sent to open a branch house in Kawaguchi where Fr. Paul Marcellino, ssp, had launched the Nippon Cultural Broadcasting station, from which he ran the radio apostolate. There were large areas of land in that area dedicated to farming and cattle raising, and the FSP candidates to our Institute were called to not only carry out the Pauline apostolate but also to do field work as well, in the midst of difficulties we would find it hard to imagine today.

In 1953, together with eight other young women, Keiko entered the first FSP novitiate held in Japan. Maestra Thecla, who visited the country that very year, left this testimony of her trip: “The young women here are very good. Between the Italians and Japanese, there are more than sixty sisters. It is hard to communicate with the young women, but there are interpreters. The community is building a new house. They have many debts and no money...just like Rome. Here, too, you can feel the hand of God at work in everything. These wonderful vocations are thirsting to do good. The community chapel is beautiful and the young sisters sing so well they enchant everyone.”

Keiko made her first profession in Tokyo on 30 June 1954. Now known as Sr. M. Joseph, she was sent to Fukuoka and then to Osaka to spread the Gospel and other formative books to families, schools, and institutes. She was obliged to undergo a period of medical care and rest from 1958-1961, due to frail health. In Nagoya, she carried out community services, after which she returned to Tokyo where, over the next 25 years, she worked in the sewing room, the book bindery, and also managed the stock room with her customary helpfulness and generosity.

Sr M. Joseph was a very hardworking and diligent sister, attentive to the needs of the sisters, a quiet and discreet person who was always ready to lend a hand wherever there was need. She was convinced that *even collecting the garbage could be a work of evangelization*. This statement, made by a priest, had impressed her so much that it left a deep mark on her life. She said very realistically: “It all depends on where my heart is directed. I must not compare myself with others. Instead, I should try to do all I can in my own situation...”

From 1996-2022, Sr. M. Joseph lived in the Hiratsuka community. At first, she was in charge of the stockroom for non-Pauline editions, but as her strength declined, she devoted herself to making baptismal veils. In 2016 she was diagnosed with a form of Parkinson’s disease and about a year ago her physical situation, which was already very weak, made it advisable to transfer her to a healthcare facility for the elderly. She spent the last period of her life united to the Lord in humble and silent self-offering. It was her custom to place her life in the hands of God the Father every morning, praying for the canonization of Blessed James Alberione and M. Thecla, and entrusting to them her deep desire to respond to the will of the Lord moment by moment, with ever-greater love and docility.

Her simple and humble existence, offered for the gift of drawing vocations to the Congregation, has been placed on the lampstand mentioned in today’s Liturgy, where she now shines and radiates the light of the Gospel to the world. Affectionately,

Rome, 13 June 2023


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan