



Dear Sisters,

Today, October 13, 2016, at 4:46 am (local time) at the Hospital Sanno di Hachioji - Tokyo, during this Year of Mercy, the Lord opened the gates of Heaven to our sister,

**SR. M. GRAZIA JUNKO M. GORETTI TSUKAMOTO,
born on May 24, 1931 at Kure-Shi, Hiroshima-Ken (Japan).**

She received baptism in 1950, in the Diocese of Nagoya at the age of 19, taking the name Maria Goretti. On November 13, 1955, in view of her entrance into the Congregation, her pastor, an Italian Carmelite, wrote to the Superior General: *“According to me, if there is anything lacking in the young Maria Goretti Tsukamoto Junko it is health. Both of her parents died of consumption and she has already been in a sanitarium. It is true that the doctors say that she is healed and she has worked daily for three years without any problems. With regard to piety, she is simply exemplary. Besides daily Mass, she also comes to me weekly for confession. Also, since she is a Third Order Carmelite, she daily fulfills the obligations this entails, which are not easy”*. Her vocation may be considered as the fruit of the ecclesial charity of the missionaries.

Despite her physical frailty, she was admitted into the Congregation on January 3, 1956, in Mitaka, Tokyo DM, living the difficult beginnings of our presence in that nation. Following the novitiate, she made her first profession in Tokyo on March 25, 1959, and her perpetual profession on March 25, 1964.

Some of her characteristics were already evident during the years of formation: she is a delicate person, industrious and creative; she does not waste time, is generous, sociable and serene, accepts all corrections and is dedicated to working on herself. In her apostolic ministry she was initially assigned to embroidery and sewing vestments. From 1970 she was the cook in Tokyo and then in Fukuoka; and from 1988 to 1991 at the Seminary of Yokohama. In 1972 she was appointed local superior in Tokyo Ongata, in the community at the Society of St. Paul. She exercised this same ministry in 1975 at the *Comitato Cattolico* of Tokyo, (similar to the *House for Priests*), and in 1977 at the presbytery of Nagasaki. In 1985 she was once again appointed local superior at Tokyo DM, and in 1994 at Nagasaki. This service was animated by the following spirit: *«I have reached the end of my mandate, which I fulfilled with all the good will and the faith I had available. Despite this, I was unable to accomplish all that I desired for the good of everyone and of everything. With the gospel, I tell myself: I am a useless servant»* (to Mother M. Lucia Ricci, Tokyo, June 19, 1975).

Sr. M. Grazia was particularly sensitive to the charismatic values, and enthusiastic for every service rendered to priests and to the Church. She joyfully lived the beauty of the vocation of a Sister Disciple and felt the responsibility of giving witness. In rendering thanks for the feastday greetings, she expressed her wonder at the great heart of Primo Maestro and also *«I feel the*

responsibility we have to live our beautiful vocation in its fullness. Every morning I offer my day until the day the will of God is fulfilled» (to Sr. M. Paola Mancini, June 15, 2002).

Already in 1995 there were manifestations of a painful form of rheumatism, with deforming arthritis that would cause Sr. M. Grazia years of intense suffering. She underwent various surgeries for joint replacements, without success. Sr. M. Grazia was always alert and aware of her situation, uniting herself to the Passion of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. When she required more specialized treatment, she accepted the transfer to a clinic. From April 1, 2014, in fact, she was at the clinic “*Shinsei-en*”, near our DM community of Hachioji and, on August 6, 2015, she was moved to “*Komatsubara-en*”, always near our community. Each day she drew strength from the Word of God and willingly prayed for the Congregation and for the Japanese Province. Sr. M. Grazia awaited the visits of the sisters and joyfully received Eucharistic Communion. She had a strong sense of Pauline poverty and even in her illness she made herself useful by making small artistic notecards, for as long as the flexibility in her hands permitted. The sisters testify that Sr. M. Grazia always gave herself fully, with joy and a great spirit of sacrifice.

When on October 6, Sr. M. Fiorella Asaho, the provincial superior visited her, Sr. M. Grazia promised her prayer for the third Provincial Chapter in Japan that would be celebrated within a few days. Pronouncing the names of all the sisters in each community, she said: “*Greet them all for me*”. These were her last words. Yesterday evening, October 12, her condition suddenly worsened and she was brought to the Sanno Hospital, accompanied by Sr. M. Fiorella Asaho and by Sr. M. Flora Kida. Diagnosed with acute pneumonia, Sr. M. Grazia concluded her apostolate of suffering and returned to the House of the Father at dawn this morning, in serenity and peace.

From Paradise she will certainly continue to intercede for vocations, for the needs of the Japanese Province, and for the entire Congregation journeying toward the 9th General Chapter.

S. M. Paola Mancini