



Dear Sisters,

Today, February 22, 2017, at 8:27 AM (local time), at the Hospital of Hinodegaoka (Japan), the Lord called to himself our sister,

**SR. M. AGATA - SUEKO FURUKAWA**  
**Born on January 30, 1945, in Hirado (Japan).**

Sueko came from Nagasaki, the area of Japan in which evangelization began in the mid 1500s thanks to the missionary zeal of Saint Francis Xavier. The roots of Japanese Christianity were irrigated by the blood of numerous martyrs who offered their lives for Christ.

Her family, profoundly Catholic, received the special gift of religious vocations. She is the youngest of seven children, of whom four sisters entered religious life – two sisters of Saint Vincent, two Sister Disciples, and one brother who is a Trappist priest.

Sueko entered the Congregation in Tokyo Mitaka on March 24, 1965, following her sister, Sr. M. Jolanda, who was already a Sister Disciple. She entered the novitiate in 1967 and made her religious profession on March 25, 1968. She received the name Agata, specifying: *“Agata is a name that means goodness, to remind yourself and others that it is goodness that makes life serene and meritorious in every moment. Intention: for your brother priest and for all the priests and religious of Japan”*. Although she was shy and frank by nature, Sr. M. Agata committed herself to a lifestyle characterized by goodness and kindness toward her sisters. She always had a lively sense of love for the Congregation, the capacity to persevere in the work on herself, as those responsible for her formative journey have testified.

She made her perpetual profession on February 10, 1974, in Tokyo. Initially she was entrusted with the apostolate in the bindery in Tokyo, then in 1970, she was in the Liturgical Apostolate Center in Nagoya. She then returned to Tokyo and assisted in the bindery while pursuing music studies under the guidance of a famous teacher in Japan, receiving special lessons. In 1978 she was in Fukuoka, always in the bindery. Her companions testify that, since the beginning of her religious life, she was joyful and always singing. God gave her a special talent of music for the mission of the Sister Disciples in Japan. With the dedication of Sr. M. Agata and other sisters, the Congregation began a new area of liturgical apostolate with sacred music through the recording of songs for the liturgical year following the three cycles, in collaboration with the SSP. Upon her return to Tokyo Hachioji in 1981, she dedicated herself to painting and served as the organist, with passion and love for the liturgy and for the community. In 1992 she was diagnosed with renal insufficiency which obliged her to begin dialysis. Therefore, she had to limit her full-time apostolate in liturgical music: composing hymns, teaching singing, animation of the community, cultivating an exchange with musicians, etc. This was her slow and difficult calvary. She would live this for 25 years as a new apostolate, which required much sacrifice. Two years ago, when her companions were gathered in preparation for their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Sr. M. Agata, aware of her health situation, told them: *“I am starting the journey in preparation for the eternal meeting with my Master before the fiftieth!”*

This sister gave proof of a journey of sanctification that took place in the daily reality of a fraternal life lived in faith, dedicated together with her sisters to prayer and the mission. Sr. M. Agata never lost her sense of joy and vivacity, even though she was conscious of the limitations imposed by her health. She completed a spiritual journey that enabled her to enter into the apostolic dimension of suffering, offered in acceptance of the Will of God, with apostolic intentions.

Hospitalized since 2016, in the last days she consciously accompanied her call to eternal life, receiving the sacraments of the Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum from a Pauline priest. When her condition was already serious, she moved her hands and fingers as though conducting an orchestra, and said: *this is my song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord*. Thanking the Provincial Superior, Sr. M. Fiorella Asaho, and the sisters, she went to meet the Bridegroom in confidence and in peace.

Sr. M. Agata, as we accompany you with our prayer of intercession, we ask that from Paradise you compose suitable music for Japanese youth to reawaken in them the desire to follow Jesus Master as his disciples! And you will certainly invoke for us graces for the 9th General Chapter!

*S. H. Paolo Hama*