



Dear Sisters,

Yesterday, May 8, 2015, at 10:20 PM local time, in the “Komatsubara-en” Nursing Home (Tokyo), the Lord introduced into eternal joy our sister,

**SR. M. STELLA WAKA JULIANA DOI,
born in Singhi-Syu (North Korea) on July 4, 1923.**

For the reconstruction of the “special” journey of our first Japanese sister, we are assisted by the narration of her life, conversion and vocation published in *LIFE IN CHRIST AND IN THE CHURCH*, (Dec. 1957 and Jan. 1958) entitled: **I was looking at my star!** She was born in North Korea, to which her parents had emigrated from Japan forty years before the outbreak of World War II. Two sisters and a brother died at a very early age, but she, Waka, though of delicate constitution, experienced a joyful childhood. She recounts: “My room was small, but it had a large window. One evening I was in my room and I was looking at the heavens. I saw a star. It seemed to be more beautiful than all the others and it seemed to want to tell me something. – What do you want? – I asked – Who are you? – O little one, my little one! I know your future. You will have much pain in your life, but I will be always with you, I love you very much. – I cried for a long time, seated on my bed; and from that time on I looked at my star each night. I spoke to her and listened to her. I did not know what praying meant and I did not know how to pray. But each evening, before going to bed, I would pray in my own way”.

When Japan lost the war, the Japanese were forced to leave Korea: “I said farewell to the house, to the violin, to the piano, to Korea – the land of my birth, to many beautiful and necessary things”. They disembarked at Fukuoka, after a month-long journey during which many children died for lack of food and water. Here she was separated from her parents, since she was hired in an office of the American military base, where she worked from 1945 until 1949. Her knowledge of the American base would later bring benefit to the rising Pauline Family. For the young Waka, it was also the way of coming to the faith. Sargent Wright introduced her to Father Martin, who introduced her to the Christian life. In their first meeting he asked her: “Did you ever think about God?” – I believe that God exists, but I do not know him. – Do you want to know him? “The words of the priest planted in my soul a true longing to know God. ... I continued to go to him for six months and he explained to me the catechism of the Catholic Church. Then he sent me to the pastor for six months of instruction in preparation for Baptism. I told the pastor about my star. – Do you believe that the star could be God? No, I believe that there is only one God, who sees all things, knows all things, and is in all places. I always prayed to him through that star that shines brightly in the evening and in the morning remains in heaven near the moon. You know, he told me, that star is the figure of the “Morning Star”, that is, the Madonna, the Mother of God. What a joy! It was, therefore, the Madonna who told me, ...I will be always with you”. She protected and guided me! My heart was filled with gratitude. On April 16, 1949, Holy Saturday, I was baptized by Bishop Fukaori, together with 11 other persons.” She was given the name Juliana. At Easter she received the Eucharist for the first time.

Through a friend who assisted two Italian missionary priests, she learned that a group of sisters called the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master would be coming to Japan. She also obtained work with the priests who described to her the life and spirit of these sisters. She spoke about this to the pastor who reminded her: “The beginnings are hard, you will encounter sacrifices that you will not be able to bear”. “This is an additional reason to choose this Institute. In my life I have made so few sacrifices. How can I repay Jesus for the goodness he has shown to me? Too late have I known him! I must love him in total dedication and in sacrifice”, I responded. On November 26, 1949, together with another girl, who would become Sr. M. Scholastica, I went to live in Fukuoka near the Paulines, awaiting the arrival of the Sister Disciples, who arrived in May of 1950. I was soon sent to Italy for the novitiate. The Pauline priest, Fr.

Angelo Castellotto, who accompanied her was solicitous to present her: "This girl has an extraordinary capacity to endure pain and moral suffering".

She made her first profession on March 25, 1952, in Alba (CN) and received the name "Stella" in memory of the story of God's love for her. Returning to Japan immediately, she was of great help to the missionary sisters; dedicating herself to translations, the formation of the young, placing in service her artistic sensitivity, beginning the apostolate of painting, and contributing to the foundation of the apostolate.

She made her perpetual profession in Tokyo, Japan, on March 25, 1957. In her request for admission to perpetual vows, she wrote: *"I am confident that the Divine Master, my eternal spouse, will receive me..."* (January 3, 1957). In 1970 she was sent to South Korea, where some Italian sisters were already present, to begin our presence in that nation together with them. She remained there until 1975. She then returned to Italy for a few years, working in Milan in the areas of design and silkscreen.

In 1979 she was asked to offer her missionary contribution to the United States, where she offered her service as sacristan in the Cathedral of Los Angeles. In 1989, on the occasion of the beatification of Blessed Timothy Giaccardo, she went to Rome and returned definitively to Japan. She assisted in the Cathedral of Osaka, and then in Tokyo and the Liturgical Apostolate Center in Fukuoka.

She had the gift of a profound spirituality that she transmitted in her daily life. She wrote to Mother Scholastica: *"For me, the most precious and anticipated hours are: the Eucharistic Adoration, the examination of conscience, Confession and communion with Him even in my work. When the spiritual life is going well, my life is serene, and I love all my sisters. The characters are very different, therefore, each one is precious among us and before God. I came from a pagan family; I was the only child, but I sent my parents to heaven by Baptism. Therefore I detached myself from everything: there is no longer my house or my country, I have nothing on this earth: thus, I am free from everything. But the most difficult detachment is from myself. Therefore, please pray for me, for my daily conversion"* (February 5, 1978).

She considered her missionary experience a great treasure in her life and remembered it gratefully. Even in advanced age, she continued to have a missionary heart. She wrote to Mother Thecla at Christmas 2006: *"I thank the Lord that my whole life was filled with joy: in Italy, Korea, USA, Japan. The entire world is my country, all the Sister Disciples are my sisters, even if I do not have a family or homeland. We will all be united in paradise!"*.

"At my age of 85, the physical energy is decreasing. As a mission, I do not go out, but near our house there is housing for the elderly. The people come to pray even though they are not Christians. I am teaching them how to pray; each time I give them a small note with a verse of Scripture. This is my work and my mission. (to Sr. M. Regina Cesarato, Name of Mary 2008).

In another note, always in thanksgiving for the feastday greetings, she wrote: *"Name of Mary: today I offered many intentions, for the pagans in the Orient, especially in Japan, for the dear Mother General, for the community in Japan, and for the work of Domus Dei"* (undated).

In order to receive adequate medical assistance, she spent the last three years in a nursing home, Komatsubara-en (Tokyo). Also here she was loved by all. The sisters in Japan accompanied her with their constant presence, as was the case for the Pauline brothers. For as long as her health permitted, she sang hymns to Mary, Mother of Jesus, together with other persons. Thus, in a simple manner and in the essential nature of life, she was still able to offer Jesus and bear witness to the faith!

Sr. M. Stella, now that you can see Mary, the Morning Star, and give praise to God for the great love you experienced in your story as a disciple loved by your Spouse, keep your compassionate gaze upon the earth, especially upon Korea, Japan, and all of the Far East!

S. H. Paolo Hancin