



Dear Sisters,

During the night of May 15, 2018, at 11:00 PM, in the DM community of Albano Laziale, Jesus Master definitively called our sister,

SR. M. LUCIANA – NOBU UMEKI
born in Kumamoto - (Japan) on March 25, 1934.

She was born on March 25, 1934, into a very traditional Buddhist family. After receiving the Good News of Jesus Christ, she received baptism on April 9, 1955, Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil, and took the name Maria Veronica Kondo Sumiko. The following year she received the sacrament of Confirmation on June 13, 1956. On April 29, 1957, at the age of 23, she entered the Congregation in Fukuoka, where the small community of Sister Disciples on Japanese soil was taking its first steps in the faith. From brief excerpts of her vocational story, it is clear that she struggled to respond to her religious vocation. There was a great deal of resistance from her family, especially her father, who was a Buddhist priest. In the emphatic chronicles written by the first missionary sisters, we read: *In the house of the Buddhist priest Umeke, there are gatherings for prayer, sacrifices are offered, and celebrations in honor of the dead. The atmosphere is one of recollection and mystery. One day one of the daughters entered a Catholic church together with a friend. She was drawn to the image of the Blessed Mother, and the profound sense of prayer conquered her. She enrolled as a catechumen; received baptism, became a Sister Disciple. (...) Her priest father, an upright and strong man who respected the Catholic religion, courageously overcame himself and consented that his daughter might become a Catholic and a religious. There are many young women who entered after their conversion, who then obtained the conversion of their loved ones through the example and joy of their life.*

Sent to Italy for the initial formation, Maria Veronica entered the novitiate in Rome on March 25, 1960, and made her religious profession there on May 7, 1961, which would be sealed by the perpetual profession after five years, on May 7, 1966. She lived the specific religious consecration in her daily life in the services asked of her in the communities of Vicenza, Nogent sur Marne (France), Genoa, Rome at the General House of the SSP, Bordighera, Centrale di Zugliano and at Albano Laziale. She offered herself generously in roles of service in the refectory, kitchen, reception of guests, and providing for the needs of the elderly and infirm sisters.

She enthusiastically cultivated the artistic dimension when she was offered specific preparation in ceramics, which she perfected in the workroom in Rome from 1965 to 1982. In Florence she profited from a course in ceramics which included modeling, decoration, professional design, plastic art, workshops and preparing forms.

With the exception of a short period in Tokyo from 1969 to 1974, she spent almost her entire religious life in Italy. She is remembered for her great love of the Eucharist, of the Pauline priesthood, and of the Blessed Virgin, to whom she had a special devotion that was marked by her maternal presence since her birth.

She often repeated that she was happy to have lived as a Sister Disciple, missionary in Italy, and she rejoiced over the news that came from Japan, news of the Congregation and of the Pauline Family.

With the reduction in energy and the presence of stomach cancer, her health gradually declined, but the joy in her vocation and the pride of being a Pauline sister remained strong.

The presence of the Virgin Mother, who welcomed her into this world on the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, was her consolation in the final passage of her death in this month of May. Accompanied by the prayer and the care of the community, she concluded her life during the night, going to meet Christ, the Bridegroom, with the lamp of charity burning.

May the novena of Pentecost, with its incessant invocation of the Spirit of life, help us to fix the gaze of our hearts on the final goal, where this missionary disciple has preceded us.

Sr. M. Luciana Honeth'