



Dear Sisters,

On December 14, 2023, toward 9:00 AM (local time), in the Divine Master community of Hachioji (Tokyo – Japan), the Lord of Life called our sister to receive her eternal reward,

**SR. M. NAZARENA – YASUKO MARIA FUJIWARA
born on March 25, 1945 in Hirado – Nagasaki (Japan).**

The eighth of ten children, she was born into a Catholic family and brought to the baptismal font on April 25. With the gift of Baptism, she received the name of Mary, thus entrusting her life to the Most Holy Mother of God.

Three daughters of the Fujiwara family entered among the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master: Domenica, who received the name Sr. M. Lucis; Maria, or Sr. M. Nazarena, and Caterina, who received the name of Sr. M. Domenica, deceased in 2005.

Among her autobiographical mementos we find the outline of the story of her religious vocation: «I entered the Congregation of the Sister Disciples in Fukuoka, on March 25, 1960, at 15 years of age. In the background of my vocation can be read Psalm 139: 13-18: “*You knit me in my mother’s womb, I am wonderfully made...*”. The first day of my life began with the feast of the Annunciation, which is also the date on which I entered the Congregation, and made by religious profession and my perpetual profession! The certainty of having been entrusted in the journey of my Christian and religious life to the Mother of Jesus has given great significance to my vocation and mission. I feel in the depths of my being that the Lord has entrusted me with the mission of inheriting the spirit of Mary Most Holy so that my “yes” is united to the *Fiat* of Mary. As it is written in the Rule of Life: “*From this virginal love arises a special fecundity which contributes toward the birth and the growth of divine life in hearts*” (n. 26)».

March 25, the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord and the docile and collaborative “yes” of his Virgin Mother, is thus a day that marked the rhythm of her consecrated life. At the conclusion of the novitiate, she made her religious profession in Tokyo on March 25, 1964, and six years later, her perpetual profession, also in Tokyo. She immediately showed herself to be a sister who was trustworthy, loving Eucharistic prayer and the specific mission at the service of priests and of the beauty of art as a way of encountering God. Together with her older sister, Sr. M. Lucis, and her younger sister, Sr. M. Domenica, she was blessed with artistic talent in sculpture and design, a talent that she placed at the service of the apostolate and in the community settings.

In 1995 she wrote: «My first experience of the Word of Jesus before entering the Congregation was: *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life* (Jn 14:6). This verse was written on the back of an image of the Divine Master given to me by a sister. The image remained among my most prized possessions until the novitiate. After the profession, the Eucharistic Jesus became the Way, the Truth and the Life in me and in my prayer, and he has accompanied me along the way. It was a great joy when I later discovered that this Word is at the heart of the Pauline charism, by the grace of which I live my vocation and mission as a Sister Disciple of the Divine Master. It is a journey of following Christ that is continually being perfected, but it is my favorite Word that confirms me in the love of God, and now it is the foundation of my life. It is the same Jesus who continues to call me to follow him. I am proud to be a Sister Disciple: I offer my heartfelt gratitude to the Founder, the Congregation and the community in which I am living».

Sr. M. Nazarena spent her apostolic life in various communities in Japan: in Fukuoka, in Tokyo Hachioji and in Nagasaki, where at various times she also served as Local Superior. She loved the priestly service and fulfilled it in her feminine and Marian style, enlightened by the word of the Gospel and of the Founder. She completed studies in culinary art and put her talents to use. She was liked and esteemed everywhere: in Karuizawa with the Verbite Fathers, at the Bishop's House in Fukuoka and then in Osaka; in the vocational communities of the Society of Saint Paul in Tokyo and by the Jesuit Fathers in the House of Prayer in Hiroshima.

Despite suffering from hypertension and multiple cerebral infarctions for more than 20 years, she spent her days normally: between prayer, community services and the workroom. For as long as she was able to do so, she accompanied her older sister, Sr. M. Lucis, who was suffering from cognitive decline, with patience and care. In 2017, the beatification of Justo Takayama Ukon was held in Osaka. Shortly after having participated in those celebrations, she was diagnosed with interstitial pneumonia, with a prognosis of about three years to live. But no one foresaw her definitive departure, which caught the community by surprise, but certainly not her. Some days ago, on December 7, 2023, she received the Sacrament of Reconciliation and, vigilant, she was preparing herself for an increasingly intense encounter with the Lord Jesus. On December 14, after breakfast, she went to her room, but she did not appear for lunch. Then Sr. M. Loretta Omizu, the Local Superior, and Sr. M. Cristina Takami went to look for her: they found that she had collapsed in her room due to an heart attack.

In the time of Advent, in which we pray for the coming of the Lord in history and in glory, Sr. M. Nazarena is for all of us a visible sign of daily and ordinary vigilance. In fact the liturgical prayer offers us the suitable words for the Mystery: «*Grant that your people, we pray, almighty God, may be ever watchful for the coming of your Only Begotten Son, that, as the author of our salvation himself has taught us, we may hasten, alert and with lighted lamps, to meet him when he comes*» (Collect).

Sr. M. Michaela Monetti'