



*Dear Sisters,*

Monday, December 18, 2023, at 11:25 AM (local time), in the retirement home San Marco-EN (Nagasaki), Jesus Master, the Life of the world, came to visit our sister,

**SR. M. AGOSTINA – MARIA CHINO IKEDA**  
**born on April 1, 1927, Hirado – Nagasaki (Japan).**

The first of five children, she was born into a Catholic family and brought to the baptismal font on the day after her birth: April 2, 1927. With the gift of Baptism, she received the name of Maria, which was added to her Japanese civil name of Chino, bearing witness to the devotion of her parents to the Holy Mother of God. In her autobiographical writing she said: «I wanted to become a sister from the time I was in elementary school. Born into a farming family and the eldest of two sisters and three brothers, I believed in the Lord's word: "*Follow me without anything*". I did the housework, I helped my parents, and I waited for the moment to enter the Congregation. I believed in the voice of the Lord who invited me to "*come*" and I sought to imitate him in many ways each day in order to fulfill his will faithfully». On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1954, she left her family and the beautiful island of Hirado and went to Tokyo to enter among the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master.

Upon completion of the regular initial formation for the religious life, together with a good group of Japanese novices, she made her religious profession on May 31, 1958, the feast of the Visitation of Mary to St. Elizabeth. At the conclusion of the period of temporary vows, she made her perpetual profession on May 31, 1963, also in Tokyo.

From the beginning of her formative period, Sr. M. Agostina presented herself as a mature young woman, with a strong-willed character and a marked practical sense. They are gifts that she also invested in the tailoring techniques since she had obtained a diploma in cutting and sewing while she was still with her family. In fact, looking over her long apostolic life, except for two brief periods spent in the communities at the service of the Society of Saint Paul, she was primarily in the workshop for ecclesiastical tailoring in the various communities in the Province of Japan: Fukuoka, Osaka, Nagasaki, Tokyo *Regina Apostolorum* and Tokyo *Divin Maestro*. She carried out her service with great love for the vocation of the

Sister Disciple and a profound awareness of serving Christ in his priests and in his faithful. Sr. M. Agostina Ikeda was dedicated to the sewing apostolate for 66 years, from the time she entered the Congregation until the age of 93. The cassocks and tunics she made were appreciated also by the Protestant and Anglican ministers, thus giving an important contribution to ecumenism on a practical level. To her creativity we owe the creation of hand-made purses made with *obi*, a traditional Japanese fabric: a creation that is greatly appreciated and desired.

The Eucharistic Adoration, diurnal and nocturnal, sustained her in daily life, in health and in sickness. «As I was sewing the cassocks and ritual vestments worn by the priests, I prayed for priests, asking for them the grace of perseverance in the beauty of the consecrated life; I prayed for the persons who do not know God and for many other intentions».

In May of 2021, with the advancing age and the complications of the state of her general health, it became necessary to admit her to a clinical setting that enabled her to receive suitable care and also assure attention to the consecrated life at the retirement home San Marco-EN in Nagasaki. The sisters of the community, who reside in Nagasaki, were able to visit her often. Even during the isolation imposed by Covid and the following period, it was possible to foster a sense of belonging to the Institute and overcome the solitude through frequent video calls. It was a moment that she particularly appreciated and awaited and to which she responded with a beautiful smile, serene and grateful. In those meetings, she loved to pray the Pauline prayers, that she had learned by heart, manifesting the bonds of a profound life that unites us.

In the fall of 2023, she became ill and was hospitalized, but she was released on December 3, and returned to the Clinic San Marco-En. In the presence of the local superior, Sr. M. Irene Murakami and Sr Myriam Ogiyama, on the day before her death, she received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. At that moment, she made the sign of the cross, responded to the prayers and even opened her eyes wincing. The beautiful sign of the cross seemed to us like a proclamation of faith and of gratitude for her entire life. Even the priest who administered the Sacrament was moved. The following day she went in silence to encounter her Divine Master.

Sr. M. Agostina excelled in playing the harmonica, which her father had taught her at an early age. She delighted in playing it during the community gatherings, on feast days, when guests came to visit her and in the local reunions honoring the elderly citizens. Now we like to think of her, participating in the Wedding Banquet with her beloved Master Jesus, playing the harmonica to gladden the community of the Heavenly Jerusalem together with the angels.

Sr. M. Michaela Monetti