



Dear Sisters,

Today, February 11, 2024, at the Sobu Hospital of Hachioji (Japan), at 4:43 AM, early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus Master, the Lord of Life, definitively called to himself our Sister

**SR. M. FIDELIS – TOMOKO CECILIA ASANO
born on October 27, 1929, in Fukushima (Japan).**

The second of six children of a Buddhist family, Tomoko received Baptism on May 2, 1951, and with the gift of faith she received a new name: Cecilia. Born in the northwestern part of Japan, where Christians were in the minority, the story of her vocation is moving: «My vocation to religious life was born from the joy and gratitude I experienced when I came to know Christianity and became a Christian. I wanted to make this wonderful grace known to as many people as possible. “How can I do this?” I asked myself. I often went to help the priests, with the conviction that I, lacking in everything, could make Jesus known to the world by helping the missionaries. I told the priest who guided me spiritually that I would be content to do this type of work for my whole life, and he advised me to get married, clearly taking into account my family’s opposition. However, I could not surrender. Therefore I went to Tokyo against his wishes and continued to search for an Institute that would satisfy my desires. After six months, I had the blessing of encountering the Congregation of my dreams. These six months seemed extremely long, therefore, when I found it, my joy was great».

On October 30, 1954, she entered among the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master who had arrived in the Land of the Rising Sun on May 2, 1950 and had begun to live as a religious community completely dedicated to Jesus Master living in the Eucharist, in the priesthood and in the Church, and thus spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Upon completion of the novitiate, Cecilia, together with seven other Japanese companions, made the religious profession in Tokyo on May 31, 1958, on the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Always in Tokyo, on May 31, 1963, she made her perpetual profession.

Most of her life was spent in the priestly service in the formation community of the Society of St. Paul. In a period of extreme poverty and scarcity of food, after the Second World War, she sustained their life and vocation by obtaining food for the 30 Pauline religious and the 70 young people in formation, washing and sewing their clothes and sustaining the Eucharistic Adoration day and night. She watched over them with a maternal heart and, when necessary and possible, she also spoke words of encouragement. During her service in the Society of St. Paul, she was always attentive also to the Sister Disciples and offered them every kind of care and assistance. To this day, the sisters hold in their hearts her care in preparing many warm sweets that they enjoyed and sustained the community.

Various times she assumed the role of responsibility for the community, without sparing herself. Also due to the hard work she carried out from the time of her youth, she suffered from lesions in the back and spinal column that required a series of significant surgical interventions. In 2015, due to a displacement of the cervical vertebrae, she underwent a significant surgical intervention that was life-threatening. All of the sisters thought she would not survive the surgery, instead she faced rehabilitation with her natural perseverance and returned to the community, continuing to offer her services for the common good. Despite repeated surgeries to the neck and the heart, she returned to health like a phoenix. She was forced to wear a cervical protective device for the remainder of her life and, although she was told not to move or to look down, she continued to serve the sick sisters unceasingly, washing their clothes, cleaning and sewing their religious habits. This was the transparent witness of her love for God and for her neighbor.

Special mention needs to be made of her fidelity to the Eucharistic Adoration. It did not matter how sick she was, or how much she was suffering, she had the responsibility of fulfilling her turn in the daily Eucharistic Adoration, as established by the community schedule. In 1997, she described her love for the Eucharistic Adoration in this way: «I remember when I visited the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master for the first time, two sisters were praying before the Eucharist, wearing a blue mantle, I was moved by their pure and mystical appearance and felt nostalgic. During a discussion with them, I was told that this Eucharistic adoration was a mission entrusted by the Church, to be carried out in her name, and that this was the apostolate of the Congregation. I had received Baptism a few days before and did not know anything, but the joy of fulfilling this precious mission as a member of the Church sustained me in the days in which, because of my weak faith, even this became heavy. And I asked myself if the impression I had formed was only a desire in a girl's heart. In those moments, it seems I always heard a voice saying to me: "I have called you for this mission". And I spent the last years sustained and strengthened by that voice. Now I am aware that the daily Eucharistic Adoration is a great mission, a serious responsibility and the greatest source of energy for my consecrated life».

On December 3, 2023, she was brought to the hospital by ambulance after losing consciousness due to a head injury caused by a fall in her room. Until that day she fulfilled the Eucharistic Adoration as her first apostolate.

As the celebrations for the Centennial were reaching their climax, Sr. M. Fidelis accompanied us in silence, in suffering and in prayer.

On February 10, the members of the Pauline Family in Japan, who had not been able to gather for three years due to the pandemic, were reunited in the Divine Master community of Hachioji to share in the joy and gratitude. And Sr. M. Fidelis returned to Jesus Master in the first hours of the Lord's Day, the weekly Easter, as a seal of the joyful conclusion of the jubilee of Foundation. The conclusion of her life, spent totally as a sign of love lived for the Church, for the mission of the Congregation and for the sisters, marks for us, as pilgrims below, the beginning of renewed zeal in the mission.

Sr. M. Michaela Haneth'