



Dear Sisters,

Saturday, December 6, 2025, from the Minami-Tama Hospital in Tokyo, at 1:56 PM, the Divine Master definitively called to himself our sister

**SR. M. FRANCA – ELISABETTA MUTSUKO SUNAGA**  
**born on March 10, 1943, in Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo (Japan).**

Mutsuko was raised in an affluent Buddhist family, living in one of the suburbs surrounding Tokyo that was densely populated and renowned. She was the fourth of eight children – 6 boys and 2 girls – carefully educated by her parents and respected by her brothers, thus maturing within her the relational experiences that would forge her character.

At the age of twenty, on May 17, 1964, the Solemnity of Pentecost, she received Baptism at the baptismal font in the parish of Akabane in the Diocese of Tokyo. With the gift of the Christian faith, she was received as a daughter in the great Family of God and received the name Elisabetta.

The following year, 1965, would be especially important for her: on June 6, the Solemnity of Pentecost, she received the sacrament of Confirmation and, a few weeks later, on June 29, 1965, she entered as an aspirant in the Congregation of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master. This life choice of Elisabetta Mutsuko would have a decisive impact also on the religious search of her father and family members, who accompanied her with wonder and uneasiness as they progressively discovered, through the witness of the life of the community of the Sister Disciples, the newness of the joy of the Gospel.

From her first steps in the consecrated life, Elisabetta Mutsuko faced a great desire to do good, dedicating herself totally to Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, in fraternal life and in the mission, and the fragility of her Christian, spiritual and moral formation, since almost as a neophyte, she responded to the Lord's call to follow him more closely in a life consecrated to him. But, accompanied by the formators and the superiors, she would always find the way to improve and grow by living in continual conversion, so that Christ could be formed in her.

Upon completion of the regular novitiate, on September 12, 1969, together with five other Japanese novices, she made the religious profession in the Divine Master community in Tokyo.

At her religious profession, she received the new name of Sr. M. Franca, in honor of her father, Francesco, who, on October 26, 1969, received the gift of baptism together with his



wife and some of his children. This renewed within her the awareness of the baptismal foundation of the religious life, expressing gratitude also for the gift of life received through her parents.

«Entering the community barely one year after baptism, as a child her health was always weak. She grew up somewhat fondled in the family, which resulted in the manifested personality. Through proper guidance and correction, we hope and trust that, with time and grace, she will be able to respond ever more generously to the call of the Divine Master», this was the synthesis of her formative journey at the vigil of her perpetual profession, which she made on October 25, 1975, in the Divine Master community of Tokyo. It was the Saturday leading to the Soleminity of the Divine Master for the Pauline Family, and it was a great joy for everyone.

Sr. M. Franca fulfilled her mission in the various communities in the Province of Japan: Tokyo DM at various times, Osaka DM, Nagoya DM, Tokyo RA, Fukuoka SP, Yokohama, Nagasaki DM, Tokyo at the seminary of the Society of St. Paul. She loved and served the Lord Jesus and the people of God, in the liturgical apostolate – in the workrooms for sewing and ceramics -, in the priestly apostolate, in the seminary of the Society of St. Paul and the diocesan seminary in Yokohama. She offered her active and responsible contribution in the offices of the Catholic Committee of the Tokyo diocese (1978 – 1981). And, certainly, every service, in its various forms, was sustained and animated by daily Eucharistic prayer, in the Eucharistic celebration and the adoration, which she understood and lived in its essential apostolic dimension.

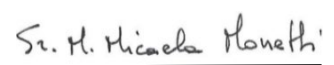
When it became medically necessary, she was transferred from the community of Hachioji to the Haines Clinic located near the community. Thus the sisters were able to accompany her in her illness, manifesting the bond of charity that united them, outside of the ordinary routine. On the occasion of her 50th anniversary of religious profession, expressing that which she held deep in her heart, she wrote: *“The trials of my vocation, every word and action of the sisters I respected were an experience of continual learning. In that place and in that time, my awareness and sense of mission as a Sister Disciple of Jesus Master was reinforced, consolidating the foundations of my consecrated life. Now, as I celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of religious profession, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my superiors and to my sisters who guided and sustained me in many ways over these years”*.

Today – in this Advent season – the words of this verse of Psalm 23, that she so dearly loved, were fulfilled for her: *“Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. In the Lord’s own house shall I dwell for ever and ever”*.

She chose it as a profession of faith, writing it in her *“Last Will and Testament”* that she had consciously written and signed at the proper time.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate, may she be introduced into the Kingdom of the blessed to contemplate unceasingly the Face of her Lord and Master, whom she sought and loved as her Spouse.

Rome, December 7, 2025

  
Sr. M. Micaela Monetti