



Dear Sisters,

The Lord came to visit us in the heart of the night, at 3:15 AM, today, September 1, 2014, and has called to eternal life

SR. M. ANCILLA MARIA SECONDA BELESSO
born in Brugine (PD) on July 10, 1924.

She entered the Congregation in Sacile (Pordenone) on May 18, 1940, at the age of sixteen. Following the novitiate, she made her first profession in Alba (CN) on March 24, 1943, and the perpetual profession on March 25, 1948, also in Alba. She offered her contribution of service in the workroom at Alba, when she received a special call. Her notes and letters help us to reconstruct the characteristics of the extraordinary life of this sister, who was missionary at heart and in action. The Japanese sisters offer us, in memory, a precious witness in which Sr. M. Ancilla tells the following story: "It was a Sunday in September of 1949. As we waited for the Mass to begin, I found myself beside Mother Maestra. At a certain point she passed me a holy card of a little angel and on the backed was written: "Would you come with me to the other side of the sea?" She bowed her head in profound silence and, after a brief moment of reflection, replied: "If I can be useful: Behold the Handmaid of the Lord! So be it!". Following the necessary preparations, we left on November 17, 1949. Four of us left from the port of Genoa, by ship, and we arrived in New York on November 29, 1949. Mother Maestra had told me: Go to New York, learn some English, and then you will go to China or Japan. Unable to enter China in the month of September, 1951, on the 13th we left for Tokyo, where we arrived on the 15th at 1:00 in the afternoon, local time. Fr. Testi and a Sister Disciple were there to greet us. At home there were 5 young sisters who had barely made their investiture, and 2 aspirants who went to school. Sr. M. Ilaria Vaio and Sr. M. Cordis Drudi were in Fukuoka for their annual retreat. *In the great diversity between East and West, we were completely ignorant in everything: language, culture, customs, etc., but in my heart I already felt a great love for this people and these sisters, with the desire to become like them as much as possible in order to do something good with them.* Therefore, no sacrifice was too great for me, it was a joy to have something to offer. The war had recently ended and there was much poverty, but the Lord blessed us with many beautiful vocations, and also with providence from the Americans. At that time the hope for developing our apostolate and mission was in complete darkness, but the trust that the Lord would open the way was great. The internal bulletin, *Divin Maestro*, of October 1951, reports and confirms: "Sr. M. Ancilla Belesso left New York for Tokyo in September. These arrivals and departures for distant lands are always moving and they tell us that the Congregation, and we with them, must have a universal heart. They remind us of the exhortation of the Apostle: *Our home is not on this earth but in heaven, where the one who has given more will receive greater glory.*" In Japan Sr. M. Ancilla is one of the pioneers who assumed the missionary drive of the Founder: *When the Reverend Primo Maestro asked Mother Maestra for Sister Disciples for Japan, he wrote: "The Sister Disciples are to go and adore among the seventy million Shintoists and Buddhists". It was with a great source of confidence that we began our mission in Japan at the beginning of May, as the entire Church praised the Madonna. She would know how to assist the first Sisters in overcoming the inevitable difficulties of every beginning and make them valued for their apostolate (DM June 1950).*

Sr. M. Ancilla fulfilled diverse and common responsibilities as well as that of local superior in Fukuoka, in Nagoya, and in Osaka. In her missionary life she sustained or initiated our mission in its various expressions and services. Given that the mission in Japan was flourishing in vocations and in the

apostolate, she was asked to widen her horizon and her heart to embrace South Korea, where she arrived in 1965, together with some Japanese sisters. The Pauline brothers were already present there. In 1969 she returned to the United States for two years and, in 1971, she was appointed Regional Superior and Mistress of Juniors in Japan. She returned to Korea in 1975, where she assumed the responsibility of local Superior, of Regional Superior and of Mistress of Juniors; in the last years, before returning to Italy definitively, she fulfilled various duties. In Korea she sustained and fostered the promotion and collaboration of the Friends of the Divine Master, affronting great initiatives together with the sisters. Sr. M. Ancilla wrote: *“The Lord continues to bless us with much apostolate and good vocations. Mother Maestra, we have only one desire: to understand fully our vocation, in fidelity and in fervor. The rest we entrust to God, beginning with our ignorance and incapacity ... Help us through prayer and ask the Lord for me that I may not be an impediment to the good Jesus wishes to accomplish in this nation, among these sisters”* (Seoul, February 6, 1982). Some years later she told the story of the blessing of the statue of the Divine Master and a small house on the mountain: *“The statue of the Divine Master is 5 meters tall, it is the tallest in Korea and weighs 9 tons. It is placed upon the top of a hill that is 600 meters high. From a distance the Divine Master can be seen. His gaze seems to follow us wherever we go. It has become a place of prayer for many people”* (October 22, 1986). Clearly, the secret of apostolic fruitfulness is the constant care for the interior life and prayer. After the spiritual exercises in 1990 she resolved: *“To offer Jesus Christ through a life of silence and hiddenness, to take the last place, the last word, the last choice for myself. Like the Madonna, to carry in my heart in silence the word of God and meditate upon it. To offer everything with great joy in my heart and in faith...”* (Seoul, February 7, 1990).

In 2003 she returned to Italy and went to Sanfré because of her declining health. From Sanfré, she herself offered a beautiful synthesis of her life when she wrote to the Mother General, Sr. M. Regina Cesarato: *“I give thanks to the Lord and to the Congregation for the gift of spending the last period of my life in this community in which I can prepare myself better for my encounter with the Heavenly Father in eternity. I lived for 54 years in foreign countries: 3 in America, 18 in Japan, and 33 in Korea, but now I feel that I am more of a missionary than when I was in the Orient. I fear that I have wasted much time and many graces, but the Lord will be merciful, I hope and I believe this. I want to make reparation for the great evil I may have done, and fill the empty holes of the good that I did not do, generously and lovingly offering all that the Lord will ask of me, always with trust and the support of his help”*.

Sr. M. Ancilla was a missionary until the last moment of her life, keeping informed about the sisters and the initiatives of the Korean Province; and the interest was mutual. Today they wrote: *“On the evening of August 23, 2014, Sr. M. Gianna Kwon, Provincial Superior, called M. M. Ancilla to tell her about the visit of Pope Francis. As usual, she spoke with great emotion and joy, saying that each morning during the Eucharistic celebration, especially at the moment of the elevation, she remembered all of the Korean Sisters. When we call her, she says that even if it is a small service, she desires to help in the laundry until the last moment of her earthly life and asks that we also pray for her final “Yes”, that it may be well prepared in accordance with God’s will. Mother Ancilla offered her entire life as a missionary in Korea. We are the fruit of her sacrifices and her prayer.”*

Sr. M. Ancilla was diabetic and suffered from heart problems for many years. She died of pulmonary edema with 15 minutes after being assisted during the night. She heard the cry: *“Behold the Bridegroom is here, go out to meet him!”* Her lamp was ready with the oil of blessings from her daily life. Now we pray for her and invoke her intercession, especially for the mission of the Pauline Family in the Orient.

Sr. M. Ancilla, you are the disciple who is strong in weakness, ask the Lord for the gift of vocations and the apostolic zeal of Saint Paul for the evangelization and the coming of the Kingdom of God also in Asia! Live in God and repose in peace.

S. H. Paolo Mancini