



*Dear Sisters,*

In the heart of the night, at the start of the month of May, in the clinic St Marco-En in Nagasaki (Japan), the Master Jesus has called definitely to Himself our Sister

**SR. M. INNOCENTE SATO SAKAMOTO**  
**born January 8, 1933 in Hirado, Nagasaki (Japan).**

Sato Sakamoto with Baptism received the name of Anna. She was the third of seven children of a Christian family who lived on the beautiful island of Hirado. She grows up facing the tragic trials from the Second World War with the consequences of the nuclear disaster of the bombing of Nagasaki which took place on the morning of August 9, 1945.

Love and trust in the Virgin Mary marked her in a particular way. This is evident in the written testimony she left us.

«I received the grace of vocation in the month of Our Lady of 1953. Since I was a child, every time I saw a sister, I felt a certain attraction towards her. I began to pray to the Virgin Mary, believing that God was always waiting for me somewhere to realise my desire of religious life. One year, in the month of the Madonna, I confided my desire to my mother, said goodbye to my father and left the house. I wanted to go to a convent as far away as possible, so I decided to go to Tokyo and found myself on the platform of Sasebo station in Nagasaki. It was my first trip, and I wasn't sure of myself. I didn't know exactly where I wanted to go, but I just wanted to be a Sister. I thought to myself: "Tokyo is the last stop, and we all get off there. I will go down and, from that moment on, I will entrust myself to Mary". Holding tightly the rosary that I had kept since I was a child, I said: "Mary, please help me". "Mary, please help me": I pleaded inwardly, in my heart, throughout the journey. When I arrived in Tokyo, the first thing that came to my mind was to visit the convent where my brother was. They let me into the reception room of the convent and, while I was waiting for my brother, I saw on the table some brochures that presented the Congregation of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master. When I saw the nuns in their blue mantles, who adored the Eucharist, lived service of the priesthood and of the liturgy, I felt relieved and said: "Thank you, Mary, I want to enter this Institute. I want to join this Congregation". I said this to my brother, and I knocked immediately at the door of the nearby community of Yotsuya where the Sister Disciples were located.

The Holy Mother of God has always been with me, helping me when I was in bad

weather storms of life and led me to the Master Jesus. I entrust all my life to you,

Mary, who has called me, however helpless and poor I was. Please don't abandon me until I reach God the Father, worthy of his call". (May 1999)

She entered the Congregation on May 20, 1953, almost seventy years ago, after the regular novitiate, she makes religious profession on the 31 May 1958 and perpetual profession on May 31, 1963, in the Cathedral of Nagoya.

She worked tirelessly for the pastoral care of vocations, especially in the first years of the foundation in Japan. Many of the Japanese sisters are the fruit of her vocational work which she carried out with generous dedication.

She also spent much of her life engaged in the priestly service in the maternal spirit of the Blessed Virgin. In her priestly ministry she always felt that, to appreciate and live the significance of this apostolate, she must never separate herself from Mary Most Holy. Our Founder taught us that «the great secret of light, grace and progress is to serve Jesus in the spirit of Mary, his mother".

To best carry out her service in priestly houses, seminaries and in the Bishop's House, she obtained a diploma in the culinary art and also in typing. She recounted: «I have met some priests who were so exhausted in mind and body that they had no energy to eat. And I asked myself: Mary, the mother of Jesus, how would she serve these priests now? I prayed and then I spoke: "Father, at least have a meal". At that moment, the priest's face lit up and he said: "Well, thank you! Thank you". Then he began to eat and gradually regained his strength. It was encouraging to see that the sick priest spoke more than before about the Virgin Mary, he prayed to her and he loved her. Mary, Mother and protector of vocations, stay close to priests. Naturally, she also accompanies the Sisters who carry out their priestly ministry, supported by the sublime desire to live like Mary" » (May 1995).

In her long life she spent her generous service in various communities, sustained by prayer of adoration and by a profound sense of the beauty of the religious vocation which she wished to share with the new generations.

Sr. M. Innocente Sakamoto's physical health went gradually deteriorating. She often fell, broke her bones and could no longer walk on her own. Living in the community of Nagasaki, she could no longer go to Mass in the Cathedral and this caused her great suffering. So, in December 2019 she was accepted in the San Marco-En care home in the city of Nagasaki. There, she was grateful to be able to participate in the Mass daily and pray before the Blessed Sacrament, receiving also the health care necessary for her fragile health and the regular and fraternal visit of her community.

Her return to Heaven was unexpected for us. Today, 2 May, we celebrate the anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation in Japan. Her departure, on this blessed day, is an eloquent sign of the benevolence of God which reminds us how his fidelity and grace never become less in time.

Sr. M. Innocente, continue to invoke from Jesus Master the gift of new vocations to the Church and to our Congregation: that they may enjoy the beauty of a life given entirely to God, in the joyful availability of Mary of Nazareth: «Here I am, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your Word".

*Sr. M. Michaela Honeth'*