

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ  
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO  
CASA GENERALIZIA  
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Dearest Sisters,

At dawn this morning (4:50 a.m. local time), the Divine Master visited Tokai-daigaku Byoin Hospital in Hiratsuka, Japan to call to himself our sister:

**KAIBARA KEIKO – SR. M. PAOLA**  
**born in Fukuoka, Japan on 8 August 1932.**

Sr. M. Paola was always very happy to celebrate the memory of her vocation journey because she saw in it the loving plan of God, who guided her with great gentleness from the time she was a child. She liked to recount the discovery that revolutionized her life, saying that she was drawn to a “red-brick house” with a cross over the door [a church]. As an adult, she once more came face-to-face with that “house,” whose wide open doors seemed to invite her to enter it... And she accepted the invitation, thus beginning with enthusiasm a beautiful adventure of faith. In fact she was baptized in 1954 and on 20 May 1956 she entered the Congregation of the Daughters of St. Paul in the community of Fukuoka, Japan.

Sr. M. Paola underwent her initial formation in Tokyo and also made her novitiate there, concluding this stage of her Pauline life with her first profession on 30 June 1960. Immediately afterward, she was sent to Rome to continue her formation to the charism and her academic studies. In 1966, she returned to Japan, brimming over with the gifts she had received. In the documentary, *The Red Brick House* [a film that recounts the story of her vocation], she says: “As the plane approached Tokyo, I thought about my people and all those who in the dark night of their hearts are pleading for light—the very light that now shines bright as day in my life. I was returning home immensely rich and I longed to share with everyone the treasure within me.”

In Nagasaki and Tokyo, Sr. M. Paola worked in the formation sector, the editorial department and also evaluated which titles to carry in the circumscription’s “Other Publications” sector. In 1974, she was asked to serve as a provincial councilor, after which she was assigned to work in the secretary’s office of the Tokyo diocese. Following this, she dedicated her energies to the diffusion apostolate and also worked as a translator in the Hiratsuka diocese. In 1992 she was asked to return to Rome to work in the Japanese-language sector of Vatican Radio—a request that came as a big surprise to her.

Reassigned to Tokyo in 1997, she resumed her work in the editorial department and also dedicated herself to catechetical activities and the translation of texts that were especially difficult. She was very happy to have made a noteworthy contribution to the preparations for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 through her translation of the papal document *Novo millennio ineunte*.


In 2005, Sr. M. Paola was diagnosed as suffering from uterine cancer and from that point on her health began to decline. She underwent a successful operation but a thrombosis that affected her varicose veins worsened her condition and she was transferred to the Hiratsuka community, where she could receive specialized care. Her already difficult health situation was further compromised when she broke her leg in two places and then began to experience the onset of senile dementia. Due to this complicated health situation, which made it necessary for her to receive continual assistance, it was deemed advisable to admit her to a long-term health care facility.

In these last weeks, a cerebral infarction (stroke) hastened her meeting with the Lord.

The poetic words that conclude the documentary *The Red Brick House* and that marked the life of Sr. M. Paola are truly prophetic. In it, she describes her return to Japan in 1966, saying: “I have returned to my sea—splendid and infinite like the joy in my heart. It seems to reflect the splendor of faith, which is vaster than the ocean. I know it will lead me to the ‘other shore,’ where the dawn’s early light will never set. One day it will explode like a fire and we will all be enveloped in that light and meet one another there.”

Today Sr. M. Paola arrived on the “other shore,” and is now encompassed by that brilliant Light that will never set.

Affectionately,

  
Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan  
Superior General

Rome, 12 October 2017