

June 21, 2007

Death Notice No. 17 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Region of Japan, recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **FUKUICHI MATHIAS SATOWAKI**, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 28, 2007 in Tokyo, in the 106th year of his age and the 88th year of his religious profession.

Brother Satowaki was born on July 20, 1901 in the town of Shittsu in Nagasaki Prefecture. In his youth he was greatly influenced both in his faith and in his human development by Fr. Marc De Rotz (1840-1914), the famed Paris Foreign Missionary and pastor of the Catholic parish in that town. The young Fukuichi entered St. Mary's Institute, the Apostolic School in Urakami, in April of 1914. He began his year of novitiate there in April of 1918. After professing first vows on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1920 at St. Mary's, he was involved in the farming operations at that same institution. During the period from October of 1921 until December of 1923 he fulfilled his military service obligations in Kurume. Upon his return from Kurume he was put in charge of the farm at St. Mary's Institute.

In September of 1927 he was assigned to the Gyosei Religious Community in Tokyo, and except for a six month period from the end of 1937 until mid-1938 when he was sent by the Japanese military to serve on an artillery base in northern Manchuria, he performed a variety of tasks at that Tokyo community until 1944 – boiler man, bookbinder, the school store, janitor, general repairman (carpenter, electrician, plumber), etc. In April of 1944, Bro. Satowaki was transferred to the Meisei Religious Community in Osaka and ministered at Meisei School as school accountant and teacher of Ethics. He also had responsibility for one of the grade levels at Meisei.

In 1954 he was assigned to Akebono Gakuen (presently, Chaminade) in Tokyo. There he served as community accountant, Province business manager, and from 1963 on as an officer on the board of the religious corporation. In 1965 he also appointed as the Head of Temporalities for the Province. During this period he did much to assist the FMI in the financial and legal aspects of their Mission expansion in Japan. Bro. Satowaki was named director of the Meisei Religious Community in 1968 and served for a brief time as the Acting Chief Director of Osaka Meisei School. Shortly after celebrating his Golden Jubilee, he had a close bout with death – an acute inflammation of his gallbladder complicated by peritonitis. His gallbladder was removed and he steadily recovered his health. He was warned by his doctor, though, that as a result of the operation, he should take better care of himself or he wouldn't have a long life ahead of him.

Reassigned to the Kaisei Religious Community in April of 1971 and at the age of 70 he took on the task of establishing and operating a ranch in the Makiya section of Satome-cho near his hometown. Originally envisioned as a project to assist handicapped persons to become more self-reliant, for a number of reasons beyond his control, the project did not materialize as originally intended and Bro. Satowaki had to spend several years dealing with the complex financial and legal issues which resulted. In 1983 he moved to the Sanwacho Community, also in Nagasaki Prefecture, where this octogenarian had responsibility for the management and “hands-on” operation of the “sweet summer orange” orchards there on the property – work which included fertilizing, pruning, picking and packing, etc. A chainsaw injury during this time prompted him to acquire word-processing skills. Bro. Satowaki moved back to the Kaisei Community in 1992 and lived there for the next 12 years until he moved to the health-care facility at Chaminade in Tokyo in April of 2004.

In his later years, Bro. Satowaki would repeatedly express his gratitude to all who visited him, regardless of whom they were or what they had done, with the words “arigatoh, arigatoh.” All of his visitors were deeply impressed by his person and by this particular expression of his thankfulness. Though he grew increasingly hard of hearing as the years passed, he would on occasion crack jokes and create a “healing” atmosphere among those around him. Through his long years of religious life and the numerous trials and difficulties he experienced and overcame, Bro. Satowaki in his person presented us with a model for ourselves in the future and he served as a source of encouragement in our own lives.

May he rest in Peace!