

THE BROTHER
IN THE ORDER OF
THE MINISTERS OF THE SICK
(CAMILLIANS)

G/4/46

00186 ROME — Piazza della Maddalena, 53

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INTRODUCTION

BY

THE MOST REVEREND FATHER GENERAL

In confidence and trust I am happy to write this introduction to the study which we in the General Consulta so lovingly undertook.

This study has lasted now for more than a year. For the first draft we divided the entire subject into five parts. Then, together, we revised and redrafted the text a number of times. This, the final draft, is very much a team effort. It represents the thinking of the General Consulta, although each member was responsible for the accuracy of historical data in preparing the section initially assigned to him.

We also availed of the comments of some of our fellow religious. Among those I would like to mention in particular the two ex-Generals, Frs. Vezzani and Dammig, both of whom have worked strenuously to recover the juridical as well as the spiritual image of the Brother within the Order.

We have tried to be faithful both to the mind of St. Camillus and to the Holy Spirit who speaks to us at our point in history as reflected in the awareness shown in the recent General Chapters of the Order. We endeavoured to x-ray, as it were, the roots of the Order and to read our tradition in the light of both the source and the historical development.

The rediscovery of our original values presents us to today's world with that same charism and evangelical immediacy which enchanted the early companions of St. Camillus. We have placed special emphasis on the urgent need for adequate formation. Today's society increasingly feels the need for professional competence. What makes the difference is not so much what is done but how it is done. Furthermore, even a perfect knowledge of our profession is insufficient to make our service

in the ministry all that it ought to be. We must know the place, the reason and the consequence of our ministry in the complex fabric of life in society today. No one surely becomes enthused by a project heading for disaster no matter how generous and sophisticated that project may appear.

This study does not claim to be complete. Nor is it intended to be a pious, theoretical, innocuous or ascetical exhortation. The subject could have been more extensively treated but we thought it best to strike at the heart of the matter and offer points for reflection and further development since it is a subject with many dimensions and still more practical implications.

It is now up to each Religious, community and Province to continue the discussion by means of their suggestions and propositions in a more widespread dislogue thereby enriching our study with critical comment and a greater sharing. In this way each one can live for himself the happy experience which was ours in the Consulta, namely, that the study has helped us grow in the love of and in enthusiasm for the Order.

We must all realise however that we do not live on words alone no matter how fine they may be; what matter most of all are the facts. If the subject were to remain on the level of ideas and discussion, without penetrating the local situation, without becoming part of the life-blood of each Province, then it would end up as "... simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing." (I Cor. 13, 1). Even before Fr. Bresciani's time, the Constitution spoke eloquently and extensively of the service to the sick and the specific role of the Brother. This eloquent ideal, however, remained a dead letter until someone had the courage to translate it into practice by actually getting the Brothers back into the hospitals.

The Brothers themselves are called upon to play a leading part in their own growth. They are called upon to undertake responsibly and loyally their own human and religious advancement. The way has been painstakingly re-opened along the lines dictated by our Founder and inspired by the Holy Spirit. New tracks have been laid and in every Province the engine will be there to pull the train — it would indeed be a great pity if the passengers were to be missing!

Rome, August 15th 1979

CALISTO VENDRAMÉ
Superior General

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The characteristic feature of the Ministers of the Sick became more and more clear in the mind of the Founder according as his original idea took shape to found "a group of good and pious men who, without pay but willingly and for the love of God, would serve the sick"¹. This idea, which came to St. Camillus, to obviate the serious deficiencies in the care of the sick in St. James' hospital in Rome², underwent many evolutionary changes as is the case of all human undertakings. One point, however, which remained always clear in the mind of the Founder was that all members, priests and Brothers alike, should work in common and live their lives of service to the sick on an equal basis. Just a few days before he died, he dictated his idea with great clarity in his last testament: "the wonderful Providence of God, not without cause and mystery, wished us to have this name of Ministers of the Sick which includes everybody, priests and Brothers, and the Order is common to all ... we must also be aware that other Orders in the Church do not follow the same pattern as we do insofar as these Orders are not the same as ours"³.

This unique relationship between priests and Brothers, which did not exist in other religious Orders at the time⁴, resulted from the charism of service to the sick person in all his needs. Initially what struck Camillus was the absence of service to the sick in their corporal needs and so he tried to remedy this situation by forming a group of "good and pious men". It was later on he became convinced of the need to meet the spiritual requirements of the sick. This, however, was always seen as part of the corporal and spiritual service to the whole man.⁵

Operative equality

The most significant aspect of the reform brought about by Camillus was the service to the sick under the twin heading of health care and spiritual care. All the Ministers of the Sick, without exception, were involved in important and complementary duties in the service to the sick thereby overcoming rigid sectional divisions. The evidence of religious who were contemporaries of the Founder, the first official documents dealing with the foundation,⁶ and the Acts of the first five General Chapters all testify to the complete equality among the members in the common front of loving service to the sick. The formula subscribed to by all the religious established a unified work of service to the sick.⁸ This meant that the pastoral ministry of the priests was extended to nursing, just as the Brothers in their nursing were also engaged in pastoral activity and in the work of evangelization proper to their ministerial role. Camillus himself, while opting for the priesthood at 32 years of age,⁹ identified himself above all with the work assigned to the Brothers in the Foundation Decree.¹⁰ In assigning members to posts of particular responsibility and in emergency situations, he always chose the person whom he considered the most suitable for the job.¹¹ Brothers as well as priests were put in charge of expeditions in the care of the sick. On December 10th 1599, Camillus engaged lay people to relieve Brothers who were unable to serve the sick because of domestic activity. Later, on 4th April 1600, with a Consulta decree, he founded a group of Oblates, pious and devout men, without vows, who would do house-work and "those domestic duties which in other Orders were done by the Brothers".¹²

Juridical equality

All the members of the Order therefore, priests and Brothers alike, were apostolically involved in the one field of ministry to the sick and were expected to be experts and leaders in that ministry. However, the juridical equality between priests and Brothers caused much discussion and suffering as is always the case when it comes to establishing juridical norms for charismatic vision. The new Order was placed by the Holy See among the group of Orders known as Clerics Regular even though much wider scope was given to the Brothers with some important duties like those of the priests. There was no

other choice at the time. This canonical configuration meant that the Ministers of the Sick became subjected to given structures. But it was not possible for the Order to liberate itself from certain ambiguities.¹³ Contrasting opinions arose from the beginning within the Order between the clear vision of the Founder for a complete equality and the "clerical" investiture within which the Order had to work and develop. This brought about a process of clericalization within the Order to the detriment of the charismatic orientation of the Founder.

At the very beginning the novel innovation contained in the Camillian Foundation was set out in canonical terms. "Our Order is such that the numbers of Brothers be far greater (*longe maior*) than that of the priests".¹⁴ This was the picture in the early years (1591). The classification of the Order, however, among the Clerics Regular grouping brought about an increase in the number of priests. It also brought about the phenomenon, not easily avoidable, whereby there was a change-over from the category of Brothers to that of priests. The papal decree "*Superna dispositione*" (1600), following heated controversy regarding the nature of the service to the sick, sanctioned the numeric proportion between priests and Brothers according to the following formula: "that in establishing the number (in the community) of our members the norm adhered to should be that in some places there be more priests than Brothers whereas, in other places there should be more Brothers than priests, so that, the ministry proper to our Order be exercised with greater freedom and competence, not only, in seeing to the spiritual and corporal needs of the sick in the hospitals, but also, in visiting the sick in their homes and in the prisons and in seeing to the recommendation of the dying to the Lord".¹⁵

With this numerical balance in mind, the first General Chapter stipulated that the General Consulta be made up of two priests and two Brothers. This followed the direct intervention of the Pope who undoubtedly was influenced by the Founder.¹⁶ The papal Decree "*Superna Dispositione*" (1600, n. 15) and the Constitution of 1601 (n. 32) codified this into law even though the balance in numbers of priests and Brothers was already changing in favour the priests. This same representative parity was established for provincial delegates to the General Chapters¹⁷ and of local and provincial counsellors.¹⁸ Brothers had access to all community offices (ministers, assistant-

ministers, bursars, procurator of alms, sacristans, etc.) except those offices which presumed jurisdiction associated with the priesthood such as superiors at all levels and the formation of novices.¹⁹

It can, therefore, be stated that the type of community which Camillus wished to establish quite definitely overcame the separation between priests and Brothers which existed in other Orders of Clerics Regular where Brothers were given the menial tasks of house work and of being at the service of the priests. In his vision, Camillus was both original and charismatic. Inspired by his spirit and by his example, priests and Brothers were able to leave aside artificial dividing lines and together they were able to write the most glorious pages in the history of the renewal of hospital service to the sick in times of public calamities and epidemics. The golden age of charity lists the names of Camillians, priests and Brothers equally generous and responsible who died in the care of the plague-stricken.

The crisis

The situation changed however after a few decades of valuable work together. The operative and juridical fraternal spirit which was basic in the mind of Camillus and for which he so arduously worked did not resist the time of crisis and the inevitable pressures coming from the canonical structures inside of which the Order found itself. The gradual process of clericalization, the effects of which were noticeable even during the life of the Founder, could not be arrested. During the entire 17th century, the Order experienced a major fluctuation in its numbers following epidemics and the Brothers paid the heavier price. Faced with unfavourable circumstances and a gradual loss of interest in the charismatic spirit of the Founder, the stage was reached where the hospitals and the nursing care of the sick were abandoned. In open contrast with the will of St. Camillus, the Brothers were deprived of their rights and relegated to house duties. In this period of internal conflict and less than generous evaluation, the final crunch came with the Decree of Pope Innocent XI which declared that the Brothers were "absolutely useless to the government of the Congregation, being uncouth and ignorant." With this decree the Brothers were deprived of their right to be part of the General Consulta of the Order.²⁰

A return to the spirit of St. Camillus

The decree of Innocent XI was a serious blow to the Order. With the ministry restricted to the spiritual assistance alone and indeed being involved in activities which were not pertaining to its scope, the Order was unable, for many years, to rediscover the impact it was famous for in the early days of its foundation. The man who spearheaded the return to the original spirit and restored the Brother to his rightful place at the bedside of the sick was Fr. Cesare Bresciani²¹ from Verona. This restoration, along with other factors, was also to lay the foundation for a juridical re-evaluation of the position of the Brother in the Order. Fr. Bresciani, who became a Camillian at the age of 53, showed a clear preference for "being with the poor" and living with them in the hospitals. He was able to see at first hand the serious deficiencies in the hospitals of Verona at the time and he decided he would set about remedying the situation. Following from the reading of the gospel, he set about improving the sub-human conditions facing the sick in his day and he made the spirit of St. Camillus his model in this gigantic work of renewal.

The Brothers held an important place in Bresciani's project.²² In 1837 as he was communicating with the Superiors in Rome so as to be accepted into the Order, he spoke of the small community he had already formed which consisted of three priests, two students for the priesthood and six Brothers. The priests, and to a certain extent, the students, were involved in the spiritual ministry while the Brothers assisted the sick night and day. "We are Camillians even without having come in contact with the Order. Our rule and lifestyle is that of St. Camillus, whose life we read every day. It can be said that our vocation came about through the reading of the life of St. Camillus. We work night and day. Our form of dress and our food are based on the spirit of poverty."²³

The project embarked upon by Fr. Bresciani incorporated the pastoral and nursing care of the sick. Evidence of this can be seen in the correspondence he had with Rome and with the people in charge of the hospitals in the Lombard-Venetian region of Italy²⁴ and again in the guidelines he set down for the formation of young Brothers and for the establishing of new foundations. He would turn down

requests to set up new communities unless the hospital in question could provide nursing ministry for the Brothers as well as pastoral ministry for the priests.²⁵

The reform brought about by Fr. Bresciani had its effect on the growth of the Order. On May 19th 1885, the then Vicar General, Fr. Ferrini in a Circular to the Order, lamented the fact that in many communities Brothers were being recruited for house duties only, and that Superiors were insufficiently involved in their advancement and education.²⁶ The Brothers too, Fr. Ferrini stated, are "necessarily and essentially part of our Order and they are members with full title." With the Brothers we need to renew in the Church that operative charity to the sick which "in former times drew attention and admiration on the Order not only from the faithful but from the enemies of the Church as well."²⁷

The same topic was taken up again by the then General, Fr. Holzer, in a Circular to the Order on 16th November 1928.²⁸ According to Fr. Holzer too, the presence of Brothers, possibly more numerous than the priests,²⁹ is an undeniable condition if the Order is to remain faithful to the mission outlined for it by St. Camillus.

On February 24th 1948, Fr. Mansfeld, as General, succeeded in obtaining from the Holy See a more favourable interpretation of the ruling which prohibited those not destined for the priesthood from studies of any kind.³⁰ According to this interpretation those who worked in the field of health were no longer excluded from studies which were required for professional competence and civil recognition in the field of public health. In this way the stage was set whereby the charismatic orientation of St. Camillus could be brought to bear on the evolution of modern society and present-day theological insights.

In the spirit of Vatican II

With the Second Vatican Council the Church has rediscovered and re-declared the profound values and the dignity of man as a human person, man's sense of participation and co-responsibility as well as the rights and duties of every christian within the Church in bringing about the growth and development of the Kingdom of God. This new

vision, which is also found in "Perfectae caritatis", provides valuable guidelines for the position of the Brother in Religious Orders. It was in line with these guidelines, even though they have not yet had canonical sanction, that the Order set about the renewal and updating of its Constitution (1966-1969).

Even before the official renewal came about, at a previous General Chapter (1965), the members, having considered the opinions expressed by the rank and file in the Order and having discussed the matter at some length, voted in favour of some measures which in turn provoked further reflection and conviction in all the communities.³¹ What was particularly significant was the declaration of the principle that priests and Brothers enjoy the same dignity both as Religious and as people called to the same field of ministry in accordance with the mind of the Founder. This principle was unanimously approved and signaled an important step in reaching a common identity as Camillians. The consequence, which logically followed from this principle of equality, was that the Brothers too had access to the office of Superior. The meeting of the Provincials with the General Consulta in San Pedro de Ribas, Spain, in 1967 and the central commission formed at that meeting to elaborate the blueprint for the new Constitution, were all guided by this principle of equality, even though with some hesitation, not because of their vision of the nature of the Order but by the existing canonical legislation.

The General Chapter of 1969 in Seiano, Italy, put an end to all doubt and declared the principle of complete equality, even in the juridical sense, among all our Religious, priests and Brothers alike.³² Thus all Religious in solemn vows were unreservedly granted active and passive voice within the Order.

This courageous step on the part of the Order was, however, in contrast with the existing canonical legislation and could not become operative without the approval of the competent ecclesiastical authorities. During the Generalates of Frs. Vezzani and Dammig repeated approaches were made to the Sacred Congregation for Religious both directly and indirectly through the Union of Superiors General.³³ Indeed Fr. Dammig and his Consulta were entrusted with this duty by the General Chapter in Vienna in 1971. The results were not

immediately very significant. It was only in 1974 that the Sacred Congregation granted, on an individual basis, that three Brothers who were presented by their Provincials were nominated as local Superiors. The General Chapter in Capiago (Italy) in 1977 commissioned the General Consulta to continue the efforts, so that the eligibility of the Brothers, at least to the office of local Superior, be obtained as the norm and not by way of exception to be granted on an ad hoc basis. The Sacred Congregation examined the proposition presented by the new Consulta and, a year later, on the Feast of St. Camillus 1978, granted the request on an experimental basis. We are confident that this approval will become law with the sanctioning of the new Constitution following the next General Chapter in 1983.³⁴

In our day-to-day living

The consequences of renewal in the Constitution are being felt. The openings for Brothers in the scientific and technical fields are already evident. There is an increased participation by the Brothers in the life of the community and in the local and provincial councils. Brothers have been nominated Superiors while at the last three General Chapters Brothers took part as regular Chapter members. At the General Chapter in Capiago (1977) a Brother was elected General Consultor after a lapse of nearly three centuries.

Much has still to be done. In some Provinces sufficient emphasis is not given to the promotion of the Brother's vocation. In the minds of far too many of our Religious, the vocation of the Brother is still seen as a second class choice which is meant for those who are not suited for higher studies. The religious and professional formation of the Brothers is not everywhere adequately catered for. The recent crisis in the priesthood and religious life has had its toll on the number of the Brothers in the difficult search for identity.

But a crisis is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. It can generate a process of self-searching and revision both for the individual and for the community. Recovery can take place according as we deepen both the spiritual values of our camillian life and the sensitive awareness of the needs of modern man.³⁵

The camillian religious life

It is urgent, above all else, to re-discover the value of the religious life as such in the camillian sense. We are not, primarily, priests or Brothers; we are camillian *Religious*. We are united by a common vocation and it is thanks to this that we are able to give witness to the love of Christ for the sick. The diversity of each one's role takes place within the oneness of our charism which in turn identifies us in character and establishes for us all an identical purpose in life and in action.

The "following of Christ" is the fundamental norm for religious life (PC 2). Christ is the source of our common vocation and its unique model. He is the one sent into the world to bring about the plan of salvation through communion with and liberation of man. His life was lived out according to a definite pattern: celibacy; poverty and the communion of will with the Father. He revealed, in word and action, the love of the Father for all men. He proclaimed the gospel and cured the sick. He is the model of all those who choose to accept his invitation to follow him and place themselves at his service for the coming of his Kingdom.

The proposition put forward by Camillus to his Religious was to imitate Christ the Saviour both in word and action which, in turn, are connected one with the other, interdependent and efficacious in as much as they are inseparable. It was in this line of thought, and not in the classifying approach to body and soul which was in vogue at the time, that we find the teaching of St. Camillus who set out to serve the sick "...lovingly, both in soul and body."

Through our baptism we participate in the mission of Christ. Our religious vocation deepens and consolidates this participation. In answering the Lord's call, we make ourselves available to Him according to a specific project — the camillian project — whose aim is to extend, in time, the presence of the love of Christ among the sick (Const. 1). Being a priest or Brother is secondary in bringing about the fulfillment of this vocation; what matters is the following of Christ and re-presenting Him as model in the service of the sick.

Fraternal community

In the name of Christ who has called us to follow Him, we form a community, an active ecclesial group whose members are bound together in fraternity. In our living together as a community we reproduce that communion of life which is the hall-mark of the Church, "...a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men..." (LG. 1). It is this exalted reality which gives life-blood and strength to the Order which is, in itself, a small ecclesial community, thereby overcoming the limitations of cold juridical structures and rendering credible our witness to charity.

Our common vocation urges us to cultivate this fraternal link (P.C. 15) over and above any distinction between priests and Brothers and so to present to the world, through our common life, the model of the early church: "The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul..." (Acts 4,32). We all share in the one calling and in the one mission. Accepting each other and considering ourselves as brethren is the first step in the concrete undertaking of establishing a community of love. Within this community of love, we discover human values of the highest dimension: a sense of fundamental equality, respect for personal individuality, a family spirit, co-responsibility, recognition of the freedom of the individual and mutual interdependence and a shared effort in alleviating one another's sufferings.

Among some of the older Orders and in some modern Congregations too, the priests are called Brothers in deference to the concept of ecclesial communion and to the words of Christ "you have one Master and you are all Brothers" (Mt. 2,8). But over and above whatever name we might call ourselves, the fact remains that the common name given to us all by St. Camillus was that of Ministers — Servants — of the Sick.

Community of service

Apart from being a fraternal community, we are also a community of service to the sick. The talents of the individuals in the community, and of the community as a whole, are meant to be of service in the form of ministry. What our theological reflection has to say on

ecclesial communion becomes a reality in our community. The talents received by each one and the duties assigned to him as well as the expertise obtained from study and from experience, are all articulated in those of the other members of the community, becoming mutually complimentary, and are aimed at the one communion and mission of charity among the people of God.

The love which animates the individual member of the community and the service carried out by him in favour of the sick person are expressed in various duties. These, while being various are nonetheless complimentary. We need the ministerial priesthood, but the service carried out by our priests cannot dissociate itself from other services which are substantial and necessary and not tied to ordination. All these services, which have the camillian charism as their common denominator, establish for us the ecclesial community. The title of Ministers of the Sick, which makes us all one, refers to the common ministry undertaken and carried out in fidelity to the Spirit.

Looking towards the future

Over the years the camillian charism has expressed itself in various ways according to the circumstances of time and place. On the strength of its evangelical content and tradition, it continues to embark on forms of service that are ever new in the fields of health and ministry making its presence in the world a significant one.

It is true that marvellous work is being done by our Religious in private institutions (private clinics, etc.). These, however, while being of value in a supplementary and subsidiary way, need to be reviewed continually in the light of faith and of the changing conditions of our time. (O.G. 23). Whole new areas of active ministry are opening up before us and need to be studied and confronted. We mention just a few, taking into account the entire range of countries where the Order is engaged at the moment.

— The presence of Brothers in the public hospitals gives us wide scope for a competent, loving and fruitful service to the sick, thus becoming a christian voice in the midst of organisational and nursing deficiencies.

— The work in organised local dispensaria and specialized diagnostic units, which are so highly recommended nowadays, permits the Brother to come in contact with a very wide circle of those who are sick and needy.

— District nursing, or home nursing, which constituted a vast area ("mare magnum") of ministry for St. Camillus, has been given priority attention in modern health-care programmes and opens up many and valuable opportunities for ministry for our Religious.

— The specialised care of new categories of sick people, like the terminally ill, ex-patients from psychiatric hospitals, drug-addicts, alcoholics; all these bring us into contact with some of the most difficult and very often unheeded suffering.³⁶

— The animation of the laity for the service of the sick, the defence of the rights of the sick, the promotion of voluntary groups, the forming of public conscience regarding problems in health care, etc.; in these areas too, the Camillian can find ample opportunity for ministry that is both demanding and gratifying.

Possibilities for ministry are presenting themselves as never before. They are in fact limitless when we consider the reality and conditions prevailing in developing countries where the lack of basic health-care programmes is still so widespread. It is to these countries that all the Provinces are turning their attention with keen apostolic insights. It is in these countries too, that we find the poorest of the poor, the abandoned, the unwanted, just as in the time of Camillus himself.

As this huge range of possibilities for ministry presents itself to us we are provided with an opportunity of reproducing in our own day the prototype of evangelical witness established by St. Camillus and thus increasing our role and responsibility in the care of the sick. Facing up to this responsibility, we consider the following as necessary:

1. *An adequate preparation*

Now that the Brother has obtained juridical parity within the Order, a special effort must be made to bring about full participation and co-responsibility in the community and in the service of the sick. This adaptation cannot take place without due preparation. The time

allotted for the theological and Religious formation of Brother candidates is noticeably less than that of the candidates for the priesthood. This is understandable in the context of former times when the needs of the community were put forward as a pretext. This however is no longer acceptable. Just as the candidates for the priesthood, so too the candidates for the Brotherhood have the right and the duty to continue after the novitiate in a house of formation where they should spend at least three years in consolidating the doctrinal and scientific foundation for their future religious life and ministry. With this preparation they are assured of a technical competence not inferior to that of lay people working in the same field, and a theological/religious foundation not inferior to that of the laity working in the apostolate. Our ministry must be characterised by a reliable technical competence from a scientific point of view and by a camillian spirit to sustain it, as well as by an ecclesial outlook which is obtained only by an appropriate theological formation. For the Brothers too, the spiritual aspect of their work should be seen as an essential part of their ministry. Once this basic formation is complete, those with particular aptitudes should be encouraged to undertake higher studies in the area of health-care. The need for this is seen especially in developing countries. Where scientific and technical competence is concerned, there is a wide range of opportunity open to us in our serious approach to our undertaking in the health-care area. This gammut extends itself to all the specialisations brought about by the advances of modern sciences including also preventive medicine. Each one should feel stimulated and encouraged to develop his personal talent to the full, giving particular attention to those specialisations which involve direct contact with the sick and which are concerned especially with the poor and the abandoned, like, for example, the work of evangelization, on the Missions.³⁷

2. *On-going formation*

On-going formation, which deserves attention all of its own, is necessary for all our Religious but especially for those Brothers who did not have an opportunity to avail of an adequate formation for Religious life. Being called to live and work in the world of today, they need a twofold renewal: that which is common and urgent for all Religious and that which is proper to their newly acquired status within the camillian community.³⁸

3. Vocation promotion

In our vocation promotion, we present the camillian life-style which is open to all the appeals from the world of suffering. To those candidates who come and see (John 1, 39), we offer the reality of a fraternal community where the sense of solidarity and responsibility for the sick is felt and where ways and means are being sought to improve the quality of our service to the sick; where daily confrontation with the gospel takes place and where prayer has its rightful position within the life of the community. With this as our guide, the candidate's choice of the priesthood or the Brotherhood should be seen as ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit rather than being a conclusion based on human criteria.

Conclusion

The image of the Brother that comes to us from the new Constitution is that of a man who is capable of undertaking his life and mission with full responsibility, who has no need of guarded or supervised beaches but who is capable of exposure to the sun and the tide, for in whatever situation his service is required, he is able to honour his commitment and explain the reason for his hope.

Rome, 15th August 1979

CALISTO VENDRAME, *Superior General*

DOMENICO CASERA, *Vicar General*

TOM O'CONNOR, *Assistant General*

FRANZ NEIDL, *Assistant General*

FRANCESCO ZAMBOTTI, *Assistant General*

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Vita Manoscritta, 39.

² Vita Manoscritta, 38-40.

³ VANTI, The writings of Saint Camillus, p. 458.

⁴ Among the regular clerics, a category which contained the ministers of the sick from 1591 (Bull "Illus qui pro gregis" of Gregory XIV), the brothers were alongside the priests but considered "the last." In the Society of Jesus to relieve the Society of some mansions which the others could not occupy without the detriment of an even greater asset. (Constitutiones S.J., p. 1. c. II, n. 2A, Rome 1949. p. 78. See the Dictionary of the Institutes of perfection - fratello (brother).

⁵ It was common practice that no one would be received at the hospital if he had not first been to confession. Camillus in his "Rules and procedure to be followed in serving the poor sick in hospitals", speaks of this service in terms of healing (27 - 39) and then in four rules (40 - 43) in terms of evangelization. He wishes to serve man in his entirety, especially in his spirituality. Naturally in the context of evangelization there exists the catechesis of pardon. Camillus recommended that it should be done well, but said that the priest should be called for confession, only if the patient was consentient: "The confessor should be called as soon as possible - however with the consent of the patient" Rule 41. It is only by knowing the history of the service to the sick at that time that one can fully appreciate the full significance of the word "however" (Writings, p. 59.) The emphasis of Camillus on the healing of the whole man was considered to be excessive by the congregation official appointed to examine the rule for approval. He would have preferred a greater insistence on the administration of the sacraments (Writings p. 72 (5)).

⁶ The Decree Ex Omnibus of Sixtus V (1596), the Bull Illius qui pro gregis of Gregory XIV (1591), the Bull Superna dispositione of Clement VIII (1600), in Bullarium Ordinis Clericorum Regularium Ministrantium Infirmis, Verona, 1947.

⁷ Fr. SANNAZZARO, The first five general chapters of the Ministers of the sick, Cura Generalizia, Rome, 1979.

⁸ SANNAZZARO, o.c., p. 261ff.

⁹ With the scope of procuring for himself an adequate title of presentation and not prejudicing his work from the beginning, Vita Manoscritta, p. 45-46.

¹⁰ He intervened severely with regard to those priests who preferred the ministry of the confessional to that of the assistance of the sick; "Remember, Reverend Father", he wrote to the superior in Bologna, "it is not the purpose of our institute to hear confessions in the Church or to fill the church with penitents, this is something else and he who spreads this conviction is not true to the original charism of the order".

¹¹ Five religious, headed by Br. Adam were sent to look after the Spanish troops who had been hit by pestilence at Pozzuoli (Sannazzaro o.c. p. 48).

¹² SANNAZZARO, o.c., p. 363-366. This initiative was incorporated in Superna dispositione n. 11.

¹³ There was ambiguity in the legislation regarding the studies of the brothers which seems strange and unjust to us in modern times. We see this legislation as it developed in the life of the founder; (19.6.1599) "No one who enters the house to serve will learn to read or write, nor shall others teach them without the licence

of the superior, but they will be content to serve Christ our Lord in holy simplicity and humility." (7.8.1599) "It was decided that no superior would give permission to any lay brother to learn to read without the permission of the General and the consulta. The initiative of going from brotherhood could be taken by the superior only. (16.4.1600) No superior of religion, nor even the general consulta, can give permission to learn to read or write to those who are professed or novices and were received into the order as brothers not destined for the priesthood. The third general chapter of 1602 gave the faculty of permission to the General only, in scriptis. And so on. The disposition was common to the religious institutes of that time, it was adopted nearly to the letter by the company of Jesus, where it was said that if the brother on entering possessed a certain culture he could not better it having entered. (Sannazzaro, o.c. passim) In this far from ideal situation, naturally there was no question of the brothers coming into their own. Thus was facilitated the process of clericalisation which took place.

¹⁴ Bullarium, p. 24, 11.

¹⁵ Bullarium, p. 93, 28.

¹⁶ SANNAZZARO, o.c., p. 93, 296, cost. XXXII.

¹⁷ A Father and a Brother, Superna dispositione n. 14.

¹⁸ A Father and a Brother, ib. n. 18.

¹⁹ Ib. n. 18.

²⁰ The grave decision, with the same motivations, is extended to the privation of the active and passive voice by Innocent XII with his Motu proprio of the 20th. August 1697. The pope declares himself to be acting "ex certa scientia et matura deliberatione", "de apostolicae auctoritatis plenitudine" and "perpetuo". (Bullarium, pp. 196-198; 206-210). They are pages that are best forgotten.

²¹ BRUSCO, A., Fr. Camillo Cesare Bresciani, founder of the Lombardo-Veneto province of the regular clerics, Ministers of the sick (Camillians), Published by Edizioni Il Pio Samaritano, Milano 1972, 395 pages.

²² By nature of his appointment, Fr. Artini carefully followed in a progressive way the intellectual formation of the clerics but at the same time expressed concrete ideas on the formation of the brothers, for whom Bresciani had suggested a house of formation with its own regulations. (Brusco, o.c. p. 134). At that time no such models existed within the order.

²³ BRUSCO, o.c., p. 79.

²⁴ Cfr. FEDRIZZI, The Lombardo-Veneto province of the Ministers of the sick on the period of the suppression, in Vita Nostra, I, 1963. Negotiations for the assumption of complete service at the civil hospital in Cremona was subject to considerable delays, partly because the general consulta at the time would not accept the perspective that 20 nurses already working in the hospital and members of an association would enter the order, as they had repeatedly asked to do. They would, in the opinion of the consulta, have been a dangerous imbalance to the number of fathers in the community. Bresciani suffered much because of this attitude of the consulta, but continued with his convictions and in the end he was partially vindicated. Cf. Fr. Sannazzaro, The foundation of the Lombardo-Veneto province in the history of the Order, in The History of the Lombardo-Veneto province, Verona, 1963, 11, p. 21. The agreement with the hospital in Cremona with regard to the nursing service says: "The Camillians will assume in the hospital the service of head nurse, heads of departments and simple nurses in all the wards for males with fever, plague and those who are mentally disturbed, the usual proportion being 1 nurse to every 10 or 15 patients, apart from those cases which call for individual care." Attached to the agreement, is the regulation which states the obligations of the assistants, religious, head nurses, heads of departments and ordinary nurses and is signed by the director of the hospital and Fr. Bresciani. Fr. Bresciani wanted to have much the same

type of situation in Cremona as had been introduced by the founder of the Order at the Ca Grande in Milan and at the Pammatone in Genoa. Cf. Sannazzaro, o.c., p. 20.

²⁵ BRUSCO, o.c., p. 135ff. In the houses at Cremona, Padua and Mantova, the brothers take on responsibilities of the first degree. Their work in emergency situations was excellent, such as the activity they carried out during the epidemic which afflicted the Lombardo-Veneto region in those years. It is to be noted that in the preparation of competent brothers animated by the spirit of the gospel, Fr. Bresciani never thought of building hospitals. Rather, his aim was to put them in the civil hospitals so that they could work there in the fields of renewal and reform. The foundation of hospitals run by the order commenced later, at the beginning of the century, and not without contrasts, seeming to be in contrast to the mind of the founder. It was the only way to assure the brothers of an adequate field of work in a period in which male religious were excluded — vi legis — from working as nurses in civil hospitals. At the same time, these hospitals provided an excellent location for brothers and clerics alike to prepare for their ministry. The Italian model was then copied in other provinces, in Europe and in the Third World, and regulated in the new constitution on the basis of the principle of social needs (O.G. 53).

²⁶ From GIOACCHINO FERRINI, the Vicar General of the Ministers of the Sick to all the provincial and local superiors of the Order, Greetings and Blessings, Rome 1855, 8. pages.

²⁷ o.c., p. 2, Behind the very ornate style of this period, the convictions held by Ferrini on the matter can be clearly seen. Insistence on formation assumes inspired accents: "Educate the brothers! This will be the continuous aspiration of our soul, the uninterrupted cry from our lips, the command never withdrawn by our will. Educate the brothers and make them men, educate the brothers and make them Christians, educate the brothers and make them religious, educate the brothers and truly convert them into ministers of the sick." (p. 2)

²⁸ Fr. HOLZER, Circular letter on the necessity for brothers in our order and on the importance of their education and instruction as religious Ministers of the Sick, Verona, La Tipografia Veronese 1928, 24 pages.

²⁹ He cites for example a statistical data: of the 136 religious who had died in the Lombardo-Veneto province, 63 were priests and 73 were brothers, of whom 30 were Oblates (the juridical period of 9 years which preceded novitiate). "We find the identical proportions as at the time of Camillus, namely that the number of brothers exceeds that of priests, which is even more proof of our thesis." (o.c. p. 12)

³⁰ Rescriptum N. 1369/48, 24 February 1948 in Analecta, 2, 1948, p. 51.

³¹ In summary: perfect equality between the fathers and the brothers as a result of their equal dignity as religious, — the extension of the right to vote for the provincial to the brothers, — the eligibility for the office of bursar, — the abolition of article 73 of the common rule which advocated the separation of tables at meals, — the urgency of an adequate formation after novitiate in a house specially set up for that purpose, under the leadership of a master with the same norms as those required for clerics. (Analecta, T. XI, I, 1965, p. 28ff.)

³² With regard to the subdivision of the work between the brothers and the priests, article 45 of the constitution represents an attempt to solve this matter which did not fully succeed (see The special Chapter of the Ministers of the Sick, Studies and documents, Rome 1970, p. 169-189).

³³ Analecta, T. XI, II, 1970, p. 1041-1043 and the Letter from the General, Fr. Vezzani, IV, the juridical position of the brothers, p. 1048-1050. In the Motu Proprio, Ecclesiae Sanctae of the August 1966, (11, 27), Paul VI encouraged the general chapters to concede to the brothers the right to vote only in determined

acts and in the elections (Active voice) and the possibility to take on certain responsibilities (passive voice). A decree of the Congregation for religious (27.11.1969) specifies that these positions should be purely administrative without having any connection with priestly service. The active and passive voice was extended to the chapters of whatever grade, with the possibility of being nominated to the Council in any grade. Exception was made in the case of the election of the superior and the Vicar, be they provincial or local because the jurisdiction inherent in these positions continues to be reserved to the priesthood. In the same sense the Congregation replies to the request of the consulta to approve the proposals of the extraordinary chapter of Seiano. The stumbling stone is the concept of jurisdiction (Prot. N. 13005/69, 20.IV.1969).

³⁴ The indult is on an experimental basis for a period of 6 years. It says among other things: "It still remains that they (the brothers nominated superiors) cannot propose acts derived from the power of jurisdiction, in conformity with Can. 196 and following." (Analecta XIII, 2, 1978, p. 142). The restriction is to be read more in terms of "jus vigens" than the "jus condendum". The latter will probably have to re-examine all the practice of the jurisdiction.

³⁵ Cfr. P.C. 2.

³⁶ Cfr. Document on our ministry, Analecta, XIII, I, p. 45 ff.

³⁷ Cfr. Directive criteria on the relationship between bishops and religious in the Church, II, 26, (1978): "Cultural renewal and specialist studies are based on material specifically related to the vocation of the Institute; such studies, are not planned with individual finalities in mind but so that they can answer the needs of various apostolic projects of the same religious family, in harmony with the necessities of the Church."

³⁸ For pastoral formation there are evening courses in theology, inter-community conferences, weeks of specialisation or renewal in biblical subjects, liturgy, ethics, the hospital pastoral etc. In the case of these studies as in the case of the technical studies, we apply the principle that the time dedicated is not lost but can be seen in greater personal efficiency and a better giving of ourselves as religious dedicated to the service of the sick.