

Reflections on the *Camillianum* in 2015

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I was asked by Fr. Léo Pessini, the Superior General, to offer a very brief talk on the *Camillianum* at this meeting. I do so most willingly, accepting some suggestions that Léo himself made as well.

In reality, I cannot but remember that I am still a lecturer (I have been this since 1994) and that in the history of its students I have matriculation number one, that is to say I was the first on the list of the students of 1987, the year when its academic activities began.

Looking at the Past

Perhaps a little nostalgia...

Some voices of people who are reference points such as Camillians or the Popes themselves are important for me and I would like to evoke some observations made by them about the *Camillianum*:

- I cannot avoid quoting my dear Fr. Calisto Vendrame who, in his inaugural address to the Institute, whose approval took place in a meeting similar to this one (the General Consulta and Provincials) which was celebrated in Miraflores de la Sierra, Madrid, in 1985, observed: 'It remains to me only to wish this ship a happy voyage, a ship that starts under the safe guidance of Father Dr. Domenico Casera for seas and gulfs that are in part still unknown, perhaps sowed with mines and dangerous pathways. It is truly the case that the undertaking is not an easy one'.¹
- And we are still not distant from the words of Fr. Francisco Alvarez (whom we should thank for being the first secretary of the Institute and for his fine contribution to the theology of health) who in 1993 stated: 'It is essential and urgently necessary to deepen theological and pastoral training (a grave failing in lives consecrated to health care) and to overcome the temptation of the immediate which navigates by the 'short waves of charity' or by the narrow road of a professionalism without a mission'.² 'The language and the theological-pastoral criteria of the world of health, of suffering and of death are asking for a renewal', he said in 1987.³
- I also had an opportunity to take part in the audience that was granted to

¹ VENDRAMÉ C., 'Saluto del Rev.mo p. Calisto Vendrame, Superiore generale dei Camilliani at the inauguration of the *Camillianum*, 7 November 1987, in *Camillianum*, Rome, 1990, p. 167.

² ALVAREZ F., 'La nuova evangelizzazione nel mondo della salute. Prospettive teologico-pastorali', in AAVV., *La vita consacrata nel mondo della salute*, Rome, Quaderni del *Camillianum*, n. 4, 1993 o.c., p. 72.

³ Cf. ALVAREZ F., *Religiosi nel mondo della salute: inviati ad evangelizzare*, Rome, 1987, p. 168.

those taking part in the General Chapter of 1995 by Pope John Paul II, at which he said to us: 'I exhort you to always conjoin irreplaceable nearness to the sick with the evangelisation of health-care culture in order to bear witness to the gospel vision of living, of suffering and of dying. This is a fundamental task which you have engaged in through the institutes of formation of your religious family and especially through the 'Camillianum' International Institute for the Theology of Pastoral Care in Health of Rome'.⁴

- I was also present on the occasion of the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of St. Camillus when John Paul II himself said to us: 'Especial attention must also be paid to the promotion of a culture that is respectful of the rights and the dignity of the human person through the academic institutes, and in particular by the Camillianum, centres for pastoral care and health-care institutions that are present in various nations'.⁵
- I well remember the letter addressed to the Provincial Superiors and Delegates by Fr. Frank Monks, the then Superior General, in 2005, which said amongst other things: 'During the first meeting of the Provincials and the Delegates with the current General Consulta, which was held in Rome in 2011, the Camillianum International Institute of the Theology of Pastoral Care in Health was assured the unanimous support of the Order. It was declared without any objection that it had been the most positive development of recent years in the history of the Order'.⁶ And his recommendation was to examine with the Provincial Council the possibility of sending some Camillian students to Provinces where there were candidates for study.

Some Qualitative Fruits as well

Everybody knows that from the Camillianum, through some of its students, other centres have come into existence, because while it was being created other initiatives came into being in Verona, San Paolo, Bogota, Naples and Rome:

- Centres for pastoral care and the humanisation of health, animated by Camillians, have come into existence. This has been the case with centres in Madrid, Mexico, Ecuador, Burkina Faso, Perù, Bangalore...
- Indirectly one could say that other centres (some, however, have died) have come into existence in the shadow of the Camillianum, such as that in Argentina,
- Without there being a centre, important activities involving formation are engaged in, for example in Chile, 'nourished' by the life of the Camillianum as well.
- There are also others that have drunk at the Camillianum or drawn upon its lecturers, even without being born in its shadow, for example that in Colombia...

⁴ Juan Pablo II, 'Exhortación dirigida por el Santo Padre a los capitulares Ministros de los Enfermos y a las Hijas de San Camilo', 20 May 1995: cf. *Camilliani-Camillians*, n. 88, June 1995, p. 567.

⁵ Juan Pablo II, 'Mensaje del Santo Padre a los Religiosos Camilos', 15.05.2000 con ocasión del 450 aniversario del nacimiento de San Camilo de Lelis': cf. *Camilos*, nn 130-131, July 2000, p.121.

⁶ MONKS F., 'Ai Superiori Provinciali e Delegati. Il Camillianum', in: *Camilliani-Camillians*, 3/2005, p. 235.

But one should also say that at the Camillianum people have been trained who animate pastoral care in health by having roles involving animation within various Bishops' Conferences, dioceses, hospitals, parishes...

And it is also clear that a large number of publications on pastoral care in health and humanisation have been produced by lecturers, former students, those who work with centres...these hundreds of books constitute a 'fund of publications' concentrated not only around the Institute itself in Rome but also throughout the world. And how can one not refer to the importance of the *Dizionario di Teologia Pastorale Sanitaria* ('Dictionary of the Theology of Pastoral Care in Health'), translated in Brazil⁷ and in Spain,⁸ and to the review *Camillianum* which brings together the scholarly output of the academic body...

Assessing the Present

Even though my analysis is reductive, I can say to you that I have been through various stages of my journey and my connection with the Order with the Camillianum.

- I felt the pride of the whole Order which was created through the mouths of the greatest animators who gave it life, almost thirty years ago.
- I saw how the Order invested through people and programmes in the Institute and supported it by sending it lecturers, students and money so that it could work.
- I also witnessed the crisis created by the decrease in the number of students, and in particular European ones, and the decrease in income associated with this, as well the increase in the difficulties of languages and the decrease in Camillian lecturers (a significant number who were that at the beginning are now dead), and on to the difficulties in identifying Camillian religious who could be leaders for posts of responsibility in the Institute.
- I also saw the tension between those who laid more emphasis on the pastoral aspect and those who invoked the more theological side of things, with moments of insistence and healthy tension and other moments which perhaps helped less in the promotion of the development of the Institute.
- I also experienced the beginning of the critical murmurings about the performance of the Camillianum from various quarters. I personally had the impression that they arose not only from a constructive wish to help it to grow and develop as an important body in the life of the Order – they were also the talk of lazy students and the prejudices of people who had never drawn near to the Institute, or first or fourth generation rumours... These last, I believe, form a part of that 'chatter' that Pope Francis strongly seeks to avoid within the Church.
- I also live with passion the daily life of the Institute during the days of my lectures and in the simplicity of the individual courses...the formation of future leaders, pastoral workers and health-care professionals is invested in.

I want to include in this talk of mine certain data as a sign of gratitude towards

⁷ The Brazilian edition was published by b Ed. Paulus and edited by Calisto Vendrame and Léo Pessini.

⁸ The Spanish edition was published by Ed. San Pablo and adited by Francisco Alvarez and José Carlos Bermejo.

our history (the past). Up to the present time, one may say that there have been:

- 284 licences, of whom 82 were Camillians.
- Doctorates: 47, of whom 14 were Camillians.
- Diplomas: 179.
- Two-year formation course: 458.
- Taking a licence: 35, amongst whom 9 Camillians.
- Students awaiting the award of a licence since 2005: 24, of whom 2 Camillians.
- Those taking a doctorate: 30, of whom 6 Camillians.

The Camillianum is alive and at the present time has:

- 6 permanent lecturers, amongst whom 5 are Camillians.
- 21 temporary lecturers (contract lecturers and invited lecturers), of whom 5 are Camillians).
- 6 emeritus lecturers, amongst whom 5 Camillians.
- 1 Camillian assistant.

A Timid Look at the Future

I believe that the Camillianum today is a sign of the intrinsic identity of the nature of the Order for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which it would be difficult to describe without its power of permeation as regards individuals and Camillian charismatic culture.

Some challenges can be identified, even without engaging in a detailed analysis:

- Leadership
 - o The most urgent challenge is a new form of closer working between the general government and the staff of the Camillianum, as well as with the Provincials, which could lead to the identification of religious who would be able to contribute – perhaps in new forms – so that we can continue to give life to the Camillianum.
 - o No less there is the challenge of humanising the air that is breathed around the Camillianum. I already referred to this when I was a member of the General Chapter in 2013. This means improving the leadership and the relations between the authorities, the lecturers, the students, alliances...
 - o Naturally enough, this challenge is in a special way connected with the profile of the people who make up the permanent committee and are more often present in Camillianum, and is thus connected with the appointments of the government of the Institute.
- Administration
 - o Increasing economic transparency and, perhaps, recognising all the contributions (including the salaries of the Camillian lecturers) that could help to achieve a more professionalised administration. The General Consulta seems to have already given indications for the creation of an independent entity with its own legal identity. (Hitherto, the reference points have been the General Consulta and

- the Province of Rome – to which we should be grateful).
- Generous support from the Provinces for the activities of the Camillianum would help to sustain an Institute which, as is the case with the Roman universities, will always be an economic responsibility for the Order.
 - Despite this fact, the professionalisation of the administration of the Institute could lead to the finding of economic resources, as has happened, and still happens today, with projects such as the Camillian Task Force and the projects of ‘Health and Development’.
- Communication and Relations
 - Another challenge is communication. An almost immobile web site means a decrease in the number of possible candidates to be students.
 - The promotion of the Institute will depend in part on its relationship with the centres and universities that belong to the Order as an expression of the wish to be a ‘new school of charity’ in the world.
 - Infrastructures:
 - In my view, the Camillianum would gain a great deal if it were in the centre of the city of Rome and in a particular way at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, and here I believe that it is possible to study the possibility of a creative and efficient management of the spaces of the generalate house.
 - Publications and Human Resources:
 - Perhaps it would be appropriate for there to be different forms of relationships with the Camillianum (amongst which the ‘Ed. Camilliane’, the Camillian publishing house) where there are publications.
 - A closer relationship between the General Consulta, the staff of the Camillianum, Provincials and centres could contribute to identifying present and future human candidates to be Camillian lecturers.

Cardinal William Baum, the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education at the time of the creation of the Camillianum, on the day of the inauguration of the Institute, 7 November 1987, said: ‘The canonical erection which we have given to the new International Institute was not – please believe me – an act of legal and academic formality but, rather, an act that we did with great joy and deep conviction, happy that this new sector of ecclesiastical studies took shape in such a concrete way and in a way so full of hope, thanks to the work of the Camillians’.⁹

I also wish for a healthy future for the Institute and a new impetus in the twenty-first century. Much will depend, in my view, on our faithfulness to our charism, beginning with those who are present here today.

⁹ Cardinal William Baum, ‘Saluto all’inaugurazione del Camillianum, in: *Camillianum*, Rome, 1990, p. 170.