

**Message to the Religious of the Camillian Vice-Province of Peru on the Occasion
of the Fraternal Visit of Fr. Leocir Pessini, the Superior General,
and Br. José Ignacio Santaolalla, the Consultor and General Financial
Administrator**

19-31 August 2015

Esteemed

*Fr. Wilson Enrique Carbajal Gonzales, Superior Vice-Provincial of Peru,
Members of the Vice-Provincial Council,
Our Camillian religious brothers of Peru,*

Dear brothers of the Camillian life and the Camillian charism: health and peace in the Lord of our lives!

During the last twelve days of August, I had the opportunity to visit each of the seven communities that make up the Vice-Province of Peru which contains thirty-six religious of perpetual vows, six students of theology, a novice, four students of philosophy and five who are attending the preparatory course. Together with Br. José Ignacio Santaolalla, the Consultor for Missions and the General Financial Administrator, who accompanied me during the visit, I want to thank all of you for your warm welcome and the wonderful way in which you treated us.

Our visit coincided with a crowded series of Camillian events/meetings which for three weeks made Lima the heart of the Camillians in America.

Four important events followed one another:

- 24-28 August 2015: a course of ongoing formation for the Camillians of Latin America.
- 28-29 August 2015: the Third International Congress of Humanisation and Bioethics.
- 30 August 2015: the Fourth Pan-American Meeting of the Major Superiors of the Camillians.
- 1-5 September 2015: the Nineteenth Camillian Meeting for Formation and Pastoral Care for Vocations in Latin America.

These meetings witnessed the presence, the support and the involvement of Fr. Laurent Zoungrana, the Vicar General of the Order and the Consultor responsible for formation. Thus three-fifths of the General Consulta took part in most of these events. More specific information on these meetings will be published in our internal bulletin *Camilliani/Camillians*.

The fact that religious responsible for formation and pastoral care of vocations for the pan-American area have met every year for almost twenty years provokes a positive assessment. The last meeting was number nineteen! Unfortunately, in recent years we have witnessed a notable decrease in vocations to religious life in Latin America. Our appreciation goes to all those who are involved in this sector both in Peru, and in every other Latin American country, for the efforts that they have made in this crucially important field on which, indeed, the very future of our Order depends.

Another important aspect was the meeting of the Major Superiors of America. This amounts to an insight where one could begin to think of a possible new planning of the Camillian geography of the Americas. Alone, isolated, separated from each other and few in numbers...we have no future that way! A greater synergy of our forces and priorities for the whole of this area is a great horizon that should be followed.

The fraternal (pastoral, canonical) visit of the Superior General took place on 19-31 August and he was accompanied by the Superior Vice-Provincial, Fr. Wilson Enrique Gonzales. This visit involved all of the Camillian communities (Trujillo, Arequipa, Huancayo, Lima and Chosica). We also had an opportunity to visit, and to celebrate the Eucharist in, the communities of the Daughters of St. Camillus who attend to remembrance of the places where their beloved Founder Fr. Luigi Tezza lived, specifically in the district of the religious house *de la Buenamuerte*.

During these visits to you we took part in a community meeting of each community, with the possibility of individual meetings with all those religious who wanted this. In addition to visiting some of the works of ministry that you are responsible for, we also met the Council of the Vice-Province and the legal and administrative consultancy team of the Vice-Province.

In each community meeting the first part was dedicated to the presentation of the priorities of the Order that were established at the last General Chapter (Ariccia-Rome, June 2014), as well as to some reflections on the subject of consecrated life, above all starting with the writings of Pope Francis to all religious people.

As regards priorities, we would like to remind you that for this six-year period (2014-2020) the planned horizon has been defined as the implementation of the *Camillian Project for the Interior Revitalisation and the Reorganisation of the Order*,

with three priorities: 1) attending to the economics of the Order, first of all of the generalate house and its reorganisation; 2) (initial and ongoing) formation and the animation of vocations; and 3) communication: without suitable communication it will be difficult to construct communion in our communities.

Three moments in history can be highlighted in the message of Pope Francis that he addressed to all consecrated men and women: *religious people are not only the custodians of a glorious history which should be remembered and narrated, they also have a great history to construct. We should cultivate a relationship of gratitude towards our past; as regards the present, a passion for life* (and we Camillians would add that we should also serve with Samaritan compassion), *and with respect to the future, an increase in hope.*

Remembering the Past with Gratitude

We want to go over a number of important dates and events taken from the rich history of the Camillians in Peru – 306 years of presence in the land of the ‘Incas’. Many young Camillian religious do not know about this history and above all for our Camillian religious brothers from other parts of the world this can be a propitious opportunity to learn a little about the genesis and the development of the first Camillian foundation in America, which became known as that of the ‘Fathers of the Good Death’. If we do not know about our history we cannot know what our identity is. Let us engage in this journey of the memory in order to remember and narrate our history, as we have been stimulated to do by Pope Francis.

Without taking anything away from the historical event that characterised the missionary adventure of a Camillian religious who came from Sicily, **Fr. Andrea Scieli**, who was in mission for twenty-two years (1666-1688) in Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Peru, the presence of the Camillian religious in Peru began in the early eighteenth century with the arrival of **Fr. Goldobeo Carami** who reached Lima on 9 January 1709. Fr. Carami, a religious who belonged to the Camillian Province of Sicily and was born in Spain, requested and obtained the permission of the General Consulta to voyage towards the *Indies of America* in order to gather alms for the cause of beatification of St. Camillus.

As Fr. Giuseppe Villa narrates well in his book *Religiosos Camilos, 300 años en el Perú entre luces y sombras* (p. 4), ‘at the beginning of the eighteenth century the city of Lima had about 40,000 inhabitants. When Fr. Carami arrived with his habit and his black cloak with a red cross on his front, amongst the people of Lima he generated a great deal of curiosity and at the same time much devotion. Indeed, he began to care for the sick and the dying in private homes and performed this ministry with so much zeal that many people had the idea of a foundation of the Institute of St. Camillus in Lima as well to care for and accompany the dying of the city’ (cf. also the work of Fr.

Virgilio Grandi, *El convento de la Buenamuerte: 275 años de presencia de los Padres Camilos en Lima*, 1985).

In line with this style and above all after the arrival from Spain in October 1716 of **Fr. Juan Muñoz de la Plata** and **Fr. Juan Fernández Ravelo**, the first Camillian community was established in *Barrios Altos* where on 14 August 1712 Fr. Carami inaugurated a chapel dedicated to the *Vergine de la Buenamuerte* (or Transit).

In the year 1930 the Superiors of Spain sent three other religious: Fr. Domingo Pereda Ruiz, Fr. Alejandro Montalvo Sacristán and Br. Juan Blanco.

We can follow the account of Fr. Giuseppe Villa from the work mentioned above: ‘during the course of these years the pastoral work of Fr. Carami, and the other religious, for the sick and the dying was valuable and admirable in its religious spirit both in private homes and in the four small nearby hospitals: *Santa Ana* for the Indios, *San Bartolomé* for the blacks, *San Andrés* for the Spaniards and those of mixed race, and *La Caridad* for women. For this reason, people began to call them the *Padres de la Buenamuerte*’.

In line with this chronology, the year 2016 will be the three-hundredth anniversary of the official foundation of the first Camillian community of Lima at the religious house *de la Buenamuerte*. During the 300 years since the foundation of the Camillians in Peru – as for that matter in any other human context – there have been lights and shadows. There are many lights of a past full of glory because of the good done to sick people in so many ways and we should be full of pride and able to see this as a good example. But there are also many shadows that should about this warn us about deviations as regards community life and the ability to live religious vows and to develop our Camillian ministry.

In the religious house *de la Buenamuerte* many other distinguished Camillian religious were present and lived, like those who have already been cited. **Fr. Martín de Andrés Pérez** was one example and led the then Vice-Province for twenty-five years. A man of learning and charity, he strove for the promotion, the welcoming and the formation of new vocations. During his mandate more than a hundred candidates entered the Order. Even though not all of them persevered, on his death, which took place in the year 1770, the community had 62 Camillian religious. He wrote works on philosophy and theology for religious formation which were of profound erudition, and to such a point that the rector of the University of *San Marcos*, who was enthusiastic about the goodness of the ministry of the fathers *de la Buenamuerte*, established the teaching chair of ‘*Moral y casos ocurrentes in articulo mortis*’. **Fr. Martín de Andrés Pérez** was the first holder of this chair and held it until his death. We may say that this Camillian religious was our precursor in the teaching of ethics and bioethics in the field of health and health care in the Americas. It is certainly the

case that he had already perceived that together with activity involving corporeal and spiritual care we also have to be experts in the art of teaching those who take care of the sick, namely health-care workers, so that they can discern, accompany, and solve in an ethical way the conflicts that arise in health care.

The religious house *de la Buenamuerte* (defined as ‘The Pearl of the Order’ by the Provincial superior of Spain in 1933) was made famous in Lima not only because of the service of accompanying the sick and the dying which was practised with great zeal and competence by the Camillian religious but also because of its courses in mathematics, Latin, philosophy and theology. It also began to take in the children of distinguished families of the city, some of whom then entered the Order. There also passed through the religious house *de la Buenamuerte* **Fr. Camilo Henríquez González**, who was accompanied at the age of fifteen by his uncle on his mother’s side, Fr. Francisco Antonio González Laguna. After entering the Order he played an important role in the life of the Vice-Province of Peru and then in the history of the political independence of Chile, his country, to the point of being seen as the founder of Chilean journalism and a hero of the Chilean nation.

Another very well known event is the presence amongst the Camillians of Peru of a martyr of the ‘seal’ of confession. **Fr. Pedro Marieluz Garcés** was shot on 13 January 1826 in the Castle *de Callao* because he had refused to reveal information that he had received during his exercise of the ministry of confession. The Blessed *Fr. Luigi Tezza*, who had come to Lima as a reformer and had been sent by the Superior General twenty-three years earlier, died in the religious house *de la Buenamuerte* in the year 1923. The founder of the Daughters of St. Camillus together with the Blessed Giuseppina Vannini, he was beatified by John Paul II in 2001.

Living the present with passion and serving the sick and the needy with Samaritan compassion

306 years have passed since the arrival of the Camillians in Lima and still today as Camillians of the religious house *de la Buenamuerte* you continue to help the sick with limited financial resources in the *Clínica San Camilo* and in the *Consultorios Médicos San Camilo*, also engaging in activity involving formation, information and care for the sick, above all children and families with HIV in the *Hogar San Camilo*. You also provide formation for future Camillian religious at the various levels of aspirants, postulants and the accompanying of young religious during their period of temporary profession.

The activities of the *Hogar San Camilo*, of the *Clínica San Camilo* and of the *San Camilo* medical centres are the works involving care of the Vice-Province of Peru that have greatest visibility and we see them as being very valid for the exercise of the Camillian ministry. We believe that greater awareness on the part of all the

religious of the Vice-Province, and in particular on the part of the religious communities located in the *Barrios Altos*, is required so that they see these works as an integrating reality of the Vice-Province itself. In our view, greater coordination and a greater interchange of information between the Vice-Provincial and his council and these works are necessary in order to achieve a greater offer of participation to other religious of the Vice-Province by the heads of these institutions.

A sense of belonging, joint responsibility for works of care, and an appreciation of them will grow only if the goals that have been achieved by them, their financial and economic situation, the projects underway, and the priorities and the challenges that have to be addressed (transparency in management), are communicated and shared regularly and periodically with all the members of the Vice-Province. This communicative style allows the avoidance of many misunderstandings, gossip and slander which are often caused specifically by a lack of correct information. Versions that have been purely invented of events and situations are generated and this climate is certainly not constructive. In addition, although the heads are the directors of some works it is not possible to 'privatise' a possession/work which, instead, belongs to everyone. Although they are very competent and although they have many talents and abilities in the sector of management, administrative competence is always developed as the result of dialogue and exchange within a team. The 'Cause', the charism, must always be placed first: the ego (the self) must, instead, withdraw...! No individual person, however intelligent he may be, has all the '*light of the Holy Spirit*' to judge things, whether they are simple or complex. This is a lesson that we have to learn from the suffering that was generated in us by the painful events that recently beset our Order.

In addition to the two above-mentioned works of care, it is incumbent to mention the night refuge for homeless people, as well as *La Posada* of Arequipa and the initiatives connected with the accommodation house for the families of patients in hospital from far away places who do not have enough resources to pay for decent accommodation. The houses in Lima which arose specifically to help people most in need are different from these.

The *Centro de Formación en Salud* (CEFOSA) offers the possibility of training pastoral workers and health-care professionals, thereby contributing to the spread of a culture of life and health according to the Gospel and the Camillian charism. We believe that it is necessary to '*obtain more*' from the good structures offered by the CEFOSA and its magnificent position in the city. In addition, it could be a valuable opportunity to make the Camillian presence in Peru more visible and more known about, contributing in this way to the promotion of vocations as well. We encourage the completing of the studies and the inquiries that are underway in order to attain a better use of its structures and teaching activity, through agreements with universities

and businesses as well, so that the CEFOSA can also be an effective resource for the necessary economic self-sustainability of the Vice-Province.

The pastoral activity that is exercised in the chaplaincies of various hospitals and centres for public health involves a large number of Camillian religious. In this ministry, which is often silent and almost invisible, praiseworthy work is engaged in and we encourage you to live it with joy, commitment and competence. We greatly appreciate the pastoral work that is engaged in at the *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* parish of Arequipa, the *Nostra Signora di Guadalupe* parish of Huancayo, and the *Chiesa di Betlemme* of Trujillo. We encourage greater ministerial activity involving pastoral care in health in the parishes in which we are involved. They must take on a physiognomy that has an increasingly Camillian face! This is one of the recommendations that comes from the last Extraordinary General Chapter of the Order.

Embracing the future with hope

In all the communities and at the meeting of the council of the Vice-Province we presented you with the idea that Peru could acquire the status of a Province in the near future. During the course of the meetings of the General Consulta with the Major Superiors which took place in Warsaw (Poland) on 18-23 May, the (*mother*) Province of Italy proposed that this process be set in motion. When we held up this prospect at the various community meetings we did not perceive that you had special enthusiasm. Although none of you were against this, almost inevitably you highlighted the difficulties of pursuing economic self-sustainability which the status of being a Province requires *a priori*.

There are three fundamental pre-conditions envisaged by our Constitution for the erection and maintenance of the status of a Province in our Order: 'It must be adequately sufficient with regard to the number of religious and of houses so as to be economically viable and pastorally active' (C 93).

It is certainly the case that the achievement of economic autonomy is not an easy task but it is certainly not an impossible one (as at times we hear said). It seems to be especially difficult to cover the financing of the formation of candidates for religious life in our Order, something which, indeed, requires large sums of money.

And as all of us know, the future of the Order itself throughout the world depends on new members who have received a good formation. In this context, we remembered and reflected together on the fact that over recent decades the Vice-Province of Peru has always been able to rely on the generous help of the Province of North Italy (formerly of Lombardy and Veneto) to meet its expenditure and in particular the expenditure relating to the sector of formation. The idea is that in the

future this help will come to an end and the Vice-Province will be able to take on this responsibility as well.

As a result, it is important to have as an objective economic self-sustainability and also implement a serious strategy to achieve it. What is needed, therefore, is a placing together of all the resources that are available. In addition, some activities must generate those surpluses that are needed and are sufficient to cover the costs of the formation of candidates.

During the visit to the Vice-Province we were particularly struck by some religious, above all young religious, and their attitude of upholding '*their rights*' in relation to the Vice-Province, without, however, ever mentioning or paying attention to '*their duties*' as religious in relation to the Vice-Province. Pope Francis at a recent audience in the Paul VI Hall that was granted to young consecrated men and women from all over the world (17 September 2015) warned us about the fact that 'we live in a narcissistic culture', that we must be careful about the temptation of 'narcissism' and of 'looking only at ourselves', of 'beholding our image reflected in the mirror'. 'This is one of the worst attitudes there is for a religious', Pope Francis warned. This attitude is not only deplorable from a moral point of view but brings with it disastrous consequences for life in community and excludes any prospect for a shared project, from an economic point of view as well. The time has come to stop asking 'what can the Order do for me?' and to begin to ask 'what can I do for the Order?'

All the structures and the institutions of the Vice-Province must be under the sole coordination of the Vice-Provincial and his council. Without such a central coordination it is in practice impossible to construct unity. Nobody possesses anything. We are mere stewards of a patrimony that 'does not belong to us'. Those people who have administrative responsibilities should remember that these are positions offered to them in trust and they require the taking on of a great deal of responsibility in a spirit of service. Periodically, there should be meetings of an administrative character (preferably once a month) for a description of the state of accounts and the financial situation (transparency as regards the figures), of the work that has been carried out, of emerging needs, and of cooperation and assistance between projects. The team of experts and consultants of the Vice-Province can provide an important service of advice and support as regards establishing and developing this process of centralised coordination of all the Camillian ministerial activities of the Vice-Province. The professional management of works is a challenge that must be addressed with courage and without fear.

We believe that the Vice-Province of Peru can and must consider the goal of becoming a Province over the next few years. To do this, it has to set in motion a process of drawing up its Provincial statutes through which it can govern the most important aspects of the life of the Province (with details that are not laid down by

the Constitution or by the general Statutes): ministry, the charism, Camillian spirituality, the promotion of vocations, (initial and ongoing) formation, and the administration and the economics of the Vice-Province, amongst other areas.

A process of participation should be implemented that could begin with the meetings of the Superiors and the meetings in the communities with the aim of holding an assembly of the Vice-Province within year (August 2016) at which the Provincial statutes could be discussed and the future steps by which to become a Province could be identified. This process will bear fruit in terms of growth in a feeling of belonging to the Vice-Province, communion between the religious, growth in personal faith, and growth in an in-depth examination of Camillian spirituality. A well defined, outlined and planned programme produced by the Vice-Provincial and his council is the *conditio sine qua non* for success on this pathway. It is advisable to remember that the achievement of this process looking forward to the year 2016 would coincide with the historic date of the commemoration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the first Camillian community in Peru. This would really be a unique opportunity to reflect upon the importance of community in your Camillian consecrated lives.

At the end of this message, which offers some reflections and recommendations with a view to the growth and construction of a permanent future for Camillians in Peru, we would like to emphasise again our appreciation of the warm welcome that we received amongst you. On behalf of the whole of the Camillian Order, we appreciate all of the good that you are promoting in the field of the world of health and health care in Peru through your dedication to the Camillian charism. We also appreciate the strong sense of ecclesial communion that is present in all the ministerial initiatives in which you are involved in various regions of Peru. We are a living part of the Church which as our 'mother and teacher' we cannot neglect. We cannot work in a separate or isolated way: we should always work in harmony and in communion with the activities of the Church.

Let us go forward with courage, evangelical boldness, and with joy at living our Camillian vocation of serving those most in need with a Camillian and Samaritan heart.

May our Father founder and Inspirer, St. Camillus, and the Blessed Fr. Luigi Tezza, who lived in your country and served so many people in need here, be always and for everyone protectors of our lives and inspirers of our Camillian and Samaritan service!

Rome, 19 September 2015

Fr. Leocir Pessini

Superiore General

Br. José Ignacio Santaolalla

Financial Administrator and General Consultor for Missions