

Canonical Erection of St. Camillus Province, India

A warm good evening and hearty welcome to you all to this Eucharistic celebration and also to the official declaration of St. Camillus Province of India.

We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28). Let me begin thanking God for His protection, grace and blessings upon each one of us at this occasion of the Canonical erection of St. Camillus Vice Province to the status of a Province. We are blessed indeed to celebrate it today as the Church celebrates the feast of the presentation of our Lord and the closing day of the year of Consecrated Life. For us Camillians, today is the feast of the conversion of St. Camillus – a day dedicated to the consecrated people. Although more, we are joyful in entering into a new identity as a province, to grow and bear fruit, in the holy Jubilee Year of Mercy.

I delight in St. Camillus' little plant continuing to grow and bloom over four hundred years after it has been planted. I realize that we are guided by the true spirit of our Founder, St. Camillus and we, in a special way, are protected by the divine presence of the Lord and the constant accompaniment of Mary, Queen of the Ministers of the Infirm.

It is an opportunity for us to look on to the road we have travelled so far to reach where we are today. Then, we meet so many who became instruments in the hands of God for the planting and growing up of this young Camillian mission in India. We look back with gratitude and joy at the wonderful ways the Lord has guided this province, the great number of sick people we have nursed and the various ways through which we were instrumental in spreading the kingdom of God. The miles we have journeyed are filled with the manifestations of God's special care for the growth of this new province. God used so many hearts and hands to nurture this plant to grow to the small tree we are today. Very specially we remember Fr. Crotti and Fr. Nindini, the founders of our mission in India. We remember Austrian Province, Irish Province, German and Spanish provinces. A special word of thanks to Fr. Gregotsch for his constant guidance, financial contributions and accompaniment from our initial journey to this point of life and to Fr. Joseph Didone, Thaiwan Delagate, for his concern and generosity. We gratefully remember the remarkable services of the Benedictines Fathers, CMI fathers, Mananthavady and Bangalore dioceses, Bishops and priests, Norbertin fathers, Camillian sisters and other religious congregations. A special gesture of love and gratitude to our beloved formators, Fr. George Padannamakkil CMI, Fr. Paulinose OSB, Fr. Geroge Moolayil, Fr. Calderaro, Fr. Giulio Gazzi, Fr. John Contarin, Fr. Albino Turcato, Fr. Rino Metrini and Fr.

Jacob Nadayath, who was our spiritual father. A special thanks to Bro. Luca for his personal commitment to launch our healthcare ministry in India. There have been many provinces of our Order which extended support and encouragement and helped us grow by holding us close to their hearts. On this day of jubilation, we express our sincere gratitude to all the former generals and the Consulta, Fr. Calisto Vendrame, Fr. Angelo Brusco, Fr. Frank Monk and Fr. Renato Salvatore, our mother province, Lombardo Venetian Province, now North Italian, all the provincials and their council, Fr. Giuseppe Bressanin (Senior), Fr. Gianni Matrignoni, Fr. Giuseppe Bressanin (Junior) and Fr. Lino Tamanini, all our beloved confreres, very specially our former provincial delegates and the vicar provincials, Fr. Mathew Perumpil, Fr. Babychan Pazhanilath, Fr. Reji Kaithaparampil and all their council members, friends, benefactors, collaborators, staff and all the sick who taught us authentic discipleship and true witnessing to the merciful love of Christ. I feel good and feel supported and encouraged fraternally by all the confreres of our province and I also would like to extend my sincere gratitude for your concern and commitment for the growth of this province. I would also like to express a special word of appreciation to all of you, very specially to our provincial counsellors, community superiors and confreres in India and abroad for their efforts and commitment for the growth and well-being of this province.

We are fortunate to have so committed and dedicated confreres who were even more than willing to sacrifice their lives in the Ebola mission in Sierra Leone and in Iraq mission. A sincere appreciation to Bro. Madhu, Fr. Antony Kunnel and Fr. Sebastian Christi for your heroic witness of the merciful love of Christ and living out practically our Camillian fourth vow to witness even at the risk of ones' life. This sense of mission, enthusiasm and commitment enhance the quality of our consecration even in the midst of trials, challenges and in the moments of sadness. We have lost the physical presence of Fr. Shibin two years ago but we are happy now that he is in heaven to pray for us and intercede for us.

Just as is the significance of being raised to the status of a Province, so are the challenges it entails. We pray for the courage to move forward with hope while responding to our new challenges and responsibilities. We pray also for our unity to be strengthened and our commitment to be deepened.... both towards God and our Order. Therefore, this milestone in our history is a time to move forward with hope, on the strong foundation laid by the generous and committed people in our past. Their vision, hard work and sacrifice are the solid blocks on which we can still stand and journey forward and bring forth fruits, healing the sick and preaching the Kingdom of God.

I thank God that we can rejoice with the confreres who continue to grow and are enthused over the Camillian ideal. We hold our heads high while always remaining footed on the awareness that our real worthwhile growth will only come from God.

We tread into the new responsibilities with hope seeking new ways of facing the challenges of today with more enthusiasm and courage to be the living witnesses of the Merciful love of Christ as the Holy Father points out. We may continue being faithful to the Charism of the Order and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be the true apostles of mercy in our healing ministry.

Well, we all know that we are united here as a Camillian family to share our fraternal support and encouragement, the love and concern for each one and to share our joy in this celebration. We have our Superior General, Most Rev. Fr. Leocir Pessini, with us to grace the Celebration of the Eucharist at the declaration of the Canonical erection of St. Camillus Province. He is a born leader and beyond description are his abilities and capacities. His sense of commitment and availability are highly appreciated. He is a plainly spoken personality and his simple approach and appealing presence are really touching and inspiring. Dear Fr. Leo, we are privileged and blessed by your inspiring presence with us. So we, the Camillian family, extend to you a very warm welcome to this great celebration.

We have been fortunate to have Fr. Aris, the General Consulta for Ministry with us. The commitment and hard work, the enthusiasm and the zeal and above all the love of Charism of Fr. Aris are remarkable and appreciated. He has been with us for a few times with his CTF mission and fraternal visit as General Consulta for ministry as well. Dear Fr. Aris, we extend to you a warm welcome to this celebration.

Fr. Gianfranco, the General Secretary is also with us. Though it is for the first time he comes to India, he is known to many of us. The Generalate office is very alive and active with his presence. He is well disciplined and organized in his undertakings and very systematic in his office matters. He is so quick in responding to our mails and easily gets the things done for us. Dear Fr. Gianfranco, we really appreciate your hard work and commitment and acknowledge your valuable service to our Order and to you too, we extend a warm welcome.

Now we have our head, the head of our mother province, our beloved father in all its sense, Fr. Vittorio Paleari, the provincial of North Italian Province with us. In fact, there is no need to welcome him to this function, because it is our celebration but it is our blessed privilege to welcome him to this great celebration. He has been heading this province for so many years in

different capacities as one of the provincial counsellors and for nine years as our dear Provincial. He has been traveling with all of us, closely and dearly accompanying in moments of our joy and in moments of our difficulty, in moments of our crisis and in moments of our growth. He knows each one of us through and through. Our love and our indebtedness to you and to all the former provincials and the counsellors are beyond our expression. We realize the fact that what we are today is the fruit of the commendable hard work and the remarkable generosity of our virgin mother province. While I sincerely appreciate Fr. Vittorio and his counsellors I gratefully acknowledge their sustained support, spiritual guidance and timely intervention, love and concern, availability and generosity and above all, for making each one of us grow to this stage of our lives in the province. Dear Fr. Vittorio, we extend to you a warm welcome to this great celebration.

We have Fr. Giuseppe Rigamonti, the provincial secretary and the superior of the hospital community in Milan. He has been here on his pastoral visitation in 2008 and he knows each one of us. We extend to you a warm welcome.

Fr. Lorenzo Testa is with us. He is our provincial bursar and one of the members of the economic commission of the Order. He has already been here to lay the foundation stone for the Camillian Pastoral care centre. He is a faithful steward. He has been very generous with us and we would like to appreciate his availability and generosity. We extend to you also Fr. Lorenzo a warm welcome.

Fr. Paolo Guarise is also with us. He is our former Vicar General. In fact, we know that in the absence of Fr. General, he was the one guiding and leading us through the difficult moments of Order. His sense of commitment and hard work, his simplicity and his pleasant appearance are highly appreciated. Above all, he is a true missionary and he is fully immersed with the zeal for mission work. He has been a missionary in Kenya for over 25 years and more. Dear Fr. Paolo, we are blessed with your presence and we extend to you a warm welcome.

Fr. Alessandro is here with us to share our joy. He has been to India to help us out in the formation along with Fr. Nidini Ernesto and he was in charge of the philosophy students for two years. He was also a missionary in Kenya for many years serving in different capacities. He is now the superior of the community in Venice. Dear Fr. Alex we extend to you too a warm welcome.

Fr. Stephen Foster, the provincial of Irish province is also with us along with Bro. John and our beloved confreres working in Ireland. Dear Fr. Stephen we do really appreciate your

presence and the collaboration between the province of India with Irish Province. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity and the financial contribution for the health projects of the province and hope you would continue to extend your generosity in the future as well. so dear Fr. Stephen, I extend to you a warm welcome.

Dear Bro. John, I know that it is your first visit to India. Though you wanted to come before, you couldn't. It's opportune for you as well to visit on this special occasion. We extend to you Bro. John, a warm welcome.

Fr. Paul Cherdchai, the provincial of Thailand is here. There is strong collaboration between these two provinces mainly in terms of formation and ongoing formation. Right now we have two religious from Thailand, one is engaged in the ongoing formation and the other is doing his theological studies at Dharmaram College. Besides all these, he was so generous to give us 100 stalls and 100 T-shirts as gifts for this great celebration. Dear Fr. Cherdchai, we appreciate and gratefully acknowledge your commendable generosity and we extend to you a warm welcome

Fr. Joseph Phat, is the provincial delegate from Vietnam. We were together in Rome for one year and he was trying to come to India for some studies but unfortunately, that didn't work out. Today he is here with us to share our joy and thanking the Lord for all the blessing. Dear Fr. Joseph, we extend to you too a hearty welcome

Fr. Mario Didone is also with us from Italy. He has been to India for a couple of time and right now he is working as chaplain in Padova hospital, where I did the chaplaincy for one year along with him. We appreciate Fr. Mario for your love and concern for us and a special word of thanks to your superior and the members of the community for letting you participate in this celebration. I extend to you Fr. Mario a warm welcome to this celebration.

We have two delegates from the province of Poland, Fr. Szwajnoch Mirosław, the Vicar Provincial and Fr. Saewicz Ireneusz, one of the provincial counsellors. Well, we were together in Poland in last May for the major superiors' meeting held there. Dear Fathers, we appreciate your valuable presence with us and we extend to you hearty welcome.

We are indeed delighted to have the presence of Sr. Anila, the provincial of the Daughters of St. Camillus. Dear Sr. Anila, we extend to you a warm welcome.

I sincerely extend a warm and hearty welcome to all our staff, brothers, sisters and our beloved children.

Finally, my dear confreres of St. Camillus Province of India, it is absolutely the fruit of your earnest prayers, hard work and remarkable efforts, sacrifices and pain, shared vision and innovative initiatives, that shaped and re-shaped, formed and reformed the growth of this province. A special word of sincere appreciation to our former provincial delegates, vicar provincials and to each one of you. We are 53 perpetually professed religious and right now 45 are present here and we are sure that those who are absent would be with us spiritually with their prayers. A special thanks and hearty welcome to our missionaries abroad who made themselves available for this celebration. Dear Confreres, gratefully acknowledging each one of your commitment, availability, hard work, generosity, fraternal support and encouragement for the growth of this province, I extend to all warm and hearty welcome.

Through the powerful intercession of St. Camillus, our Founder and the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Ministers of the Infirm, lets us Commend this new province into the hands of our Lord and each one of us present here so as to be true witnesses of the Merciful Love of Jesus and to become an apostle of Mercy in the Year of Mercy.

Fr. Baby Ellickal MI

Provincial

2nd February 2016