

**Message of the Superior General
to the Camillian Delegation of Tanzania
The Camillian Province of Germany**

Pastoral Visit, 19-21 April 2016

That the old saying will always be true: Where here are religious, there is joy. We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our heart to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere; that the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the Church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us life-long personal fulfilment.

Once again, we have to ask ourselves: is Jesus really our first and only love, as we promised he would be when we professed our vows? Only if he is, will we be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have his own heart.

Pope Francis

Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life (2015)

Dear Fr. Shukrani Kassian Mbirigenda, MI

Provincial Delegate of the Camillian Delegation of Tanzania

Dear Fr. Siegmund Malinowski, MI

Provincial of the Province of Germany

Dear members of the Council of the Delegation and our religious brothers Fr. Hubert Constantine Mrosso, Fr. Camille Neuray, Fr. Festo Athanas Liheta, Fr. Ephraim Mpaji Ogha, Fr. Gemini Moringe Laizer and Fr. Fidelis Safati Mushi.

Health and Peace in Lord of our lives!

For the first time in this term of our general government (2014-2020), I, Fr. Leocir Pessini as Superior General, together with Fr. Laurent Zoungrana, the Vicar General and consultor responsible for the promotion of vocations and formation in the Order, made a (fraternal, canonical) pastoral visit to your Delegation on 19-21 April 2016.

We had the opportunity during our presence among you of visiting, together with the parish priests, three of the four parishes that the Camillians run on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam. We had two community meetings and had an opportunity to interact through personal encounters with almost all the religious who are present, with the exception of Fr. Gemini, who was out of the country, and of Fr. Mushi, who had some health problems, according to the information that we received.

We also had a meeting with all the Camillian students, novices, and philosophy and theology students. They came from Morogoro to meet us and this is something that we appreciated very much. We took the opportunity to speak about the Order today as well as about the need that the world has for our charism and the contemporary relevance

of Saint Camillus during the year of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in the Catholic world. He entrusted us Camillians with the 'Charism of Mercy' and this has been recognised by the Church.

The Delegation of Tanzania was initially linked to the Camillian Province of Holland. When this Province became a Delegation of the Province of Germany, the Delegation became the responsibility of the German Province. At the present time, the Delegation is made up of seven Camillian religious – six from Tanzania and one from Holland. There are five students of theology (temporary professed), and five students of philosophy, all under the guidance of the religious responsible for formation, Fr. Fidelis Safati Mushi. The student residence is located in Morogoro which is 200km from Dar es Salaam, the main city of the country. One student, Pascal Mapendo Kekule, has already finished his studies and is engaging in pastoral work while preparing for his perpetual profession. In the novitiate of this year there are two novices: Emmanuel Joh Mapunda and Patrick Athanas Bwakila, under the guidance of the master, Fr. Festo Athanas Liheta.

Some Information on the Country

Tanzania is a country in East Africa known for its vast wilderness areas. They include the plains of Serengeti National Park, a safari populated by the 'big five' (elephants, lions, leopards, buffalos and rhinos), and the Kilimanjaro National Park, the home of Africa's highest mountain.

The population of Tanzania is 51,045,882. Its capital is Dodoma, and Dar es Salaam is the largest city of the country with 4 million inhabitants. Shortly after achieving independence from Britain in 1960, Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to form the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964. The population of Tanzania is 99% African, of whom 95% are Bantu, with more than 130 tribes. Tanzania has two official languages: Swahili (the native language) and English which came with British colonisation.

In Tanzania, the Christians make up 61.4% of the population (Catholics are around 40%); Muslims, 35.2%; people of the native local religion, 1.8%; others, 0.2%; unaffiliated, 1.4%. Life expectancy at birth is 61.71 years. 15.6% of the population has access to health care. 1,499,400 people live with HIV/AIDS (the 2014 estimate).

A Short History of the Camillians in Tanzania

The fragments of the history of the Camillians in Tanzania presented below were told to us personally by Fr. Camille Neury who was one of the first pioneers to come from Holland to Tanzania and has already engaged in 46 years of work in this land.

The beginning of this mission started with inter-congregational cooperation between the Dutch Holy Spirit Fathers and the Dutch Camillians. They were to provide teachers for our seminarians in Holland and we were to help them in their mission in Tanzania. Thus it was that in 1960 the first two Camillians, *Fr. Franz Rapost and Nonore Swenne*, arrived from Holland. They stayed in Tanzania for only a short period because they fell ill and had to return to their homeland.

In 1961, two other Camillians, *Fr. Josef Maessen and Fr. Louis Hobus*, arrived and started to work in different parishes of the diocese of Morogoro. After becoming accustomed to the climate and culture of Tanzania, their help was offered to develop the parish of Ngerengere (in the diocese of Morogoro) which was erected in 1939.

After a few years they started to rebuild the parish in another place, together with a health centre, in accordance with the Camillian charism, to take care of the sick in

hospitals and in people's homes. The buildings (a church, a residence for the priests, a residence for the sisters, and a health centre) were finished by 1968. The health centre, unfortunately, was soon nationalised (confiscated by the government) because of the political situation in the country at the time.

With the growth of the mission, in 1969 three other Dutch Camillian priests joined the mission in the diocese of Morogoro, working in different parishes: *Fr. Camille Neury*, *Fr. Theo Van Schayk* and *Fr. Gerard*. Tanzania at that moment had a population of only 13 million people.

In 1976, in response to a request made by the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Cardinal Laurean Rugambwa, the Camillians were asked to take responsibility for service to the sick in the large referral hospital of Muhimbili in Dar es Salaam. So two Camillians gradually moved to this new city which in Swahili means 'harbour of peace'.

At that moment there were two Camillians working in the diocese of Dar es Salaam and three in the diocese of Morogoro. Following the suggestion of the Provincial that it was better to live and work together in one place, slowly the three Camillians working in the diocese of Morogoro moved to Dar es Salaam.

In 1982, Fr. Camille and Fr. Louis Kobus started a new parish on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam – the Saint Camillus Parish in Yombo-Kiwalani which today is also the location of the novitiate. One of the Camillians working in at the hospital of Muhimbili also provided religious instruction at the rehabilitation centre for the physically handicapped. He also started to celebrate Masses in the school. Many people joined in those celebrations and so the idea arose of starting a new parish. The Christians were able to build a small church. After establishing and developing the parish, the congregation grew fast, so the church became too small and plans were made for a new church in honour of St. Camillus. The old church was transformed into a health centre to provide health services to people at an affordable price.

Later on, the St. Camillus parish was divided into different parishes: Dovyva, Buza and Vituka. Today the Camillians run four different parishes, including the parish of Muhimbili which was erected at the beginning of the year 2000.

The first Camillian vocations of Tanzania studied in Nairobi, Kenya, where the major seminary was opened in 1976. Nowadays, Tanzanian students study in Morogoro. The Delegation also helps the Camillian Delegation of Uganda and has three theology students from that country.

During our meetings with the community, we had an opportunity to update you on the Order, **mainly as regards the implementation of the Camillian Project for the Revitalisation of Camillian Consecrated Life**. It has three priorities for this six-year period (2014-2020) of our term of office: a) *organising the economics of the Order, mainly at the generalate house*; b) *the promotion of vocations and (initial and ongoing) formation*; and c) *communication*. We also commented on, and discussed, the happy moment that we are living through in the ecclesial world with the leadership of Pope Francis, the promulgation of the **Year of Consecrated Life** and the **Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy** (2015-2016). For we Camillians, who are inspired by Saint Camillus and whose 'charism of mercy' has been confirmed by the Church, this is an exceptional opportunity for all of us to grow in spirituality and our ministry through Samaritan action of creative compassion in the health-care field, responding to the challenges that this world poses to us today.

With respect to the Year of Consecrated Life (2015), there is an important point in the letter that Pope Francis wrote to all the consecrated people of the world. The Pope

reminded us of our historical identity, an identity that we can never forget. He said that we religious do not only have a *glorious history to remember and to recount to those that do not know about it – we also have a great history to construct together*. Looking to the past we need to cultivate an attitude of gratitude, while living the present with passion (and as Camillians serving with Samaritan compassion) and embracing the future with hope.

We closed our pastoral (fraternal and canonical) visit with morning reflections related to the Jubilee of Mercy. The Father General gave a talk on ‘*Camillians: the Call to be Witnesses and Prophets of God’s Mercy*’. Afterwards we had a good conversation and an exchange of thoughts on this subject. Ending our visit, we celebrated the Eucharist in memory of all those who have dedicated their lives and talents to the life of the Camillian Delegation of Tanzania.

During our talks and meetings, we talked extensively about pastoral care for vocations, the process of formation, and the possibility of cooperation between Camillians from East Africa (the English-speaking countries), especially Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

The General Consultor of the Order, Fr. Zoungana, mentioned the need to have a coordinator for pastoral care for vocations and formation for these three neighbouring countries. An important history of cooperation between Camillians in these countries of East Africa already exists. As happened in the recent past, there is cooperation between Camillians in the field of formation. We recommend that you walk in this direction and encourage you to do so. Living in an isolated way, being few in number, we will simply not have a future. We need to question the possible cultural issues or attitudes of some leaders which are not aligned with a spirit of communion and are blocking this process of walking together. United we can do better and really make a difference in the world. We have to draw up common programmes shared with all the parties involved, with what is essential for each one of the stages of formation, as well as taking into account the values of different cultural traditions, which, indeed, always play an important role. As Camillians, the members of just one religious family, first of all we are Camillians (with a capital ‘C’) and then we are Tanzanians, Kenyans or Ugandans... belonging to a specific culture or nationality. If we are not convinced of this approach, it is useless to try to construct community and fraternity amongst us.

In this sense, the next world meeting of the Order with all the promoters of vocations and people responsible for providing formation, which is planned for 2017, has as one of its main objectives the updating of the manual on formation of the Order (this was a request of the Extraordinary General Chapter of June 2014). This could be an important source of inspiration for your process of formation in Tanzania and neighbouring countries.

Looking to the Future: what Hope Warms your Hearts?

You hope to grow in the number of your vocations by intensifying work involving the promotion of vocations and formation. We heard from you that this is the priority of the Delegation. Here existing or not existing in the future is at stake. You already have some practical achievements in this direction.

You are considering the prospect of being present with the Camillian charism in other dioceses of the country outside Dar es Salaam and Morogoro. In fact, you said that you have already received several invitations from bishops in this sense. The expansion

of our presence must go together with the existence of people for the mission chosen. You are already overloaded with a great deal of work: we must carefully assess our human resources for such initiatives.

During our stay amongst you, we several times heard about the extraordinary work that is done by the Lay Camillian Family. It is certainly the case that the involvement of the Lay Camillian Family can be an important resource for the expansion of the Camillian charism and Camillian spirituality and ministry in your country. You must encourage more lay people to be involved in this special way so that lay people can share our Camillian values.

We would like to congratulate you on your leadership amongst the religious Congregations in Tanzania. Two of our religious occupy at this moment occupy the important roles of president and executive secretary of the Religious Superiors Association in Tanzania (RSAT). In addition, your presence in the university world as chaplains in university hospitals, as well as lecturers, is an important kind of ministry that is very demanding and requires specialised studies. In the field of education, we can sow the seeds of a new culture of humanisation of health-care services. We can help professionals of the health-care field '*put more heart in those hands*', as our Founder Saint Camillus taught us.

We noticed that you all are very hard workers in the 'vineyard of the Lord'. There is a deep pastoral commitment to the people of God in those parishes, hospitals and chaplaincies where you are present. In all your activity there is the concern that the Camillian charism should be present. This is fantastic and it must always continue. The challenge is to have enough time and to plan community meetings and gatherings, days of reflection, spirituality and prayer, and celebration, as well as studies on subjects of interest to us. We suggest that you consider our idea of having at least once a month, if not for a whole day then at least for half a day, a community meeting where you can be together, share meals together, and study topics connected religious life and spirituality and the Camillian ministry, along with other issues which you think it is important and necessary to discuss. We know the dynamic that you are living through, having just one (canonically constituted) community and four residences spread out in the city and in Morogoro. To meet and be together is a challenge.

May God sustain your courage in the face of potential challenges when spreading the good news of the gospel in your country as Camillians! May our founder Saint Camillus bless you all, keeping you always healthy and happy when serving with Samaritan compassion in the health-care field!

Fraternally yours,

Nairobi, Kenya, 23 April 2016

Fr. Leocir Pessini, MI
Superior General

Fr. Laurent Zoungrana, MI
Vicar General