

## HOMILY OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

### Celebration of the Eucharist for the Canonical Erection of the Camillian Province of Burkina Faso

On the fifteenth anniversary of the bloody death of Fr. Celestino Di Giovanbattista

*Ouagadougou, 13 October 2016*

*His Most Reverend Eminence Cardinal Philippe Ouedraogo, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Ouagadougou,*

*His Most Reverend Excellency Msgr. Prosper Kontiebo, the Bishop of Tenkodogo,*

*Reverend Fr. Emilio Blasi, the Provincial Superior of the Camillian Province of Rome,*

*Reverend Fr. Paul Ouedraogo, the Vice-Provincial Superior of Burkina Faso (etymology: 'land of integral men'),*

*Esteemed major Superiors of the Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Delegations of the Order, present here for our meeting,*

*Dear sisters Daughters of St. Camillus who share with us the Samaritan service of caring for the sick, the elderly and the poor,*

*Dearest brothers and sisters all!*

This evening we are taking part, as witnesses, in a historic event for this Christian community, for our Camillian Order, and – I believe – for the diocesan church of Ouagadougou.

We are celebrating with joy and gratitude the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first Italian Camillian missionaries: Fr. Pasqualino Del Zingaro, Fr. Fernando D'Urbano and Fr. Gaetano De Sanctis. They arrived in the year 1966 in response to an invitation of the then Archbishop of Ouagadougou, Msgr. Paul Zoungrana, the titular Cardinal of the Basilica of St. Camillus of Rome. Today we are celebrating the fiftieth year of the presence of the Camillians, which has always been – and must always be! – a Samaritan and merciful presence at the side of the sick in the complex world of health and health care.

This celebration also provides a context in a solemn way for the canonical move of the Camillian Vice-Province of Burkina Faso to the status of being today an already large religious Province! This is the first Camillian Province in the land of Africa and the second largest in terms of numbers of religious with its 119 members (novices, temporary professed, religious who are priests and religious who are brothers).

We are engaging in this celebration in the ecclesial context of the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy which was called by Pope Francis (2015-2016) and we are still going through the healthy provocations that come from the celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life, in which we are especially provoked and called to 'wake up the world'!

'You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also *a great history still to be accomplished!* Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things' (post-synodal exhortation *Vita Consecrata* n. 110). Retrieving and deepening this quotation, Pope Francis outlined the history of every institute and every consecrated person, which is made up of the past, the present and the future,

inviting us to ‘look at the past with gratitude...to live the present with passion (and for we Camillians to serve with Samaritan compassion)...and to embrace the future with hope’.

The memory of your fifty years of life and service spurs us to thank God for the good that has been done. This is a history on which you are invited to base yourselves in order to ‘live the present with passion’, as Pope Francis says, and I would say in order to ‘live the present with Samaritan passion and compassion’. This is a matter of ‘listen[ing] attentively to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today, to implement ever more fully the essential aspects of our consecrated life....open to being challenged by the Gospel... the “manual” for our daily living and the decisions we are called to make...Jesus asks us to practice it, to put his words into effect in our lives...Living the present with passion means becoming “experts in communion”, “witnesses and architects of the ‘plan for unity’ which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design”...we are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters’.

The Pope invites us to embrace the future with hope: in our Camillian Project, as well, it is emphasised that ‘our trusting openness to the future, and even more our tenacious commitment in the present, spring from an act of faith in the ongoing contemporary relevance of the Camillian charism. Faith moves mountains (Mt 17:20) and hope pushes towards ever higher goals and makes us journey towards summits (cf. *The Camillian Project, second part*).

‘This hope is not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust (cf. 2 *Tim* 1:2), the One for whom “nothing is impossible” (*Lk* 1:37). This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that he can still do great things with us’ (*Apostolic Letter of the Holy Father Francis to All Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, I, 3).

A spiritual life committed and lived in the Spirit and the Truth will nurture your and our hope in an increasingly renewed awareness of, and commitment to, an authentic, tenacious and decisive ‘missionary impetus’ to be religious and a religious community ‘going outwards’, towards the ‘existential outskirts’ but also the ‘geographical’ outskirts of humanity.

Our Constitution is an ongoing source that nourishes our spirituality and takes us back to faithfulness to our charism: ‘St. Camillus, himself a recipient of mercy and tempered by the experience of suffering, following the example and teaching of the merciful Christ, was called by God to assist the sick and to teach others how to serve them’ (n. 8).

‘The Church has acknowledged in St. Camillus and his Order the charism of mercy towards the sick and has seen in it the source of our mission, defining the work of the Fonder as “a new school of charity”’ (n. 9).

‘By the promotion of health, the treatment of disease and the relief of pain, we cooperate in the work of God the creator, we glorify God in the human body and express our faith in the resurrection’ (n. 45).

Gratitude, passion and hope must nourish our journey which should be:

- *ad-intra* in our communities, searching for a *unity* – which is not uniformity! – that is always inclusive, that embraces diversity, different opinions, our divergences; that commits us to being *one-for-the other* and not *one-against-the other*; and that increases in us a sense of belonging to the Order, our spirit of being a family, in trust and communion around the essential dimension of consecrated life, spiritual life and ministerial life.
- *ad-extra* in order to be courageous in *mission*, in order to live in a permanent way our Camillian vocation in a state of ‘exodus’, of going outwards, pushed by the urgent need for Samaritan charity,

in line with a logic of responsible cooperation with the initiatives of the Church, of the Order and of your religious Province!