

**LETTER FROM THE GENERAL SUPERIOR OF THE ORDER  
TO THE CAMILLIAN DELEGATION OF THE U.S.A.**

*Second Pastoral Visit, Milwaukee, October 19-24, 2017*

***Dear Fr. Pedro Tramontin, MI***

Provincial Delegate of the Camillian Delegation of the USA/the Camillian Province of Brazil

***Council members and confreres of the Camillian Delegation of the USA***

Health and peace in the risen Lord, the reason for hope in our lives!

Dear confreres of the Camillian life!

In this message I would like to briefly touch on three main issues related to our Camillian life in the USA: a) some memories of my personal relationship with the Camillians in the USA since the early 1980s; b) the Saint Camillus Campus which is going through a major transformation and expansion; and b) the new house of the community which is a symbol of a new start for the Camillians in this country.

**1. Going back to some precious memories of my life and the current presence of the general government in the life of the Delegation**

The wonderful moments that we had together recently on the occasion of the second pastoral visit to your Camillian Delegation of the USA on October 19-24/17 are still vivid in my memory.

For me, this visit was like going home after a long period of absence. I feel particularly linked to all of you, with strong bonds of belonging to this community since the early 1980s when I went to your country from Brazil to study clinical pastoral education (1982-83/1985-86). Since then I have regularly visited over the years, once when I worked as a chaplain to update my knowledge in pastoral care and bioethics. This long journey of thirty-five years in terms of time, of mutual friendship, culminated with the process of the official attachment, by the general government of the Order, of the Camillian Delegation of the USA to the Camillian Province of Brazil at Easter 2011 when I was Provincial Superior, on the Brazilian side, and Richard O'Donnell was the General Delegate of the Delegation of the USA.

In this fraternal letter I would like to start by thanking you all for the wonderful hospitality that you offered to me and also to Fr. Aris de Miranda, the member of the General Consulta responsible for Camillian Ministry who stayed recently in your community for two precious months (July 20-September 23, 2017) for the "Mission Appeal" which involved: a) promoting the mission of the Order, especially of the SOS Doctors, a branch of the **CADIS** – the Camillian Disaster International Service; and b) campaigning to raise funds for the projects of CADIS.

At that time, CADIS USA visited 14 parishes throughout the country. In this mission Fr. Aris was helped by Fr. Evan Villanueva, a Camillian from the Province of the Philippines.

Fr. Villanueva during his stay in the USA preached at a retreat of one week for the Camillian Delegation. On September 19 Fr. Aris, on behalf of the general government of the Order, and Fr. Pedro, visited the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (California) in response to an invitation to the Camillians to open a new Camillian community in that archdiocese. The dialogue and negotiations are going ahead, with the prospect of the establishment of a new community in the Church by 2020.

## 2. The Saint Camillus Campus: growing and expanding its service to the community

During the time of my visit I had the privilege of blessing the new house of the Camillian Delegation of the USA (20 units/apartments) and the new building of Assisted Living (24 Units) and Memory Care (48 units/apartments), which is in its final phase of completion. This house of the religious community is one of the most beautiful houses of the entire Order. These two new buildings, with a third, the Jesuit retirement house which has 49 apartments which are almost completed, are all aligned on Wisconsin Avenue and constitute **phase I** of the project of expansion of the St. Camillus Campus, with an estimated investment of 57 million US\$. **Phase II of this project** of expansion of the Campus is at the final phase of obtaining the required approvals and permissions from the local authorities and the City of Wauwatosa. This phase consists of the **East Tower**, a building 18 floors high with 169 units for independent living. If everything goes well, without any surprises, as is expected, the construction of this tower will start in mid-2018 and will be finished by the autumn of 2020. This East Tower will be built in the place of the original building of the Saint Camillus hospital (built in 1936 and later adapted to being a nursing home) which will be demolished. The investments in this **phase II** are estimated at 130 million US\$. Hitherto, 64 units out of 169 units have already been pre-sold.

Along with this fantastic expansion of the Campus, the Saint Camillus Vision Statement was recently updated: “St. Camillus will become a nationally recognized life plan community by achieving the highest levels of healthcare quality; sharing knowledge and best practices; and delivering exceptional experiences to help individuals achieve their life goals”.

Tagline: Tradition, Compassion. Innovation.

**Tradition** – In the tradition of our founder, the St. Camillus community provides exceptional experiences honoring an individual’s sacredness and dignity.

**Compassion** – We offer health, comfort, hope and meaning by respecting each person’s innate dignity, unique needs, and God-given rights.

**Innovation** – We strive to become the center of new knowledge and to adopt best practices in order to help individuals attain their life goals and holistic well-being.

At the present time, the St. Camillus community serves about 890 individuals through various services (311: home care; 316: Independent Living; 156: Assisted Living including 58 Jesuits; 35 in Memory Care; 54 in our Skilled Nursing; and 18 in the Home Hospice program). Today we have 550 employees in the Campus – professionals with several specializations.

During my short stay in the USA, in addition to the blessing of the new buildings, I had a meeting with the Delegate and Council members; celebrated the Eucharist for the Lay Camillian Family – on this occasion Fr. Richard O’Donnell, as Spiritual Assistant, admitted 17 new members; had a meeting with the CEO and other leaders of the St. Camillus Project; had individual meetings with religious who asked for such meetings; and visited the Camillian Cemetery in Baraboo, known as “Duward’s Glen”, in a rural area near Madison, the Capital of the State of Wisconsin, 130 kilometers from Milwaukee.

I was reminded that in this cemetery a former Superior General of our Order is buried, Fr. Charles Mansfield. In this place until some years ago there was a Camillian Community and in the early days of the Camillians in the USA this was the location of the novitiate. Recently it was transformed into a retreat center and sold.

## 2. What is the future of the Camillians in the USA? An intercultural community!

As I have observed in this letter, the administrative and ministerial activities at the Saint Camillus Campus are undergoing a giant process of innovation, transformation and expansion. This is very well planned at all levels, for competent professionals, with the dedication of many Camillians.

We must nurture this same courage and enthusiasm in our hearts with the possibility of new members and vocations in our community. It is obvious that there is no future for us in the USA if we are not able to attract new members to our charism and our Order. From this point of view, opening a second community in the USA in Los Angeles in the near future, with the objective of attracting Camillian vocations, is an initiative that we must look to with enthusiasm and hope. Despite the fact that we Camillians are so few in the USA, we are no longer talking about dying but, rather, about the possibility of growing!

I would like to remind all of you of the words that I uttered on the occasion of the blessing of the new house of the Community: “I pray and wish from the bottom of my heart that this new house may be a new sign of a new rebirth, a new beginning for the Camillians in this country. A religious community without a place for its members to live and pray together is like a human body without a heart.” How wonderful and meaningful for me it was to be together with you sharing the Eucharistic prayers and having meals around a single table! This is just a dream that happily became reality! A little “miracle” I would venture to say!

Another very important aspect of this community is its **multi-cultural dimension**. We have Camillians from North America and from several different cultures and nations of the Camillian geography of the world: Brazil, the Philippines, Nigeria, India, Italy, among others. This brings many blessings of learning from one another in living together but also some hard challenges that we must face up to with courage and humility. We must not repeat some mistakes of the past, connected with a very dangerous mentality called **ethnocentrism**. In this ideology we have two classes of individuals: those that belong to a culture that is considered superior and those that belong to another that is seen as inferior. This is an ideology that considers one’s cultural values as being always being superior to those of others and in this view one is always ready to judge, before having an attitude of humble listening, of trying to understand what is different in our confreres of other cultures. We are all together, united in one charism, not because of our cultural values but because of the Gospel and our Camillian idealism. In this sense, first of all we are Camillians and then we are Brazilians, North-Americans, Italians... To build unity in diversity is the very core of the challenge that we have ahead of us. Traditionally, what happened was an attempt **to achieve uniformity** in missions in this field of the encounter of different cultures. The result was simply disastrous. Today, as religious persons, in order to live together in a joyous and peaceful way we need to acquire “**intercultural competency**”. The starting point is to learn how to listen, respect and tolerate the different. We will then be surprised by the “graces of the spirit”, as in Pentecost!

Another aspect that we should pay attention to as regards the community at the present time is the **sense of belonging** of its members. We should clarify and verify this aspect in order to know the exact numbers **we can count on** in terms of a firm commitment to the growth of the Delegation. Members that behave as mere tourists, or put their individual plans before the community’s values, must be confronted and redirected to their original Provinces, without any delay.

“Where is your foot, there must be your heart”: this was repeated many times at our last meeting of the Major Superiors of the Order (Roma, June/2017) during the discussion of the document drawn up by the general government of the Order on the implementation of the guidelines for inter-Provincial cooperation.

Finally, I ask for God’s blessings and the protection of our Mother of Health and our beloved Saint Camillus de Lellis in achieving a successful completion of all these projects of the Camillian Delegation of the USA.

Fraternally yours in Christ,  
Rome, October 29, 2017

*Fr. Leocir Pessini, MI*  
*Superior General*