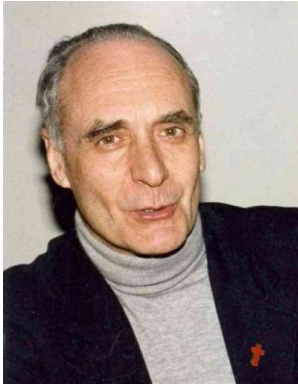


## Brother GIOVANNI BATTISTA STELLA

1931-2018



Giovanni Battista Stella was born on 13 December 1931 in Bolzano Vicentino (VI), to his father Giuseppe and his mother Orsola Benetti. He entered the apostolic school of Villa Visconta in Besana B.za (MI) on 14 September 1942. As an aspirant 'brother', starting on 30 August 1945 he spent a year at S. Sisto di Poviglio (RE), a provisional location; he then went to Mottinello in Rossano Veneto (VI) and for a few months he was in Cervia. On 24 December 1948 Giovanni officially began his postulancy at Cremona with the bestowal upon him of the Camillian red cross. On 5 March 1949 he was sent to the hospital of Verona B.go Trento, being responsible for housework. These frequent changes can be explained by the fact that the aspirant brothers were already given domestic service to do when they were going through their years of formation. They thus learned immediately the lesson of elbow grease and manual work. After the term prescribed by the postulancy, on 14 July 1949 he entered the novitiate in Verona, in the house of S. Giuliano. On 15 July 1950, a Holy Year, he made his religious profession of vows and at the end of the required three years he immediately made his perpetual profession – the date was 15 July 1953 and the place was Venice Alberoni, in front of the Provincial Superior, Fr. Francesco Ivaldi.

On 3 August 1950 he went to Venice Lido to the health-care institution of Alberoni. On 19 October 1955 he moved to Cremona to go to the *Scuola Convitto* for Professional Nurses: he received his diploma on 20 June 1957. On 5 October 1957 he was sent to the surgery department of the St. Camillus Nursing Home in Milan, his new community.

After ten years, on 20 June 1967, he was sent as a nurse to the third floor of the house of Venice Alberoni. On 6 July 1969 he was awarded the diploma of charge nurse at the St. Joseph Nursing Home in Milan, after being a commuter travelling between Venice and Milan. With this qualification, he was made a member of the staff of the newly-founded St. Pius X Nursing Home of Milan, to which he was transferred on 31 October 1969. He would spend a long period in Milan which was interrupted only once, in 1980, to respond to a humanitarian emergency: three months in Bangkok (Thailand) in the refugee camps for refugees from the war in Laos.

On 5 January 1981 Br. Giovanni was sent to the town of Predappio (FO) in Romagna as a nurse in the health-care institution for the mentally ill. After two years, on 21 March 1983, he returned to the St. Camillus Nursing Home of Cremona as charge nurse and in October 1984 he was appointed house councillor. On 4 December 1992 he went again to Venice Alberoni but he did not stay there a long time because on 26 October 1993 he was called back to Predappio as the Superior. At the end of two three-year periods, on 13 August 1998 he went back to Alberoni as department head.

On 13 September 2001, at the venerable age of seventy, Br. Giovanni wanted to make himself useful again and managed in Mottinello in Rossano Veneto to engage in the service of being a voluntary nurse in people's homes and for his confreres who had retired. There, as well, he was appointed the house councillor and on 14 August 2010 he was placed in the ministry of acolytes by the Provincial Superior, Fr. Paleari. Thus it was that towards the end of his Camillian ministry he also managed to perform a role involving spiritual assistance, a role that had been deep in his heart from a very early age.

Finally, on 8 June 2016, he went to the house of Capriate S. Gervasio (BG) for his greatly deserved retirement. However, he tried to make himself useful by performing small domestic tasks and he did not disdain to make a trip now and then to the place of his birth to visit his family relatives. It was during the last of these trips that his back gave way in an alarming way. This was in the middle of November and he was aware of the fact. The pain that he had to endure convinced him that he needed complete care at the RSA, to which he was moved on 9 December 2017. Suddenly, when there had been no previous signs of this, he had a fatal heart attack during supper in the evening of 11 January 2018.

The life curriculum of Br. Giovanni enables us very much to understand why the brothers of the Order of Camillians have a rougher pathway than that of the candidates for the priesthood, starting with the stage of initial formation and then continuing during their ministry. They have a 'grassroots' formation, bending their backs, using their arms, taking care of people's health, and adapting themselves to widely differing situations. This, in essential terms, was the strategy in which St. Camillus believed: his principal criterion was practice more than grammar; the heart before the mind. Br. Giovanni had a gentlemanly and courteous character but was demanding in his roles of responsibility. He had a special devotion to Our Lady and he was devoted and punctual at times of prayer. He had a special respect for the authority of a Superior, from whom he expected care and concern for his confreres, in particular those most in difficulty or suffering illness.

May the heavenly Father – who never forgets His children – welcome him into His open arms amongst His chosen!