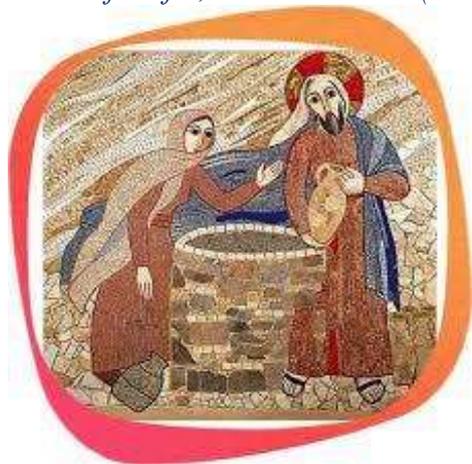


The Camillian Charismatic Family Day of Spirituality

By Fr. Patrizio SCIADINI OCD

'God is faithful, let us trust him' (St. Camillus)



During these days of your meeting you will listen to many papers that will help you at the level of pastoral care and learning in your mission near to the sick. This day of spirituality is not concerned so much with the doctrinal dimension as with applying ourselves to listening to the Word of God which provokes us to address today's challenges and to implement the message of Jesus who came to heal the whole of the human person: the spirit, the heart and the body. Let us ask the Lord to send us his light for this meeting of listening to God who loves us. The simple methodology that I will use is the following: we will engage in five minutes of silent and loving personal reading of the text that is the subject of our meditation. This evening we will address the text of the **Samaritan woman**:

'Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself was not baptizing, just his disciples), he left Judea and returned to Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?"

(For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (The woman) said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband."

Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you." At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?" They went out of the town and came to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months the harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already-receiving his payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work."

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the saviour of the world" (Jn 4:1-42).

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND THE SAMARITAN: HEART AND HANDS TOGETHER

I thank my brother and long-standing friend, Fr. Leo Pessini, a Camillian, and Sr. Zelia Andrighetti, a woman Camillian, my sister and long-standing friend, for their invitation to spend a day with the Camillian Charismatic Family and to engage in a meditation together on two icons of the New Testament: the *Samaritan woman* (Jn 4) and the *Samaritan* (Lk 10).

These two evangelical texts have always had a doctrinal-practical force in the life of the Church, both in pastoral care and in spirituality. One cannot read these evangelical texts without feeling that one is on a JOURNEY searching for the true water hidden at the bottom of the well or without searching for the suffering face of Jesus hidden in the SICK MAN of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Gospel is not a 'museum' of paintings that are there to be admired; nor is it a 'cemetery' where we go to visit what has been. Instead, it is a 'living garden' where we contemplate and update our lives.

The Word of God must renew us, update us, in our lives and mission and in pastoral care, and at the same time we feel that we ourselves are engaged in a PERSONAL EXPERIENCE of the truth of the Word of God that is a two-edged sword...

'Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help' (Heb 4:12-16).

We cannot be disciples and missionaries of Jesus with spirituality and without works. The Gospel does not save us because we learn it by heart or because we achieve a fine and innovative exegesis but because it becomes our lives. The saints – as we are reminded by the post-synodal document in the Word of

God, *Domini Verbi* – are the finest exegesis of the Gospel there is. Without doubt, the Camillian men and women saints, because *their educator* was St. Camillus, experienced the search for the living God at the well of Samaria, and for God suffering in brothers and sisters who ran into brigands and were left for dead at the side of the road of life.

I would like to cite Teresa of Avila, a doctor of the Church and a mystic, who in her highest contemplation does not listen to God who says to her – the Lord wants more prayers – but, instead, listens to what is said to her: **THE LORD WANTS WORKS...**

Works lead to prayer and prayer is the source of works. I believe that we can understand the words of Saint Camillus – more heart in those hands – as more prayer to have sensitivity in our hands to attend to the sick.

THE FIRST MEDITATION

THE PARABLE OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

This evening, as the beginning of our meeting, we want to go where Jesus is waiting for us, sitting down and tired at the side of the well of Samaria. At the end of this short paper of mine each person present will receive a photocopy of the evangelical text on the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-42).

In this paper I will use the art of philosophy, but also of theology, that we call MAIEUTICS, that is to say contribution, where each one of us looks for what they need, what they emphasise, what for THEM IS IMPORTANT, so as to then put TOGETHER, PLAN and WALK TOGETHER FOR NEW PATHWAYS.

Accompanying Jesus on his travels that are not travels for tourism but apostolic and missionary travels is a unique happiness. We feel involved; we experience the growth of our love for Christ. After more than two-thousand years we live with the memory of this journey where Jesus teaches us what we should do and how we should do it.

St. John the Evangelist is very attentive to the smallest details which help us to achieve a deeper reading of life. Already old, he reads anew, sees again, remembers, with different eyes and a different heart, his personal encounter with Jesus and encounters of Jesus with others at which he was present, and NOW HE READS ANEW AND REMEMBERS with new eyes and a new heart.

Let us leave linguistic and contextual exegesis to the specialists: we will draw near to the text with the eyes of our heart and of love.

I like to call the whole of the meeting with the anonymous rejected SAMARITAN WOMAN who lives her life on the margins of society a GREAT PARABLE OF LIFE at whose school we learn to know through new pathways how to free ourselves from our past and to accept truth and to communicate it to other people.

JESUS LEFT JUDEA...AND RETURNED TO GALILEE (Jn 4:4)

This observation of the evangelist is important – it is not only an expression of the nomadism of Jesus: it is also an expression of the fact that Jesus does not want to be the centre of attention. He knows that his mission is to proclaim the good news, to work signs of salvation which, when accepted, open up the space of the Kingdom of God.

He returns to Galilee where the prophet in his own homeland will not be accepted, but also in our houses, communities, workplaces; even if we are ‘REJECTED’ we must proclaim the truth; we live in a world of FLIGHT, looking for those who applaud us, who recognise our good qualities, who supports us. The fear of REJECTION makes us retreat from our mission.

In this return to Galilee, Jesus must pass PROVIDENTIALLY through Samaria...all of our journeys are providential. The Lord waits for us, to meet us and to carry out a mission through us. John remembers the WELL OF JACOB, the source of life, the gift of the Patriarch to his son Joseph. Why this detail? Is this not perhaps to remind us that everything is a gift that we receive and that we must give to other people? The time has come to sit at the well of our charism, which we have received but which is not ours and which we

must pass on to others, where everyone can drink with the abundance of the living Water. Those who drink the Water from the spring that is Christ not only will never be thirsty again but will also themselves be a river of living water for everyone.

***JESUS, TIRED FROM HIS JOURNEY, SAT DOWN THERE AT THE WELL (Jn 4:6).
THE SAMARITAN WOMAN***

Jesus is tired and alone at Jacob's Well; a woman looking for water, a dialogue; water that is asked for, water that is given, a conversion, a mission.

This is the only time in the Gospels – it seems to me – where we learn that JESUS WAS TIRED BECAUSE OF A JOURNEY...He first arrives at the well, then he sits down, and he waits for us. He does not want people near to him; this is a PERSONAL ENCOUNTER. All of the disciples go into the local town to buy food; do they go on their own or is it Jesus who sends them? Why does he not want to have witnesses to his meeting with the woman he is waiting for? Here we have Jesus's sensitivity towards sinners, the sick; in a world in which privacy has been lost; this small pastoral aspect of intimacy is beautiful. Jesus does not want propaganda about what he does: it is heart to heart; eyes to eyes.

It is twelve o'clock. The fullness of time.

In life each one of us has a 'midday' where God is waiting for us, to speak to us, to ask us, to love us. Discover this evening: what is your midday? What is the well where Jesus is waiting for you? We can never begin the journey of conversion if we do not allow ourselves to be challenged by Jesus, who asks us to drink...and we challenge Jesus himself...but if there is openness and dialogue, God will always win. This is the story of the search for God. When man closes himself, God loses, and man loses even more. God never tires of knocking at our door.

THE INITIATIVE OF JESUS...OF LOVE

The initiative always starts with who loves most...and nobody can love more than God and for this reason the initiative always starts with Him. We look for Him. Before we look for Him, He looks for us and is waiting for us.

GIVE ME A DRINK...

The fathers of the Church, mystics, people who read the Bible for recreational purposes as well, have felt attracted, moved and amazed by that request of Jesus: "Give me a drink"!...This is a request that demonstrates all of his frail humanity and all of the power of his divinity.

THE SUPPLICANT JESUS...

Not only do we supplicate the love of God – God also supplicates our love; the symbol of love is thirst and hunger which are never quenched or sated. These are harsh realities that run like an 'underground river' through Holy Scripture; we hunger and thirst for God and God hungers and thirsts for us (see Psalms 62 and 42).

GIVE ME A DRINK...

This request of Jesus brings out his humanity, his need. Today on our journey of life from each person that we encounter we ask something and they ask something from us. Only in the gift of reciprocity can one fill the emptiness of the heart and life.

"Give me a drink" (Jn 4:7): perhaps in order to understand this request of Jesus we must move to being under the cross of Christ on Calvary where Jesus makes another request: 'I AM THIRSTY (Jn 19:28). The thirst to achieve, for ever and totally, the will of the Father to save humanity.

In front of this request that Jesus makes to the Samaritan woman we are amazed, and we ask how he, the Lord, can ask us for a drink and how he can be thirsty.

JESUS AND MAN CHALLENGE EACH OTHER ALWAYS

““If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (Jn 4:10). This is the challenge of Jesus, his promise, a water that does not quench once but quenches for ever.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (Jn 4:11-12)

The well is deep, about thirty metres or more, and you do not have a bucket...you are unable to draw water, you do not have an instrument; I have the bucket. But what is the bucket?

Our self-sufficiency, our excessive confidence in ourselves, in pride, in science, in instruments, in bank accounts, in works, in power...All of this is our large bucket which impedes us from believing and from allowing ourselves to be led by the power of the providence of God.

JESUS WINS WITH GOODNESS (Jn 4:13-14)

One never wins with self-sufficiency: one wins with love, goodness, tenderness. How amazing is the sensitivity with which Jesus enters the heart, does not break the door down, does not attack; he adopts a healthy sense of humour that does not wound; he clearly knows where he wants to go. The water that he offers is another water, it is a spring, a spring that gushes forth, that makes us become ourselves, a source for eternal life...

What does the woman understand? Nothing about the mystery that is involved: she understands only the water; she perceives that there will be a solution to the problem of having to be exposed every day to the indiscreet eyes of criticism, to the malicious judgements of those who see her as a woman without morality.

She calls him: “Sir, give me this water” (Jn 4:15).

THE MASK FALLS (Jn 4:16)

Masks fall on their own before the Truth. With sensitivity Jesus unmasks the Samaritan woman who does not feel offended but speaks the truth. She is looking for a husband. It is amusing to read the imaginative exegetic and spiritual interpretations of the fathers of the Church...let us leave them to the good will of each individual.

What matters is that in life we are ourselves able to mirror ourselves in God and mission.

Perhaps we live in realities that are overly camouflaged, with plastic that seeks to conceal our frailty. Before God the masks fall one by one, and only in this way can Jesus give us the living water that will make burst forth in us rivers of living water that will make fertile the deserts of humanity today.

In which deserts do we encounter each other? I would like to identify only some of them:

1. The desert of vocations: not by the hand of works for works but of credible witnesses to mission and the witness of ‘worshippers’ whom the Father looks for in spirit and truth...

2. The desert of fraternal life: this life should not be stained by the search for status and power but, rather, marked by LIVING TOGETHER, BUILDING TOGETHER, WALKING TOGETHER. Without this, we fall into individualism and the desert of not listening.

3. The desert of a structural immobility, of immobility as regards formation and the spirit. New wineskins for new wine are lacking. It is not enough for the Pope and the Church to urge us forward with words: the courage to begin is lacking.

4. The desert of prophecy: there is an absence of prophets who disobey the rules and launch themselves amidst the people, like the Samaritan woman who is no longer afraid and goes to proclaim the discovery of the prophet JESUS.

What are the masks of our Order. Of our communities? Of our works? And my masks which must fall in the encounter with Jesus?

I AM HE, THE ONE WHO IS SPEAKING TO YOU (Jn 4:26)

We know that in the gospel of John the revelation of Jesus with the words I AM HE take on a special importance...the good shepherd...I am the door...I am the path...the truth...life...I am the vine...I am the teacher...

We can only know Jesus if he reveals himself personally; it is not we who say it is him but he who tells us who he is, what his mission is. To listen to Jesus is the secret by which to know him, to love him, to serve him and to proclaim him.

The revelation of Jesus does not take place immediately. Jesus prepares the heart of the Samaritan woman so that she can welcome him with generosity to free herself from her 'five husbands', who are the idols that oppress us and prevent us from having true life. They are the idols that provoke us, as Pope Francis says in his Message for the twenty-seventh World Day of the Sick of this year: 'Amid today's culture of waste and indifference, I would point out that "gift" is the category best suited to challenging today's individualism and social fragmentation, while at the same time promoting new relationships and means of cooperation between peoples and cultures'.

Dialogue, which is a pre-condition of giving, opens up relational spaces of human growth and development that can break the consolidated schemata of the exercise of power of society. A 'gift' is not to be identified with the action of giving a present because it can only take place when there is self-giving; it cannot be reduced to the mere transfer of a property or some objects. It is different from giving a present because it contains self-giving and assumes the wish to establish a tie. A 'gift', therefore, is first of all mutual recognition, which is the indispensable character of a social tie. In a 'gift' there is the reflection of the love of God which culminates in the incarnation of the Son Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Only when one welcomes the Lord Jesus, the living water, are we able to promote the culture of giving and free giving. Pope Francis in the same Message says: 'I urge everyone, at every level, to promote the culture of generosity and of gift, which is indispensable for overcoming the culture of profit and waste. Catholic healthcare institutions must not fall into the trap of simply running a business; they must be concerned with personal care more than profit. We know that health is relational, dependent on interaction with others, and requiring trust, friendship and solidarity. It is a treasure that can be enjoyed fully only when it is shared. The joy of generous giving is a barometer of the health of a Christian'.

It is a personal encounter, before being a collective one, a dialogue before being an evasive discourse.

I AM HE, THE ONE WHO IS SPEAKING TO YOU

Perhaps we have lost, I have lost, the joy of listening to Jesus who speaks with me; perhaps I think that he speaks for other people. And as long as we think that he speaks for other people we will never CONVERT.

WHO ENCOUNTERS JESUS FORGETS THE BUCKET (Jn 4:28)

It is not vows that make us forget things, our interests, projects or personal dreams: only the encounter with Jesus makes us forget the bucket and run to proclaim our discovery of he who is Saviour, Prophet, Teacher...all for us. When Camillus met Jesus, he forgot the bucket of money, of pleasure, of cards, of gambling, of promotion and the project of being someone, and he made himself a servant for the DISCARDED, THE LAST...

This is what all the saints have done, and Jesus, the Word made flesh, did it in particular, he who forgot the bucket of his will to eat the bread and drink the water of the will of the Father (cf. Jn 4:34-35) which will be fulfilled in Matthew 25: I was hungry, thirsty, cold, I was sick...and you helped me.

THE TRUE APOSTOLATE: BEARING WITNESS TO JOY. COME AND SEE (Jn 4:29)

The Samaritan Woman with her joy of discovering Jesus, Prophet, Messiah, runs to proclaim him to everyone and everyone is amazed. The Latin word is significant: '*Mitabantur*'. A question arises that I would like to put to you and put to myself: have we amazed somebody with our discovery of Jesus, with our proclaiming? Has someone been deeply struck not with our arguments, our technology, our professionalism, or our status, but because we said: COME AND SEE HE WHO TOLD ME EVERYTHING THAT I HAVE DONE?

This is our true apostolate: to provoke wonder in others through our witness, through the centrality of the person of Christ in our lives!

Teresa of the Child Jesus, Camillus, Tezza and Vannini may have known little about theology, about technology, but they amazed everyone because for them Jesus was not an idea but a living person who proclaimed more with his life than with his words. They were joy wherever they went. Wherever they lived.

GOING TOGETHER. The Samaritan woman was alone when she went to the well to fetch water. Jesus was alone at the well but after their meeting they were together; after an encounter with Jesus there is always someone who will follow him. To see Jesus and the other always united; the other and Jesus are always united.

Religious life is a life of love TOGETHER; it is a gift to Christ and the other from which arises the whole of mission.

Perhaps I am saying something foolish – forgive me. We have to walk together amongst the sick sowing joy, serving, praying, fleeing from administrative jobs and from bank accounts that make our mission burdensome and not very credible. Going back to believing in the BANK OF PROVIDENCE like the great benefactors of history.

Today everyone is LOOKING AT US AS RELIGIOUS, to see how we act, how we speak, but in particular how we reveal the person of Jesus; we are lights on a candelabra and not closed up in administrative offices. We are missionaries, walking in search of men, of women, of children who are DISCARDED in order to restore human dignity to them.

Humanity believes in God if humanity sees Him shine alive in us; this is mission, apostolate. Does the world need hospitals, schools, homes, money, bread and clothes? YES! But first of all, to have all of this, it needs God who moves hearts to act with love and gratitude; if the world encounters God everything will go forward for us; without God we will lack everything.

What man needs is for us to give him God in our holiness. The multiplication of works is a good thing, the multiplication of loaves and fishes, but in the end when they looked for Jesus to make him King, his reply puts us in a state of crisis: Everyone is looking for you. Why are you looking for me? Why did I multiply the loaves! Or why am I the Saviour? He went elsewhere. To proclaim the Gospel...

WE NO LONGER BELIEVE BECAUSE OF YOUR WORD (Jn 4:42)

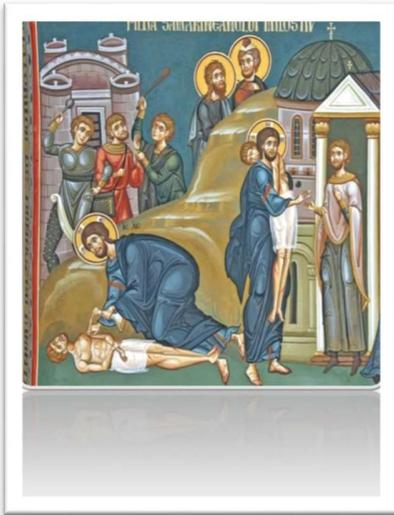
Men and woman religious, everything is proceeding well: we are drawing near to the end of this wonderful text of the Bible about the Samaritan woman. The testimony of the people of Samaria is interesting. They say to the woman with five husbands who was with her sixth husband and had discovered her seventh, Jesus, who meets the wish of all the wishes for the infinite: love, peace...this is the canticle of spousal love, of the human being with God. This is the dream of God to unite us with Him and Him with us.

We do not need your word: we have seen, we believe that this prophet who told you everything that you have done is the Saviour. This is the outcome of mission.

Without encounter with Jesus we can engage in WORKS but we cannot proclaim Jesus; only our personal experience with him makes us his credible witnesses, lights in a humanity of night and non-believers.

THE SECOND MEDITATION

THE PARABLE OF THE SAMARITAN



Let us return to our journey not with the eyes of an exegetic study but with the eyes of love that becomes mercy in the person of the Son greatly loved by the Father: ‘This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased: LISTEN TO HIM’

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS MERCY AND MERCY WAS THE FACE OF GOD AND MERCY WAS GOD AND MERCY BECAME FLESH AND CAME TO DWELL AMONGST US AND WE SAW IT...

Mercy, even if it includes the famous works of corporal and spiritual Mercy, goes beyond them and launches us into the Heart of God who is defined as compassionate and merciful, slow in anger and full of tenderness towards man who bears in his flesh and spirit wounds that bleed if they are not attended to with redemptive love.

Without doubt, in order to have an effective understanding of the parable of Luke we should go through Holy Scripture and stop to listen to the cry of the man wounded by pain who now has only God to listen to him.

The most dramatic page of this pain that is dry pain confined to the throat, which becomes dialogue and obliged the God of mercy to come down to be with humanity, is Exodus 3:7: ‘I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their suffering’.

Our God does not remain far from those who suffer. He takes part, He lives with us, He walks with us, He constructs history with us in joy, in hope and in pain. It is mercy that moves our inner selves, makes us cry, and makes us rejoice when the wound of pain has been healed.

The most humanising attribute of God and the attribute that is most revealed in Jesus is mercy, which is care and forgiveness, which touches the wholeness and totality of being, which reaches the ‘marrow’ of our selves.

The parable of the Samaritan is the best theological tract there is of an ANTHROPOLOGY by which Jesus demonstrates what the importance of the human person is. What most compromises human co-existence is not discussing what the ‘first commandment’ is (this is to be encountered in Holy Scripture) but how to defeat the worst sin. And the worst evil is indifference towards the suffering of other people which kills compassion and mercy.

Man is a ‘wounded’ being, left at the side of the road, who needs to be looked after, listened to, cared for medically, taken to the inn of mercy – the community, the Church.

A HISTORICISED pain in concrete man who lives his dramas of immense wounds that change according to the contexts in which he lives. Jesus VOLUNTARILY places himself against the system that gives preference to the OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW AND NOT MERCY (the priest, the Levite). ‘Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So

likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side' (Lk 10:31-32).

In this parable, we are involved in the reality of mercy which is the approach of the Samaritan which we will see more intensely, but at the same time we are the observers of ANTI-MERCY which is expressed in observance of the law but also in indifference to the suffering of other people.

THE CHURCH IS THE HOSPITAL OF MERCY

On a number of occasions Pope Francis has spoken about the Church as a 'FIELD HOSPITAL'.

The Church is the setting of the wounded man who is at the side of the road; his race, his religion, do not matter. What matters is that he is a wounded person, a man left 'half-dead' who is waiting to be helped by others.

Pope Francis coined a new phrase for a reality that is not new. An 'outgoing Church', which is always the Church, to be such, must be outgoing, in the same way as MERCY has come from the Heart of God, so as to travel down our roads and bring us comfort and love.

A Church that must move out of its INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTER, JUST AS WE MUST MOVE OUT OF OUR INSTITUTIONS, and begin our journey, with a heart that pours out mercy and tenderness towards those who are wounded.

The Church has a HISTORICISATION OF THE CRY OF THE WOUNDED that changes down the centuries, with places, with epochs, just as there also different attackers who seek to attack a person and leave him half-dead; new forms of clericalism, of 'Phariseeism', that passes by chance along the same road and pretends not to see; it does not want to get its hands or clothes dirty...

WHO ARE THE NEW WOUNDED PEOPLE AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD?

There can be no doubt that we must produce an X-ray of humanity in order to understand the new wounds and the new wounded people who have been left half-dead at the side of the road that goes down towards Jerusalem and rises from Jerusalem. The wounds of what we call the world of the new poverty and the new colonisation that goes from Africa to Asia to Latin America...brings with it human wounds that are different from those in Europe and North America which are closed up in their own overbearing ways and thirsty for a new human and religious colonisation.

We, the Church, the followers of the merciful Christ, must move out of ourselves and go where the cry of human loneliness is strongest, to existential and also material fringes where man is wounded, deprived of his dignity. The new wounded people are refugees and migrants who are exploited, beaten in new concentration camps, who die in bucket ships in the middle of a sea that by irony is called '*mare nostrum*'...and to whom selfishness does not allow and does not offer a safe haven.

The doctor of the law, the priest, the Levite...circle around theological questions; they are not interested in the lives of those who die: they are interested in the law which defends the rights of the few.

The mission of attending to wounds where they are encountered in culture, in politics, in health care. Wounds of the soul opened by moral and religious subjectivism bleed because of a lack of ideals, because of a lack of faith in the God of mercy who is frequently replaced by the God of money and prosperity who generates the anxiety of consumerism.

If mercy does not rule over personal and collective interests inside and outside the Church, a community of life, EGOCENTRISM will create INDIVIDUALISM which acts to suffocate love for the weakest and frailest.

A PROPHET PROCLAIMS AND DENOUNCES

The atheistic indifferent world applauds works of charity but does not want to change the system that produces misery and poverty.

It is related that the great prophet and father of the poor of Latin America, D. Helder Camara, whom many, like myself, knew personally, said: 'When D. Helder gives bread to the poor he helps with the bank of Providence, everyone says: how GOOD D. Helder is! When D. Helder asks: but why are there so many poor people in the world, and why do we not help them to move out of their poverty? Then they say: D.

Helder is a COMMUNIST!

The PROPHETS OF MERCY HAVE to come together, they have to form the community of the good SAMARITAN, LED BY THE CAMILLIAN FAMILY to denounce the BANDITS, THE ATTACKERS OF TODAY who create victims; to have the courage to denounce acts of oppression; and to offer the pathway of true freedom. We cannot forget the words of Jesus: do not think that I came to bring peace – I came to bring war! A war without weapons that gives through knowledge of dignity, of citizenship, to the human person the right to look for his own pathway.

MERCY WAS MADE FLESH...all of the life of Jesus was nothing else but a canticle of mercy that entered a new way of thinking and acting.

BEING A SAMARITAN

The parable of the Good Samaritan, where Jesus plays the part of a teacher, a Samaritan, a wounded man, the gift of the inn...without doubt leads us to practical conclusions for our spiritual and pastoral lives.

1. The first message that seems to me to be clear from a reading of this text, with the heart of the parable of the Good Samaritan, re-affirms that the action of all those who follow the Word of God, and of Jesus, cannot but lead not only to siding with the poor, in all its expressions, but also, like Saint Camillus, to LOOKING FOR THEM where they have been thrown away, discarded, waiting for someone to take care of them, to love them and to help them. An OUTWARD BOUND Christianity that can only live if it has Mercy that embraces all the being of a person with all its needs.

As has been pointed out, those who have been thrown away and left half-dead at the side of the road have changed, as have their attackers, and the ways in which they are helped has also changed, but this help should always be marked by FREE GIVING AND GIFT, as the Message for the World Day of the Sick for this year of Pope Francis affirms.

2. BEING MERCY. Knowledge of the Gospel is not being distant from the kingdom of God but it is not entering and being in the kingdom of God. What makes us the kingdom of God is practising His Word. Do not be listeners to the Word of God but practitioners of it we are reminded by the apostle James, whom we could define as being the ‘contester of a dietetic or theoretical spirituality, a spirituality of compassion but one without life and without an implementing dynamic’.

Mercy is a beatitude. Pope Francis in *Gaudete et Exsultate* declares: ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will find mercy’. Mercy has two aspects. It involves giving, helping and serving others, but it also includes forgiveness and understanding. Matthew sums it up in one golden rule: “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you” (7:12). The Catechism reminds us that this law is to be applied “in every case”, especially when we are “confronted by situations that make moral judgments less assured and decision difficult”.

Giving and forgiving means reproducing in our lives some small measure of God’s perfection, which gives and forgives superabundantly. For this reason, in the Gospel of Luke we do not hear the words, “Be perfect” (Mt 5:48), but rather, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you” (6:36-38). Luke then adds something not to be overlooked: “The measure you give will be the measure you get back” (6:38). The yardstick we use for understanding and forgiving others will measure the forgiveness we receive. The yardstick we use for giving will measure what we receive. We should never forget this.

Jesus does not say, “Blessed are those who plot revenge”. He calls “blessed” those who forgive and do so “seventy times seven” (Mt 18:22). We need to think of ourselves as an army of the forgiven. All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion. If we approach the Lord with sincerity and listen carefully, there may well be times when we hear his reproach: “Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” (Mt 18:33) Looking and acting with mercy – that is mercy (nn. 80-83). LIVING THIS is a step forward in holiness.

Starting with the letter of Pope Francis for the Year of Mercy, we can say that living mercy has become the *MAGNA CARTA*, the CONSTITUTION of the NEW WAY OF BEING DISCIPLES AND

MISSIONARIES OF JESUS.

I would only like to remember a risk that we religious must avoid: looking for wounded people at the side of the road outside and forgetting about the wounded that are at the side of the road in our communities...where there are people, brothers and sisters, who live at our side and whom, like the priest and the Levite, we pass near to and do not see...who are these wounded men and women?

Consecrated people without joy and hope.

Elderly people who need attention and help.

Vocations in crisis of people who live closed up in their problems.

Consecrated people who live in a kind of practical atheism.

People concerned about their own projects who forget about the charism, the works and the spirituality of their Congregation, etc.

These men and woman are in their turn...left half-dead and need help.

3. A Church, a community of mercy, is **VISIBLE AND PROVOKES PROPHETIC INTEREST AND SETS AN EXAMPLE** because men see our good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven – because you should produce much fruit and abundant fruit...charisms must always bear much fruit, they must be fruitful trees and never decorative plants in the garden of the Church, of the Congregation.

Our credibility comes not from words but from **WORKS**. It is not great works that save us but, rather, works done with love: ‘everything is great when it is done with love’ (Teresa of the Child Jesus).

We are saturated with documents, meetings, letters, words...speaking less and doing more. John of the Cross said ‘*calar e obrar*’, that is to say be silent and act rather than speak.

GO AND DO LIKEWISE (Lk 10:37)

The pedagogy of Jesus is not to provide pre-packaged answers or ready solutions: he sends men out to find them, he puts our hearts into the search, being concerned, and wants us ourselves to give the answer to ourselves. Salvation does not come from God alone – it also comes from us. It is perfect cooperation between the freedom of God, who calls, and the freedom of man, who answers.

Jesus does not say to the doctor of the law ‘think like this’; he says ‘do like this’. Thought that becomes action. Jesus gives back to the doctor of the law the true face of the God of mercy which is to act not only to begin with but until the end. A mercy that ‘**PAYS IN THE FIRST PERSON**’, that accompanies until the full recovery of the wounded person, the abandoned person. Mercy is not an **EMERGENCY UNIT**; it is complete and total assistance.

CONCLUSION

As regards these two texts of the Gospel, in the Samaritan woman we encounter Jesus who awaits the woman and each one of us, perhaps ‘ashamed’ about our sins and for this reason rejected in the Church, in the community and in society. And for this reason we prefer to go to the well of the water of life at midday, in the hope that nobody will see us and rebuke us about our past. It is there that Jesus is waiting for us. Not to rebuke us but to ask us for a drink. And in exchange he will give us the true water that not only fertilises our hearts but also becomes a source of mission. Mission always arises from encounter with God who loves us and once we have experienced His love we are no longer afraid of our past but, instead, run to proclaim Him to others. There are wounds that we cannot expose to the public gaze – we have the courage to reveal them only to those whom we know love us. In the Samaritan woman we must learn to challenge Jesus himself with our certainties represented by the bucket, by individualistic self-sufficiency, by economics, by works, by pride...but the victory always belongs to love. God is always victorious.

In the Samaritan, Jesus represents at one and the same time the law of compassion and mercy but not ritualism. Yet Jesus is also the Good Samaritan who bends down to the suffering of others who are at the side of the road and takes care of them, and who personally made his sacrifice on the cross, for our salvation. The Samaritan is not only a theological text – it is more a narrative and merciful description of how pastoral care in health should be, where sick people are no longer a burden but become a sacrament, a gift of God, so that man does not fall and does not allow his heart to dry up in the desert of indifference. In all the books of

the Bible – the Bible experts will have difficulty in denying this – there are always more sick people than healthy people, more sinful than righteous people: ‘it is not the healthy that need a physician but the sick’.

We cannot forget that where Jesus was defined by the fathers of the Church as the divine physician of souls and bodies, Mary is the mother full of tenderness: in our illnesses she passes by close to us, she comforts us with her maternal touch and smiles at us, taking care of us, as one day St. Teresa of the Child Jesus did. A smile has more power to cure than many medicines!

QUESTIONS

I would like to end this paper with two questions for the work carried out in groups:

1. Which illnesses of the spirit and the body today most attack the dignity of the human person?
2. What can we do as a Church and a Congregation to ensure that the human person rediscovers once again the joy of being in the image of God in a society where the culture of throwing away wants to eliminate suffering through the greatest suffering there is, namely death: assisted suicide, euthanasia, etc...

‘I would like to have a thousand tongues, the ardour of St. Paul and the learning of all the saints to make God known to all creatures...The thought that men do not love God gives me great suffering...Why can I not prevent all the sins of men?’ (*The Spirit of Saint Camillus*).