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IN PREPARATION FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF MAY 2020

**THE HISTORY OF CAMILLIAN SUPERIOR GENERALS AND GENERAL CHAPTERS:
Some Historical Notes and Curiosities!**

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The superior general presides over the government of the entire Order. He has jurisdiction and authority over the provinces, the vice-provinces, the delegations, the houses and the religious (Constitution, 97).

The superior general also consults the provincial superiors, vice-provincials and delegates in matters of major importance which concern the entire Order. If possible once a year and, whenever this is necessary, he shall convene the provincials, vice-provincials and delegates...to address various questions with the general consulta (General Statutes, 79)

The general chapter, wherein resides the supreme collegial authority of the Order, is formed of representatives of the whole Order and thus is a sign of unity in charity (Constitution, 113)

Introduction

We are beginning the preparations for the fifty-ninth General Chapter of the Order of Camillians which we will celebrate starting on 2 May 2020 and whose subject will be ‘Which Camillian Prophecy Today? Peering into the Past and Living in the Present Trying to Serve as Samaritans and Journeying with Hope towards the Future’

The subject of prophecy is once again of great contemporary relevance and appears always new as a challenge for consecrated life today. Let us welcome the invitation of Pope Francis who has repeatedly called our attention to this specific characteristic of consecrated life: prophecy! ‘I hope that you will wake up the world’ because the known characteristic of consecrated life is prophecy. As the Pope urged the Superior Generals: ‘evangelical radicalism is not exclusive to religious, it is required of everyone. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way’. This is the priority that now applies to us: ‘to be prophets who bear witness to the style of life that Jesus chose for himself in the incarnation...A religious should never renounce prophecy’.

A prophet receives from God the capacity to scrutinise history, to live and to interpret events: he is like a sentry who keeps vigil during the night and proclaims the dawn (cf. Is 21:11-12). He knows God and he knows men and women, his brothers and sisters. He is able to discern and denounce the evil of sin and injustice because he is free; he does not have to answer to teachers other than God; and he does not have

interests different to those of God. Usually a prophet is on the side of the poor and the defenceless because he knows that God Himself is on their side!

In the following pages are brought together some historical references from the rich history of our Order of Camillians: a history of over four hundred years (437 years – from 1582 to 2019) marked by the figures of its Superior Generals and by its General Chapters: sixty Superior Generals, including the current Superior General, and fifty-eight General Chapters.

It is important to know our history so that we can know who we are, our profile, our identity, our spirituality, our ministry and our mission as Camillians in society and the Church. I believe that there is a need to have our young generations know about the history of our leadership which is usually studied during the novitiate and then forgotten about. It will be impossible to project our future without having in our hearts and our minds the book of our history.

I would like to enter the dimension of prophecy which sees the time of history as the *καιρός* of God, with an outlook of gratitude for the past of our Camillian story in order to continue to live the present *in a Samaritan way*, in a dynamic towards a future rich in hope.

The criteria for selection as regards historical facts in this text are defined by the biographies of the Superior Generals and the events of the General Chapters: our martyrs to charity (the hundreds of Camillians who offered up their lives at the beginnings of the Order in caring for the plague-stricken); the events of crisis (wars, the Napoleonic dissolution of the religious Orders); and the interventions and the appointments of the Holy See during the course of the nineteenth century. In addition, I will comment on some ‘curious’ facts of this rich and picturesque history of the Camillians.

The text is organised around four subjects: (I) the beginnings of the Order of Camillians under the leadership of St. Camillus de Lellis and his immediate successors (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries); (II) the Superior Generals and the General Chapters from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first century; (III) some observations about the first five and the last seven General Chapters; and (IV) some statistical data on the Order as regards the last sixty years (1959-2019).

1. The Beginnings of the Order of Camillians under the Leadership of St. Camillus and his Immediate Successors (the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)

In this first section of this text I will follow the approach that our historical confrere Fr. Piero Sannazzaro adopts in his classic work *Storia dell'Ordine Camilliano (1550-1699)*¹ (‘A History of the Order of Camillians (1550-1699)’).

Fr. Calisto Vendrame, a former Superior General of the Order (1977-1989), in his preface to the work by Fr. Sannazzaro observes: ‘We know that history is much greater than the facts. These are signs and expressions of a reality that continues in the present and continues in the future, so that the past explains the present and the present does not cease to unveil the past... If the greatness of a community lies in generating people who are able to die for others, we can say that... the multitude of martyrs to charity and practically all our confreres who offered themselves as martyrs to serve the plague-stricken, knowing that they were risking their lives, is the finest proof there is that the *‘pusillus grex’* of the giant of charity, during this first century of life, was shown to be a worthy heir of its great father’.²

‘Camillus, during the twenty-four years of his government of the Order, of which sixteen were spent as Superior General, founded sixteen houses. He admitted to profession 311 religious, of whom 69 died. There remained 242 professed, of whom 88 were priests and of the rest more than a half were intended for the priesthood. In addition, there were more than 80 novices. Since the beginning of the company, 170 had died. This was a striking and unprecedented death rate compared to the death rate experienced by other Orders. The first companions – ‘a company of pious and good men’ – of Camillus in the Hospital of St. James for the Incurables in Rome were: Fr. Francesco Profeta (the chaplain of the hospital) and the laymen Bernardino Norcino, Curzio Lodi, Ludovico Altobelli and Benigno Sauri’.³

¹ SANNAZZARO Piero, *Storia dell'Ordine Camilliano (1550-1699)* (Edizione Camilliane, Turin, 1986).

² VENDRAME Calisto, ‘Presentazione’, in SANNAZZARO Piero, *Storia dell'Ordine Camilliano (1550-1699)* (Edizione Camilliane, Turin, 1986), VI-VII.

³ *Ibid.*, p 101.

1.1. The generalate of Fr. Sanzio Ciatelli and the ‘*Vita Manoscritta del p. Camillo de Lellis*’

‘During his generalate there were neither openings nor closings of houses, but the intention was to strengthen those that existed, with the restoration and expansion of buildings as well. It was also possible to obtain from Gregory XV by the Bull ‘*Superna dispositione*’ of 24 November 1621 control of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene and its release from the Archfraternity of Gonfalone, its first owner, who boasted of major rights to it, receiving in exchange a suitable compensation’.

Fr. Sanzio Ciatelli: the witness and biographer who lived with Saint Camillus

‘In particular Fr. Ciatelli, who had already written a biography of the Founder for the years 1609 to 1610 (the so-named *Vita Manoscritta*), with the help of the research he had carried out subsequently, and the testimony of the religious, was able to write his life at a record speed and to such an extent that the General Consulta on 19 September authorised its publication. Some difficulties delayed the publication which finally took place in December 1615’.⁴ When Camillus died the biography was practically ready. In a few months Fr. Ciatelli completed it with an account of the moments of the end of the life of Camillus and in 1615 the first edition appeared of the *Vita manoscritta di P. Camillo de Lellis*⁵ (‘A Manuscript Life of Fr. Camillus de Lellis’).

The *Vita manoscritta di P. Camillo de Lellis* by Ciatelli is a historical work of notable importance. The author demonstrated that he had done his research well and he was very able from a stylistic point of view as well, managing rather well to avoid the Baroque forms that were fashionable during that epoch. The *Vita manoscritta* met with the approval of his contemporaries and greatly helped the cause for the beatification of St. Camillus

Ciatelli was particularly concerned about the beatification of the Founder. He published a second edition of the biography (Naples, 1620) and composed a third (Rome, 1642) which was notably revised and expanded to the extent that one can see it as being the most complete.

1.2. The generalate of Fr. Francesco Nigli (1613-1619)

The event of greatest importance during the government of Fr. Nigli was the *death of the Founder*. ‘The death of the Founder inside and outside the Order had a great echo and a deep resonance. In Rome, first of all, the people, the nobility and the clergy competed to exalt his charity... The fame for holiness that had accompanied the Founder when he was alive grew and spread after his death. The people immediately began to call him ‘Saint Camillus’ and ‘Blessed Camillus’. This manifestation of their feelings provoked the intervention of the ecclesiastical authorities who had the body buried in an almost concealed way’.⁶

1.3. On the painting of Our Lady of Health: its origins

‘A circumstance of especial interest for the whole of the subsequent history of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene and the traditional devotion of the Order occurred under the generalate of Fr Nigli. On 15 May 1616 Signora Settimia De Nobili, the wife of Signor Giovanni Paganelli, a citizen of Rome, died in Montecitorio. This lady of high social rank had been spiritually assisted, with great zeal, by Fr. Cesare Simonio. Ever since he had first gone to see her, he had admired a fine painting of Our Lady with the child Jesus in her arms. This lady was particularly attached to this painting. Fr. Simonio suggested that she give it to the Church of St. Mary Magdalene where it would be put on show for public veneration. In the end, she accepted that this would take place after her death given that she felt that she could not deprive herself of it while she was still alive. The painting, for that matter, was a dear and venerated family heirloom. And she said that according to a tradition it had been painted by Beato Angelico and that in front of it Pope Pius V had had the vision that revealed to him the victory of Lepanto.

⁴ CICALTELLI Sanzio, *Vita del P. Camillo De Lellis Fondatore della Religione dei Chierici Regolari Ministri degli Infermi*, appresso Pietro et Agostino Discepoli, Viterbo, 1615.

⁵ SANNAZZARO Piero, *op.cit.*, 98.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

By an act of a public notary of 19 February 1614, Signora Settimia arranged for the bequest after her death to the Church of St. Mary Magdalene of the painting of Our Lady which was to be given to the fathers before the funeral of the benefactor... The effigy of Our Lady is painted on canvass. The pictorial composition, in the Greco-Byzantine style, reproduces a subject that is quite well known and which came to us from the East at the time of the iconoclasts and the crusades, with the generic name of Our Lady of St. Luke. Our Lady, whose upper half is depicted, holds the baby Jesus, fully portrayed, on her arm and her left hand. The face of the Virgin is of an inexpressible meekness which inspires confidence and invites us to prayer. Her right hand comes out of her green-blue cloak and her left hand, which is holding the baby Jesus, has beautiful tapered fingers. The face of Jesus, which is round and a little bright, is illuminated by fine open eyes. The work in the opinion of Fr. Vanti goes back to an anonymous painter of the first part of the sixteenth century.

The picture after being given to the fathers was hung on the high altar of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene. It soon became the subject of strong devotion. As a result of the zeal of Father Simonio and Father Giovanni Battista Crotonio as well, prayers were offered up to Our Lady to help the sick, giving her the title of 'Our Lady of Health', *Salus Infirmorum*. Copies were made of the picture and these were sent to various houses of the Order. To her, Our Lady of Health, an altar would be dedicated with the building of the new church'.⁷

1.4. The valuable relic of the heart of Saint Camillus and Fr. Califano

'Fr. Giovanni Califano, a Neapolitan, when he entered the Order in the year 1592 had already graduated in *utroque* and had practised as a lawyer in his homeland, dealing with the affairs of the curia of the Archbishopric of Manfredonia and of Cardinal Ginnasi... He watched over the Founder during the last night of his life. After the death of the saint, Fr. Califano, out of devotion and 'because of the great belief in his holiness' that he had, took his heart, which was as beautiful as a 'ruby' and extraordinarily large and kept it secretly until the General Consulta, not knowing where the heart was, was obliged on 19 February 1616 to threaten excommunication for 'any person who knows where this heart is or actually has it', obliging that person to reveal it.

Fr. Califano had to describe what he had done and he justified himself by saying that he had done it in order to take the heart to Naples, invoking the role of Fr. Nigli, the Superior General. Given, however, that the same year he was appointed prefect of the house of Messina he was allowed to go there with a part of the heart, one side of which had been cut out... Enthusiastically devoted to the Founder, whose particular favourite and confidant he held himself to be, he expressed this belief in his testimony to the Roman ordinary process when, with emphasis and a little exhibitionism, he described the relationship that he had had with the saint'.⁸

1.5. The generalate of Fr. Frediano Pieri (1625-1634)

'During the nine years (1625-1634) of the government of Fr. Pieri, 32 religious died, amongst whom the former Superior Generals Fr. Nigli and Fr. Ciatelli: 44 priests, 18 professed clerics, 52 professed brothers and eighteen novices and oblates. The 56 deaths caused by the plague will be addressed in the next chapter; of the others, some figures stand out amongst the main ones'.⁹

1.6. The generalate of Fr. Matteo Morruelli (1634-1640)

'The Order at the end of the generalate of Fr. Pieri (1634) had about 365 professed religious. During the six years of government of Fr. Morruelli, 66 religious were admitted to profession: 52 for the clerical state and 14 for the lay state. During the same period 33 fathers, 33 brothers and 5 clerics died, in all 71 professed'.¹⁰

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

⁸ *Idem, ibid.*, 103-104.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

1.7. The generalate of Fr. Nicolò Grana (1646-1652)

This was a generalate marked by the death of two former Superior Generals and three members of the General Consulta. ‘Amongst the deceased there were two former Superior Generals – they both died in the space of a few days. *Fr. Frediano Pieri* (who died on 23 August 1648) and *Fr. Giovanni Batista Novati* (who died on 30 August 1648). During the government of Grana, three members of the General Consulta died: one priest and two brothers. Not even two months after his election as a member of the General Consulta, *Fr. Giulio Cesare Reytano* of Messina died in Rome (on 3 July 1648). His death was a grave loss for the Order because through his prudence and wisdom he might perhaps have tempered the drastic character of the initiatives and decisions of Fr. Grana’.¹¹

1.8. The generalate of Fr. Marcantonio Albiti (1652-1656)

‘During the government of Fr. Albiti there were nine new professions as against seventy-two deaths and departures from the Order. There were many causes behind this and as regards the former, first of all, there was the decimation that continued in the year 1657 due to the immolation of the religious at the service of the plague-stricken. In ten years (1646-1656), during the governments of Fr. Grana and Fr. Albiti, the number of religious decreased by 129 – a third of the whole Order. At the end of the year 1656 there were about 250 professed’.¹²

1.9. The generalate of Fr. Giovanni Batista Barberis (1657-1666)

‘From official statistics presented in 1663 to the Holy See it emerges that in that year the Order had 409 religious, of whom 166 were priests, 95 were professed clerics, 77 were professed brothers, 56 were novice clerics, and 15 were novice brothers. At the end of the generalate of Fr. Barberis there must have been about 394 professed in the Order’.¹³

1.10. The generalate of Fr. Francesco Monforte (1678-1684)

‘The generalate of Fr. Francesco Monforte (1678-1684) marked a stationary period as regards the number of religious in the Order. There were 61 professions, of which 49 for the clerical state and 13 brothers; 5 religious left the Institute. At the end of the government of Fr. Monforte, the Order must have had about 412 professed’.¹⁴

1.11. The generalate of Fr. Giovanni Lasagna (1684-1686)

‘Innocent XI, by his papal brief of 15 May 1684, appointed as Prefect and Superior General of the Order Fr. Giovanni Battista Lasagna. The generalate of Fr. Lasagna lasted a little more than two and half years. In December 1686 he was struck down by an acute violent illness which he bore with constancy and fortitude’.¹⁵

1.12. The generalate of Fr. Francesco Del Giudice (1693-1699)

‘One of the undertakings that was most expected of Fr. Francesco Del Giudice was the construction of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene. As soon as he was elected Superior General, his first thought was the creation of the new church. A first part of it had been constructed under the direction of the architect Carlo Fontana who had planned the work since 1673. Probably it was at that time that the building of the cupola (the new large chapel) took place, together with the vault... The exhumation and the translation of the body

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 256-266.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 297-301.

of the Founder had to take place in 1694 and 1696 because of the building works of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene.

At the end of the government of Fr. Francesco Del Giudice, the Order must have had about 428 professed, in 37 houses in 6 Provinces. The professions were 74 in number, of whom 64 for the clerical state and 10 as brothers, whereas there were 76 deaths, of whom 54 priests, 2 clerics and 16 brothers. There were two departures from the Institute'.¹⁶

1.13. The dedication of Camillians as *martyrs to charity* in their exercise of the fourth vow!

'The Order during the epidemic of 1630 gave the most important proof of its capacity for dedication. The religious involved in providing help to the plague-stricken and in cleaning services were about one hundred and twenty, of whom fifty-six died of plague, almost all of whom while providing *service to the plague-stricken*'.¹⁷

While we read and reflect upon the history of the ministry of the Camillians during the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is difficult for us not to be moved, and even not to be amazed, at the dedication to martyrdom of these men in the exercise of the fourth vow in taking care of the plague-stricken. The number of Camillians who immolated their lives is notable. The fourth vow was at that time our polar star, a source of joy and of great satisfaction for the Camillian vocation and ministry.

'Of the over 300 martyrs to charity, the identities of only 222 are known with precision, and the same may be said about the circumstances of their deaths, the places where they provided service and the kind of plague that infected them. All the others have remained anonymous because of the difficulties encountered in gathering facts and evidence because of the tragic condition of the contexts of their deaths.

Everywhere the Ministers of the Sick made themselves present and to them were entrusted tasks of the most delicate character and of the greatest responsibility and they performed these tasks with skill and absolute dedication. Indeed, from 1607 to 1634 they paid the high price of death by the plague 'in service to the plague-stricken' and this involved a notable number of religious: 13 in Palermo, 10 in Mantua, 16 in Milan, 9 in Bologna, 2 priests and 2 oblates in Borgonovo, 5 in Florence, and 1 in Lucca. In the years 1656-1657, 27 religious in Naples and 14 Genoa died of the plague 'at the service of the plague-stricken'. In Rome the Superior General himself, Fr. Marcantonio Albiti, was struck down by the plague and died on Christmas day 1656.¹⁸ We may also remember the nephew of St. Camillus, Onofrio de Lellis, who was a novice when he died in 1606 caring for the sick in the Hospital of the Annunciation of Naples.¹⁹

During periods of the plague, the religious of the Order of the Ministers of the Sick offered broad and moving testimony to their capacity, ability and readiness in serving infected people, well aware of the risk that the context involved. 'In these circumstances the community began to appreciate how much good the exercise of the fourth vow had done to its members as regards the task that awaited them. Indeed, starting from the example of the major Superiors who were the first to offer their service to the plague-stricken, the members of the Order competed with each other to be the first to be chosen and sent where the needs and dangers were most impelling'.²⁰

The Day of Camillian Religious Martyrs to Charity has the advantage of commemorating the heroic lives of over 300 Camillians (seminarians, oblates, novices, brothers and priests) who died serving the victims of the various outbreaks of plague in Italy, Spain, Hungary and Croatia during the first four centuries of the Order. This is testimony to the exemplary exercise of the fourth vow of the Camillians: to serve the sick 'even at risk to one's own life'.²¹

On 2 February 1994 the Order of the Ministers of the Sick officially instituted 25 May as the Day of Camillian Religious *Martyrs to Charity*. This is the date when we commemorate the birthday of St. Camillus de Lellis (25 May 1550).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 337-359.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁸ SPOGLI Emidio, *La diakonia di carità dell'Ordine Camilliano. Il quarto voto dei Ministri degli Infermi* (Casa Generalizia Ministri degli Infermi (Camilliani), Rome, 1986), p. 179.

¹⁹ REALE G., 'Religiosi Camilliani Straordinari testimoni della carità verso gli infermi', *Camilliani*, (33), 84-90.

²⁰ SPOGLI Emidio, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

²¹ 'A Call to Commemorate the Celebration of the Martyrs to Charity (25 May 2018)'. Message sent to the whole of the Order by the Superior General Fr. Leocir Pessini and by the member of the General Consulta responsible for Camillian ministry, Fr. Aris Miranda, the head of the humanitarian organisation of the Order, CADIS – the Camillian Disaster Service International.

2. The Superior Generals and the General Chapters of the Order: from the Beginnings to Today

2.1. The length of the governments of Superior Generals down the centuries

From 1582 until today (2019), 437 years of Camillian history have passed! By tradition and by our Constitution, the mandate of a Superior General lasts six years, with the possibility of being re-elected. Looking at history, we can see that there has been a slightly different reality.

We have the following historical data and they are not surprising:

- The total number of Superior Generals during these 437 years has been sixty.
- Exactly a half of them, that is to say 30 Superior Generals, have governed the Order for a period of 6 years.
- 16 Superior Generals have governed the Order for a period lasting less than 6 years. Amongst the reasons for these short mandates, we may list illness and death during the mandates (4 cases).
- In total 46 Superior Generals have governed the Order for a period of 6 years or less.
- Only 14 Superior Generals have governed the Order for more than 6 years, most of them for two mandates lasting 6 years each (12 years). Amongst the reasons for this we may mention: wartime in the case of Fr. Florindo Rubini (1935-1947), whose generalate was extended for another 6 years because of the Second World War (1939-1945), and the French Revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic revolution, with the dissolution of the religious Orders, when the Holy See intervened and appointed or confirmed Superior Generals for a second mandate to give continuity to the Order during a historical period that involved dispersion and separation from the government of Rome.
- For this reason, taking into account these historical elements, we have important data relating to the duration of the mandate of a Superior General: it should be 6 years!

2.2. The first five General Chapters of the Order

The first five General Chapters were always celebrated in Rome in the house of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, which today is the location of the general curia of the Order (1596-1613).²² In a relatively short period time, that is to say in only 17 years, there were 5 General Chapters – on average a General Chapter every three years. We are here in the first phase when the Order began to be structured and had to define a series of elements and institutions relating to its activity with sick people (the question of complete service to the sick), its organisation and the organising of the first communities that had to observe a shared Rule.

- I. General Chapter – 1596 (24 April-13 May): 30 religious took part (23 fathers and 7 brothers).
- II. General Chapter – 1599 (12 May-9 August): 25 religious took part (19 priests and 6 brothers). Of these, 16 of those taking part in the General Chapter had taken part in the previous General Chapter. This General Chapter was presided over by Msgr. Sallustio Tarugi, with special pontifical prerogatives. He was a commander of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit and he had been requested to preside over the General Chapter by Cardinal Salviati, the protector of the Order, who had not wanted to take part. Msgr Tarugi knew the Founder and the situation of the Order very well.
- III. General Chapter – 1602 (1-17 April): 29 religious took part. This General Chapter was presided over by Msgr. Leonardo Benaglia, the delegate of Pope Clement VIII.
- IV. General Chapter – 1608 (19-25 March): 23 religious took part (16 priests and 7 brothers). This General Chapter was presided over by Cardinal Ginnasi, the protector of the Order. Camillus did not take part in this General Chapter and preferred to remain in Naples serving the poor.
- V. General Chapter – 1613 (1-12 April): the Superior General was Fr. Biagio Oppertis. 24 religious took part (17 priests, 7 brothers, amongst whom the founder, St. Camillus). This General Chapter was presided over by Cardinal Ginnasi, the protector of the Order.

²² Cf. SANNAZARO Piero, *Storia dell'Ordine Camilliano (1550-1699)* (Edizioni Camilliani, Turin, 1986); SANNAZARO Piero, *I primi Cinque Capitoli Generali dei Ministri degli Infermi* (Curia Generalizia, Rome, 1979).

2.3. St. Camillus leads the Order: for how long?

St. Camillus led his beloved Institute for 25 years: for 9 years during the initial period as its founder (1582-1591) and another 16 years (1591-1607) as the Superior General elected by the General Chapters. The inspiration to found an Order took place on the eve of the Feast Day of the Assumption of 15 August 1582. From that moment onwards, Camillus tried to form a company of *pious and good men* ready to serve the sick not for money but for love, with the dedication that a mother has for her sick only child.

In 1607 Camillus, after leading the Order for 25 years, resigned the generalate and asked to live as a simple religious in the Hospital of the Holy Spirit. His successor was Fr. Biagio Oppertis (1607-1613).

2.4. Fr. Sanzio Cicatelli – the third Superior General of the Order (1619-1625)

Fr. Biagio Oppertis (1613) was the first Superior General and Fr. Francesco Antonio Nigli (1613-1619) was the second Superior General after St. Camillus. Fr. Sanzio Cicatelli was born in Naples in 1570 and entered the Order at the age of nineteen, accepted into it by St. Camillus. Fr. Cicatelli is more known about in the Order as the best biographer of St. Camillus, and a contemporary of the saint, than as a Superior General.

His greatest work was *Vita del P. Camillo de Lellis*²³ ('A Life of Fr. Camillus de Lellis'), as we saw at the beginning of this text. This work, according to Alessandro Pronzato, is 'a delicious and fascinating book that sculpts this personage and narrates the events concerning him in the elegant language of the Renaissance'. This biography arose from a detailed diary that Cicatelli wrote from the first years of his life with Camillus. Cicatelli was with Camillus for 26 years, accompanying him on many journeys to visit houses and for 8 years he was also a member of his General Consulta.

Thus he was an eyewitness to what he saw and heard with the saint. Cicatelli observed: 'I like to walk always observing...in order to be able to know about many things of the life and the goodness of Camillus, to have seen them and touched them with my hands'.

2.5. Fr. Germano Curti (1929-1935) – the only Superior General of the Order from Bucchianico

Of the list of 60 Superior Generals, Fr. Curti is the only one from Bucchianico, the town where St. Camillus was born. When he finished his generalate he went to Spain, to Barcelona, where he remained from 1929 to 1935. He wanted to exercise the Camillian ministry but an unforeseen event prevented him from carrying out this project. During the course of the Spanish Civil War, he fell into the hands of the Communists who put him in prison in Barcelona. This experience of his in prison led him to write a book entitled *Nelle Carceri di Barcellona*²⁴ ('In the Prisons of Barcelona'). After his liberation (1935) he returned to Italy and continued to serve as a chaplain in Rome where he died on 12 November 1940.

2.6. The Superior General of the Order at the moment of the beatification and canonisation of St. Camillus

This was Fr. Giovanni Costantini (1734-1740, 1745-1752) who governed the Order for two mandates. It was this Superior General who attended to all the initiatives connected with the processes of beatification (1742) and canonisation (1746) of St. Camillus. Up to that point it was Fr. Costantini who as Superior General had governed the Order for the longest period, with the exception of the founder, St. Camillus.

²³ CICATELLI Sanzio, *Vita del P. Camillo de Lellis – Fondatore della Religione dei Chierici Regolari Ministri degli Infermi*, edited by Fr. Piero Sannazzaro (Curia Generalizia Camilliani, Rome, 1980), 486pp.

²⁴ CURTI, Germano, *Nelle Carceri di Barcellona – memorie della rivoluzione di Spagna* (Libreria Editrice Coletti, Rome, 1943). The person responsible for the publication, as indicated on the cover of the book, was the historian of the Order, Fr. Mario Vanti, whose introduction to this book is a short biography of Fr. Germano Curti, pp. 5-18.

2.7. Fr. Pietro Desideri (1895) – the shortest generalate

Fr. Desideri governed the Order for only seven months, that is to say from May 1895 to 12 December 1895. He was 72 when he was elected Superior General by the thirty-seventh General Chapter of the Order (Rome, 2-11 May 1895). In August of the same year he went to France, to Lyons. In that city he fell ill, he then returned to Rome and he died in that city on 12 December 1895. After his death, the Vicar General of the Order, Fr. Stanislao Carcereri, took responsibility for the government of the Order until the end of the third year of the government (from December 1895 to May 1898) and prepared for the general election for the election of the new Superior General. It was during his government as Vicar General that the Camillian foundation in Africa took place (1867-1877)²⁵

It is curious that Father Carcereri is not included in the list of Superior Generals of the Order like the other Vicar Generals: as Vicar General, curiously, he had no designation from a General Chapter or from the Holy See, as usually happens in the absence of a Superior General when, indeed, the Vicar General takes on the leadership of the Order.

2.8. Fr. Alfonso Maria Andrioli (1920-1922) – the Province of Brazil was born with his *approval and blessing!*

Fr. Alfonso Maria Andrioli governed the Order for a very short period of time – for only two years. Elected Superior General by the forty-first General Chapter (Rome, 2-10 May 1920), he remained in office until 22 December 1922 when he died of cancer. Fr. Andrioli had already been elected Vicar General and Procurator of the Order during the last mandate of the Superior General, Fr. Francesco Vido, who governed the Order for sixteen years (1904-1920).

During the mandate of Fr. Andrioli, he authorised the foundation of a Camillian mission in Brazil, blessing the two missionaries assigned to this mission: Fr. Innocente Radrizzani and Fr. Eugenio Dalla Giacomina. The meeting with the Superior General who was ill with cancer that took place before they went to Brazil is described in the following way: ‘He was suffering more from loneliness. However, with perfect mental lucidity he gave us various recommendations and at the end in a paternal tone that was almost prophetic he added: may God accompany you, if it is the work of God, and he said this with profound conviction...and then...immediately, know that my life is offered for the happy success of the Brazilian mission. In a trembling voice, which revealed his paternal concern, he bestowed upon us his last blessing. We were silent and overwhelmed by great dismay. In another account by Father Innocente, remembering this meeting of farewell before the journey to the new mission, he observed that Father Andrioli said: ‘I offer all my sufferings for the success of this new mission’’.²⁶

This took place on 28 August 1922. Fr. Andreoli died on 22 December of the same year. His words, testimony to very strong faith, have always been a source of inspiration and thought! I had the opportunity during my pastoral visit to the Province of North Italy (March 2018) to visit, in the cemetery of Verona, the funeral chapel of the Camillians. I said a prayer of gratitude at his grave in respectful and moved silence. Father Andrioli ever since he had been Bishop of Mantua was greatly esteemed by Pope X. The Pope entrusted to him the new parish in Rome named after St. Camillus and he also appointed him a consultant of the Holy See.

2.9. Fr. Camillo Guardi (1868-1884)

Fr. Camillo Guardi governed the Order for 22 years: 16 as Superior General and 6 as Vicar General and Procurator of the Order during the generalate of Fr. Giuseppe Oliva (1862-1868). Pope XI intervened and appointed him Vicar General of the Order in 1868. On 19 February 1882, Pope Leo XIII appointed him Superior General, a mandate that he held until his death which took place on 21 August 1884. At the beginning of his government the Order had 85 religious with perpetual vows, 62 priests and 23 brothers, as

²⁵ VEZZANI Forsenio, *Stanislao Carcereri – contestato e contestator* (Editrice Ancora Milan, 1983). A book of 614 pages with ample historical documentation on the facts of the mission in Africa: Fr. Stanislao Carcereri (1840-1899) with Daniele Comboni (1831-1881) and its repercussions inside the Order (General Government) and the Vatican.

²⁶ PIGATTO Carlos (ed.), *Reminiscências Históricas da Fundação Camiliana no Brasil* (Provincia Camilliana Brasileira, Iomere (SC), 2014), p. 19.

well as 30 religious with simple vows or oblates, amongst whom 19 clerics and 11 brothers: a total of 115 religious.²⁷

‘One can say that the absence of General Chapters was compensated for by the presence of Fr. Camillo Guardi who had a long government (it was enlightened and intelligent and lasted for 16 years, 1868-1884)’, observed Fr. Vezzani in his publication on the Superior Generals of the Order.²⁸

Fr. Guardi also contributed in a decisive way to the growth and the development of the foundation of Fr. Camillo Cesare Bresciani: the Province of Lombardy and Veneto.

‘In the early nineteenth century the Order of Camillians was in a very delicate situation. The Institute reached the top of its development roundabout the year 1783 when it had 666 professed religious (443 priests, 193 brothers and 30 clerics) and it had 66 houses distributed in six Provinces (Rome, Naples, Sicily, Milan, Bologna and Spain) and two Vice-Provinces (South America and Portugal).²⁹ Ten years later the number had fallen brusquely to less than 200 religious. This was a vertical fall from which the Order of Camillians only recovered at the beginning of the twentieth century with the new missionary foundations in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Father Guardi was a highly educated person, a lecturer in various religious Institutes. It is said that his Roman students had a deep reverential fear of him and said: ‘God protect against Fr. Guardi!’

In 1841 the Order had 195 religious, of whom 13 were priests, 16 were clerics and 45 were brothers, distributed in 4 Provinces and 29 houses. Towards the end of the nineteenth century (1891), the number of religious diminished. In 1891 the Order had 178 professed: 101 priests, 42 clerics and 25 brothers.

2.10. Fr. Carlo Mansfeld (1947-1965)

Fr. Carlo Mansfeld governed the Order for 18 years. Elected consecutively by three General Chapters, he was the first Provincial Superior of the Camillian Province of the United States of America in 1946. Some religious who esteemed Fr. Mansfeld gave him the sobriquet of ‘Carlo the Great of the Order’ because of the initials of his name, C.M., as we are told by Father Vezzani. Others would say that this was due to his energetic Germanic character. After his generalate he returned to the United States where he died and was buried in the Camillian cemetery of Baraboo, in the Midwest of the United States (120km from Milwaukee, WI).³⁰

2.11. The Province of Spain has produced four Superior Generals

1. Fr. Francesco Pèrez Moreno (1728-1734)
2. Fr. Sebastian Lopez Cueto (1740-1743)
3. Fr. Gabriel Marin de Moya (1764-1770)
4. Fr. Bartolomè Martinez Corella (1776-1782)

To these we can add a fifth: Fr. Pio Holzer (1923-1929) who was born in Italy, in Trentino. From an early age he exercised Camillian his ministry in Spain and he did this until his death.

2.12. A long period without General Chapters

In general, during the course of history the number of religious taking part in General Chapters has been about 20-25, always with the presence and the support of a protector Cardinal or a representative of the Holy See.

In the nineteenth century there were long periods without the celebration of a General Chapter because of wars and the Napoleonic revolution with its dissolution of religious Orders. This was one of the most dramatic historical periods of the Order of Camillians.

²⁷KUCK Jerzy, *I Camilliani sotto la guida di P. Camillo Guardi (2868-1884)*. (Edizioni Camilliane, Turin, 1996), p. 299.

²⁸VEZZANI Forsenio, *Superiori e Capitoli Generali. Compendio di storia dell'Ordine Camilliano* (Verona, 1993), pp. 73-76.

²⁹KUCK Jerzy, *I Camilliani Sotto la Guida di P. Camilo Guardi (1868-1884)* (Edizioni Camilliane, Turin, 1996), p. 23.

³⁰VEZZANI Forsenio, *Superiori e Capitoli Generali. Compendio di storia dell'Ordine Camilliano* (Verona, 1993), pp. 95-97.

Thus from the thirty-first General Chapter (29 July-2 August 1788) to the thirty-second General Chapter, which took place in July 1807 (2-9 May), there were twenty years without a General Chapter. From the thirty-second General Chapter to the thirty-third General Chapter (2-13 May 1844) there was a gap of thirty-seven years.

For twenty-seven years, from 1862 until 1880 (the thirty-sixth General Chapter), the Order was prohibited by the Holy See from holding General Chapters. This was the moment of the dissolution of the religious Orders. In total for almost a century, and more precisely for eighty-four years, General Chapters were not held and during these turbulent years the Holy See was responsible for the appointment of the Superior Generals. Even though all these factors fostered a dispersion of the members of the Order, a small group was always connected to the general government of the Order. At the most critical moment, the central government had only 38 religious under its direction.

2.13. The critical times of the dissolution of the religious Orders

The French Revolution (1789) and the dissolution of the religious Orders carried out by Napoleon caused irreparable damage to the Church and to all the religious Congregations, including the Camillians. The wounds are still visible in our generalate house which we have still not been able to acquire from the state government.

The Camillians were especially hit because of our geographical location. When it was impossible to convene a General Chapter, the Holy See had to intervene either directly, or through a process of consultation that involved a limited number of religious in voting for the Superior General, and appoint the head of the Order. As a consequence, the general governments of that historical period were not the result of normal electoral results and did not express the trust of all the religious. The Superior Generals and the members of the General Consulta represented only a segment of the Order.

The following were appointed as Superior Generals: Michelangelo Toni (1807-1821); Giovanni Camillo Orsoni (1821-1824); Antonio Francone (1824-1826), who died a year and a half after his appointment; and Nicolò Liotti (1828-1830) who died two years after the beginning of his government.

Michelangelo Toni was elected by the thirty-second General Chapter (4 May 1807) but two years later he was deported by the revolutionary government in France and finally exiled to the Island of Capraia. He spent many years in exile. In 1824 he returned a free man to Rome and was appointed Superior General *ad interim* by the Holy See. A few years later (7 October 1824), Pius VII confirmed his position as Superior General. Father Toni remained Superior General until his death which took place on 12 December 1821.

Between 1800 and 1868 the Order had ten Superior Generals, of whom four died during their periods of office: Fr. Michelangelo Toni (1807-1821), who died in the fourteenth year of his mandate; Fr. Giovanni B. Francone (1824-1826) and Nicolò Liotti (1828-1830) both of whom died in the second year of their mandates; and Fr. Luigi Toni (1822-1838 and 1844-1849) who died in the fifth year of his second mandate. As regards the other six Superior Generals, the length of their periods of government of the Order was six years: Fr. Piero Amici (1801-1807), Fr. Antonio M. Scalabrini (1838-1844), Fr. Silvestro de Stefano (1850-1856), Fr. Francesco Italiani (1856-1862), and Fr. Giuseppe Oliva (1862-1868).

2.14. Pastoral visits– very scarce during the nineteenth century

During the nineteenth century, pastoral visits made by Superior Generals were not frequent. Before 1833 they were engaged in only by delegates of the General Consulta (the majority of whom were Provincial Superiors visiting their own Provinces) who then sent to Rome reports on their visits for ratification by the General Consulta. Starting with Fr. Luigi Togni (1831-1849), the Superior Generals began to make these visits themselves

During the course of the nineteenth century, canonical visits by Superior Generals were not frequent. The dissolution of the religious Institutes and the consequent dispersion of religious further aggravated the crisis of this instrument for the animation of the Order. Father Camillo Guardi made his first canonical visit to the Provinces only in the autumn of 1874, during the sixth year of his government.

2.15. Superior Generals and the female Congregations: the Daughters of St. Camillus and the women Ministers of the Sick

During the generalate of Fr. Giovanni Mattis (1889-1995), the Daughters of Saint Camillus were born on 2 February 1892 (Rome), with the Blessed Fr. Luigi Tezza (1841-1923)³¹ and the Blessed Giuseppina Vannini (1859-1911).

During the generalate of Fr. Antonio Maria Scalabrini (1838-1844), on 27 January 1842 the Superior General issued a decree of aggregation for the Institute of the *women Ministers of the Sick*. Its foundress, the Blessed Maria Dominica Brun Barbantini³² (17 January 1789-28 May 1868), was greatly devoted to Saint Camillus and the Order of the Ministers of the Sick (Camillians). On 23 March 1852 Pope Pius IX granted them the title of women Ministers of the Sick and ratified the spiritual communion of the two Institutes.

3. The General Chapters of the Order of Camillians (1591-2014): from the First Five to the Last Seven³³

The history of the General Chapters of the Order follows the order of their convocations. We have had fifty-eight General Chapters, distributed chronologically according to the centuries in which they were held:

- a) During the course of the sixteenth century, two General Chapters were convened and both were held in Rome: the first in 1596 and the second in 1599.
- b) During the seventeenth century, fifteen General Chapters were convened, always in Rome, from the third held in 1602 to the seventeenth held in the year 1699.
- c) During the eighteenth century, fourteen General Chapters took place: the eighteenth was convened in 1705 and the thirty-first was held in 1788, again in Rome.
- d) During the nineteenth century, seven General Chapters were convened, always in Rome: the thirty-second General Chapter was held in 1807 and the thirty-eighth took place in 1898.
- e) During the course of the twentieth century, fifteen General Chapters were convened: the first General Chapter of that century, the thirty-ninth, took place in Rome in 1904 and the last of the century, the fifty-fourth General Chapter, was held in 1995 in Bucchianico, the town where Saint Camillus was born.

I would like to make three observations which in my view are relevant and deserve special mention as regards the Camillian history of our General Chapters:

1. The average number of General Chapters held every century has been between fourteen and fifteen, with the exception of the nineteenth century which had only seven General Chapters. This was a period of general crisis and dispersion because of the dissolution by Napoleon of the religious Orders. Innumerable Superior Generals of this period were appointed directly by the Holy See.
2. All the General Chapters of the Order, from the first that was held in the far away sixteenth century, in 1596, to the forty-eighth in the middle of the twentieth century, in 1965, were always held in Rome. After 1965 (the forty-eighth General Chapter) a series of General Chapters began that took place outside Rome (1969 – the forty-ninth; Vienna (1971 – the fiftieth); Capiago (1977 – the fifty-first); Bucchianico (three times: 1983 – the fifty-second, 1989 – the fifty-third, and 1995 – the fifty-fourth); and Mottinello (2001 – the fifty-fifth). After that date the General Chapters of 2007, 2013 and 2014 were celebrated once again in Rome.
3. The only General Chapter in the history of the Order to be celebrated outside Italy was the one held in Vienna (Austria) in 1971.

I outlined briefly at the beginning of this text historical information about the first five General Chapters of the Order – they covered a period of only seventeen years (1596-1613). At the beginning of the life of the Order there were many questions and canonical requirements of the Holy See that had to be addressed as regards the formalisation of the Institute founded by San Camillus.

³¹ BRUSCO Angelo, *L'Amore non conosce confini: Beato Luigi Tezza*. (Casa Generalizia Figlie di San Camillo, Rome, 2001).

³² BRAZZAROLA Bruno, *Madre Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini. Fondatrice delle Ministre degli Infermi di S. Camillo 1789-1868* (Casa Generalizia, Rome, 1992).

³³ PESSINI Leocir *et al.*, *Essere Camigliano e samaritano Oggi: con il cuore nelle mani nelle periferie esistenziali e geografiche del mondo della salute* (Casa Generalizia Camilliani, Rome, 2017). See especially 'Cronostasi dei superiori generali dell'Ordine', pp. 360-362 and 'Cronostasi dei capitoli generali dell'Ordine', pp. 362-364.

Now let us attempt a summary of the historical information that is available to us about the last seven General Chapters of the Order which cover a period of thirty-one years.

The last General Chapters of the Order of Camillians (1983-2014)

1. **1983 – the fifty-second General Chapter** – Bucchianico (2-21 May 1983). **Subject:** *our charism in the context of the charism of religious life, its origins and today*. In the convocation of this General Chapter one reads: ‘it is the task of the General Chapter of 1983 to discuss and approve the final text of the Constitution and the General Statutes’. **Superior General:** Fr. Calisto Vendrame (re-elected 1983-1989).
2. **1989 – the fifty-third General Chapter** – Bucchianico (2-19 May 1989). **Subject:** *towards the poor and the third world*. **Superior General:** Fr. Angelo Brusco (elected 1989-1995).
3. **1995 – the fifty-fourth General Chapter** – Bucchianico (2-18 May 1995). **Subject:** *which Camillian for the year 2000?* **Superior General:** Fr. Angelo Brusco (re-elected 1995-2001).
4. **2001 – the fifty-fifth General Chapter** – Mottinello (2-19 May 2001). **Subject:** *witnesses to the merciful love of Christ, promoters of health*.³⁴ **Superior General:** Fr. Frank Monks (elected 2001-2007).
5. **2007 – the fifty-sixth General Chapter** – Ariccia (RM) (2-18 May 2007). **Subject:** *united for justice and solidarity in the world of health. Camillian religious and prophetic mission*.³⁵ **Superior General:** Fr. Renato Salvatore (elected 2007-2013)
6. **2013 – the fifty-seventh General Chapter** – Ariccia/Rome (3-17 May 2013). **Subject:** *the Camillian Project, towards a faithful and creative life: challenges and opportunities*.³⁶ **Superior General:** Fr. Renato Salvatore (re-elected 2013/resignation 2014).
7. **2014 – the fifty-eighth extraordinary General Chapter** – Ariccia/Rome (6-21 June 2014). **Subject:** *towards a revitalisation of the Order during the fourth centenary of the Order (1614-2014)*.³⁷ **Superior General:** Fr. Leocir Pessini (elected 2014-2020).

With the General Chapter of 1989 the tradition began of choosing a subject that would be debated during the deliberations of the General Chapter as well as the establishment of conclusions involving decisions or directions for the life of the Order.

For the previous two General Chapters the following subjects had been chosen: *towards the poor and the third world* (1989) and *which religious for the year 2000?* (1995). The General Consulta, after consulting all the communities of the Order and in particular the Provincial Superiors, decided for the following subject for the General Chapter of 2001: *witnesses to the merciful love of Christ, promoters of health*.³⁸

³⁴ Documento do LV Capitulo Geral da Ordem. Mottinello 02-05 a 19-05-2001. *Testemunhas do amor misericordioso de Cristo, Promotores de saúde* (Ministros dos Enfermos – Camilianos/Provincia Camiliana Brasileira, São Paulo, 2001).

³⁵ Documento do 56°. Capitulo Geral: *Unidos para a justiça e solidariedade no mundo da saúde* (Ministros dos Enfermos – Camilianos/Provincia Camiliana Brasileira, São Paulo, 2010), *Reimpressão*.

³⁶ DOCUMENTI (Atti del 57° Capitolo Generale, *Per una Vita Fedele e Creativa. ATTI. Ariccia (RM), 3-17 maggio 2013*, edited by Fr. Gianfranco Lunardon (Curia Generalizia, Camilliani, Rome, 2014).

³⁷ DOCUMENTI (Atti del 58° Capitolo Generale. *Per una rivitalizzazione dell'Ordine nel IV Centenario dell'Ordine (1614-2014)*, edited by A. Fr. Gianfranco Lunardon, Ariccia (RM), 16-21 giugno 2014 (Curia Generalizia Camilliani, Rome, 2015).

³⁸ Documento do LV Capitulo Geral da Ordem. Mottinello 02-05 a 19-05-2001. *Testemunhas do amor misericordioso de Cristo, Promotores de saúde* (Ministros dos Enfermos – Camilianos/Provincia Camiliana Brasileira, São Paulo 2001), p. 9.

4. Some Statistics on the Order over the Last Sixty Years

The information that I present here has been taken from the preface to the *Status Ordinis* drawn up by Superior Generals at the General Chapters of the Order over the last sixty years.

4.1. During the generalate of Fr. Carlo Mansfeld (1947-1965)

On 1 January 1959 the Order had 1,261 religious, who were made up as follows: 611 fathers, 252 perpetual professed clerics, 311 professed brothers, 23 oblates, 64 novices. This was the epoch of the minor seminaries and at that time the Order had 1,076 seminarians.

4.2. During the generalate of Fr. Forsenio Vezzani (1965-1971)

	31 December 1964	28 February 1971
Fathers	719	730 (+11)
Professed clerics	211	129 (-82)
Brothers	335	293 (-42)
Novices	55	15 (-41)
Total religious	1,320	1,116

4.3. During the generalate of Fr. Enrico Dammig (1971-1977)

	1 March 1971	1 March 1977
Fathers	727	673
Professed clerics	33	22
Perpetual professed brothers	257	223
Temporary professed	131	83
Oblates	16	10
Novices	14	31
Total religious	1,178	1,046

Observation: of the 71 priests who abandoned the Order during the period following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), 51 requested the dispensation to return to the lay state, 5 resigned, and 15 ceased to be Camillian religious and continued as diocesan priests.

4.4. During the generalate of Fr. Calisto Vendrame (1977-1989)

In 1983 there were 1,005 Camillian religious and by 1989 that number had increased to 1,088. 'The Order has increased by 83 over the last six years' (Fr. Vendrame). In 1989 there were 66 novices, 39 of whom were from the third world, and 162 temporary professed, of whom 95 were from the third world.

4.5. During the generalate of Fr. Angelo Brusco (1989-2001)

In 2001 the Order of Camillians had 1,083 religious, distributed in 149 religious houses: 692 priests, 146 brothers, 13 clerics with perpetual vows, 173 temporary professed, 57 novices and 2 oblates.

4.6. During the generalate of Fr. Frank Monks (2001-2007)

In 2001 there were 1,089 religious and by 2007 there were 1,147. In 2007 there were 66 novices, 210 temporary professed and 70 clerics with perpetual vows.

4.7. During the generalate of Fr. Renato Salvatore (2007-2014)

From the data sent to the Secretariat of State of the Vatican which refer to the census of the year 2013, we learn the following: the total number of religious was 1,115, classified according to their religious state: 660 priests, 190 brothers, 115 clerics with perpetual vows, 108 temporary professed, 42 novices. There were 174 religious houses.

4.8. During the generalate of Fr. Leo Pessini (2014-2020)

From the census of 2015 sent annually to the Secretariat of State of the Vatican we learn that there was a total of 1,094 Camillian religious, made up as follows: 767 priests, 136 brothers, 38 clerics with perpetual vows, 111 clerics with temporary vows, and 42 novices. The total number of religious houses was 172.

We have the following numbers relating to the Order for 31 December 2016: 766 priests, 104 brothers, 34 perpetual professed, 146 temporary professed, 19 novices, making up a total of 1,069 religious.

Conclusion

History is always richer in teachings and wisdom than our *vain philosophy*, as a folk proverb proclaims!

As a theologian of morality and bioethics, I am curious about and interested in history, understood as a broader context in which human, ethical and evangelical values take practical shape and materialise. This small exercise in historical research which has revisited, and called attention to, important aspects of the life and the history of the Order of Camillians connected with its leadership and the decisions taken at its General Chapters, shows us how important it is always to cultivate a contextualised ‘historical outlook’ on things, on historical processes and on people.

As a suggestion, I would like to recommend to those who exercise the ministry of authority in service that they ensure that the new generations of young Camillians have the possibility of studying with passion our history and Camillian life and ministry from an academic and *scholarly point of view*. There is a lack of living reference points amongst us in the present, people like Ciatelli, Sannazzaro, Vanti, Spogli...and many other important Camillian historians, for the present in which we live and the future that we are building! To attend to our history and our memory is a need and a requirement if we want to be always ‘faithful and creative’ towards our Camillian charism and identity.

We know that General Chapters have always been decisive moments in terms of revision, assessment, priorities and the planning of prospects for the future of the Order. We hope that the next General Chapter will be a special moment, *καιρός* and prophecy for each one of us who today have the responsibility for the exercise and the service of authority for our confreres and also for the whole of our beloved Order of Camillians.

As I have already observed in this text, and this is something that I would like to reaffirm at its conclusion, everything is being done with great attention in terms of planning and programming for May 2020 (following historical tradition, starting on 2 May). The general subject will be: *what is Camillian prophecy today? Looking backwards to the past (our rich history), living in the present (worried and critical about human civilization) and moving towards the future (do we dream about, and hope for, in the perspective of our Christian faith, the achievement of the values of the Kingdom of God)?*

In the end, prophecy and hope go hand in hand and always journey together. From this point of view, I would like to remember a meeting of Zygmunt Bauman (the famous Polish thinker and sociologist who died at the beginning of 2017 and who lived for the whole of his career in England) with Pope Francis in Assisi on 20 September 2016 on the occasion of the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of World Peace Day that John Paul II had convoked for that city in 1986. This sociologist expressed to the Pope his sympathy for, and nearness to, his statements and his work in the world. This eminent professor did not conceal his pessimism about the situation and the development of the contemporary world.

And at the end of this private conversation with Pope Francis, Bauman expressed himself in the following way: “I have worked all my life to make humanity a hospitable place. I have reached the age of 91 and I have seen many false starts, to the point of becoming pessimistic. Thank you, because for me you are the light at the end of the tunnel”.

The Pope was very surprised and answered Bauman with the following words: “Nobody has ever said to me that I would be at the end of the tunnel”. And Bauman answered: “Yes, but as a light”. The Pope was struck by the lucidity of his interlocutor, as he confided privately to those near to him.³⁹

Yes, we can be the light of God in the darkness! May the Holy Spirit of God illumine our minds and our hearts so that we can open ourselves to the essential truths that define our identity and mission in this world as Samaritans and prophets!

May *Our Lady of Health* not allow us to become cold, calculators or organisers who are indifferent to human suffering, but through her intercession may we be always witnesses to tenderness and maternal love in caring for human life marked by pain and human suffering!

May our father founder and source of inspiration, St Camillus, help us not to give way to disenchantment with the problems and the challenges that we have in front of us, in the exercise of our mission in the chaotic, unequal and unjust world of health! May he illumine us to be always open, happy, sensitive, full of hope and creative in order to perceive and realistically understand the new opportunities that present themselves, starting with this transcendent horizon, embodying in the concrete realities of human existence the values of gospel values and Camillian hope!

Rome, 14 March 2019

³⁹ MARAZZITI Mario and RICCIARDI Luca (ed.), ‘La luce in fondo al tunnel. Dialoghi sulla vita e la modernità, Zygmunt Bauman’, *Avvenire*, 8 February 2018.