

Being a camillian and a samaritan in today's world

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Introduction

At the outset a note by way of information: I take up in this paper a large part of a previous work of mine. And I apologise at the outset if my words are addressed more to our religious world rather than to the world of our family of lay faithful.

The following subject was assigned to me: 'Being a Camillian and a Samaritan in Today's World'. This subject demonstrates the importance of the gospel parable of the 'Good Samaritan' (Lk 10:25-37) in the life of 'Camillians' in the contemporary world. In saying 'Camillian' there is the risk of thinking only about 'religious, the Ministers of the Sick'. In our context, the term 'Camillian' is not limited to a religious who claims that he belongs to St. Camillus. It refers, rather, to every person, whether religious or lay, who seeks to live the charism that St. Camillus received from God in the Church and transmitted to the world. In this sense, we can say that every member of the Lay Camillian Family is a 'Camillian' because they live the charism of St. Camillus. We should not forget that 'At the beginning of the life of the Order, indeed, St. Camillus involved in the service of care for the sick a group of lay men, aggregating them to the Institute' (*Fr. Angelo Brusco, Statuto Generale Famiglia Camilliana. "Presentazione"*, Rome, 1998, p. 4.). Even before that 'a priest and four lay men adhered to the project of Camillus' (*Lettera della Consulta Generale nel documento: "1591-1991, La Famiglia Camilliana si confronta" a cura di Missione e Salute, 1991. p. 3*). And as Father Emidio Spogli said: 'After his first 'Company' had been transformed into a religious Order, he was concerned that activity involving charity might in this way be restricted and for this reason he asked for, and obtained, the faculty to aggregate and to bring together in a 'Congregation' lay people, clerics and priests who would exercise 'the same pious works of mercy and charity', and thus be able to reach a greater number of sick people, multiplying the opportunities for service of his community' (*La Famiglia Camilliana. A cura di P. Emidio Spogli. Estratto "Camillo de Lellis – Un santo per chi soffre, second edition, casa editrice Tinari, Bucchianico, 1995, p. 9*). Taking into account this historical observation, 'Camillian' here means a lay person or a male or female religious or a priest who are called in their state to live the charism of St. Camillus, that is to say 'the merciful love of Christ for the sick' (*Costituzione e Disposizione Generali, Ministri degli Infermi, Casa Generalizia, Rome, 2017. art. 1, p. 13*).

In addressing this subject, I would like first of all to re-read the Parable of the Good Samaritan (I), then apply it to St. Camillus and Camillians (II), and, lastly, to consider one of the figures of the parable (the innkeeper) as representative of Camillians, to whom are entrusted the charism of St. Camillus and Camillian service (III).

I. A Re-Reading of the Parable of the Good Samaritan

The parable of the Good Samaritan, which is narrated only by Luke the Evangelist, is placed between the Gospel of the return from their mission of the seventy-two disciples and that of Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary. The seventy-two disciples, after preaching the nearness of the Kingdom of God (Lk 10:9), offering peace (Lk 10:5), and inviting people to convert and accept Jesus

the Saviour, return full of joy (Lk 10:17). One may say that the parable of the Good Samaritan, which comes immediately after the mission of the disciples, illustrates the behaviour that one should have towards one's neighbour after receiving the Kingdom of God in Jesus, which is a kingdom of love. The parable thus illustrates the practice or non-practice of the commandment to love one's neighbour, which allows us to enter, or not to enter, eternal life. It demonstrates to man the will of God who 'asks from man a total love that in practice is generous help for a travelling companion who is in need' (*I Vangeli, traduzione e commento a cura di Giuseppe Barbaglio, Rinaldo Fabris, Bruno Maggioni, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi, 1978*). This love for one's neighbour extends as far as welcoming the needy into one's own home, into one's own life, as the passage on Jesus as a guest in the house of Martha and Mary enables us to perceive.

Therefore to the question of the lawyer 'what must I do to obtain eternal life?', Jesus in a practical way demonstrates through the parable of the Good Samaritan what one must do to merit entering eternal life and give proof of acceptance of the preaching of the Kingdom of God. In this parable, if we leave to one side the robbers and the unfortunate man, we see that Jesus brings onto the scene four characters: the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan and the innkeeper, and we can already sense that at the centre of the parable there is his person and his message of mercy.

I.1. *The characters*

The first people who appear before the unfortunate man are the *priest* and the *Levite*, both of whom are official representatives of Judaism, as well as 'official representatives of love in the Israelite religious structure' (*Commento della Bibbia liturgica, Edizione Paoline, Rome, 1984, p. 1206*), of that love referred to by the lawyer: 'you will love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself'. Both of these two figures, both functionaries of worship, travel, like the unfortunate man, without giving much space to the unforeseen. Probably so as not to be contaminated, because of the law of holiness (Lev 21:6-11) they sought to follow the legal and ritualistic prescriptions that made them insensitive to the urgent need of their neighbour. They embody the rigid sacredness that veils the eyes and heart when faced with the needs of a brother. However 'the two indifferent passers-by ignored the wounded man, they saw him journeying on the road while disappearing on the horizon'.

Like the priest and the Levite, a third figure, a '*Samaritan* half-breed, bastard and heretic', is travelling and also sees the unfortunate man. Yet in a contrary way to the first two, 'he passed by near to him, he bound his wounds, he put him on his donkey, he took him to an inn and took care of him'. We observe that the Samaritan at that moment was concerned not about his own affairs, his own programme, but, rather, about the needs of the unfortunate man. As Father Calisto Vendrame said: 'The Samaritan proceeds to listen because his first thought is: what does this man need? Thus while the men of the law, doing what was prescribed, did what they wanted to do, the Good Samaritan, doing what he wanted to do, guided by love, did what he had to do' (*CIC n. 165, p. 520*): he really did the will of God, opening himself to love for his neighbour and putting into practice his compassion.

The fourth figure for our examination is the *innkeeper*. Usually in the comments on this parable this character is not discussed. Yet he received the Samaritan and the unfortunate man into his inn: 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back'. If the whole of the message of the work of the Samaritan is very important and is addressed to the lawyer, and to each one of us, I ask myself to whom are addressed the mission and the meaning of the message addressed to the innkeeper? Is it not equally addressed to us? And in a special way to us of the Camillian family? We will now analyse the message that springs from this parable.

I.2. *The message of the Good Samaritan*

In response to the commandment remembered by the lawyer ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself’ (Lk 10:27), and his question ‘And who is my neighbour?’ (Lk10:29), Jesus teaches us through the parable of the Good Samaritan who our neighbour is, how one really becomes a neighbour to another person, and how we should behave towards our neighbour in need.

The parable makes us reflect and meditate upon the duty of love towards men of all races, religions and social level, without any distinctions, and points out that every disciple of Christ should make himself a neighbour to others: ‘Making oneself a neighbour to the other means...to take responsibility for the situation of the other, to take part in his pain, to be near to him, to listen to him, to come to his aid, to address his difficulties’ (Vito Morelli, *La domenica: XV Domenica tempo ordinario/C. 12 luglio 1998*, p.1). Through this parable Jesus illuminates ‘the universal character of Christian love...For Jesus every man becomes a neighbour to the other when he allows himself to be guided by love and places himself at the service of those who are in need’ (Calisto Vendrame, *Essere Religiosi oggi*, ED, Rome, 1989, p. 83). One may say that ‘*the parable transmits the absolute and unlimited nature of the duty of love and that mercy transcends national and racial barriers*’ (*Cathopedia, Enciclopedia cattolica* on internet).

In the Gospel of the Final Judgement of Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus through the mouth of the king who judges says: ‘Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me...as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me’ (Mt 25:40.45). We can say that the parable of the Good Samaritan helps us to understand these statements because it helps us to understand the presence of God above all in those who most need our help. As the commentary of the *Bibbia Giovane* says: ‘it is not enough to be sensitive and feel compassion; one has to act. We are all invited to be Good Samaritans; some are called to be him because of their professional activity. We are called ‘to make ourselves a neighbour’ by drawing near to those who are in need’ (*La Bibbia giovane*, Ancora – Editrice la scuola, Milan, 2009, p. 1308).

This parable does not only invite us to meditation upon, and contemplation of, how beautiful the action of the Good Samaritan is. It also invites us to act, to open our hearts to people who suffer, stretching out our hands to them, without any form of discrimination, ‘helping the marginalised and anybody who suffers because of any kind of pain’ (*Comento della Bibbia liturgica*, Edizioni Paoline, Turin, 1984, p.1206). But before us, someone did for us what the Good Samaritan did for the unfortunate man: Jesus was a Good Samaritan for us.

I.3. *Jesus, the Good Samaritan*

The Fathers of the Church (note: ‘Fathers of the Church’ is the appellation adopted by Christianity roundabout the fifth century to refer to the principal Christian writers whose teaching and doctrine were held to be fundamental for the doctrine of the Church) state that the Parable of the Good Samaritan has a Christological meaning. For them, this Good Samaritan is none other than Jesus himself.

Indeed, Br. Daniel Ols O.P. in his homily of 10 July 2016, when commenting on this parable from the point of view of the Fathers of the Church, observed: ‘the Samaritan represents Christ who takes care of the wounded man and saves him; St. John Chrysostom sees in the wine and the oil used for

this purpose the blood of Christ shed during his passion and the oil of confirmation. Obviously, the inn is the Church which, as Chrysostom himself tells us, welcomes those who are tired by journeying in the world and tired by the sins that they bear, and restores them to health, offering them a health-giving pasture. We see in the innkeeper the apostles and the ecclesiastical hierarchy who care for the faithful and proclaim the gospel; in the day of the return of the Samaritan, we see the day of judgement, both particular and universal’.

Father Konrad in his sermon of 4 September 2011 on the Good Samaritan said: ‘St. John Chrysostom interprets the priest as the sacrifice of the Old Testament, the Levite as the Law of the Old Testament; neither of them could heal the fallen man and therefore, in history, both of them passed by without halting. A Samaritan who was travelling down the same road drew near to him and on seeing him felt compassion for him. This Samaritan is none other than Christ himself; he too went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, that is to say from heaven to this world, and brought with him the remedy that man needed, that nobody before him in the Old Testament could give man: drawing near to him he dressed his wounds, poured oil and wine, and put him on his horse and took him to the inn and cared for him. This sentence speaks to us about the remedy brought by the Lord: the oil and the wine are the sacraments, the oil symbolises baptism, confirmation, priesthood and extreme unction, the wine symbolises the Holy Eucharist, the bandaging symbolises the commandments, and the horse, according to all the fathers, is the sacred humanity of Our Lord through which we are saved’.

Through his Incarnation, his Passion, his Death and his Resurrection, Jesus realised for us the merciful love that springs from the message of the Good Samaritan; he gives us an example of how one becomes a neighbour not with chatter but by involving oneself in the pain and the suffering of man, and gives us the commandment of love for neighbour: ‘Go and do likewise’. This command reached the ear of Camillus de Lellis and was not without its effects.

II. *Camillus, the Good Samaritan*

In the Constitution of the Ministers of the Sick we read: ‘St. Camillus, himself a recipient of mercy and tempered by the experience of suffering, following the example and teaching of the merciful Christ, was called by God to assist the sick and to teach others how to serve them. Encouraged by the crucified Christ to continue in the work he had started, he dedicated himself and the Order to the service of the sick’ (Const. art. 8).

II.1 *God transforms Camillus*

Camillus de Lellis, whom we know well because we are a part of the array of his followers, in the sixteenth century experienced a context of hunger, plague, war and abject poverty. At the level of health care, promiscuity was experienced with a poor service, indeed a very bad service. Father Piero Sannazzaro when citing Luigi Fiorani in his book *Religiosi e Povertà* (‘Religious and Poverty’) said: ‘For Camillus de Lellis, who came to Rome in the year 1575 and who always lived in very close contact with the destitute and the dying, in Roman hospitals was reflected in its entirety the law of marginalisation that the city inflicted on its most obscure and defenceless victims. It is no accident if precisely between the walls of a hospital – that of St. James – he felt spring up within him the vocation

to serve his suffering neighbour specifically, in fact, where there was inflicted on him the most acute discomfort and neglect... To call upon Camillus there was an urgent and bleeding reality, there was a lucid perception of the evils of that city. What an epidemic was, how it struck, from which parts of society it chose its victims, what frightening object poverty lay behind it, or what the real situation of the Roman hospitals was, or, in addition, how odious was the internment that the hospice of St. Sixtus inflicted on beggars' (Padre Piero Sannazzaro: *Promozione umana e dimensione contemplativa nel S. P. Camillo*, p. 10).

Yes, indeed! Like the Good Samaritan, Camillus de Lellis understood when faced with such a situation in the social context that one could not be cold, indifferent or insensitive. One could not leave things as they were without doing anything. His spiritual conversion, which took place on 2 February 1575, had opened his eyes and heart so that he became able to see what others did not see, or, if they did see, they thought it was normal to live like that. This situation was a real challenge for him. Thus it was that helped by his own suffering, and above all by the grace of God, Camillus changed his dissolute life, his obtuse views and his not very dignified behaviour, in order to embrace a life and a way that led him to a complete fulfilment of his existence. He placed himself at the service of God and his suffering neighbour with an unusual zeal – the zeal of the Good Samaritan. His conversion was a decisive turning point, a decisive and very personal experience that marked his life for ever: 'For this reason, he committed himself from that moment onwards to a life that would be a constant search for God and the best way to serve Him' (E. Spogli, *La prima comunità camilliana*, p. 28). 'His serving the Most High would be achieved (and was achieved) in his serving the sick' (*ibid.*, p. 31) and the poor. Thus we realise that Camillus understood that his vocation and his mission were an initiative of God who wanted him totally at His service through diligent work for the poor and the sick. It is said of Camillus that 'his model is the Good Samaritan, his rule the discourse of the final judgement, his criterion the gesture of Christ who washed the feet of his disciples. With everything contemplated in Christ on the Cross who revealed to him: 'This work is not yours but mine'.

'Camillus, with things made clear to him in this way by the will of God', wrote Ciatelli, 'proposed thenceforth to give himself in everything and for everything to service to the sick. Camillus had found his true vocation', his true vocation in the Church and in the world. A few centuries previously Camillus would have been able to say what Teresina would say later: 'In the heart of the Church my mother, I will be love', I will be merciful love. So it was that Camillus, comforted by Christ in the cross and under the protection and the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, not only served the sick: he also became through his example of devotion the proclaimer of how to serve God in the sick, and to such an extent that Pope Benedict XIV defined the work of Camillus as 'a new school of charity'. In this new school Camillus said to his adherents: 'We must be the mothers of the sick more than their brothers... Serve the sick with the greatest diligence possible with the affection of a mother for her sick only child and looking at a poor person as the person of Christ'.

II.2 *The Samaritan ministry of Camillus*

Touched by divine grace, Camillus left an empty, insignificant and wasted life in order to try to value it and give it a meaning. From a life dissipated and consumed in vanity, he moved to desiring, indeed wanting, a full life that he would find in his own life, to which God called him: his service for the sick and the poor. Indeed, after understanding that he was the object of the mercy of God, he, too, had to express mercy through, and service for, his suffering brothers and sisters, and he had to do this in the clothes or rather the feelings of a loving mother caring for her sick only child. Indeed, Camillus said to his disciples-confreres: 'We must be the mothers of the sick more than their brothers... Serve

the sick with the greatest diligence possible with the affection of a mother for her sick only child and looking at a poor person as the person of Christ’.

‘The poor, the most abandoned of the sick, would be his preferred people; for forty years he would be seen in Rome, Naples, Genoa, Palermo and Milan as a Pilgrim of Love in hospitals, in hovels, in the barrel-vaults of the Coliseum and the Roman Baths, in the caves and the shabby little houses, during the terrible plagues and during normal times’ (*Foglietto di liturgia della Festa di S. Camillo*).

Camillus was a man of action. In the short book by Father Sannazzaro one reads that Camillus ‘made himself a poor man with the poor – ‘my kings and princes’, as he called them – inside the terrible wards of the hospital of St. Sixtus...amongst the patients with sores of the hospital of St. James, in the grand salons of the hospital of the Holy Spirit, where the proclaimed health-care tradition did not manage to silence certain complaining judgements’.

‘Camillus at times met tramps and homeless beggars...the prisoners of Tor di Nona and poor people shut up in their own homes...In many cases Camillus found lying in the same bed a father, a mother, children and others, mixed together, so that those who did not die because of illness died because of hunger...Camillus organised visits with his confreres, he took food from his religious house of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene...No less painful was the humanity that he encountered at the hospital of the Holy Spirit, where...he exerted himself without holding back, providing powerful examples of pure love for Christ and for the miserable men he came across...The poverty that Camillus witnessed had dreadful features. Indeed, Camillus’ days were spent in the trenches of the most squalid poverty, even at the cost of giving second place to, or limiting, certain commitments strictly connected with his priestly ministry...Camillus made a preferential choice for these ‘poor people’ (Padre Piero Sannazzaro, *Promozione umana e dimensione contemplativa nel S. P. Camillo*, pp. 10, 11,12).

In his ministry of service to God and the poor (especially the sick), Camillus showed that he was impassioned, compassionate and merciful. He responded to the challenge of the poverty and the illness of his time by living the charism of mercy.

In a letter written and sent to the Catholic University of Argentina, Pope Francis said: ‘Mercy is not only a pastoral approach, it is the very substance of the Gospel’.

One can say that Camillus de Lellis understood this and applied himself to the full as a person to living the gospel of mercy as a gift that was received and ought to be transmitted; as a charism that enabled him to care for the (sick) poor and to teach other people how to serve them. For this reason, ‘The Church has acknowledged in St. Camillus and his Order the charism of mercy towards the sick and has seen in it the source of our mission, defining the work of the Founder as ‘a new school of charity’ (Const. n. 9).

III. *The Camillian Samaritan Ministry of Mercy*

III.1 *Recent General Chapters*

At the beginning of this part of our conversation, I believe that it would be useful to quote the words of the Camillian Project where reference is made to the ministry of service, that is to say: ‘The ministry received by us as a mission and as Grace, and professed with a vow, possesses the same radical character as the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. It is the ministry of Christ and possible to the extent to which we relive his way of acting, his deeds and feelings, and his generosity.

This is how Camillus lived, basing himself on the Biblical image of the Good Samaritan and Christ identified with the last.

In a community, gathered around Christ, we become Camillians, that is to say sent out to carry out the same merciful mission of Jesus who called his disciples to him and then sent them out (cf. Lk 10:37).

Each Camillian lives his 'mandate' for a mission, which is the very purpose of his personal vocation. In our specific case, the Order, a living part of the Church, has received from God, through its Founder St. Camillus, the charism of reliving and bearing witness to the merciful love of Christ, serving the sick and teaching others how to serve them (Const. 1 and 8)' (*Camillian Project*, 2,5).

We can say with Monsignor Prosper, a Camillian bishop, the words of his homily of 25 May 2015 given at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene: 'Hitherto the Institute has always been faithful to this idea'. And alluding to the 'martyrs of charity' in our Order who have often given their lives because of faithfulness to our charism, he added: 'even if epidemics are not as they were in the past, still today this flame of charity remains lit and led our confreres to risk their lives in Central Africa to serve and save the lives of very many citizens, above all Muslims, in the face of the rebels; a dedication to people with Ebola in Sierra Leone, in Nepal because of the earthquake...Attention is paid to those with tuberculosis, with leprosy and AIDS in China, Thailand, the Philippines, Africa and Brazil'.

One should emphasise that the recent General Chapters of the Ministers of the Sick celebrated since the year 2001 have been very significant for the subject of this paper and point out to us the roads that should be followed, the challenges that should be met to live Camillian ministry better today, a Samaritan ministry. They are a well from which we can draw elements: 'Towards a Faithful and Creative Life' or 'Towards a Revitalisation of the Order', of our Provinces or Delegations, as was suggested to us by the last two General Chapters (of 2013 and 2014). We may evoke the already distant General Chapter of 2001 whose subject was: 'Witnesses to the Merciful Love of Christ, Promoters of Health'. In the 'Message to Confreres' at the end of the event we can see the following passage as still being of great contemporary relevance:

'The horizon that is opening on the world of health is vast, rich in promises, but also darkened by shadows and traversed by great threats such as poverty, ignorance and wars. These are some of the causes that most help to create often dramatic situations of malaise in populations that do not have any kinds of resources to deal with them.

One of the first concerns that animates us is to be present where these human tragedies take place, ready to make our contribution to promoting quality of life with every initiative designed to achieve the recovery of the psycho-physical, social and spiritual wellbeing of the person.

Our readiness to help takes different concrete forms and adapts to the contexts in which it is implemented. It can be direct care for the person of a sick man or woman or spiritual assistance in a hospital context; it can involve the teaching of health-care culture or the formation of specialised staff; it can be the animation of community health, the organisation of primary help for those who are in a state of marginalisation, or accompanying for those who are going through the terminal stage of their existence.

In being involved in these various sectors, we wish not only to support what is already being engaged in but also to open up new roads, dig new wells, animated by hope and guided by the wish to contribute to the promotion of a new world' (*Atti del 55° Capitolo Generale...*, pp. 336-337).

The members of the General Chapter declared: 'The Order should be present in the field of justice and intervene with sufficient weight in the denunciation of evident injustices in the world of health (for example patents for medical products, cases of dehumanisation etc.). To this end, it should promote activities that are able to influence socio/health-care policies through suitable individuals and instruments. The promotion of participation in forums of decision-making is equally advisable, such as committees on bioethics or similar institutions (n. 2)'. Number 7 reads as follows: 'a 'commission for justice and solidarity in the world of health' should be established at the central level of the Order, and where possible at the level of the Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Delegations: 'Love thus needs to be organised if it is to be an ordered service to the community' (*DCE* n. 20)'.

Let us evoke here the sharing of our charism with lay people, cooperation with members of the family of St. Camillus: something that all the recent General Chapters have emphasised is a way of living Camillian ministry in an incisive way. In the Message of the last General Chapter we read the following words: 'Together with all the members of the great Camillian family, and with all those who share a passion for frail and sick people (cf. Mt 25:36), we, too, stimulated by the appeal of Pope

Francis, always wish to improve the quality of our involvement in the needs of suffering man and new social emergencies’.

III.2 *The innkeeper or the challenges to be addressed today*

The Samaritan of the initial parable offers two pieces of silver to the innkeeper and entrusts to him the mission of taking care of the unfortunate man. This is a task and a mission that calls on us. It is said that ‘he took him to an inn and took care of him’. *The inn represents the Church where Jesus wants to bring together those who have been wounded by life. It is a beautiful thing to think of the Church as a clinic of patients and not a club of the perfect!*

One observes that the Samaritan does not address any words to the unfortunate man; he does not even ask him why he met with his fate. This is a wonderful thing: it enables us to understand that love does not need to express itself with words and that pain does not ask for reasons but for company and participation. The silence of the Good Samaritan is a love without words.

‘And the next day he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said: ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back’’. *What do the two silver coins given by the Samaritan represent? They are what is needed to live well while awaiting his return. The Fathers of the Church saw what Jesus left behind for our salvation: Holy Scripture and the sacraments. These are instruments of grace that help us on the journey towards holiness. This taking care of is the mission of the Church which continues the mission of the Samaritan. The two silver coins are given to the innkeeper; they represent the ministers of the Church who through the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments heal wounds and save man subjected to evil’.*

Father Konrad says: ‘As regards the two silver coins these can mean the Commandments of Charity towards God and towards neighbour, or the promise of present life and future life, according to other interpretations’.

With Camillian eyes, we lay and religious can put on the clothes of the innkeeper and see that Jesus, the Good Samaritan, through St. Camillus offers us what is needed to take care of suffering people who are in need. He offers us his grace and our intelligence for a competent and effective service for those who suffer.

The parable does not tell us what the innkeeper did after the departure of the Samaritan but one can imagine that he took time to take care of his guest, trying to find the right way to care for the suffering man and make him feel well or better, not least because he had received a promise: the promise to be paid which certainly simulated him to provide a service to his guest.

We Camillian lay people and religious, to whom Jesus through St. Camillus has entrusted the ministry of mercy, are called to free creative inventiveness so as to offer to the world, and in particular to the sick, that competent service that knows how to use ‘creativity in charity’, that knows how to invent proximity or nearness to those who suffer, that knows how to welcome the abandoned people of society.

It is a fine thing to remember here what St. Pope John Paul II said at the dawn of the third millennium in his apostolic letter *Nuovo Millennio Ineunte*: ‘Now is the time for a new "creativity" in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by "getting close" to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters’ (*Nuovo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 50).

For us it is important to take on board *what is said in the text of the ‘Superna Dispositione’ which expresses the thought of St. Camillus. In it, the Holy Father Clement VIII made clear that ‘All the reason for our Institute lies in works of both corporeal and spiritual works of mercy to be carried out in hospitals, in prisons and in the private homes of citizens’* (*Bullarium Ordinis*, edited by P. Kramer, pp. 79-80). This does not only involve thinking about works of mercy – it also involves living them,

basing ourselves on St. Camillus. This is a matter of making our lives, our service and our centres a 'new school of Charity'. Our socio/health-care institutions, our chaplaincies, and our centres for pastoral care must become poles of excellence of service and of how our suffering neighbours are served, poles of humanisation, and poles of evangelisation in the Camillian way.

Conclusion

Globalisation or internationalisation is making the universe into a village where everything is seen and known about; in his last encyclical the Pope spoke about a 'common home'. This provokes the challenge of an integration or interculturality that is not indifferent to the world of health. Great challenges such as the demographic revolution, the demands of ecology, economic disorder etc., also influence in an incisive way our Camillian world, which is the world of health and suffering. Despite everything, we are called to find our place in this world through Camillian ministry. Pope Francis when speaking about an outward-going Church in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* says: 'Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 20). So we ask ourselves: what does this going forth mean for us in Camillian ministry?