

Message to the Camillian Religious of the Province of Brazil after the Pastoral Visit (8-31 May 2019)

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‘In fidelity to the initial inspiration of the Founder and the Foundresses, and in listening to the many forms of suffering and poverty of humanity today, you will know how to make the gift you received shine with an ever new light; and many young men and women throughout the world will be able to feel attracted by it and to join you, so as to continue bearing witness to God’s tenderness’ (Pope Francis, Address to the men and woman religious of the Camillian Charismatic Family, 18 March 2019).

Dearest Fr. Leo Pessini, Superior General,
Dearest Fr. Antonio Mendes, Provincial Superior,
Dearest Camillian confreres of Brazil,

Health and peace in the Lord in our lives!

Now that a number of days have passed since our pastoral visit to your Province of 8-31 May 2019, we wish, first of all, to thank you for the fraternal welcome that we received in all the communities. It was a fine thing to meet each one of you in the thirteen communities of your great country – Brazil. The fact that the health of our Superior General, Fr. Leo, enabled him both to take part in the opening and ending of this visit and to receive continual updating on the progress of the meeting while we were in Granja Viana, comforted everyone.

We were positively impressed by the great work that you do with so much dedication, starting with your variegated ministry in the health-care, social, educational and parish fields, your animation of pastoral care in health, your activity in chaplaincies, and so forth. We were able to observe the solidity of the administrative organisation of the various bodies of the Province that support these activities. There is no doubt that you are excellent administrators of health-care, educational and social services.

We saw the importance that you attribute as a Province to pastoral care for vocations and the formation of candidates for Camillian religious life. There are capable religious in the three communities for formation (four if we include the residence of Belo Horizonte) who are dedicated to this end. Your concern with this field has encouraged you to rely upon excellence in the philosophical-theological formation of the faculty

of Jesuits of Belo Horizonte where the temporary professed already study theology; these will soon be joined by the students of the philosophy cycle.

Good formation enables the Camillian ministry to be performed in a competent and effective way. For this reason, initial, specialised and ongoing formation is very important. In the Province there is a significant number of religious who are engaged in university studies, in particular in the disciplines of psychology and administration. We encourage others to follow their example, cultivating other disciplines as well, of an ecclesiastical and civil character, that are congruous with our ministry.

The initiative to announce the Vocational Year demonstrates your concern about the decrease in vocations and your interest in the future of the Order in Brazil. Both the vast programme that has been drawn up this year, and the various activities that form a part of it, seem to be very appropriate. The convinced support and the participation of our religious mean that the Vocational Year is meeting with notable success.

The great involvement of religious Institutes for women of our charismatic family and of lay people (the Lay Camillian Family and others), of people who work in our works and parishes, and your cooperation with dioceses, all offer an idea of the inter-Congregational and ecclesial approach that have inspired this.

The first pre-condition for a young man (or young woman) to ask to join a religious Institute is to know of its existence. The spread of knowledge about St. Camillus de Lellis (his life, spirituality and charism) will increase devotion to him and will lead to a basic knowledge about him, starting with which new vocations could be born for our Institutes.

In this period the Province is preparing its celebration of the first centenary (1922-2022) of the arrival of the first Camillian religious in Brazil (Fr. Innocente Radrizzani and Fr. Eugenio Dalla Giacoma). In a still young context such as you have, the phenomenon of ageing and the presence of a significant number of religious with signs of deterioration caused by age and/or illness have begun to appear. The Province is responding with promptness to this reality by creating in the centre at Granja Viana the space and the conditions for very good care from a technical and human point of view. It is advisable in our view, and despite what has been said, to be very careful not to marginalise those religious who can still live and live together in active communities, continuing to offer their experience, wisdom, spirituality and service.

The initiative of being concerned about the health of all the religious and the young candidates of the Province through the programme of prevention and treatment, which

was activated with the medical/health-care coordination of Fr. Marcelo, is admirable and very much appreciated.

Some Challenges

The selection of candidates

To begin with, pastoral care for vocations, discernment about the suitability of the candidates who knock at our door, is of extreme importance. The scarcity of vocations should not make us lower the bar of the pre-requisites and accept candidates who are not suitable.

First of all, people with psychiatric or psychological disturbances should not be admitted to the process of formation. We should not give way to the temptation to see ourselves as the ‘redeemers’ of these people, admitting them to our seminaries in the hope that ‘they will be healed’.

We should be equally prudent in accepting candidates who come from other seminaries and houses of formation of other religious Institutes. Candidates should not be accepted who have been rejected by one or more diocesan seminaries or houses of formation of religious Institutes.

As regards homosexual candidates, the Church has expressed itself repeatedly (and Pope Francis has recently made certain declarations on this subject) to the effect that these people should not be admitted as candidates to the priesthood. Even less should they be admitted to religious life.

Spiritual life

With the exception of houses of formation, we noted the great difficulty that our religious communities have in planning and participating daily in moments of common prayer, and the same may be said about the daily celebration of the Eucharist. A great deal of work and too many tasks must not be an alibi for failing to meet this obligation. Our identity as consecrated men depends on care for our spiritual lives. We should remember what with refined irony Fr. Calisto Vendrame loved to repeat: ‘often because of the work of the Lord one forgets about the Lord of work’.

Community life

We seemed to perceive that individualism is growing in our communities. In general, community meetings are very rare. The fraternal correction of confreres, both

by the Superiors and in the community, is practically inexistent. We encourage you to dedicate time to being together, to addressing the affairs of the community in common, and to sharing free time and leisure, etc.

At this moment, in the Province there are various communities where for various reasons only two religious remain. This is a situation that should be remedied as far as this is possible and as soon as possible.

The communion of goods

An essential aspect of religious life is the perfect sharing of material goods: ‘Whatever a religious acquires by personal labour, or on behalf of the institute, belongs to the institute. Whatever comes to a religious in any way through pension, grant or insurance also passes to the institute, unless the institute’s own law decrees otherwise’ (CCL can. 668 §3).

If for whatever reason a religious receives money in a personal capacity, the first step of the sharing of goods requires the drawing up of a complete monthly personal report of income and expenditure. Everything that remains should be given to the Superior or made available to the community.

We were able to observe that this does not always take place. The perfect communion of goods does not involve contributing to the community with a part of what the religious earns, with the contemporaneous accumulation of personal assets. It is, instead, a matter of drawing near as much as possible to the ideal of sharing everything. Here we should remember the statement made by Pope Francis: ‘Pockets are the entrance door of the devil (into our lives)’.

Mission

Unfortunately, your Delegation in Bolivia was recently closed because of a lack of religious available for that mission. Not even the invitation from the Province of Spain to take responsibility for the Delegation in Argentina was accepted by the Province of Brazil. A more missionary spirit is beginning to be absent in your Province. We encourage a cultivation of the missionary impulse. The current initiative of sending temporary professed to receive formation in pastoral care in the various Delegations of the Americas seems to us to be an excellent way to generate and develop the missionary spirit in young men and this is something that we encourage.

A Welcoming and Generous Province

We seemed to perceive a growth in a sense of belonging to the Province of Brazil of the Order and of participation in the life of the Order. There are various elements that point to this. First of all, the gift of the person of the Superior General, Fr. Leo Pessini, who at the moment of his election was your Provincial Superior. Then there is the contribution of the Central Economic Commission with its two members who come from your Province: Fr. Justino Scatolin and Fr. Mario Kozik.

The fact that the Provincial Superior in recent years has been accompanied at the meetings of the General Consulta with the Major Superiors by one or two of your Provincial councilors (even if, as Fr. Leo would say, this is a ‘responsible transgression’) was seen by us as a way of being concerned about the Order and the affairs of the Order outside Brazil.

The Province accepted with great generosity the invitation to organise the meeting of parish priests and rectors in the year 2017 and with great enthusiasm it is also organising the meeting of the administrators of the works of the Order which will be held in September of this year.

Last but not least, we would like to emphasise the economic contribution to the generalate house made by the Province of Brazil which during this six-year period has become the first contributor.

For all of this and for very many other services, gifts and manifestations of interest and generosity towards the Order, we are sincerely grateful. We thank you in a heartfelt way for everything that you, all of you and each one of you, achieve as a Province, reliving and bearing witness to the merciful love of Christ for the sick.

The Time of Chapters

The almost four weeks that we spent with you filled the first month of the last year of the six-year period of the government of the Order. By now we are entering the time of the Local and Provincial Chapters which will end next year with our General Chapter.

Your next Provincial Chapter, beginning with the preparations for it in the communities, is a *kairós* to address with courage and evangelical peace of mind the needs of our consecrated lives and our ministry. We ask you to bear in mind and to address seriously the challenges that we have cited above. We are convinced that dialogue and discernment will point out to you the pathway and the right solutions to overcome your difficulties.

The LIX General Chapter will begin on 2 May 2020 and its subject will be: ‘What is Camillian Prophecy Today? Peering into the Past, Living the Present Trying to Serve as Samaritans, and Journeying with Hope towards the Future’.

Over the next few weeks you will receive together with all the other Provinces of the Order the *Lineamenta*, that is to say the first of the documents for the assembly of the General Chapter which should be studied by the community and Provincial Chapters. The results of these consultations should be sent to the General Secretariat so that they can form a part of the drawing up of the *Instrumentum Laboris* which will guide the reflections of the General Chapter.

We encourage you to take seriously this process of thought and analysis which should illumine our journey as an Order at least for the next six-year period. The participation of everyone is needed to reach the right conclusions given the various realities of our broad presence in the world.

We will end this Message by renewing our gratitude to each one of you and to the whole of the Province for the fraternal welcome that you have given to us on this and all the other occasions of encounter and fraternity.

May St. Camillus, our father, Founder and source of inspiration, continue to protect and inspire your witness to the love of God in the world of health and to care for the sick as Good Samaritans!

Through intercession of the Virgin Mary, who with you we invoke as *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, together with the disciples of the upper room of the Last Supper, we ask for the continual effusion of the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life, upon your Province and upon the whole of our Order.

Fraternally,

Rome, 9 June 2019
The Solemnity of Pentecost

Fr. Laurent Zoungrana
Vicar General

Br. José Ignacio Santaolalla
Member of the General Consulta