

**ENGAGING WITH THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
OF THE CAMILLIAN PROJECT
TOWARDS A FAITHFUL AND CREATIVE LIFE**

In order to respond adequately to the gift that we have received from God, our Order always and everywhere strives for faithfulness to our charism and the renewal of our ministry, in harmony with the spirit of the Founder and the needs of inculturation. Thus, we promote, within the Order, community reflection, discernment, and cooperation among the confreres, communities, and provinces. (Const. n.58)

INTRODUCTION

The 58th Extraordinary General Chapter of 2014 adopted **The Camillian Project: Towards a Faithful and Creative Life** (*in short The Camillian Project*) which was approved by the 57th General Chapter of 2013. The Camillian Project is “a choral movement guided by the Spirit who invites us every day to ‘**start afresh from the merciful Christ**’, and which requires the responsible commitment of each individual religious.” (The Camillian Project, n. 1.1)

It served as the general direction of all the programming and plans of the five-year (2014-2020) mandate of the Consulta conferred by the 58th Extraordinary General Chapter in 2014; however, it was extended for another two years (2020-2022) because of the coronavirus pandemic.

From October 16 to 17, 2015, the Secretariat for Ministry members gathered together in Bangkok at the Camillian Pastoral Care Center to make a complete layout and design of the programs which was approved by the Consulta and subsequently implemented from 2015 to 2020.

“The Camillian Project was conceived of, and developed, in order to facilitate a journey on two inseparable rails.

a) Interior revitalization

- ✓ through a personal and community commitment to spiritual discernment whose aim and horizons are exploring and savoring the essential values of Camillian consecrated life;
- ✓ retrieving the meaning of the gospel radicality handed down by the Founder;
- ✓ proposing anew with courage and an enterprising spirit his creativity and holiness;
- ✓ motivating perseverance in the pathway of holiness, promoting a new culture of dynamic faithfulness;
- ✓ renewing human and professional skills in order to effect an implementation of ministry that is adapted to new situations;
- ✓ deepening ecclesial communion and openness to laypeople;
- ✓ and, intensifying and renewing pastoral care as regards vocations.

b) Restructuring or reorganization

- ✓ through a process that leads to reviewing the organizational structures of the Order;

- ✓ fostering a change in mentality which will make possible and effective necessary cooperation between the different parts of the Order;
- ✓ optimizing the resources of the Order by unifying or centralizing services, above all in the field of formation;
- ✓ unifying, amalgamating and incorporating Provinces, Vice-Provinces or Delegations; and looking for new forms of leadership of the Order, etc.”

(The Camillian Project 2014-2020, n. 1.2 Objectives)

“The greatness of the ministry – to which the Constitution attributes a central place in exhorting us to commit ourselves to it ‘above everything else’, even at the risk to our lives and for the whole of our lives (C 12, 29) ‘justifies the statement of Camillus that our Order needs perfect men, unified and centered, seduced by the merciful Christ and impassioned of the weakest and most in need, internally free, able to form healthy and health-giving relationships and to live existence and pre-existence.

We are thus called to rely upon the quality and truth of our being: authentic motivations, maturity in relationships; the way of managing our shadows and wounds; the meaning of life, attention directed towards our own spiritual needs; the way of posing to ourselves true and ultimate questions; and an intimate relationship with God through the practice of our vows and intense and faithful life of prayer (liturgy, sacraments...) that privileges the contemplative and cordial dimension, that frees itself from an excessive functional charge’.” (The Camillian Ministry: Directions 2013, n. 38)

General Objectives of the Program of the Secretariat for Ministry

The Camillian Project was developed after a long process of assessment of the needs and desires of the Order. It was “an assessment of the ‘interior map’ and an ‘exterior map’ of the Order [...] to throw light on the fundamental elements of Camillian consecrated life (evangelical counsels, spiritual life, fraternal communion, formation, ministry, and prospects for the future).”

(The Camillian Project, foreword).

The assessment has identified the pertinent issues of the Order in particular and the Church in general which the Camillian Project considered these issues as “true signs of the times, [...] phenomena which call for true discernment:

- ✓ obscuring or the crisis of essential values,
- ✓ loss or crisis of the meaning of consecrated life,
- ✓ relativism and individualism,
- ✓ mediocrity and pessimism,
- ✓ thirst and arduous search for renewal, above all of a spiritual character,
- ✓ urgent need to respond to the challenges of a time marked by epochal changes,
- ✓ live ministry with passion and creativity,
- ✓ lack of vocational perseverance and absence or diminution of vocations,
- ✓ uncertainties about the future and its management, and
- ✓ the processes of restructuring and of inter-Provincial cooperation.”

(The Camillian Project, n. 1.1 Motivations)

In response to those “signs of the times”, the Secretariat for Ministry has followed the general objectives of the Camillian Project in their programs:

- ✓ retrieving the meaning of the gospel **radicality** handed down by the Founder,
- ✓ proposing anew with courage and an enterprising spirit his **creativity** and holiness,

- ✓ renewing human and professional **skills** in order to effect an implementation of ministry that is adapted to new situations,
- ✓ deepening ecclesial **communion**, and openness to laypeople, and
- ✓ the fostering a **change in mentality** which will make possible and effective necessary cooperation between the different parts of the Order.

(The Camillian Project, n. 1.2)

In our programs, the values of radicality, creativity, relevance, communion, and new mentality became the main criteria in the specific program of action implemented beginning in 2014. Furthermore, the programs are permeated with the spirit of shared ministry and community discernment.

Enabling Objectives and the Program of Actions

It is worth mentioning here the members of the Secretariat who reflected and drew up the program together as mandated by the Camillian Project, in particular, Fr. Enrique Gonzales (Vice-Province of Peru, representing the Americas), the late Bro. Julien Gbaguidi (Province of Benin-Togo, representing West Africa), Bro. Joseph Khiyaniri (Delegation of Kenya, representing East Africa), Fr. Norbert Riebartsch (German Province, representing Europe), Fr. Gabriel Garcia (Philippines Province, representing Asia), and Fr. Antonio Puca (Sicilian-Napolitan Province, representing Italy) and all the Provincial/Delegation Council members in charge of Ministry.

For the seek of curiosity, the very first item discussed by the Secretariat for Ministry during its first meeting in Bangkok (October 16-17, 2015) for the elaboration of the concrete program of actions was the letter and appeal of the late Father General Leocir Pessini and his Consulta regarding the situation and care of the refugees in Europe.

He encouraged us to treat the issue with openness, avoid being indifferent, find ways of making our presence be felt amid crisis, and confront the crisis together with other interested organizations in a spirit of collaboration, particularly with the local church and the local government.

And now, I prepared this terminal report of the Secretariat amid the Russo-Ukraine crisis which brought about new European refugees. Thanks to the Camillian Polish Province and other Provinces with the help of the entire Camillian family and others, an emergency response activity is implemented.

A. Retrieve the gospel, mystical, ecclesial, and pastoral dimension of our service, in coordination with the local Church, open to its needs, and rediscover direct contact with the sick by a renewed competence as an effective exercise of our fourth vow

- 1) **MADRID EXCHANGE: Humanization of Health and Access to Health Care, A Task of the Camillian Universities and the Centers for Pastoral Health Theology and Health Care.** (Madrid, April 21-24, 2016)

The meeting of the directors of the Camillian pastoral and humanization centers, universities, Camillianum, and the Camillian physicians in Madrid at the Centro de Humanizacion de la Salud was attended by 33 Camillian religious and lay collaborators from Asia, the Americas, 8 Africas and Europe.

They represented the 13 pastoral and humanization centers and 8 physicians of the Camillians in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Brazil, USA, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Italy, Spain, India, Thailand, Philippines, and Chile.

The host of the meeting was the Spanish Province under the care of the General Delegate Bro. Jose Carlos Bermejo, MI. The event has left an imprint in the hearts and minds of the participants of a creative and dynamic Camillian ministry.

To date, we have a total of 22 humanization and pastoral centers which occupy 4.2% of the totality of the Camillian ministries globally.

The sharing of ideas and discussions elaborated some proposals and courses of action aimed at establishing a framework of cooperation in the field of research, studies, and special formation on health and pastoral health care as well as our response to the new challenges of the time particularly in situations of emergency and disaster by building and strengthening the resiliency of the most vulnerable populace and communities. The following were proposed:

1.1 From Camillianum to the pastoral centers and vice versa

- annual conference on a specific theme
- open database of books available and translation of books
- courses on current themes/ issues on health
- non-official collaboration of Camillianum and the other Camillian humanization centers
- send people (religious or non) to study at Camillianum
- assist its transformation from theory to practice
- facilitate meetings among professors of the different centers
- create a *central commission* that coordinates the different centers in terms of studies and programs.

1.2 Cooperation and coordination among the Centers

- organize meetings among the Centers to know, learn, and exchange experiences at least at the continental level
- developed Centers assist the developing ones (twinning/ partnership)
- exchange of educational resources in view of reciprocity and growth in the formation of the Order, valuing the strengths and the excellence of each center.

1.3 Others

- the central government of the Order reinforces the peripheral centers
- collaboration between the Centers of learning and places of Camillian ministry
- improve the interdisciplinarity of courses and academic standard in the Centers
- sensitivity to culture

2) **International Conference of Camillian Chaplains: Hospital Chaplaincy at the Heart of the Camillian Ministry** (Rome, November 4-6, 2016)

The conference was attended by 52 Camillian religious coming from the 22 provinces, delegations and missions of the Order. The event was hosted by the Consulta in collaboration with the Roman Province.

To date, we have a total of 180 chaplaincy ministries which occupies 35% of the totality of the Camillian ministries globally. The conference concluded with an **Eight-Point Program** of the Chaplaincy ministry is as follows:

- a) To be **prophets in a globalized society** in which secularization, indifference, exclusion as well as various forms of religiosity are present.
 - b) The **primacy of the Word**. In order to become evangelizers in the world of suffering, we need to rediscover the primacy of our personal and communal relationship with the Lord [...]
 - c) The **search and attention to our spirituality**. Moreover, the Camillian charism and its message require an intense spiritual life in which without it everything that we do will no longer be an expression of that "new school of charity" which is at the heart of the charism itself.
 - d) The **development of humanity**. Understanding the joys, hopes, and sorrows of the suffering humanity of today is a great gift of the Camillian charism which puts Christ always at the center of everyone.
 - e) The **exercise of tenderness**. This is the peculiar trait of the Camillian way of life in its proximity to the suffering, a trait that is typically human and humanizing.
 - f) The **challenges**. We identify accompaniment to non-believers or of persons of different faiths, the accompaniment of those who are terminally ill and the vast problems of ethical, health, psychological, emotional, and affective in nature, the accompaniment of families especially in overcoming their grief, and the accompaniment of health personnel who are the real visible image of the "hundred arms" of St. Camillus whom he desired to sustain his work.
 - g) Particular attention and responsibility to the Camillianum Institute, [...] to cultivate an open and greater dedication to engage in specific **continuing education and research in the field of health and pastoral health theology** so that it can guide us and the whole Church in reading history "the signs of the times", contributing to "integral health" of the men and women of our time.
 - h) The **hopes and commitment for the future**: [...] to see the need of the Church and the society today of the Camillian charism, obviously seen and actualized in reconstructing the history of humanity.
- 3) **Workshop Conference of All Directors of Pastoral Health Care Centers and Alumni of Camillianum in Asia** (Bangkok, August 12-14, 2019)

The workshop conference aimed at:

- ✓ forming a team of formators and animators in pastoral health care;
- ✓ maximizing resources and competencies in the field for an enduring promotion of the science of pastoral health care;
- ✓ initiating a common project among the pastoral centers existing all over the world particularly in Asia;
- ✓ strengthening the network of the Camillian Pastoral Centers in Asia in terms of communication, sharing of resources and personnel; and
- ✓ drawing out concrete proposals for the Pastoral Health Care promotion, animation, and coordination of the Order.

To date, there are three Camillain pastoral health care centers in Asia and three Camillians appointed as the episcopal conference secretaries of pastoral healthcare commissions in Thailand, India, and the Philippines.

This resulted in the elaboration of concrete proposals to be presented in the respective provincial and delegation Chapters as follows:

- ✓ establishment at the Provincial level of a systematic, comprehensive, and integrated development plan for the promotion of Pastoral Health Care with priority on the (1) formation of pastoral health care workers, (2) collaboration in the work of pastoral health care, and (3) advocacy on health and related issues in the next 2-3 years and the creation of a well-coordinated Pastoral Health care program by an inter-provincial committee on Pastoral Health care in Asia-Pacific
- ✓ continue the legacy and mission of Camillianum in Asia-Pacific by organizing a 3-month program (in the Philippines) and a series of training workshops at specific Camillian Pastoral Health Care Centers (India, Thailand, Indonesia) in different provinces, offered to the Camillians and others (diocesan, religious and laypeople) to better serve the sick
- ✓ development of modules and brief courses in different areas of pastoral Health Care (like drug dependency, HIV/AIDS, Palliative Care, Mental Health, Disability & Disaster Response, and others) to be offered at the National level by Camillians and other Local experts.

4) **Meeting of the Directors of the Humanization and Pastoral Health Centers** (Rome, October 7-9, 2019)

The meeting was convoked by the General Superior Fr. Leocir Pessini facilitated by a Committee constituted by the Consultor for ministry and two other Camillian religious.

The meeting aimed to promote the relationship of those who are responsible to the Centers of Humanization and Pastoral Health of the Order as the key towards communion, reinforce the relation of the Centers as an expression of the Camillian ministry, and prepare a project to be presented to the General Chapter (2022) in view of the closure of Camillianum.

All the directors of the 12 Camillian humanization and pastoral health centers attended the 3-day meeting. The end result of the meeting will be presented as motions in today's General Chapter.

“At the General Chapter of 1923, it was affirmed, after a long discussion, that care for the sick was the principal but not the only ministry of our Institute, on the condition that this did not lead to a deviation from the principal purpose of the Order.

This discussion was taken up again in the 1960s following a document in which it was stated that the purpose of the Order consisted of corporal and spiritual works of mercy but that amongst these those concerning the sick, wherever they were to be found, were to be privileged.” (The Camillian Ministry: Direction 201,3 n.10)

B. Understand the specific needs that emerge from the local area in which one lives (inculturation) and in parishes, guidelines should be established promoting Camillian countenance.

1) **International Meeting of Camillian Parish Priests and Rectors of churches entrusted to the Camillians:** CAMILLIAN PARISHES: A place of communion (*koinonia*), evangelization (*kerygma*) and mission (*diakonia*). (Sao Paolo, April 19 - 23, 2017)

The meeting aimed to live and enrich our “identity of being sent out in a concrete way [...] and in particular “in the Provinces where there are parishes, ‘Guidelines’ should be established for the ministry, holding dear the offering of a Camillian countenance.” (cf. Camillian Project, sec. 2.5).

It was attended by 47 Camillian pastors, rectors, and lay collaborators from the 12 provinces and delegations of the Order. At present, the Camillians are administering 55 parishes and 39 churches (open to public worship (rectories) all over the world which is 25% of the totality of the Camillian ministries globally.

At the end of the meeting, a new Statute of Parishes and Rectories entrusted to the Camillians was formulated that will accompany our mission of pastoral care, so that by living our charism, it will form Camillian Christian Communities, being sensitive to people who suffer and to their members who are most in need.

C. Expand the horizon of ministry beyond the limited field of our apostolic works (palliative care, prevention, public health, the domestic church, home care, education) and the promotion of health

1. **Convention of Directors and Administrators of the Camillian Health Facilities:**
Manage well to serve better (Sao Paolo, September 15-20, 2019)

The convention aimed at

- ✓ ensuring a health system, policy, and program that allows access to quality healthcare for the poorest and vulnerable;
- ✓ reaffirming and enhancing the mission of the health facilities faithful to the charism and values of the Institute sensitive to the signs of the times and the needs of the people;
- ✓ strengthening the identity and roles of lay collaborators as stakeholders of the Camillian mission and building a network of cooperation and collaboration to maximize learnings on qualified services.

It was attended by a total of 133 Camillian religious and lay directors, administrators, and collaborators of the Camillian Social-health Institutions (CSIs) from the 17 provinces and delegations of the Order.

To date, the Camillians operate 94 hospitals and 115 socio-health facilities all over the world which is 40% of the totality of the Camillian ministries globally.

The convention strengthened the vision of the Camillian Socio-health Institutions (CSIs) as an authentic healing community announcing the salvation and fullness of life of the sick person by incarnating the culture of the Good Samaritan in a given context.

The New Charter identifies the ten core values of the CSIs: the centrality of the human person, holistic service of life and health, gratuitous love, faithful to the moral teachings, healing community, justice and equity, spiritual mission, a network of collaboration, the priority of the poorest, and sensitivity and openness to the new signs of the times.

Conclusion

Therefore, the planning that was prepared by the Secretariat for Ministry in 2015 (Bangkok) has achieved the following activities:

- 1) concrete response to the refugee crisis in Europe,
- 2) strengthening the promotion and humanization of health as well as its promoters,
- 3) establishing the guideline of parish ministry, and
- 4) reaffirming the core values of our socio-health institutions.

The implementation of the plans (activities) of the Secretariat was achieved through the strategic collaboration and cooperation of the Provinces, particularly, Spain, Brazil, and Thailand in terms of logistics, personnel and finances.

Holding international conferences outside Rome (a common venue of international meetings) gives the confreres the opportunity and privilege to know, see and appreciate the Camillian missions in other countries.

On the other hand, it gives the host Province to introduce to the guests (confreres and collaborators) their mission and share their generosity according to their resources and blessings. Isn't it an expression of our slogan "**more Order less province**"? It strengthens our identity and builds synergy.

"What St. Camillus handed to us is [...] the result not of a sociological outlook but of the outlook of God as revealed in Christ. In two Biblical texts, he perceived, in the inexhaustible face of Christ, the unmistakable features of the identity to be impressed on his spirituality and his work.

In Mt 25 and in Lk 10:25-37 Camillus found the suffering Christ to be served and the supportive and health-giving Christ to be served; he who hides and reveals himself in every sick person; the Christ who gives us the grace to serve and to feel like him; the Christ whose beauty and dignity are to be contemplated and venerated; and the Christ who restores to every wounded and marginalized person his or her lost or stolen dignity." (The Camillian Ministry: Directions, n. 32)