

CAMILLIANS

TODAY



CAMILLIANS TODAY



Camillians Today

Charism, Spirit, and Mission





Camillians Today: Charism, Spirit and Mission

Published by

Order of the Ministers of the Infirm (Camillians)

Piazza della Maddalena, 53

00186 Rome, Italy

Tel. 06.899.281

www.camilliani.org

© 2026 Camillians

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 979-8-2533-5587-9

Design & Layout

Communications Office

Camillians

Piazza della Maddalena, 53

00186 Rome, Italy

Cover: Stained-glass artwork in the Chapel of St. Camillus at the Generalate in Rome.
Photograph by Sibi Augustin Chennatt.

Contents

PREFACE

A Story of Compassion and Care	9
---------------------------------------	---

CHAPTER ONE

St. Camillus de Lellis:

Life, Charism and Spirituality

Historical and Cultural Context	11
Some Biographical Details	13
The Camillian Charism: Theology in Action	23
Camillian Spirituality: A Response to Divine Love	26
Mary in Camillian Spirituality: Icon of Compassion	28
“Not I, but You”: Camillian Holiness! The Path of Beauty	31
The Camillian Martyrs of Charity	36
Constitution and General Statutes: A Courageous Commitment to Life	37

CHAPTER TWO

450 Years Since the Conversion of Saint Camillus:

A Symbol, a Meaning, and a History

The Elevation of the Company of Ministers to the Sick to a Religious Order in 1591	41
The Red Cross of Martyrdom of Charity: Symbol of an Order Present Throughout History	43
Camillian Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope in the Footsteps of St. Camillus	48

CHAPTER THREE

The Camillian Ministry Today

Spiritual Care in Hospitals and at Home	53
Camillian Mission in Education and Healthcare and Camillian Social-healthcare Facilities	54
Communities of Faith and Service: Parishes as “Field Hospitals” of the Camillian Order	56

The Camillian Mission in the Humanitarian Field: CADIS	57
Cultivating Value, Building the Future: <i>Salute e Sviluppo ETS</i>	59
Vocations and Young People: Cultivating the Future of the Mission	60

CHAPTER FOUR

Camillians Around the World:

Overview of Camillian Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Delegations

Province of Benin-Togo	66
Brazilian Province	68
Province of Burkina Faso	70
German Province	72
Indian Province	74
North Italian Province	77
Philippine Province	79
Polish Province	81
Roman Province	83
Sicilian-Napolitan Province	85
Spanish Province	87
Province of Thailand	89
Vice-Province of Peru	91
Vice-Province of Vietnam	93
Delegation in Australia	95
Delegation in Colombia-Ecuador	96
Delegation in France	98
Delegation in Haiti	100
Delegation in Indonesia	101
Delegation in Ireland	103
Delegation in Kenya	104
Delegation in Taiwan	106
Delegation in Tanzania	108
Delegation in The United States	109
Camillians in Georgia	111

CHAPTER FIVE

Women's Institutes of the Camillian Family

The Ministers of The Sick of St. Camillus	112
Daughters of St. Camillus	115

Handmaids of the Incarnation	117
Missionaries of the Sick ‘Christ Hope’	119
Daughters of Our Lady Stella Maris	121
Kamillianische Schwestern (Camillian Sisters)	122
Camillian Missionaries	124
Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary	125
Missionaries of Mary, Mother of Life	127
 CHAPTER SIX	
Lay Camillian Family Today	129
 CHAPTER SEVEN	
Synergies Between Religious and Laity	131
Laity and Religious: A Shared Mission	
Joint Formation: Growing in the Charism	
 CHAPTER EIGHT	
Conclusion	135

PREFACE

A Story of Compassion and Care

Fr. Pedro TRAMONTIN



Fr. Pedro Tramontin,
Superior General
of the Order of the
Ministers of the
Infirm

The Constitution of our Camillian Order sets forth with simplicity and clarity the Gospel foundation of our *angelic ministry*: the presence of Christ in us as we serve the sick, and the presence of Christ in the sick whom we serve.

At the heart of the history of the



I hope that these pages will be an occasion of inspiration and reflection for all; that they will help each of us to cherish and renew the gift we have received, so that we may continue to respond with creativity and fidelity to the call of the Gospel.

Church and of wounded humanity, the Order of Ministers of the Infirm—the Camillians—continues to represent a prophetic presence, a concrete sign of Christ’s mercy toward the sick and the suffering.

Over the past decade, we have faced great challenges and profound changes,

during which the charism entrusted by God to St. Camillus de Lellis has found new ways to express itself, generating paths of care, closeness, and salvation in the most vulnerable contexts of our time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an extraordinary trial: it has confronted us with healthcare crises, social tensions, and spiritual fragility, yet it has also highlighted the transformative power of our vocation. In many parts of the world, the great Camillian family—religious men and women and lay people—has responded with courage, competence, and dedication, revealing its role as a historic sign of Christ’s presence alongside the sick and healthcare workers. Actively embodying the Camillian spirit in the care of the sick and the alleviation of suffering, they bear witness to respect for the sacredness of the human person and the spirituality of loving Christ in every person.

The historical period we are living through is marked by new challenges and tensions: vocations declining in geographical areas historically rich in faith and self-giving, while promising signs of spirituality and dedication emerge in other parts of the world; new forms of poverty and vulnerability demanding creative responses; the need for a new style of collaboration between religious and lay people. In this context, the Order has launched a *Strategic Plan* for revitalization and reorganization, with the aim of renewing our charismatic sources, consolidating our mission, and simplifying our structures to respond with greater resilience and prophetic vision to the needs of our time.

The shifting balance of influence across the Order’s geographical landscape—with the growth of vocations and ministry in Africa and Asia—challenges our vision and our organization. New missions have emerged or been consolidated, while in other places we have initiated processes of renewal and integration. On this journey, we are called to preserve what is truly

essential and, at the same time, to renew our language, forms of presence, formation dynamics, and modes of governance.

This volume has been prepared as a gesture of gratitude, discernment, and vision, celebrating two significant anniversaries in 2025: the Universal Jubilee and the 450th anniversary of the conversion of St. Camillus.

Camillus’s experience of grace and transformation remains more relevant today than ever: a man touched by mercy, who was able to transform his own suffering into a work of compassion for others. His charism—to put “more heart into those hands” that care for the sick—continues to resonate as a powerful and necessary call in a world often marked by loneliness and invisible suffering.

Camillians Today: Charism, Spirit and Mission is not merely a collection of texts, but offers religious, lay people, collaborators, and all those who wish to reflect on the meaning of Christian care today a spiritual and missionary reinterpretation of our charism. The pages of this volume look to the future: to integral formation, to the evangelization of suffering, to vocation promotion, to dialogue with the new generations, and to the building of networks of fraternity and shared responsibility. Its pages invite us to rediscover the freshness of a charism that, though rooted in the 16th century, speaks powerfully to the heart of our time.

I hope that these pages will be an occasion of inspiration and reflection for all; that they will help each of us to cherish and renew the gift we have received, so that we may continue to respond with creativity and fidelity to the call of the Gospel.

May the Camillian charism, born of a wound healed by love, still be today a living and necessary response for a world seeking care, meaning, and mercy! ■

St. Camillus de Lellis

Life, Charism, and Spirituality

Fr. Gianfranco LUNARDON, Fr. Baby ELLICKAI, Fr. Walter VINCI, & Fr. Felice DE MIRANDA

Historical and Cultural Context

The story of Camillus de Lellis takes place in the second half of the 16th century and the early 17th century.

The immediate setting of the story is 16th-century Rome and, more generally, Italy, divided into its numerous small states, principalities, or republics.

Humanist culture, already captivated by the exaltation of the individual, the discovery of new continents, and great works of art, was undergoing a transition from Renaissance euphoria to the tensions and crises of the Baroque era, while the “new science” of Copernicus and Galileo was taking hold.

The Church faced the Protestant Reformation movements that were tearing at its unity and responded with initiatives of the Catholic Reformation, such as the Council of Trent, and above all with a new flowering of saints and religious Orders dedicated to works of charity.

Social life was often plagued by wars, famines, and plagues, as well as by the persistent poverty of the humblest classes.

In the field of healthcare and social welfare, the Church continued to provide its hospitals, as it had done in the Middle Ages with the construction of the Hôpital-Dieu, and to support popular charitable associations such as the Companies of Divine Love and the Confraternities of Mercy.

Major Italian cities saw the rise or expansion of large hospital complexes. In Rome, the hospital of the incurables of St. James and that of *Santo Spirito in Sassia*, already steeped in history, stood out; in Milan the *Ca' Granda*, in Florence *Gli Innocenti*, in Naples *l'Annunziata*, and in Genoa the *Pammatone*. Similar healthcare institutions were established in Palermo, Mantua, Ferrara, Bologna, Pavia, and in many smaller towns across the peninsula.

The management of these institutions was entrusted to charitable committees, which were more or less autonomous but always under the patronage of government or ecclesiastical authorities.

The public hospital was seen as one of the symbols—along with the noble palace and the cathedral—of a state's grandeur, and thus every prince, king, or Pope aspired to build imposing hospital structures, entrusting their design to the finest architects of the era.

But alongside this emphasis on construction and the splendor of artistic decoration stood in stark contrast glaring gaps in the field of hygiene, inadequate care, and above all, serious deficiencies in care. This was very often entrusted to unprepared individuals, lacking any medical training and often even the most basic sense of humanity. People who took the job to make ends meet or who were sometimes forced into this work in lieu of a prison sentence.

The consequences were plain for all to see, but the authorities did not know how to remedy them.

Those who suffered were the sick: mistreated with harsh words and actions, left in filth, fed haphazardly, abandoned to the whims of these hired attendants; some were even taken to the morgue before they had breathed their last.

Here it is appropriate to return to a general consideration of the times, customs, and culture of the late Renaissance in relation to the conditions of the destitute and suffering in society. In the time of Camillus de Lellis, in Rome as elsewhere, the hospital was a last refuge for the desperate. While the wealthy were cared for in their homes by private physicians, the hospital was flooded with the poor of every kind, the abandoned and the vagrant, the incurables, rejected by society as a whole. And when these people could not, or often would not, enter the hospice, they remained in their miserable dwellings without care or any aid, or took refuge in the Roman caves, that is, in the crevices of ancient ruins or under the arches of the aqueduct in the Lazio countryside.

Renaissance society ignored them, regarded them as the lowest of the low, and marginalized them. A dramatic consequence of humanist culture which, as is well known, exalted “man” as an excellent being and the center of the universe.

But which man did it have in mind? The ideal man is the exceptional man: the brilliant individual, the creative artist, the strong and astute prince, the invincible mercenary captain, the discoverer of new worlds; a sort of social, cultural, and aristocratic elite.

In this cultural world, the poor man without prestige or power—and, moreover, sick or in poor health—found no regard whatsoever.

Camillus de Lellis, as we shall see, discovers “this” man—indeed, he goes in search of him—and discovers that this man is a person of equal dignity to any other. He will devote himself to “the whole” person, not just to his illness; understanding that one enters the hospital with one’s entire self, leaving nothing of one’s person or personality behind: the poor man brings his four rags but also his free and immortal spirit.

A child of his time, yet a rebel against his time, Camillus anticipated the modern era by clearly raising the issue of the rights of the sick, understood not as abstract principles but as concrete needs demanding a precise response from those around the suffering.

For them, he sought first and foremost to transform the hospital into a home, a house of hospitality, and to provide them with the humane care they deserve as human beings. But what was the hospital like back then? What was the level of medical and nursing care? Something depressing and even inhumane to the point that Camillus was deeply shocked. Camillus—

as his biographer Sanzio Ciatelli states—“above all, had immense compassion for the suffering that was sometimes inflicted by mercenary servants...”

He wanted to take action, but he realized it could not be the work of a single man. He needed generous and selfless collaborators. He gathered them, trained them in a new spirit, sent them to hospitals and the hovels of the poor, dispatched them to dozens of Italian cities

to bring aid to the most needy and to demonstrate through concrete example how the sick should be cared for. To ensure professional care for the sick, he also wrote the “Rules for Serving the Poor and Sick with Utmost Perfection”.

Disasters, famines, plagues, and wars drive him and his followers to rush to the scene as if to festivals of charity. He involves laypeople and cardinals, stirs the city and the Church, and transmits his passion and his anxiety to all: ‘I wish I had a hundred arms to reach the multitude of the suffering...’.

His zeal for works of charity arose from his discovery of human dignity, above all from seeing in the sick person ‘the very person of Christ..., the pupil and heart of God..., my lord and master’.

Camillus would impart these principles to the society and culture of his time, becoming the founder—as Pope Benedict XIV, who would beatify him in 1742, would say—of ‘a new school of charity’. Not from the pulpit or a university lectern. But from the hospital.



In the time of Camillus de Lellis, in Rome as elsewhere, the hospital was a last refuge for the desperate. While the wealthy were cared for in their homes by private physicians, the hospital was flooded with the poor of every kind.

From that hospital of his time, which he himself entered as “incurable” due to a leg ulcer that would never heal. That wound would determine, as we shall see, the course of his life. God Himself used it to show him the way.

Some Biographical Details

Birth and Youth

Bucchianico is a small town in Abruzzo perched on a hill between the city of Chieti and the Maiella.

It was here, on a feast day—that of the patron Saint Urban—on May 25, 1550, that Camillus de Lellis was born. His mother, Camilla de Compellis, seized by labor pains, had to rush home from Mass at the church. The child was born in a ground-floor room used as a stable. “Like Jesus,” the villagers immediately remarked; they revered Camilla, who was nearly sixty, calling her Saint Elizabeth.

During her unexpected pregnancy, she had a premonitory dream that she interpreted as ominous or a bad omen: she saw her grown son followed by many others, marked like them by a cross on their chests. She feared he would become a bandit leader.

Upon hearing the news of the birth, everyone rushed to the house, foremost among them his father Giovanni, an infantry captain in the pay of mercenary companies. He had fought in numerous wars and battles, in the service of Italian princes and the King of Spain. In Bucchianico, he was known as a “respectable man, a sworn magistrate, a council leader, and a good, God-fearing Christian”.

His mother Camilla, tall and dignified in bearing, was known for her domestic virtues, religious piety, and generosity toward the poor.

The boy grew up handsome and robust (he would eventually reach a height of nearly two meters), and soon found himself spending more time in the town square than



in school. With an elderly mother and a father in the military, he was left somewhat to his own devices. He displayed a lively, strong, and at times impetuous character; nevertheless, educated by his mother’s example, he showed kindness toward the poor and beggars.

When he was about thirteen, his mother died. At eighteen, his father’s example

1) Bucchianico, a small town in Abruzzo; 2) The house in which Camillus was born on May 25, 1550.

1) Valle dell'Inferno, Manfredonia, where the conversion of Camillus took place on February 2, 1575;
 2) "Conversion of Camillus", a painting by Agostino Gagliardi.

led him to pursue a military career. In anticipation of the crusade launched by Pius V against the Turks, he set out to answer the call for enlistment issued by Venice. The journey was arduous. Father and son, struck by fever, had to stop in Ancona and decided to return home.

On the way back, in Sant'Elpidio a

Mare, near Loreto, Giovanni's condition worsened and he died suddenly.

Left alone and adrift, Camillus had no choice but to return to a life of arms. He took part in several military campaigns in the Venetian army, distinguishing himself among his comrades for his fierce passion for dice and cards. He eventually ended up pawning his shirt to pay off gambling debts.

But then a troublesome sore appeared on his right leg, which tended to worsen. He went to Rome for proper treatment, to the Hospital of *San Giacomo degli Incurabili*. During his stay, he was hired as a ward attendant. But he proved to be a poor nurse. As soon as he recovered, he was fired, because he was in the habit of abandoning his duties to the sick to run off and gamble with the boatmen on the banks of the Tiber.

In 1572, he returned to enlist in the Venetian army and took part in several expeditions to Zara and Corfu, where he fell seriously ill and received the last rites. Once recovered, he fought at Castelnuovo against the Turks to liberate Kotor.

A couple of years later, we find him with the Spanish army at La Goletta near Tunis. From there, he returned to Palermo and Naples. Twice he faced the grave danger of shipwreck; he vowed to change his ways, but these were just sailor's promises.

His service was far from exemplary, and in the winter of 1574 he was dismissed. He found himself in Manfredonia. Numb with cold, he stood at the church door begging for alms. The foreman asked him to work as a laborer on the construction of the Capuchin monastery. He accepted without enthusiasm. And without knowing that he was about to experience the most important day of his life.

The Conversion and the Inspiration to Found a 'Company'

One evening, at the convent of San Giovanni Rotondo, where Camillus had been sent to transport materials and provisions, the convent's guardian, Father Angelo, approached him with fatherly



and admonishing words that touched him and caused him to reflect all night long. The next day, February 2, 1575, the feast of the Purification of Mary, as he was descending toward Manfredonia along the Valle dell'Inferno, his inner turmoil erupted and threw him from his horse. He struck his chest with a stone, asking God for forgiveness for his past life and resolving to do true penance. Perhaps the Lord had already been preparing that rebellious but fundamentally upright soul for some time; yet the circumstances and consequences of this return to grace are so surprising that his contemporary biographer, Sanzio Ciatelli, does not hesitate to compare it to Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus.

After a period as a postulant in Manfredonia, he was admitted to the novitiate at the Capuchin monastery in Trivento (Campobasso). But the constant rubbing of the habit against his leg reopened the wound, and after only three months the young novice, much to his regret, was dismissed.

On October 23 he returned to the

Hospital of San Giacomo, where he again underwent the necessary treatment, "causing no small amount of astonishment due to his radical change of life. Four years earlier he had been expelled for indiscipline; now he is admirable both as a patient and, above all, as a nurse. He devotes himself with patience and generosity to the service of the sick in need of assistance, gains knowledge and experience of hospital life, and takes on increasingly important responsibilities."

In June 1579, still convinced of a divine calling in this direction, he knocked again on the door of the Capuchin novitiate. This time he was sent to Tagliacozzo (L'Aquila). But after a few months, the wound reopened, and he was forced to definitively renounce his deep desire for the Franciscan life; nevertheless, the memory and the fascination of St. Francis's spirituality—characterized by merciful love and service to every creature of the Lord—would remain indelible in his soul.

The wound, which would never heal, becoming over time more extensive and deeper, would accompany Camillus throughout his life. He was now convinced

Signature of Camillus in his capacity as the superintendant of St. James Hospital, contained in this historic register preserved in the archives of Holy Spirit Hospital, Rome





“Camillus is being instructed by Fr. Philip Neri”, a painting preserved at the church of *San Girolamo alla carità*, Rome

that the Lord wanted him in the service of the poor and the sick.

In October, therefore, he returned to San Giacomo. The administrators welcomed him with open arms and entrusted him with the role of “Master of the House”, that is, general treasurer and head of personnel. Camillus fulfilled this task with wisdom and diligence. Every day he visited the sick, caring for them personally; he persistently guided and instructed the often negligent and disheartened staff; and he sternly reprimanded those who failed in their duty to provide proper care.

He was aware of his lack of spiritual preparation and placed himself under the tutelage of a man known for his wisdom and holiness: Father Philip Neri of the Oratory. He met with him assiduously as his

confessor and spiritual director. But even among saints, differences can arise. Saint Philip Neri initially opposed Camillus’s plans with firm dissent, but later changed his mind and recognized them as inspired by God.

The eve of the Feast of the Assumption in 1582: another memorable moment in the history of Camillus de Lellis. Camillus, increasingly distressed by the neglect suffered by the sick in the hospital, and as if struck by a heavenly inspiration: “that there was no better remedy for such hardships than to establish a Congregation of pious and virtuous men, whose purpose would be to help and serve these poor people, not for pay but voluntarily and out of love for God, with that charity and tenderness that mothers usually show to their own sick children”.

Camillus confided in some friends willing to share the idea and told them that one night the Crucified One himself had encouraged him in a dream in the face of the first difficulties, saying: “Continue, you of little faith, the work is not yours but mine”.

The hospital administrators viewed the initiative of that group of self-styled volunteers with suspicion and opposed it in every way. Therefore, Camillus decided to move with his first companions to the Church of Our Lady of Miracles and, together with them, began to provide daily service at the nearby Hospital of *Santo Spirito in Sassia*.

Faced with the physical and spiritual needs of the sick, Camillus had formed his group of men skilled in physical care and a few priests, so as to offer a comprehensive service to the sick, addressing the whole person and all their needs.

With tenacity, at the age of thirty-three, Camillus began studying Latin and theology at the Roman College in order to be ordained a priest. “Tarde venisti!”, his young companions teased him, but he persevered, and on May 26, 1584, he was ordained a priest. He would never be a



man of letters, but he would make up for his limited theological training with his extraordinary, brilliant, charismatic, and prophetic gifts.

He therefore felt the need to give precise form to his teachings, both in the realm of spiritual life and in that of nursing care. The latter was something new. Therefore, he drafted a code of “Rules of the Company of the Servants of the Sick”, which he would later present to the Pope for the first approval of the Company itself.

Little by little, the guiding principles and goals that Camillus set for himself became increasingly clear: to aid the sick following the example of the Good Samaritan, because the person of Jesus Christ himself is present in the sick. Among those who admired and associated with him—priests and laypeople of every background and nationality—the number of those joining the first group of followers and embracing

the way of life dictated by the founder grew.

On September 8, 1584, together with his companions, to visibly witness his consecration to the service of his brothers, he donned and had them don a sort of black cassock. The small group continued to assist the sick at the Hospital of Santo Spirito and in the homes of the poor, but struggled to find a permanent residence of their own. They moved from the Church of the Madonnina to that of St. Stanislaus of the Poles, finally settling at the Maddalena, which would become the motherhouse of the future Order.

Official approval from the Church was granted by Pope Sixtus V on March 8, 1586, through the papal brief *Ex omnibus*. The same pontiff authorized Camillus and his companions to wear a ‘red cross’ on their cassocks. It would become the Institute’s heraldic emblem over the centuries.

“Crucifix comforts Camillus”, a painting by Carlo Maratta, preserved at *Donna Camilla Savelli*, Rome



Art-work by Silverio
Capparoni (1831-
1907)

Father Camillus was elected superior of the first religious community at the Maddalena.

From 'Company' to 'Order'

Within a couple of years, the group of followers—fathers and brothers—grew in number and expanded its work in support of the hospital and the poor neighborhoods of the City. The Company's fame spread,

and some bishops in Italy began requesting the presence of the Ministers of the Sick in their own dioceses. Thus came the first foundation of a community outside Rome, in Naples, at the Hospital of the Annunziata, led by a young religious, Father Biagio Oppertis, who would later succeed Camillus as head of the Order.

The following year, on some galleys loaded with soldiers that had arrived at the port of Naples, a violent epidemic broke out, and the Ministers of the Sick rushed to provide assistance. Hard work and hardship led to the spread of the disease even among them. Three religious died in the line of duty: they were the first of many who would lose their lives while providing care during the plagues. Meanwhile, famine began to spread again in Rome as well, and the plague inevitably followed.

Two years, 1590–1591, that devastated the population and demanded hard work and many sacrifices from the Ministers of the Sick. Fr. Camillus organized widespread assistance; he set up a care center at Maddalena and established a sort of nursing school there to prepare his companions to care for the sick with competence as well as love.

The religious distinguished themselves in the city for their dedication. They attended to the dying with particular care day and night, so much so that they were called 'fathers of the good death'. The priests primarily carried out spiritual ministry, while the brothers performed physical or medical care.

Here too, there were victims or martyrs of charity. Four religious and a novice sacrificed their lives while caring for the plague-stricken in the hospice of St. Sixtus.

The witness of self-sacrifice offered by Camillus and his companions could not go unnoticed by the Vatican authorities. Struck by such heroism, Pope Gregory XIV, with the Bull *Illius qui pro gregis* of September 21, 1591, decreed the establishment of



the Congregation as the Order of Clerks Regular Ministers of the Infirm.

On December 7, Father Camillus was elected Superior General of the new Order, and the following day, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, in the Church of Maddalena, the Founder and twenty-five of his confreres made their religious profession. To the customary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, they added a fourth vow to “serve the sick, even if afflicted by contagion,” thus even at the risk of their lives.

Within a few years, news of the new Order spread throughout Italy: bishops, hospital authorities, and civil authorities sought the invaluable service of Camillus’s religious, especially during famines, plagues, or other public calamities.

A new series of commitments and labors began for Camillus. Ready to answer every call, he undertook long and arduous journeys, on foot, on horseback, by land

and by sea, with the aim of studying and planning new foundations, then visiting the individual communities and comforting them with his presence and the example of direct service to the local sick.

A first foundation—after that of Naples—took place in Milan, at the Ca’ Granda Hospital, where in June 1594 Camillus led a group of thirteen religious, with the three-fold purpose of serving the inpatients, providing home care for the sick, and being available in the event of a plague. The memory of Charles Borromeo and his concern for those infected during the plague of 1575 was still alive in him.

Two months later, a similar foundation was established in Genoa at the Pammatone Hospital. The following year it was Bologna’s turn. In the years that followed, communities were opened in Florence and Ferrara, Messina, Palermo, and Mantua. And later in Viterbo, Chieti, Bucchianico, Borgonovo di Valtidone, and Caltagirone.

Sistine aisles of the historic wards of the Holy Spirit hospital in Rome, where St. Camillus served the sick with great love and dedication for almost 25 years.



“Saint Camillus de Lellis rescues the patients of the Holy Spirit hospital during the flooding of the Tiber on December 24, 1598”, painting by Pierre Subleyras

He also turned his attention to the needs of the war-wounded and wanted his religious to carry the red cross onto the battlefields for the first time. On June 19, 1595, he traveled to Trento to issue directives to a group of brothers assigned to accompany the the papal army in the Hungarian campaign.

On Christmas Eve 1598, there was a major flood in Rome, causing the Tiber to overflow. The waters began to flood the wards of the Holy Spirit Hospital. Camillus and his companions set about carrying some three hundred patients to the upper floors. The episode remained in the city’s memory, and some 17th-century painters, such as Pierre Subleyras, depicted the realistic and emblematic image of a saint, barefoot and scantily clad, carrying a sick person to safety on his shoulders amid the commotion of a scene filled with the sick and their ministers.

In May 1599, the second General Chapter was held, where the issue of comprehensive service to the sick was discussed. Should the religious—as Camillus had begun to desire after the foundation in Milan—reside at the hospital and perform all duties, including general services and portorage, or should they provide only the physical and spiritual care of the sick, as many argued? A bitter debate ensued among the religious of the Order, which was resolved through a compromise, in Pope Clement VIII’s Bull, *Superna dispositione*, dated December 29, 1600.

In August 1600, Fr. Camillus rushed to Nola, where an epidemic of bubonic plague had broken out. The bishop appointed him vicar general of the diocese for the duration of the contagion. Five other religious died while assisting the plague victims.



The End of His Life: A Seal of Holiness

On October 2, 1607, Fr. Camillus, “seeing himself old and almost worn out by his labors,” resigned from the office of Superior General; he asked to live as a simple religious at the Hospital of Santo Spirito.

During his 24 years of leadership, sixteen of which as superior general, the Founder had admitted 311 religious to profession, of whom 69 had died. There remained 242 professed members, including 88 priests, roughly the same number of brothers, and the same number of candidates for priestly ordination. He had founded five houses in Italy and established service in eight hospitals.

At Santo Spirito, Camillus’s presence and activity, day and night, had continued almost uninterrupted for twenty-five years

and would continue—except for a period in Naples—until the eve of his death. Countless episodes of charity and dedication, as well as miraculous or otherwise singularly exemplary and significant events, illustrate his spirit and his prophetic charism, all of which can be found in his rich biography. Here we can only provide the essential chronological details.

In March 1608, the fourth General Chapter was held. Fr. Camillus, though entitled to do so, did not attend. He preferred to remain in Naples to care for the sick. However, he received a mandate from the new Superior General, Fr. Biagio Oppertis, to visit the communities and houses of the Order on his behalf and that of the Council. A service that Camillus would carry out with diligence and a fraternal spirit, despite the ailments of age and poor health.

He would continue to do so even after participating in the fifth General Chapter,

“Camillus receives holy Viaticum from Cardinal Ginnasi”, a painting by Matteo Toni (1785), preserved at the Camillian generalate in Rome

from May to October 1613, with the new Superior General, Fr. Francesco Nigli. Together with him and the Council, he defined in Milan the “Rules to be Observed by Our Brothers in the Great Hospital of Milan to serve the poor and sick with every perfection”, which were later printed in 1616 at the initiative of the hospital’s chapter.

After stopping in Genoa, as his health was deteriorating, he returned by sea to Rome on October 13. In the spring of 1614, Father Camillus was forced to remain a patient in the infirmary of the Maddalena. But he wanted to know from his confreres everything that was happening at the Santo Spirito.

On June 14, he wrote to all his religious the “Testamentary Letter”, a document of

fundamental importance for the spirituality and charism of the Order.

On July 2, he received Viaticum from Cardinal Ginnasi, and on July 11, the holy oil from the Superior General Fr. Nigli.

On July 13, he had his “testament” read to him—which he himself had dictated to his confessor—while contemplating the painting of the Crucifix he had commissioned to be painted “with much blood” so that it might vividly remind him of God’s mercy.

On July 14, Camillus was on his death-bed. In the morning, he attended his final Mass, and in the evening, after blessing his confreres, he entered the Kingdom of the Lord.

The next day, his body, laid out in the Church of Maddalena, was visited by numerous faithful. Everyone was already calling him saint.

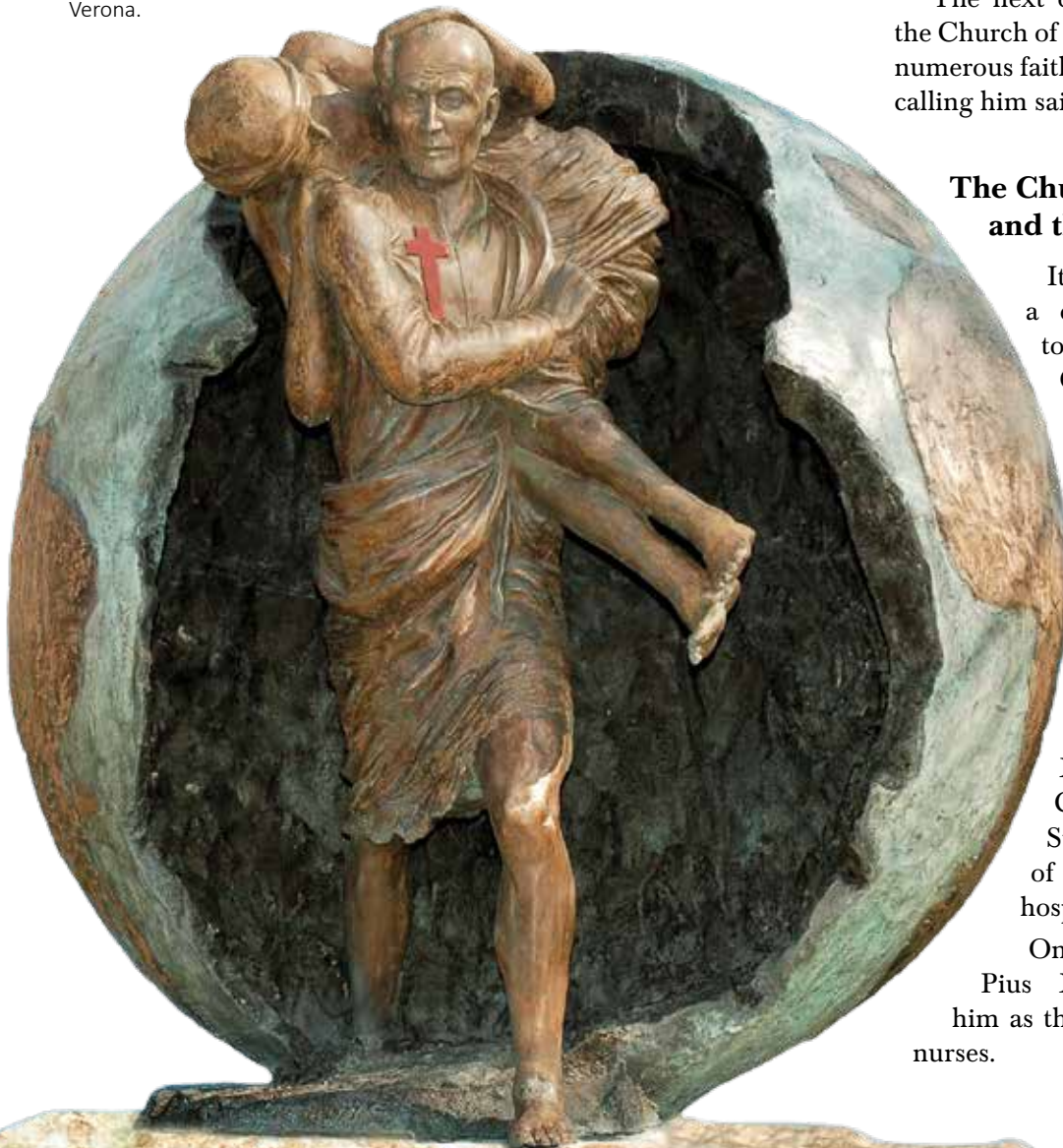
The Church’s Recognition and the Legacy of a Saint

It would take more than a century for the Church to canonically define Camillus’s sanctity: following thorough proceedings, Pope Benedict XIV, on April 8, 1742, proclaimed Camillus de Lellis blessed. Four years later, on June 29, 1746, the same pontiff declared him a Saint.

On June 22, 1886, Leo XIII bestowed upon St. Camillus—together with St. John of God—the title of Patron of all the sick and hospitals of the world.

On August 28, 1930, Pope Pius XI officially designated him as the Protector and model of nurses.

“Charity, the Heart of the World”, a bronze sculpture, at ‘CC. Bresciani’ care home, Verona.





Finally, on March 27, 1974, Pope Paul VI designated him as the special Patron of the Italian military health service.

The fruitfulness of a saint is measured by the capacity of his spirit to generate, over time, ever new works of love and fruits of holiness in accordance with the charism he received from God. In the four centuries of the Order's history, there is proof of this spiritual fruitfulness: numerous followers who have lived out St. Camillus' message of mercy in an extraordinary way; many have set an example of heroic service to the point of self-sacrifice. Special witnesses are the more than three hundred martyrs of charity recorded in the chronicles, who fell victim to their own generosity in serving those afflicted by the plague and cholera.

Similarly, significant fruits are found in the founding of women's religious congregations inspired by the Saint, secular institutes of consecrated life, and lay associations, which together with the Order form a single Camillian Charismatic Family.

The Camillian Charism: Theology in Action

The Camillian charism is a living theology of mercy rooted in the imitation of Christ the Healer.

It is expressed in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, especially in the care of the sick, the dying, and the abandoned. It is realized in the world of health, illness, and suffering, attending to both the physical and spiritual needs of the sick, affirming their dignity and worth (C.10). It is also open, with discernment and ecclesial permission, to other urgent ministries of charity (C.10).

This charism invites us to conform ourselves to Christ in chastity, poverty, and obedience (C.11), living a consecrated life dedicated entirely to God and to the merciful Jesus.

Our ministry, made sacred by the vow of service to the sick, becomes a means of salvation for the world and an expression of communion with the suffering Christ (C.5 & 12).



The Camillian vocation is a participation in the *diaconia* of Christ, he who came “not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (cf. Mk 10:45). Our fourth vow becomes a prophetic witness in a world that often marginalizes the weakest. In hospitals, hospices, homes, and mission territories, the Camillians become sacraments of God’s mercy.

In the spirit of *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Salvifici Doloris*, the Camillian ministry constitutes a prophetic witness in an impersonal world. Pope John Paul II affirms that “a redemptive mystery is hidden in suffering,” and those who serve the sick become collaborators in Christ’s salvific mission. Pope Francis defines the Church as a “field hospital after the battle.” It is precisely this space where the Camillians carry out their mission, not only as healthcare workers but as ministers of healing grace. Their identity becomes a sacrament of God’s mercy, embodying God’s healing presence in places of abandonment, illness, and vulnerability (C.7). In today’s fragmented and impersonal healthcare systems, the Camillian charism offers a countercultural vision through a ministry of presence, tenderness, and accompaniment.



The charism of mercy, the center of Camillian identity, springs from the very essence of God revealed in Scripture, incarnated in Jesus Christ, and transmitted through the life of St. Camillus and his followers. To be a Camillian means to stand at the foot of countless crosses, bearing witness to the Lord who suffers with and for humanity. It is a living theology of mercy—incarnate, sacrificial, and always oriented toward the healing of the wounded body and soul.



In a world marked by suffering, pandemics, and systems that often dehumanize the most vulnerable, the Camillian charism remains urgent and prophetic. It challenges the Church and the world to prioritize mercy, to humanize healthcare, and to accompany the sick not only with competence but with Christian compassion. The red cross of St. Camillus is not merely a symbol; it is a call to love with courage, tenderness, and self-giving, even to death. Following our Founder, we too commit ourselves to loving and serving the sick with all our strength, knowing that in them we encounter the crucified and risen Lord (C.12 & 13).



In a world that is deaf to suffering and marginalizes the most vulnerable (the elderly, the sick, the disabled), the Camillian charism remains vital. Today's challenge is not only to continue the mission but to deepen its spiritual foundations, ensuring that every act of care is animated by Christian compassion.

In the face of global crises, the Camillian charism must integrate professional competence with spiritual depth. The charism of mercy is not static, but must be reinterpreted and embodied in the concrete contexts of contemporary human suffering.

The Order of Ministers of the Infirm, a living member of the Body of Christ (C.1), is called not only to perform works of mercy, but to become mercy. We must re-enact the merciful love of Christ in a world insensitive to suffering. We are not volunteers or service providers; we are consecrated men who, in chastity, poverty,



To be a Camillian means to stand at the foot of countless crosses, bearing witness to the Lord who suffers with and for humanity. It is a living theology of mercy—incarnate, sacrificial, and always oriented toward the healing of the wounded body and soul.



obedience, and a fourth vow of service to the sick until death, reflect the crucified love of Christ. In a world that avoids suffering, we embrace it. In a culture of autonomy, we proclaim interdependence. In systems that value efficiency, we offer presence. This is our prophetic identity, and it must be rediscovered with urgency.

The community is the space where this charism lives and is strengthened (C.14). By sharing life, mission, and gifts, the Camillian community becomes a visible sign of Christ's love, supporting one another in the demanding ministry of mercy. The Church has recognized in St. Camillus and his sons "a new school of charity" (C.9). The Camillian vow to serve the sick even at the

risk of one's own life has no meaning unless it is embodied daily in our hospitals, our missions, and our communities.

Our Constitution reminds us: "We contribute to the well-being and promotion of the entire human family" (C.12). Yet, in an age of psychological distress, ecological disasters, wars, and pandemics, how bold is our service? Where is our preferential option for the invisible sick, victims of child trafficking, drug addicts, lonely elderly people, and migrants who die during their perilous journeys?

Being faithful to our Founder means being creatively unfaithful to our comfort zones. Fidelity to the charism today means opening new frontiers, risking failure, and entering the "peripheries" where Christ suffers anew. Camillian formation should prepare martyrs of mercy. Our initial and ongoing formation must be a school where we learn the art of serving Christ in the sick.

Camillian Spirituality: A Response to Divine Love

Rooted in the merciful love of Christ, Camillian spirituality is deeply intertwined with the mission of service to the sick.

Like Christ, we are called to become living instruments of mercy, for a Camillian is not simply a servant but one who responds to God's merciful love, expressed through service to the sick, "the person of the Lord" (C.61). This fundamental love is a personal and communal journey, lived deeply through prayer, the Eucharist, and our relationship with the sick.

Christocentrism. The Camillian way of life is centered on Christ, following his example as the Good Samaritan and the crucified Savior. The Constitution emphasizes that our formation is deeply rooted in the mercy and compassion of Christ (C.61, GS.36). Our service is not merely an act of kindness, but a reflection of the merciful love that Christ pours out

upon us and that we are called to extend to others, especially those who suffer in body and spirit. The Eucharist is the center of our spiritual life, for it is there that we encounter the fragility of Christ, who gives us the strength to serve others. Without daily Eucharistic devotion, our ministry risks becoming mere institutionalized care rather than a spiritual service of mercy (C.62).

The face of Christ in suffering. At the heart of Camillian spirituality is the recognition that God is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8), and this love is expressed through mercy. This face reflects the depth of Christ's merciful love for the suffering, made manifest in a special way in his Passion and death. Merciful love is not merely a sentiment, but a tangible and active force that impels Camillians to seek out and serve those who suffer, seeing the face of Christ in every person. The love of Christ illuminates the Camillian vocation. Camillians serve not merely out of obligation, but because they experience God's love in every act of service.

Christ Crucified. Camillian spirituality is rooted in Christ Crucified, who lived a life of total self-giving and sacrificial love. Camillians are called to embody this self-emptying love, especially in the care of the sick and suffering. Service to the sick consists not only in providing physical care, but in giving oneself completely to others, encountering Christ in their pain and vulnerability. This challenges Camillians to recognize their service as a privileged way of participating in Christ's redemptive work on earth. The Constitution emphasizes that our service to the sick is not optional, but is a direct participation in the suffering of Christ (C.63).

Following the Merciful Christ. Camillian spirituality consists essentially in following the merciful love of Jesus. The life of Christ, especially his actions toward the sick, the marginalized, and the excluded, becomes the model for Camillians. The Camillian charism calls us to serve without distinction, to offer healing—not only physical but also spiritual—and to accompany the suffering as Christ did.

Witnessing to the merciful love of Jesus. The fundamental aspect of Camillian spirituality is the manifestation of Christ's mercy through concrete acts of love, especially in the care of the sick. This witness is realized by offering compassionate care



Camillian spirituality is rooted in Christ Crucified, who lived a life of total self-giving and sacrificial love. Camillians are called to embody this self-emptying love, especially in the care of the sick and suffering.



to the sick, whether in hospitals, homes, or other institutions; by being present to the suffering in their most vulnerable moments, offering emotional, physical, and spiritual support; in sacrificing one's own well-being for the good of others, following the sacrificial nature of Christ's love. This service is always grounded in a deep life of prayer and a strong spiritual commitment.

Spirituality of the Red Cross. The Red Cross is often associated with selfless and unconditional service to those in need, particularly in times of crisis or suffering. Just as the Red Cross symbolizes sacrificial love, compassion, and service to the suffering, the Camillian vocation embodies

the same spirit of mercy and compassion, particularly through healthcare and pastoral care.

The Renewal of Camillian Spirituality Today

The renewal of Camillian spirituality today calls for a deepening of our personal and communal experience of God's merciful love. Camillian spirituality challenges us to live today as prophets of mercy in a world that often neglects the sick and the suffering. The cross, the sign of our commitment, will remain at the center of our identity and our mission, urging us to live "only for Jesus crucified" (C.69). We are called to be not only stewards, but prophets of mercy, who pray deeply, love tenderly, and serve the sick with complete dedication.

Mary in Camillian Spirituality: Icon of Compassion

Mother Mary is with us at the foot of every cross and walks with us through every corridor of suffering. In the spiritual life of the Church, the Virgin Mary shines as the perfect model of discipleship, maternal intercession, and compassionate service. For Camillians, Mary is not only an object of devotion but also a spiritual icon that shapes the identity and mission of the Order. From the early life of St. Camillus to the living tradition of the Camillian Family, Marian devotion remains an integral dimension of the Camillian charism.

St. Camillus was deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he regarded as his Mother, Patroness, and Queen. His trust in Mary was not merely emotional, but apostolic: he saw her as the Mother of Mercy, who guided him toward the poor and the sick. In moments of temptation, desolation, and trial, he ran to her like a child to his mother. A man of deep emotion and mystical sensitivity, Camillus saw in Mary not only the Mother of Christ, but also the Mother of Sorrows, at the foot of the cross, united with all who suffer.



Ancient icon of
Our Lady Health
of the Sick,
preserved and
venerated at
the church of St.
Mary Magdalene
in Rome

The image of Mary at the foot of the cross (cf. Jn 19:25–27) has particularly influenced the Marian theology of the Camillians. Just as Mary stood by her Son during his Passion, so now she stands by all who suffer. For the Camillian religious, who vow to

serve the sick even at the risk of their own lives, Mary becomes the perfect companion and inspiration in the ministry of compassion. “Mary is present at the foot of her Son’s Cross... and thus participates in a unique and unrepeatable way in the depth of that mystery of

suffering” (cf. *Salvifici Doloris*, 25). Mary’s silent yet steadfast presence at Calvary is reflected in the Camillian vocation, a ministry characterized by presence, patience, and compassion. Camillians learn not to flee from suffering, but to remain, to accompany, and to offer themselves with self-giving love, just as Mary did.

Mary’s life as a servant of the Lord (cf. Lk 1:38) and handmaid of the poor (cf. Lk 1:46–55) serves as a model for Camillian life. Her visit to Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39–56) is a missionary moment, a model of charity in action. Mary, the young woman of Nazareth, goes in haste to meet another person’s

“St. Camillus with Our Lady Health of the Sick”, an icon venerated at the chapel of the civil hospital in Padova.



needs. This haste is not stress or anxiety, but a desire to love. “Mary’s way of acting is not to draw attention to herself, but to lead us to Jesus. Mary is a true missionary... a woman of service, care, and presence” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 286). Mary becomes not only the Mother of the Camillian religious, but also the first nurse, the first caregiver, the first missionary of compassion. St. Camillus loved Mary deeply and invoked her constantly.

The Camillian charism is unique in the Church for its fourth vow: to serve the sick, even at the risk of one’s own life. This vow is not only heroic, but Marian. In her fiat, her “yes” to God, Mary accepted the possibility of suffering, of misunderstanding, and even of the loss of her Son. She remained faithful to love until the end. “Mary lived her entire life in obedience to the Faith and thus was able to give herself completely to the mystery of the Son and of the Church” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 41). The fourth vow is not merely an ethical stance, but a Marian participation in the logic of the Cross, where love is stronger than fear and mercy stronger than death. Every Camillian who lives this vow with sincerity is, in a certain sense, an echo of Mary’s “yes,” offering his own body, his own life, his very being for the healing of the wounded Christ in the sick. This vow is the living echo of Mary’s fiat: a vow that costs, that risks, that bleeds.

Article 68 of the Camillian Constitution identifies Mary as “faithful in accepting the Word” and deeply concerned for the suffering. Her presence is not ornamental but essential: she “presents herself to us as a model of spiritual life and service to others.” Mary’s fiat, her unreserved “yes,” opens the door to the history of salvation. But it is not a solitary act; her commitment deepens at every stage of Christ’s life, culminating in her silent yet steadfast witness on Calvary. Here she becomes the Mother of the Crucified One, the companion of the afflicted, and the comforter of the abandoned. “Mary is the woman who walked in darkness. She is the one who,

in silence, accompanied the Cross. She teaches us the strength of silent fidelity” (Pope Francis, Homily, Good Friday, 2020). Camillian spirituality draws from this Marian source: a spirituality not only of prayer, but of closeness to suffering; not only of rosaries, but of risk and radical solidarity.

Article 74 of the Camillian Constitution emphasizes that Camillian candidates must grow in their relationship with God, live the evangelical virtues, and honor Mary with filial trust. This is not a matter of superficial piety, but of an integral formation that shapes a Marian heart: contemplative and courageous, inwardly rooted and outwardly generous. Honoring Mary does not mean merely reciting prayers, but imitating her disposition, her attentiveness toward others (cf. Lk 1:39), her silent interiority (cf. Lk 2:19), and her resilience beneath the cross (cf. Jn 19:25). Marian formation, therefore, produces prophets of mercy, capable of reading the wounds of the world through the eyes of the Sorrowful Mother. The General Statutes (cf. Art. 39) emphasize the unique place of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in the Camillian identity. The feast of the Order’s foundation falls on this solemnity, a date chosen not by chance but by Providence.

By venerating Mary under the title of ‘Queen of Ministers to the Infirm’, the Order proclaims a countercultural truth: true power in the Church does not lie in domination, but in service to the suffering, just as Mary served Jesus in his agony. This is a provocative vision for a Church tempted by clericalism and self-preservation: to reign is to kneel beside the wounded, to lead is to weep with the dying, to be royal is to embrace the crucified poor. “In Mary, the Church sees the face of a woman who gave herself as a gift. This is the true power of the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 288).

“Not I, but You”: Camillian holiness! The path of beauty

Before presenting, albeit briefly, our Camillian holiness, it is good to offer a definition of holiness. Who is a saint? In our “worldly” culture and mindset, we give little thought to this term and feel it is distant from our human experience and sometimes even our

spiritual life. A saint is one who says to God: “Not I, but You.” Holiness is synonymous with beauty because it reflects the One who is “the author of beauty,” “the most handsome among the sons of men” (Ps 45:3).

The path of beauty, as outlined by the saints, is the preferred path to propose to our young people, for it challenges the ugliness of the soul and self-enclosure, egocentrism, “liquid” pleasure, sadness, and meaninglessness. This path is joy; it is a gift and a responsibility within a world that “is good” (cf. Gen 1:31). “It is beauty,” wrote Dostoevsky, “that will save the world.” We are called to holiness, that is, to beauty; to a beauty to be established in relationships, so as to make the Church a community where fraternal bonds are truly lived, inspired by generosity, mercy, and forgiveness; where no one says to another, “I do not need you” (1 Cor 12:21), because every wound to communion also disfigures the beauty of the one Body of Christ.

It is beauty that must permeate spaces, liturgies, environments, and above all that living temple of God which is people themselves. It is the beauty that emerges from simplicity, from poverty, from the struggle against worldliness. It is the beauty that shines forth where communion triumphs over consumption, where contemplation and generosity triumph over possession and greed. It is the beauty that blossoms from charity toward the sick, the least, the marginalized, and the poor, “for we saw you hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison, and we helped you” (Mt 25:34–46).

Beauty is not an aesthetic fact, but an event of love that recounts anew, in a creative and poetic way, throughout history, the folly and beauty of the love with which God has loved us by giving us his Son, Jesus Christ.

Saint Camillus de Lellis, in his great madness of love for Jesus Christ made flesh in the bodies of his sick brothers and sisters, presented charity to us as the beautiful holiness to be lived in the daily routine of our existence. In him and through him, the Camillian saints, blessed, venerable, and servants of God have offered us a nuance of this beautiful holiness of charity.

These nuances of Camillian holiness teach us that it is still possible today, in various ways, to live and experience the beauty of holiness.



Saint Giuseppina Vannini

Giuseppina Vannini (Giuditta), born in Rome on July 7, 1859, and died in Rome on February 23, 1911, teaches us that even today it is possible to choose virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, in accordance with the charism of St. Camillus de Lellis. Together with Blessed Luigi Tezza, she founded the Congregation of Daughters of St. Camillus, who are called to wear the uniform of charity. The path of charity that Saint Giuseppina Vannini teaches us, even today, is that of doing all things well, of being totally and completely charity. For this reason, she can be a model for all those young women who choose to embark on a nursing career, so that they may experience the beauty of holiness in charity lived as a profession and as service to the suffering. “Nothing is small before the Lord when one works with great love for Him”.



Blessed Luigi Tezza

Luigi Tezza, born in Conegliano, Veneto, on November 1, 1841, and died in Lima on September 26, 1923, teaches us that charity has the beautiful face of priestly fatherhood. His discreet yet constant ministry, intelligent, filled with love and compassion, accompanied by authority, gentleness, and patience, led him to be known and loved in Peru, where he was called “the Apostle of Lima” and “the holiest priest of the Diocese of Lima,” as Cardinal Lauri described him. The path of charity, which Blessed Luigi Tezza teaches us, is that of spiritual fatherhood as a beautiful synonym for charity. For this reason, today, he can be pointed to, following the example of St. Camillus, as a model for young people who choose to be missionaries of charity in the existential and social peripheries of our world. “All in God, for God, with God. Willing, for the sake of charity, to make ever more painful sacrifices, especially toward the poor and the sick; may such generosity be present in every moment and in the smallest details of life.”



Blessed Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini

Maria Domenica was born in Lucca in 1789 and died in Lucca on May 22, 1868, wife of Salvatore Barbantini. A marriage of love and many hopes, but just five months after the wedding, “her beloved husband” died suddenly, tragically leaving Maria Domenica alone while she was already expecting a son, Lorenzino, who died only eight years later, almost suddenly, struck by a serious illness. The path of charity that Maria Domenica teaches us is that of the “lantern.” Indeed, she is depicted holding a lantern in the middle of the night as she walked the streets of her city to seek out and serve the poor and sick. Through her daughters, with whom she founded the Congregation of the Ministers of the Sick, Maria Domenica is a message of love, tenderness, and care for the poor and lonely sick, for the abandoned, and for the dying. She is a model of charity for young people who desire to have “a heart ablaze with the charity of Christ.”

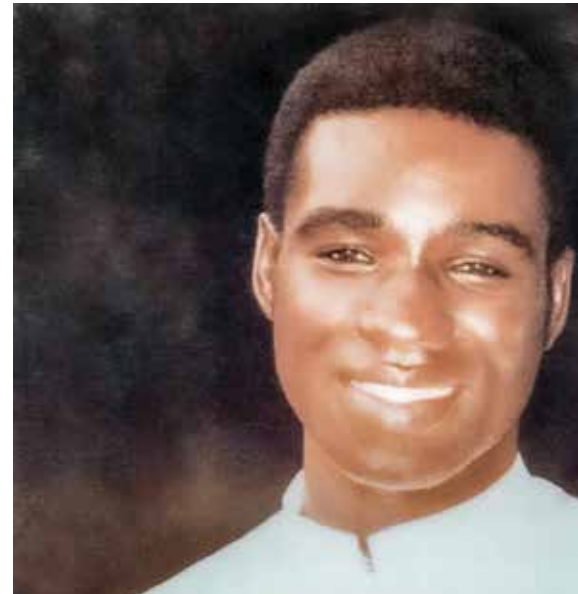
Blessed Enrico Rebuschini

Enrico, born in Gravedona (Como) on April 28, 1860, and died in Cremona on May 10, 1938, teaches us that charity is not only heroic but also everyday, that is, holiness lived out in the daily routine of existence. “One of us; yet so different from us,” writes someone who knew him. He did not perform extraordinary deeds, but he lived his daily life with extraordinary spirituality. A gentle, humble, and quiet religious, he was always ready to help his fellow brothers, the sick, and the poor, even when he knew well that some were taking advantage of his kindness. A life lived in silence, prayer, humility, and charity—in a word, in daily, concrete, real holiness—that can be imitated and practiced by all who wish to commit themselves to generous and unconditional service to God and neighbor, especially the needy and the sick. The path of charity that Enrico Rebuschini teaches us is that of prayer and service lived out in the ordinary routine of daily life. “To consume one’s very being to give God to one’s neighbor, seeing in them the very face of the Lord.”



Servant of God Alexandre Toè

Father Alexandre Toè, born in Boromò (Burkina Faso) on December 2, 1967, and died in Rome on December 9, 1966, teaches us that charity has the beautiful face of joy lived out in the daily routine of a life dedicated to vocation promotion and youth ministry and to the formation of future Camillian religious. An intelligent, brilliant religious priest, full of enthusiasm for anything good or that in any way fostered friendship and fraternity. The path of charity that Father Alexandre teaches us bears the features of joy—the joy of beginnings, of fascination, and of total self-giving. For this reason, he can be a model for our young religious who, inspired by the Camillian life, can look to him to learn the joy of charity.



Servant of God Germana Sommaruga

Germana Sommaruga, born in Cagliari on May 25, 1914, and died in Capriate (Bergamo) on October 4, 1995, teaches us that charity is synonymous with humility: to be consecrated according to the charism of St. Camillus while remaining in the world and for the world. She founded the Missionaries of the Sick “Christ Hope” because she recognized in the virtue of Hope that love which allows one to embrace the world. The path of charity that Germana teaches us bears the face of hope and can be a model for all those young women who, in obscurity and in the midst of daily life, choose to consecrate their lives to the Lord according to the charism of St. Camillus. Young women in the world and for the world, engaged in the “work” of the world, with a heart of charity.





Servant of God Ettore Boschini

Ettore Boschini, born in Roverbella on March 25, 1928, and died in Milan on August 20, 2004, teaches us that the beauty of holiness has the face of being a total gift to the least. Brother Ettore taught us how to put the Gospel of charity into practice in the daily routine of our lives as the privileged path to the beauty of charity. “I was hungry and you gave me food,” not just bread to fill the stomach. “I was thirsty and you gave me drink,” not just to quench the body’s thirst, but the water of life! And again: “You clothed me! We have thousands of clothes, but we are speaking of the garment of God, the garment of grace!” The path of charity that Brother Ettore teaches us takes the form of a total gift, without reserve and without holding back. For this reason, he can be a model for those young religious who choose the “existential peripheries” as a place of holiness and a path to becoming “beautiful” like God.



Venerable Nicola D'Onofrio

Nicola D'Onofrio, born in Villamagna in the province of Chieti, a few kilometers from Bucchianico, on March 24, 1943, and died in Rome on June 12, 1964, teaches us through his youthful witness that even during the period of initial formation it is possible to embark on the beautiful path of holiness through that intimate and sincere dialogue with God, whom he liked to call “Heavenly Father, my Beloved Spouse, Love that will set my soul ablaze with love”. The path of charity that Nicolino teaches us is that of beautiful intimacy with God. For this reason, he can be a model for our young people (volunteers, employees, those undergoing vocation discernment, whom we encounter in our ministry and vocation promotion and pastoral activities) who can begin to know God as love and charity in their hearts and souls, so that this may be reflected in their daily “actions.”



Venerable Maria Aristeia Ceccarelli

Maria Aristeia Ceccarelli, born in Ancona on November 5, 1883, and died in Rome on December 24, 1971, teaches us that even in her state as a woman, wife, and layperson, it is possible to embark on the path of beauty through charity shown to the least and the sick, and above all through her spiritual motherhood toward the Camillian religious. “I was truly, by God’s goodness, a channel of so much good”—this is the most beautiful summary of Aristeia’s life, which can serve as a model for all those women who live the Camillian spirituality in our communities and facilities. For Aristeia, the beauty of holiness was expressed in being a channel of good, that is, of God. By joining the Lay Camillian family, she is a “mother” to those who wish to know the face of charity while remaining in the world and for the world according to their lay state of life.





Saint Camillus and his companions assist the plague-stricken at the Baths of Diocletian, Rome. Art-work by Silverio Capparoni.

The Camillian Martyrs of Charity

On May 25, the birthday of St. Camillus, the Camillian Order celebrates the Day of the Martyrs of Charity. This day was established in 1994 by the Superior General, Fr. Angelo Brusco, and the General Council in accordance with a motion approved by the General Chapter of 1989.

The martyrs of charity are those Camillian religious who died in the exercise of their ministry to the contagiously ill,

offering their lives and thus honoring the fourth vow of caring for the sick by fully living out the words of Jesus: “No one has greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:3).

Within the Order, the reputation for holiness of these religious has been passed down and has remained unchanged for over four hundred years, further confirming their holiness.

There are over 300 Camillian religious martyrs of charity, as evidenced by a historical document from 1886 prepared as part of the celebrations for the III centenary of the Order’s foundation and published by the Vatican Publishing House; this document lists in detail the names of these martyrs along with the circumstances of their martyrdom (place, date, role performed, age, etc.)

Here are some of the most significant plagues faced by the Camillian religious:

— Plague of Milan (1630): 16 Camillians died in the city’s lazarettos.

— Plague of Naples (1656–1657): Almost all the Camillians in the city (about ninety) died while serving the plague victims. Contemporary accounts recount the sacrifice of the entire Camillian community, comprising Provincials, Prefects, and novice masters, who remained at their posts until the very end.

— The Plague of Messina (1743): 26 Camillians in the city gave their lives to the very last. Among them were also some novices who, aware of the risk, asked to bring forward their religious profession to consecrate themselves to the service of the sick, and they all died.

— Even during the epidemics of smallpox, typhus, and cholera that struck Rome, Florence, Verona, and Bucchianico between the 18th and 19th centuries, several Camillians died as martyrs of charity.

We have historical documentation preserved in the Archives of the Generalate dating back to the Order’s founding. Among the many authors who have transmitted and documented the “certainty” of these

religious' martyrdom, we recall: Cicutelli (1615), Lenzo (1641), Regi (1676), Positio Romana-Theatina (1681), Solfi (1689), Ed. Vaticana (1886), Valente (1912), Vanti (1929, 1930, 1945), Sannazzaro (1980), Reale (1990), and Ruffini (1993).

Constitution and General Statutes: A Courageous Commitment to Life

The Camillian Constitution and General Statutes are not merely legal documents or spiritual guidelines, but a prophetic roadmap, a living covenant, and a radical commitment to a way of life that challenges mediocrity and calls every Camillian to a courageous witness to Christ's healing presence in the world. These texts pulse with the very heart of the Gospel and the vision of St. Camillus de Lellis. They offer not only a structure but also spiritual fire, an irresistible call to holiness, fraternity, and *diaconia* in a fragmented and suffering world.

Embracing the Constitution and General Statutes means anchoring oneself to the charism of incarnate mercy, to the beating heart of St. Camillus who saw the face of Christ in every sick person. Here, the Camillian identity is presented with clarity and conviction. Every article of the Constitution is an invitation to become a living sacrament of compassion, where one's consecration is lived out in the hospital, at home, on the street, wherever there is suffering. The Constitution calls us to live the *kenosis* of Christ, his love that empties itself, through community, ministry, and radical fidelity to the fourth vow.

The true power of the Camillian Constitution lies in their ability to inspire transformation. They are both an anchor and a springboard, rooting us in the truth of the Gospel and propelling us toward bold frontiers of service and witness. The Constitution teaches us that our spiritual maturity grows in the soil of fraternal love, shared poverty, and tireless compassion. They nurture a community where prayer is not separated from suffering and where ministry springs from mysticism. Our fidelity to these values is not optional;

it is the clearest sign that Christ continues to walk through the corridors of human suffering through our consecrated life. In this way, the Constitution is not merely a rule; it is a manifesto of mercy, a charter of hope, and a daily invitation to become fire, just as St. Camillus desired "a hundred tongues and a heart of fire" to proclaim God's love.

To profess the Camillian Constitution means to take a sacred vow of fidelity to Christ crucified in the sick. Every vow we take—chastity, poverty, obedience, and the fourth vow to serve the sick even at the risk of our lives—becomes a public declaration that we do not live for ourselves but for the Kingdom.

These vows are liberations: obedience aligns us with the divine will and the mission of the Order, teaching us trust and responsibility in a world that glorifies autonomy. Poverty strips away the illusion of security and opens our hands to embrace the poor with the riches of Christ's mercy. Chastity reorients our desires toward divine intimacy, offering our whole being in undivided

love to God and to the suffering Christ. The fourth vow, our distinctive mark, makes our life a Eucharist of compassion, poured out for the sick with courage, tenderness, and self-sacrifice.

These vows, enshrined in our Constitution, demand concrete choices, daily sacrifices, and prophetic courage. To live them means to become a sign of contradiction, a visible proclamation of the kingdom of God in a wounded world.

The Constitution is a living flame. In its pages, the Camillian is called to step out of comfort zones, out of indifference, out of spiritual "lukewarmness," toward a life that is radically evangelical, radically fraternal, and radically compassionate. Our Constitution challenges us to live as prophets of healing and builders of communion. It asks us to transform our communities into houses of hope, our ministries into sanctuaries of mercy, and our personal lives into icons of Christ the Healer. ■



Our Constitution asks us to transform our communities into houses of hope, our ministries into sanctuaries of mercy, and our personal lives into icons of Christ the Healer.



450 Years Since the Conversion of Saint Camillus

A Symbol, a Meaning, and a History

Fr. Medard ABOUE

In 2025, the Camillian Order and the entire Camillian Charismatic Family (CCF), in addition to celebrating the Jubilee of the Universal Church, also celebrated the 450th anniversary of the conversion of St. Camillus de Lellis, founder of the Order and inspiration for the CCF. These were very important occasions of grace and of giving thanks to the Lord for the gift of this giant of charity to the Church and to the world.

For over four centuries, the Order he founded has continued its work in the complex world of suffering that touches humanity in every context and time.

The Camillian family, in addition to being distinguished by the maternal affection with which the men and women religious live out their consecration at the bedside of the suffering, is characterized by a red cross sewn onto the right side of the religious habit, which makes a very strong first impression on those they encounter. Moreover, the cross was adopted from the very beginning by the Founder himself, after he personally obtained from Pope Sixtus V permission to use it in perpetuity. It embodies the meaning and power of the model of following Christ,

which, four centuries later, continues to inspire generations of young people who dedicate themselves to others.

Red Cross: A Symbol Chosen by the Founder for his “Company”

Camillus de Lellis obtained in 1586 the first, partial recognition of his new Institute, that of the Ministers of the Infirm, amidst the Counter-Reformation climate that characterized the Church of that period.

Despite the widespread tendency to no longer authorize new institutional foundations, Camillus obtained recognition thanks to the witness that he and his companions had shown in courageously assisting the plague-stricken both in private homes and in Roman hospitals, which were in appalling sanitary conditions.

Amazed by the courage of those men, who were joyful in serving the suffering Christ alone, the Pope and the papal aristocracy were convinced of the goodwill and noble intentions of those



The Camillian family is distinguished and characterized by a red cross sewn onto the right side of the religious habit, which makes a very strong first impression on those they encounter.

men—organized and led by Camillus—who believed in an ideal so lofty and so beneficial to the poor and sick that it would be difficult to stop them. No difficulty could hold them back; in the name of an ideal so clear in their minds and before their eyes, they accepted even great humiliations, provided the cause could continue.

The papal bull *Ex omnibus* issued by Pope Sixtus V in 1586 recognized the Society so ardently desired by Camillus, though it imposed two limitations: the first concerning the members of the Society, who were forbidden to take vows, thereby emphasizing that no new Order was being established; the second concerning territorial boundaries, that is, Camillus and his companions were granted permission to work only in Roman hospitals.

However, neither of these limitations would withstand the power of their witness for long. While Sixtus V appeared strict toward the numerous religious Orders with the aim of restoring order and seriousness to the Church, he also harbored a secret desire to meet the giant of charity—the

one who worked on behalf of the suffering, filling Rome with the fragrance of his charity.

Camillus and his companions' dedication transformed the foul stench of the hospitals into "gardens" of a sweet fragrance. Precisely where no one wanted to go to offer aid, the former mercenary directed his attention and his zeal. His willpower was so great that it could not fail to arouse interest. With the gentleness of charity, Camillus and his companions pursued and achieved the very same goal for which the Holy Father had to resort to the force of authority, namely, the renewal of Holy Mother Church.

The jubilee celebrations will bear fruit only if we remember that our Order is above all the fruit of unshakable faith and unceasing toil throughout a long history encapsulated in a symbol: a red cross willed by God and accepted by the Pope.

Aware of the Holy Spirit's work through his humble person, Camillus wished to give his inspiration the symbol of the cross; a lion-headed cross, that is, of a reddish-brown color, which for him represented the perfect synthesis of a past of struggle in the ranks of chivalric, military, and hospitaller Orders against the barbarians in defense of ideals of identity. That world and that way of life never left him entirely.

That cross also and above all evoked Jesus crucified, for the fate of Christ who died on the cross did not seem different to him from that of those he had chosen to serve: the incurably ill, the destitute, the plague-stricken, the most desperate among men—those who, by the dozens every day, breathed their last in the wards and on the foul-smelling straw mattresses of St. James Hospital, amid the indifference of their fellow sufferers and under the distracted gazes of the attendants. To those whom life, in some way, has already crucified to a fate of pain and marginalization, Camillus and his companions freely choose to dedicate their lives, sowing new hope in so many.



In the Apostolic Brief, 'Cum nos nuper', Pope Sixtus V granted Camillus permission to wear the Red Cross on his habit (June 26, 1586).



In fact, it is precisely them whom Christ perfectly represented on the cross and for whom his approach, in a loving and revolutionary way, constituted a reason for a death sentence. Here we can already glimpse the defining features of Camillus' spirituality: to serve the suffering Christ and to become for them the servant Christ who never abandons them.

In the name of that red seal, the warrior and his companions intend to sacrifice themselves and serve the most destitute. These are the reasons why he requested of the Holy Father that the cross be sewn onto the right side of his Company's religious habit, unlike the professional knights, who wore it on the left side.

The Pope, in accordance with the spirit of that cross, on June 26, 1586, through the Brief *Cum nos nuper*, granted the members of the new Congregation permission to wear that symbol.

A few days later, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, June 29, Camillus and eight companions, adorned with that same much-desired red cross, went to the Vatican Basilica, amid a crowd intrigued by the novelty. As Luciano Noia writes, "it is not a parade; it is a symbolic offering to the Roman people with the implicit promise of total dedication to the relief of suffering and illness." The fellow Ministers of the Infirm, new "crusaders of a different kind," praised the Lord with their lives, proclaiming to Rome and the world that "there is no other boast than in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Elevation of the Company of Ministers to the Sick to a Religious Order in 1591

Among the major challenges that marked the life of the company of the new "differently crusaded," were the severe outbreaks of the plague that ravaged the following centuries.

The true litmus test for the new company was the plague that ravaged Rome and much of the Italian peninsula from the spring of



1590 to the fall of 1591. The cause of that devastating plague was the unsanitary conditions in which the wool workers—whom the Roman Pontiff had brought from the neighboring territories of Tuscany and Naples—found themselves. Dirt and the onset of tropical heat triggered the plague outbreak that caught Rome unprepared. In a short time, the contagion spread and thousands of people were infected; the hospitals declared they were "at full capacity." Camillus and his companions courageously found themselves on the front lines among the volunteers, ready to aid the sick with determination, without fear of death. The high ecclesiastical hierarchy was amazed by the commitment of the new "differently crusaded" men in organizing relief efforts and confronting the disaster. They went from house to house searching for the plague-stricken so that no

Church of Santa Maria Maddalena in Campo Marzio, Rome, rebuilt in preparation for the canonization of Camillus, and consecrated on May 19, 1727.



1. Holy Spirit hospital in Rome;
2. Hospital of Santa Maria del Popolo degli Incurabili in Naples

one would die without attention, without loving care, and without maternal affection.

For Camillus's men, there was never a moment's rest; so much so that they competed among themselves to offer help, motivated as they were by their commander-

in-chief. They said to one another, "This is our hour; we fight for charity; we must not stop."

Famine joined the plague. Pope Sixtus died of malaria in the papal residence, assisted in part by the Ministers of the Infirm. His successor, Pope Urban VII, barely had time to announce that Rome would have bread thanks to the sale of the Church's treasures when he, too, died.

The city was now exhausted. Bands of desperate people were looting, raping, and seizing everything they could get their hands on. The new pontiff, Gregory XIV, elected in the winter of 1590, found himself facing a sea of the destitute and was forced to resort to force to try to quell the unrest.

Camillus became the spokesperson for the poor and the sick before the Pontiff, highlighting a different way of serving them, according to the Gospel. The Holy Father, heeding the voice of the defender of the least among us, authorized the reopening of the old hospice at Ponte Sisto and supported, at Camillus's suggestion as well, numerous initiatives that had sprung up in the city, aimed at best addressing the dual disaster. In nearly a year of plague and famine, the city lost more than a quarter of its population, and the Ministers of the Infirm lost about half of their members.

A painful miracle of charity that, for the company, represented the most brilliant testimony and their promotion in the field.

The path was set, the test had been passed, and growth would not be long in coming, with the due and necessary recognition from ecclesiastical authorities.

Finally, on the morning of December 8, 1591, twenty-five Ministers of the Infirm, having survived the battle against the plague, typhus, and starvation, took the perpetual vows granted by the Pope on the previous September 21 through the Bull *Illius qui pro gregis*. It was the most significant recognition that elevated the Company to a

religious Order and, at the same time, laid the solid foundations of its long history, which continues to this day. Since that trial by fire, Camillus's red cross has never ceased to shine during the great health disasters of Europe and the world.

The Red Cross of Martyrdom of Charity: Symbol of an Order Present Throughout History

The *Illius qui pro gregis*, the Order's Magna Carta, is fundamental not only because it represents the actual act of approval and foundation of the Order, with the granting of privileges, immunities, and exemptions, but above all because its first part contains the formula of life through which the religious mature in conscience the decision to offer their very existence in the service of the suffering. In fact, in addition to the three vows observed in many religious Orders, Camillus and his companions established a fourth, specific and distinctive vow, symbolized at first glance by the red cross on the habit.

The formula reads as follows: "Whoever proposes to dedicate himself forever to this service of charity, let him decide to be dead to the world and to all things of this age, and to live solely for Christ, and let him join us to atone for his sins, under the most gentle yoke of perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience, and in perpetual service to the sick, even if stricken by the plague, not only in hospitals but also in prison infirmaries, where the sick are greatly afflicted by both bodily and spiritual needs."

With the guarantee of full recognition of the Order, Camillus and his companions now held in their hands the instrument of the revolution of evangelical charity in the service of the sick, so long desired at the Hospital of St. James. Confirming the trust placed in them and the goodness of the work animated all their determined, humble, and strong commitment. And this occurred in a significant way throughout the history of the Order. Until his death on July 14, 1614, the



Founder spared no sacrifice to hold high the banner of charity toward the sick. For him, the Holy Spirit Hospital was the most flower-filled garden with the sweetest fragrance he had ever known.

Because of the meaning contained in that symbol—which the Order has always recognized and which cannot be hidden even in times of great crisis—the religious

1. Hospital of the Pammatone in Genova;
2. Hospital of Ca' Granda in Milan

have always preserved, indeed sought to strengthen, their presence in the world of suffering, so that, as far as possible, the sick might be cared for with the heart of a mother tending to her own sick child.

During the long and devastating periods of plague, famine, and war in the 17th century, Camillus and his companions, “crusaders of a different kind,” gave such a powerful demonstration of their inspiration that they sparked a significant increase in the number of religious and communities throughout Italy, despite the loss of so many valiant religious who sacrificed their lives on the “battlefield.” Because of the lives given by those men, the century is even called the “festival of charity of the Ministers of the Infirm.”

During the plagues and famines in Nola in 1600, in Palermo in 1624, in northern and central Italy in 1630, and in Rome, Naples, and Genoa between 1656 and 1657; during the wars in Hungary (1595), in Croatia (1601), and the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) in Europe; in Mantua (1529); and in the conflicts in Spain and Portugal (1640–1668), the red cross of the Ministers of the Infirm symbolized care, relief, and

loving aid to the sick, the wounded, and the dead. Some historians believe that this heroic commitment of the “differently cross-bearing” on the battlefields inspired Henry Dunant to found the International Red Cross in Switzerland in 1863 for the relief of war-wounded.

A direct and indirect consequence of these missions was the driving force behind the Order’s expansion in Italy, Europe, and the world. The 18th century, the so-called “century of the Order’s missionary expansion,” saw the gradual establishment of communities in European and South American countries. Spain, the first foreign mission, experienced rapid growth that subsequently allowed for expansion into various countries of the American subcontinent. From the community in Peru, founded in 1710, those in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico were established. This development led the Order to organize itself into provinces and vice-provinces, so that by the end of this century the Order had over seventy communities divided into 6 provinces (Roman, Neapolitan, Sicilian, Milanese, Tuscan, and Spanish) and 2 vice-provinces (Peru and Portugal). Everywhere the Camillians were admired for their devoted service to the suffering. They were known and identified as the “Fathers of Good Death”, an expression still widely used in the Vice-Province of Peru.

Camillus, canonized in 1746, is called the “Heavenly Patron of the Dying” and of the “Good Death.”

Unfortunately, the revolutionary winds that swept through Europe at the end of the 18th century, bringing to power governments with a strong secularist bent, placed a significant brake on this hope. In fact, at the beginning of the 19th century, the new civil governments enacted laws for the suppression of religious Orders, confiscating most of their assets. Our Order was not spared either.

Many religious renounced the consecrated life, and numerous communities

Camillian house of the ‘Buena Muerte’ in Lima (Peru).



were closed. The few remaining religious were forced into hiding, resulting in a lack of communication. This climate fueled and exacerbated latent problems among the religious, demotivating many of them and hindering the emergence of new vocations, to the point of bringing the Order to the brink of extinction. All Italian provinces, with the exception of the Roman one, were suppressed. More out of self-interest than tolerance, King Joachim Murat of Naples ordered in 1814 that within the Kingdom of Naples, the *Fatebenefratelli*, the Doctrinal Fathers, and the Ministers of the Infirm be allowed to return to their properties, as these three Congregations were recognized as beneficial to society and their absence deemed detrimental.

From these seeds of life, hope would be reborn, for the excesses of the revolution clashed with their own inconsistencies, and slowly, we witnessed the rebirth of the religious Orders and ecclesiastical structures that were of great importance in the construction and development of European humanistic culture. St. Camillus' "differently crusaded" followers resumed the feast of charity, going so far as to give their lives for the sick, the plague-stricken, the hungry, and the suffering. Amid successive epidemics of plague, cholera, famines, and wars, the Camillians regained their prestige in the manner that characterizes them: serving without fear, even in the face of risk to their own lives, inspiring others with their legendary charity.

The reconstruction of the old provinces and the founding of new ones thus enabled the missionary renewal that characterized the entire Church at the end of the 19th century.

With great success, the European Camillian missionaries once again planted the red linen cross in Africa, Asia, America, and Australia. By the mid-20th century, the Order had truly been reborn, with provinces and delegations on every continent. Inspired by the missionaries, members of the new foundations emphasized the professional training of religious who



serve as doctors and nurses in numerous major healthcare facilities. Some religious also serve as professors at universities and higher education institutions, forming many laypeople in the spirit of St. Camillus.

A very significant development is the

1. Fr. Camillo Cesare Bresciani, founder of the Lombardy-Veneto Province;
2. First Camillian missionaries to Asia



A Camillian religious provides spiritual care to a COVID-19 infected in India.

birth and spread of the Lay Camillian Family as a distinct work of the Institute. Established as an autonomous association with ecclesiastical and civil recognition, its members work side by side with the religious in various situations of need. The association is also present in many countries where the Camillians are not yet present and proudly bears the red cross of St. Camillus in support of and care for the sick, the suffering, and the needy.

During the 19th century, women's Institutes inspired by the saint of Buccianico were founded: the Ministers of the Sick of St. Camillus, founded in 1819 by Maria Domenica Brun Brabantini; the Daughters of St. Camillus, founded in 1892 by the Camillian Father Luigi Tezza and Mother Giuseppina Vannini; and others.

At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, widespread changes in the healthcare sector, firmly managed by governments, introduced increasingly strict intervention rules, the result of a new awareness that promotes the protection of human rights and particularly those of the sick. However, in rare situations of serious

epidemics, Camillian religious men and women and laypeople have continued to provide relief, aid, and care. This was the case during the Ebola epidemic in Africa between 2014 and 2016, the COVID-19 pandemic between 2019 and 2021, and various natural disasters, especially in Asia. The "differently crusaded" followers of St. Camillus continue to bear witness to the merciful love of Christ present in the sick.

In recent years, the Order has been working hard to give meaning and structural coherence to the CCF, which brings together all the original institutionalized expressions (religious men, religious women, and laity) inspired by the charism and spirituality of St. Camillus, the heavenly patron of the sick, of healthcare workers, and patron of military healthcare. This synodal journey, strongly desired and promoted by Pope Francis for the Church in all its forms, also represents an opportunity for the entire Camillian Family to seek concrete solutions in our increasingly secularized world. Therefore, the red cross of St. Camillus can be a sign of hope for those who suffer and an opportunity to highlight the charism and spirituality, effectively bearing witness to the Gospel of the Good Samaritan, as Camillus de Lellis desired. In various parts of the world, this synodal journey is already underway, following the model lived out at the central level of the CCF, and it only needs to be deepened and strengthened.

The daily commitment that the Camillians and all members of the CCF seek to put into practice in their healthcare and welfare facilities, in parishes, or wherever they may be, in collaboration with other entities in the ecclesial or healthcare world, consists in paying attention to the world of suffering.

The Founder was a revolutionary in 16th-century Roman and Italian healthcare, with the goal of strenuously defending the rights of the sick abandoned in hospitals. He vigorously promoted the corporal works of mercy: 1) feeding the hungry; 2) giving drink to the thirsty; 3) clothing the naked; 4) sheltering pilgrims; 5) visiting the sick; 6) visiting prisoners; and 7) burying the dead.

But above all, St. Camillus promoted the fifth work—visiting the sick in their entirety—transcending the ecclesiastical view of the time, which regarded the suffering person more as a sinner who, before any other care, would need to receive the sacrament of Confession.

Saint Camillus reversed these priorities, teaching us to serve the sick like a mother caring for her only sick child. His “more heart in those hands,” which he repeated like a mantra, meant nothing other than devoted and passionate care for the sick in every aspect of their being.

Camillus was deeply convinced that the sick person is first and foremost a human being, unique and irreplaceable, and that their rights are therefore “their concrete needs” for healing and salvation.

In that context, Camillus demonstrated, through tenacious practice and a strong will, the importance of the *diaconia* of the Kingdom, reaffirming the uniqueness of the dignity and original value of the human person as *imago Dei*, and the exclusivity of

the theological experience with the sick person as an opportunity to encounter one’s brother and Christ revealed in him.

In Camillian spirituality, the care of the sick thus becomes a theological-sacramental space, a moment of grace and revelation, an encounter that is expressive, meaningful, and a bearer of grace and health. Service to the sick, as lived by St. Camillus and his companions, and as they taught others, is a highly theological space. Anyone who seeks God must serve the sick, pay attention to the poor, the prisoners, the hungry, and the needy. In this service, according to our saint, it is Christ who serves and it is Christ who is served.

Furthermore, Camillian spirituality makes care and assistance highly synodal experiences, in which the person in need of care and the one who serves them mutually become Christ. It is the *diaconia* of the Good Samaritan, the Camillian spirituality through which Jesus recommends to the lawyer—and today to each of us: “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37).

Opening of
the Camillian
Jubilee year at
Valle dell’Inferno
(Manfredonia), on
February 2, 2025





Mother General of the Daughters of St. Camillus Sr. Zélia Andrighetti and the Superior General of Camillians Fr. Pedro Tramontin, with the relic of the heart of St. Camillus, during the opening of the Camillian Jubilee year at Valle dell'Inferno (Manfredonia), on February 2, 2025

Camillian Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope in the Footsteps of St. Camillus

The Jubilee marking the 450th anniversary of the conversion of St. Camillus was a special occasion to better appreciate the fruits of this journey. The opening of the Jubilee Year, from February 1 to 3, 2025, saw the full participation of the highest levels of our Institutes.

The pilgrimage to the very places of his conversion made us feel like sons and daughters of a convert who was able to bequeath to us a wonderful charism. The shared reflection, held during the International Conference of Formators and Vocation Promoters (Rome, May 25–29, 2025), focused on the need and necessity to communicate to new generations the enthusiasm and

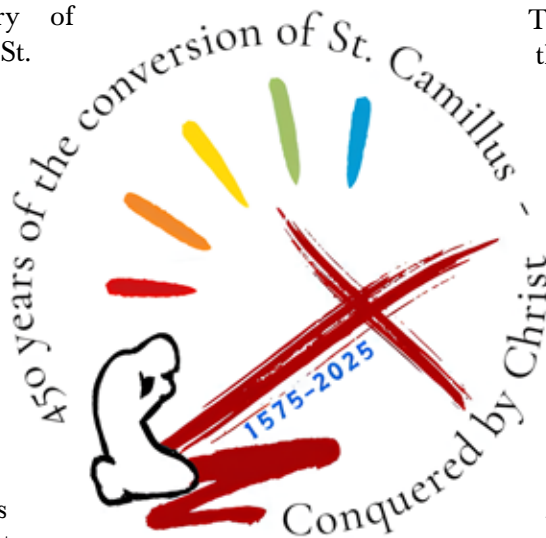
importance of this charism and this spirituality. With a great sense of responsibility, all the Institutes of the CCF, led by their Superiors General and their respective councils, have promoted, encouraged, participated in, and appreciated this formation initiative.

Since 2024, the annual celebration of the Day for Camillian Vocations, which falls on June 29, has been fostering deep collaborative relationships in the service of the charism and is a source of hope for new vocations.

The Camillian Jubilee Year concluded on December 8, 2025, in Rome, in the presence of the jubilarians from our religious families. The event was preceded by a formation session on the charism and spirituality dedicated to them.

The hope is that all these initiatives will help both present and future generations rediscover the grace and gift contained in that symbol of the red cross.

The goal of the jubilee celebration, through the experience of the various events, was to reawaken and rekindle the relevance of Camillus' conversion, which took place 450 years ago and continues to live on through the commitment of those who allow themselves to be captivated by his charism and spirituality. Times have changed, and with them the ways in which we serve, but the meaning of the symbol and the power of the charism remain unchanged.



Every generation of the saint's children and devotees is called to bring the inspiration of the heavenly patron to life in the healthcare challenges of their own time.

In our time, the world of healthcare poses colossal and significant challenges to the Camillian world. Suffering is everywhere before our eyes. A reality with a thousand faces, it still affects people today not only in their bodies but also in their psychological, relational, spiritual, and existential dimensions. Suffering is, without a doubt, an essential and existential issue that takes us beyond the limits of our being and our understanding. In addition to ancient and neglected diseases, still widespread in certain geographical areas of the planet, chronic and debilitating suffering, along with other new pathologies, continue to be a heavy burden for people worldwide. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated once again that no one is immune to suffering, despite the enormous progress that medical science continues to make against the afflictions

plaguing humanity. Everywhere, suffering, in its various forms, unfortunately continues to be humanity's unwanted companion throughout life.

Our charism and our spirituality lead us to be like soldiers on the front lines, continuing to care for, console, comfort, alleviate, prevent, and heal under the symbol of the red cross. How can we continue to fight this battle effectively? It is up to our intelligence and knowledge to identify the best ways to continue being meaningful witnesses of Christ's merciful love toward those who suffer.

The Jubilee, beyond the celebrations and festivities, is meant to be an unmissable opportunity to provide adequate responses to these challenges.

Every religious Institute of the CCF, every consecrated person, and every devotee of the saint is therefore called to a renewed conversion, to continue to be, together with that red cross on the chest, a sign and a pilgrim of hope in the world of healthcare. ■

Jubiliarians of
the Camillian
Charismatic Family
during the closing
celebration of
the Jubilee Year
at St. Camillus
Basilica in Rome
on December 8,
2025





CHAPTER THREE

The Camillian Ministry Today

Fr. Aristelo MIRANDA

The Camillian ministry embodies a commitment to compassionate care and represents a complex and dynamic network of vocations, diverse experiences, and dedicated service offered by Camillians in thirty-five countries. This ministry can be conceptualized as a mosaic, in which individual contributions and unique vocations come together to form a powerful representation of unwavering dedication to those who suffer.

This chapter explores the many dimensions of this essential ministry, examining its various expressions on a global scale.

The Camillian charism manifests itself in various forms, including care in hospitals and hospices, the promotion of the dignity of people with disabilities and marginalized populations, strengthening community resilience in the face of disasters, training future healthcare workers, and advocating for the marginalized. These diverse activities demonstrate the Camillian ministry's ongoing capacity for renewal and adaptation to meet the changing needs of vulnerable populations worldwide. This analysis seeks to highlight the narratives and diverse expressions of a ministry unified by a central and enduring mission: to embody the healing presence of Christ for those who suffer.

The Camillian Constitution emphasizes the centrality of this ministry, urging members to consider it “above all else,” even at the risk of their own lives and as a life-long commitment (C. 12 & 29). This is in line with St. Camillus's assertion that the Order needs individuals who are “perfect men, united and centered,

captivated by the merciful Christ and passionate about the weakest and most needy, inwardly free, capable of forming healthy and wholesome relationships...” (*The Camillian Ministry: Guidelines*, 2013, 38). From St. Camillus's perspective, “perfect men” are not defined by the absence of sin, but by the humble acknowledgment of their own imperfections and by a resolute commitment to embodying the charism of mercy toward the poor and the sick, even at the risk of their own lives. These individuals maintain a constant awareness of contemporary challenges and pursue reforms to improve their evangelizing mission.



The Camillian Constitution emphasizes the centrality of this ministry, urging members to consider it “above all else,” even at the risk of their own lives and as a life-long commitment



The concept of “reform” is fundamental to various healthcare ministry programs and encompasses a three-tiered approach: responding, forming, and influencing. The interdependence of these elements can be compared to Father C. Vendrame’s concept of the “tripod of religious life”: the experience of God, the experience of fraternity, and mission and service in the Kingdom of God. This dynamic of interdependence implies that each element is essential to the others. “Reforming” is carried out through acts of charity (responding), pastoral formation (forming), and social engagement (influencing).

This dynamic enriches the identity of the Camillian ministry, which is to “witness to and embody” in the world of health and illness the salvific, merciful, therapeutic, and healing action of Christ [...] realized through the promotion of health, the prevention of disease, the provision of care, and rehabilitation.

This witness is supported by various works of charity within social and healthcare institutions, pastoral formation centers, chaplaincies, parishes, and related activities. The development of these initiatives is a direct response to urgent and organized needs (C. 42–45).

Drawing a parallel with Jesus’ public ministry, where one of his primary actions was to call the disciples to be with him (Mk 3:14) for experiential learning, St. Camillus gathered the first five devoted men to pray and work together. This highlights the importance of integrating goodwill with competence and ensuring that competence is guided by compassion. To effectively support this mission, it is necessary to be credible voices for others in claiming their prophetic identity (Monks, 2016). Each member’s responsibility is to articulate these voices through compassion, commitment, and courage to influence achievable plans and achieve sustainable results.

According to 2024 statistics from the Catholic Church, the Church operates 5,420 hospitals and 15,476 homes for the elderly, chronically ill, and people with disabilities (see <<https://www.fides.org/en/stats>>).

The Camillians have contributed to this mission with 1.73% (94) of hospital ministry and 0.74% (115) of social-health centers. In addition, the Camillians operate 203 hospital chaplaincies, 22 pastoral care centers, and 94 parishes and rectories, some of which include dispensaries or health clinics. The diversity within the Camillian ministry is the result of the



revitalization and restructuring of the Order toward a transfigured existence (cf. *The Camillian Project*, 2014). This transformation is rooted in a creative fidelity to the charism of mercy toward the sick, animated by the spirit and passion of “not burying the precious talent that the Lord has placed in our hands, so that we may attain holiness during our lifetime and then eternal glory” (*Testamentary Letter of St. Camillus*). This commitment arises from a shared vision of the future and a dedication to the present, grounded in faith and the meaning of the Camillian charism.

Spiritual Care in Hospitals and at Home

Chaplaincy is a central component of Camillian ministry and constitutes 35% of their global ministries. In Europe, 51% of ministry is dedicated to chaplaincy, compared to other regions: the Americas (29%), Asia-Pacific (12%), and Africa (8%). Chaplaincy offers a privileged setting for preaching the Gospel and bringing healing to the sick. It is a place where people of different faiths and cultures come together,



Chaplaincy offers a privileged setting for preaching the Gospel and bringing healing to the sick. It is a place where people of different faiths and cultures come together, expressing their vulnerability and their need to be heard

expressing their vulnerability and their need to be heard. In this context, the Camillians confront the profound spiritual crises of contemporary humanity, characterized by chaotic and overwhelming processes of personal growth and development due to the



1. Camillian medical college in Brazil;
2. A nursing college in Burkina Faso

destabilization of original and authentic values. This crisis often generates intense inner suffering or spiritual pain.

Spiritual care in hospitals and homes is highly sensitive to cultural contexts and person-centered. Beyond the administration of the sacraments, the Camillian chaplain

assumes a prophetic role in a globalized society marked by secularization, indifference, exclusion, and diverse forms of religiosity. This role emphasizes the primacy of the Word (centered on Christ) in strengthening personal and communal relationships with the Lord, the source of strength in all circumstances of life. The chaplain demonstrates tenderness toward the suffering, understood not as sentimentality but as a sentiment that fosters love, openness, and deep respect for the person seeking care and healing. Chaplains also offer support to non-believers and people of other faiths, addressing a wide range of ethical, health-related, psychological, emotional, and affective issues. Furthermore, chaplains educate healthcare staff through verbal instruction and practical example, embodying the “hundred arms” of St. Camillus, a symbol of comprehensive support.

Camillian Mission in Healthcare Education and Camillian Social-healthcare Facilities

Camillians adopt a nuanced definition of health (WHO), recognizing it as a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, rather than merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Education and healthcare are fundamental pillars of the Camillian mission. Camillian educational institutions and social-healthcare facilities are integrated environments where care and education are intertwined. Healthcare facilities not only provide care but also serve as spaces for professional and spiritual development. Within these facilities, the Camillian charism is put into daily practice and shared with new generations of healthcare professionals, shaping their vision of medicine and care based on mercy and respect for human dignity.

The Camillians operate 19 pastoral and humanization centers and higher education institutions with medical science faculties.

Fifty-three percent of these are located in the Americas, while the remainder are distributed across Asia-Pacific (21%), Africa (15%), and Europe (11%). These institutions play a crucial role in the humanization of healthcare and in the formation of healthcare and religious professionals according to the values of compassion and charity. They preserve the Camillian charism and adapt its expression to contemporary needs. These centers promote a holistic and integrated approach to healthcare services and cultivate a culture of life that protects health and upholds human dignity. “It is essential and urgent to deepen our theological and pastoral formation and to overcome the temptation of the sailor who navigates the ‘shallow waters of charity’ or the narrow path of professionalism without a mission” (Alvarez, 1993).

Pope Francis, in his address to the Camillian Charismatic Family (2019), stated: “But in a special way to St. Camillus de Lellis and to all who follow his example, God has granted the gift of reliving and bearing witness to Christ’s merciful love for the sick. The Church has recognized this as an authentic charism of the Spirit. You live this out in an exemplary way, translating it into life according to the twofold path of direct care for the sick—especially the poorest—in their physical and spiritual needs, and of teaching others the best way to serve them, for the benefit of the Church and humanity”.

In 2025, the Camillian Studies Center (CSC) was established at the former site of the Camillianum Institute. The CSC represents the Order’s commitment to preserving Camillian culture and spirituality within the Church and in the world, building on the Camillianum’s thirty-year legacy in developing the Pastoral Theology of Health at the heart of the universal Church. The site also houses the Order’s two non-governmental organizations, *Salute e Sviluppo* (SeS) and Camillian Disaster Service International (CADIS). The CSC aims to promote and



support the Camillian tradition and culture through academic research and reflection on topics related to the pastoral theology of health. Furthermore, the CSC seeks to be a model of synodality, as promoted by Pope Francis, for all Institutes of the Camillian Charismatic Family. To facilitate formation, the sharing of experiences, research, and collaboration among members of the Order

1. St. Camillus Centre for Humanization in Spain;
2. A Camillian healthcare facility in France



1. St. Camillus hospital in Brazil;
2. Camillians at St. Camillus hospital in Zinvie, Benin

and other stakeholders across all continents, the CSC is developing regional structures within its Provinces and Delegations.

Communities of Faith and Service: Parishes as “Field Hospitals” of the Camillian Order

Throughout its history, the Camillian Order has also taken charge of parishes and rectories, transforming them into centers of welcome and spiritual support, particularly for the sick and their families. The parish serves as a place of communion (*koinonia*), evangelization (*kerygma*), and mission (*diakonia*). It offers a context in which to embody “the gift of reliving Christ’s merciful love for the sick, ever present, and of bearing witness to it before the world” (C.1). According to the Statutes of the Camillian Parish (no.14), “The parish or rectory entrusted to the Camillians, in accordance with its own potential, puts into practice those aspects of the Camillian charism that cannot be realized in hospital chaplaincies, such as assisting the sick in their homes, the formation of laypeople, and, in general, of volunteers in pastoral care for the sick.”

The Camillians administer eighty-nine parishes and rectories, 47% of which are located in Europe and the rest in the Americas (21%), Africa (19%), and Asia-Pacific (13%). These parish communities are called to be “communities of communities” capable of welcoming and listening to people’s fears and hopes, their questions and expectations (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 1), including those left unspoken, particularly when they face the challenges of illness, frailty, old age, and loneliness. Furthermore, these communities are called to offer courageous witness and to proclaim the truth, which is Christ, who, through our actions and words, “exhorts, encourages, touches, takes by the hand, and walks with us,” bringing about the great liturgy of the complete salvation of the person. The Camillian parish cultivates and promotes hospitality and identity.

Hospitality involves creating a space for those who are or feel marginalized

or alienated from the parish community, offering support for their distress and the complexities of their search in faith, life, and relationships. The evangelization of those who no longer ask questions about God, or of those whom physical, relational, and spiritual suffering has placed in a state of apathy toward life itself, should help us avoid closing ourselves off in forms of self-referential ministry, so that we may live a ministry that is permanently outgoing (cf. Pope Francis).

The Camillian Mission in the Humanitarian Field: Humanitarian Assistance in Crisis Contexts (CADIS)

The Camillian Disaster Service International formally began its mission in 2000 with the establishment of the Camillian Task Force (CTF) by the General Council. The CTF was composed of religious and lay collaborators with specialized training in emergency humanitarian response, prepared to respond globally, particularly in regions with an established Camillian presence. The organization drew upon the availability of confreres from various Provinces and Delegations, tasked with addressing emergencies arising from natural and non-natural disasters. In 2014, the CTF was reconstituted as a foundation named Camillian Disaster International Service (CADIS International). This entity obtained legal recognition under Italian law and was registered with the Prefecture of Rome (No. 1152/2016) pursuant to the Decree of the President of the Republic—D.P.R. No. 361 of February 10, 2000. The Council formally established CADIS as a Foundation in 2015, following a consensus among the major superiors gathered at their annual assembly in Poland.

Although it was formally established only recently, the CADIS Foundation has its roots in a centuries-old tradition.



The organization draws inspiration from the heroic commitment of the Camillian martyrs of charity, who set an example of corporal and spiritual works of mercy during severe plagues, epidemics, and wars in Italy and Hungary—events historically known as the Festivals of Charity in the 16th–18th centuries. During these crises, over 300 Camillians lost their lives while providing assistance to affected populations. The

Camillian parishes
in Brazil and
Burkina Faso



Camillians in Vietnam are actively involved in humanitarian activities facilitated by CADIS

Camillians take a vow to serve the sick, even at the risk of their own lives, and to promote the “new school of charity,” characterized by holistic care—both physical and spiritual—similar to a mother’s care for her only child, a principle articulated by St. Camillus.

CADIS aims to achieve holistic well-being within ecologically conscious, sustainable, and resilient communities. Guided by the principles of love and mercy exemplified by Jesus and inspired by the ethics of St. Camillus, CADIS promotes and facilitates the development of comprehensive, community-based health programs aimed at improving the well-being of disaster-affected communities through compassionate, competent, and coordinated interventions.

The organization is committed to fulfilling its mission by re-evaluating and rethinking St. Camillus’ original vision. This involves cultivating a contemporary

Camillian identity characterized by an awareness of modern challenges and opportunities and a dedication to creative fidelity to its prophetic vocation and to the preferential option for service to the poorest populations affected by disasters.

CADIS’s policies and actions are based on four core values: compassion, competence, human rights, and commitment. Compassion is understood as intelligent kindness, with care as its central principle, focused on providing comfort to those in need and promoting the capacity-building of vulnerable populations, regardless of social class, gender, age, culture, or religion. Expertise, which underpins compassion, is defined as a commitment to maintaining and upholding high standards of practice. CADIS utilizes appropriate knowledge, skills, methodologies, and technologies to facilitate transformative change within

partner communities and within the organization itself. Commitment, essential to competence, is characterized by a firm conviction and a persistent desire for the well-being of others, particularly the most vulnerable, which manifests itself through concrete actions. Furthermore, CADIS is dedicated to collaborative engagement with all stakeholders, emphasizing active listening to facilitate dialogue, negotiation, consensus-building, and the development of strong teams to empower others. A fundamental principle guiding CADIS staff is a deep respect for human dignity and the fundamental rights of every individual. CADIS recognizes that every person possesses inviolable rights grounded in justice, including the right to life, access to quality services, and the attainment of holistic well-being, free from deprivation, fear, and the negative effects of risks.

From 2014 to 2024, CADIS implemented 25 recovery and resilience-building projects in Asia-Pacific (9), Africa (9), the Americas/Caribbean (4), and Europe (3), assisting over 20,000 families. These projects typically lasted two to three years. The interventions focused on empowering vulnerable people and communities affected by natural and non-natural disasters, providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to mitigate potential negative effects. In addition, CADIS organized 44 emergency relief and medical assistance interventions in the Asia-Pacific (25), Pan America/Caribbean (9), Africa (8), and Europe (2) regions, providing assistance to over 300,000 people. Emergency interventions generally lasted up to six months following the onset of a catastrophic event. The Asia-Pacific region has been identified as a primary disaster-prone area, with many countries exposed to high risk of various types of disasters. CADIS has established 13 organizations in the Asia-Pacific (6), Africa (5), Americas (1), and Europe (1) regions, five of which are legally recognized as non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Cultivating Value, Building the Future: Salute e Sviluppo ETS

By the will of the Major Superiors of the Order and to support the Order's missions, the *Salute e Sviluppo* (SeS) was founded in Turin in 1996.

After relocating to Rome in 2001, it is now an association recognized as an ETS (Third Sector Entity), having been an ONLUS since 2001 and recognized



as a non-governmental organization by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2003. It is registered in the List of CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and is authorized to submit international cooperation initiatives in developing countries.

It promotes projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the social-healthcare and human development sectors, always partnering with the Camillians worldwide. It builds hospitals, schools, and aqueducts and implements development projects for food production and animal husbandry.

Among its various ongoing programs, it is currently engaged in two significant projects:

- In the Central African Republic, with funding from the Italian Episcopal Conference, it is building a new school for professional nurses in Bossemptélé alongside St. John Paul II Hospital, in whose management and development it has been involved for about 15 years;

- In Burkina Faso, however, it is carrying out a major agro-zootechnical development project, called "Cultivating Value," co-funded by AICS, which includes over 150 hectares of land cultivated with rice, corn, alfalfa, orchards, tomatoes, vegetables, etc., as well as a herd of 80 cattle.

Significant progress is already evident through the strengthening of training activities, food production, and product marketing. Agricultural yields are increasing, thanks to the use of organic fertilizers and improved agronomic practices, which mitigate the impact of high costs and the scarcity of chemical fertilizers. Forage production for livestock has been successfully launched, exceeding the set targets.

This is an important development, given the fundamental role of cow's milk in infant nutrition.



Young Camillians
in Vietnam and in
Burkina Faso

Thanks to our established collaboration with the Department of Agricultural, Food, Environmental, and Forestry Sciences and Technologies at the University of Florence, we are focusing on the genetic improvement of the cows, selecting breeds with proven adaptability to hot, arid climates and high resilience to local diseases. In parallel with production, approximately 11 tons of milk were processed primarily into yogurt, thereby diversifying the food supply for

the communities of Bagré, who greatly appreciated the introduction of this fresh and nutritious product into the local market.

Vocations and Young People: Cultivating the Future of the Mission

The Order recognizes the complex, dynamic, and rapidly evolving global context, characterized by plurality, interculturality, and multiculturalism. These phenomena are recognized as “a source of novelty and endless new opportunities and challenges, if managed well”. To navigate this context effectively, it is necessary to “profoundly rethink, in the light of our charism of mercy toward the sick, the multiplicity of dimensions that structure our consecration.” Furthermore, an active commitment is required to the emerging “culture of synodality,” which demands “total commitment, great enthusiasm, and intense passion for the process of transformation of the entire Order.” It is stated that “only innovative choices and organic paths will allow us to truly be at the service of the mission in the Church and in the world of illness and health, making our evangelical witness shine” (Strategic Plan of the Order 2023–2028).

Despite the significant challenges facing humanity, the global Catholic population is growing, with an overall increase of 13,721,000 compared to the previous year. This increase is observed on most continents, with the exception of Europe, which recorded a decline of 474,000. Priestly vocations have decreased, except in Africa and Oceania. The number of diocesan priests worldwide decreased by 439, reaching a total of 279,171, while the number of religious priests increased over the past year, reaching 128,559 (+297) (Fides News Agency, Statistics of the Catholic Church 2024). Similarly, vocation promotion within the Order reflects this global trend, showing growth and decline in specific contexts. In 2025, the Camillian

Order counted 237 candidates, including 55 novices and 182 temporary professed, along with 810 priests and 78 solemnly professed brothers, for a total of 1,125 religious. A steady growth in vocations is observed in Africa (Burkina Faso, Benin, Uganda, Kenya) and in Asia (Indonesia, India, Vietnam). Conversely, a decline is evident in the Northern Hemisphere, while the Southern Hemisphere presents greater opportunities for vocational promotion.

Furthermore, the persistent decline in religious vocations in the North and the migration of religious from the South to the North to fill ministerial gaps represent critical challenges. If these issues are not effectively managed and addressed collectively, they could exacerbate the current decline in religious vocations. Although the movement toward the North represents a significant opportunity, failure to recognize this reality, as Pope Francis has warned, could lead to a “survival mentality” (Pope Francis, 21st World Day of Consecrated Life, 2017). This mentality “[...] makes us reactionary, fearful, slowly and silently closing ourselves off in our homes and our preconceptions. It makes us look back to the past glorious days, and instead of rekindling the prophetic creativity born of our founders’ dreams, it seeks shortcuts to evade the challenges knocking at our door today. A survivalist mindset robs our charisms of their power, because it leads us to “tame” them, to make them user-friendly, depriving them of their original creative force. It makes us want to protect spaces, buildings, and structures rather than encourage new initiatives [...] it makes us forget grace; it makes us professionals of the sacred, but not fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters of that hope to which we are called to bear prophetic witness.”

Conclusion

For over four centuries, the Camillian ministry, inspired by the compassionate spirit of its founder, St. Camillus de Lellis, has been a constant beacon of hope and healing in a world often marked by suffering and vulnerability. Born of St. Camillus’s profound personal conversion and his deep empathy for the sick and the dying in 16th-century Italy, the Order of Ministers of the Infirm (Camillians) has expanded its global reach, tangibly embodying Christ’s merciful love through diverse acts of care.



While the complexities of the 21st century present ever-evolving challenges within the healthcare sector and the landscape of human suffering, the Camillian ministry persists as a vital and adaptable force. Remaining faithful to its fundamental commitment to embody the healing presence of Christ for those in need, even at the risk of their own lives, the Camillian family demonstrates an enduring capacity for renewal and relevance. ■

References

- Alvarez, F. (1993). Inaugural Message of the Moderator General for the Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Camillianum. *Camilliani/Camillians*, 3–4.
- Miranda, A. (2009). Re-forming in the World of Health. *Camilliani/Camillians*, 2.
- Monks, F. (2016). *The prophetic dimension of our Charism in the world of healthcare* (unpublished document) A speech delivered during the International Conference of Camillian chaplains in Rome on Nov. 4–6, 2016.

Fr. Antonio Busiello
(1937-2023),
a Camillian missionary
in Benin



Camillians Around the World

Overview of Camillian Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Delegations

Bro. Paul KABORE

The Order of Ministers of the Infirm (Camillians), a living and active part of the Church, has always actively participated in its mission, dedicating itself to the care of the sick and to serving those most in need throughout the world.

The Order, present on five continents, is organized into Provinces, Vice-Provinces, and Delegations, and is currently active in 35 countries: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, the Philippines, France, Georgia, Germany, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, the Central African Republic, Spain, the United States, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, Hungary, and Vietnam.

The missions have always been a source of satisfaction and growth for the Order, but also of concern and care. They remain at the center of our attention, especially in relation to the major challenges associated with their expansion and the achievement of self-sufficiency. The difficulties that arise can be summarized in three main areas.

First, in some countries the Camillians operate in contexts marked by serious socio-political tensions, which compromise the development of their ministry and the very stability of the mission. In these complex realities, our confreres live in conditions of great instability and risk, threatened by war, violence, and banditry. Yet, with courage and dedication, they continue to carry out their ministry, keeping the torch of charity burning brightly.

Second, many foundations face serious economic difficulties related to the day-to-day management of their ministries and achieving self-sufficiency. Most of these communities have only low-income social services and depend on support from their mother provinces or, in some cases, on aid from non-governmental

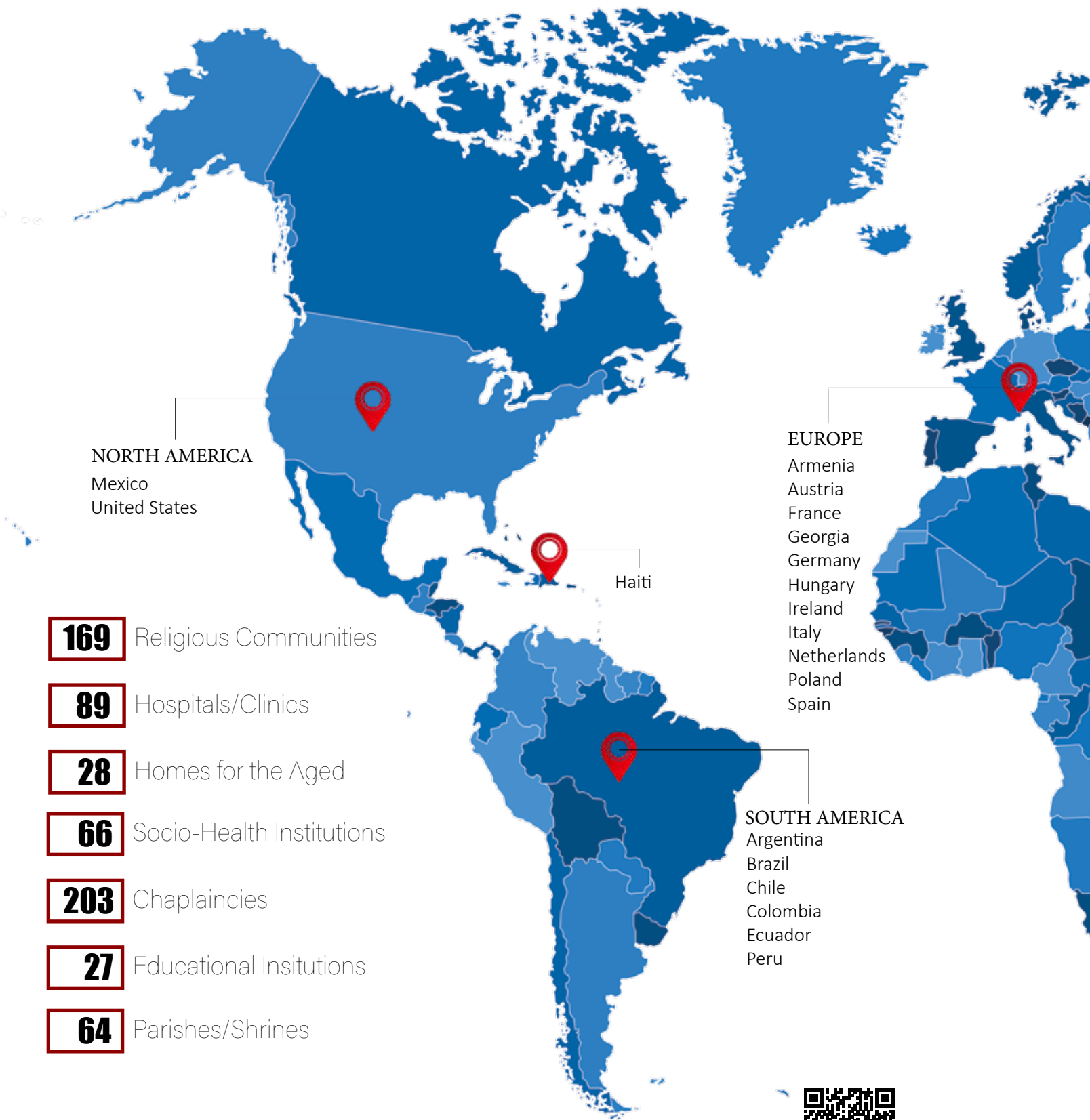
organizations (NGOs). Unfortunately, the precarious socio-economic context and widespread insecurity make long-term sustainability difficult.

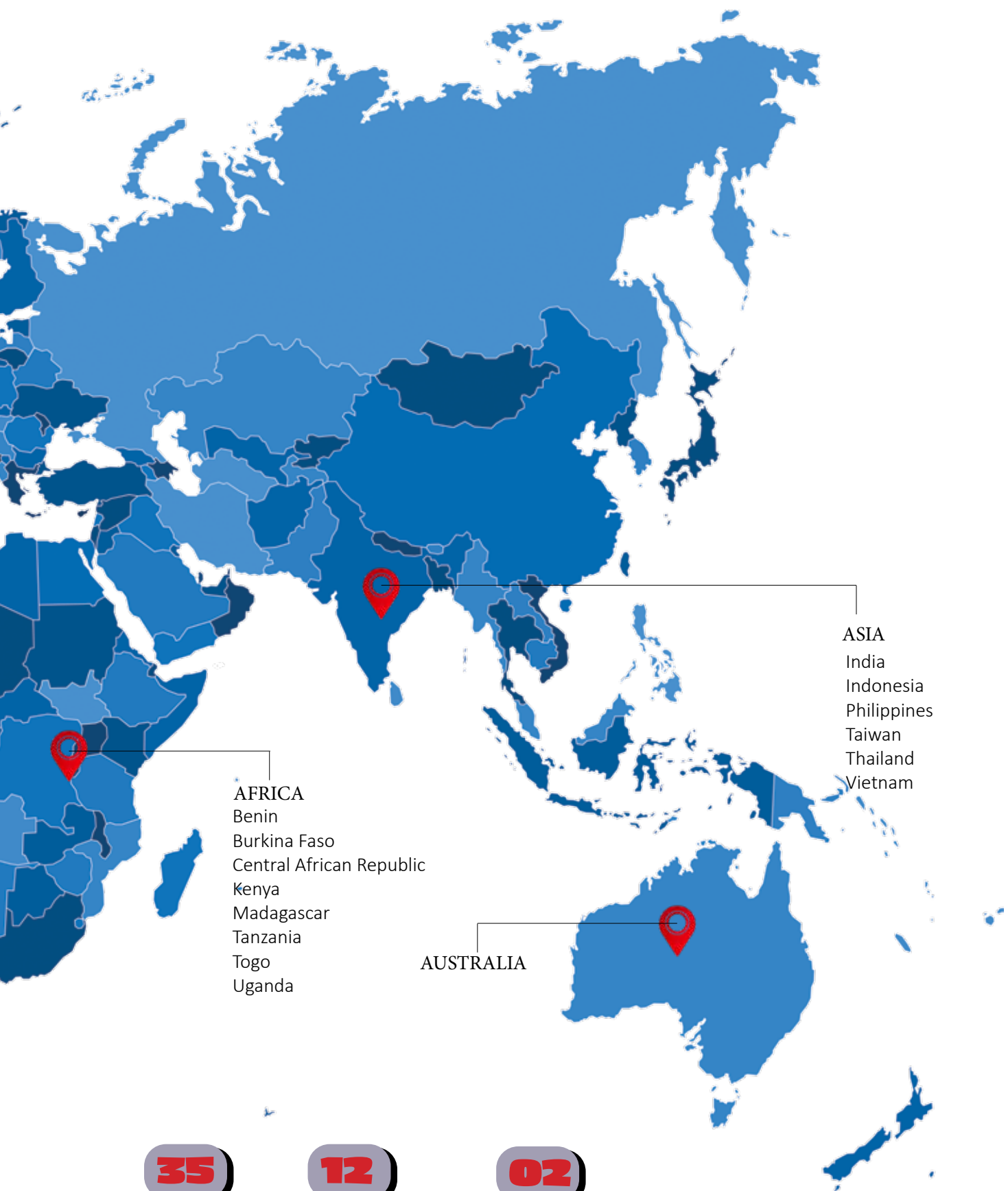
Finally, the crisis of vocation poses a significant challenge in various mission areas. Some historic foundations struggle to attract new vocations, due both to a shortage of religious and to socio-cultural factors that hinder the effectiveness of their vocation promotion ministry.

The growth and consolidation of the missions require a renewed synodal and missionary commitment, essential for continuing to spread the Camillian charism throughout the world. In this perspective, it is fundamental to strengthen collaboration among Provinces, Vice-provinces, and Delegations, as indicated in Article 58 of our Constitution: "To respond adequately to the gift received from God, the Order seeks, in every time and place, fidelity to the charism and the renewal of ministry, in harmony with the spirit of the Founder and the demands of inculturation. We therefore promote within the Order communal reflection and discernment, and cooperation among the confreres, communities, and provinces."

Deeper collaboration would also make possible a more equitable and fraternal sharing of human and material resources, as recommended by Article 130 of the Constitution: "...the provinces and vice-provinces, being part of a single body, also cooperate for the good of the entire Order and exchange temporal goods among themselves, so that those with greater resources may assist those in need..."

Despite the difficulties linked to the socio-cultural contexts of some missions and the persistent vocation crisis in various provinces, our presence in the world continues to be fundamental to the vitality, expansion, and continuity of our Order. ■





ASIA
India
Indonesia
Philippines
Taiwan
Thailand
Vietnam

AFRICA
Benin
Burkina Faso
Central African Republic
Kenya
Madagascar
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda

AUSTRALIA

35

COUNTRIES

12

PROVINCES

02

VICE-PROVINCES

PROVINCE OF BENIN-TOGO

By Fr. Karl Abathan



Novitiate house

Established on September 14, 2018, the Camillian Province of Benin-Togo is headquartered in Calavi-Zopah, Benin. Today, it extends its presence to Togo, the Central African Republic, Italy, France, and Austria. With 84 professed religious—including 76 priests, 2 deacons, and 6 brothers—it is organized into 10 communities and 4 houses awaiting canonical erection. Some of its members are engaged in missions abroad, as part of interprovincial collaboration, bearing witness to its openness and missionary spirit.

The roots of this province date back to

March 4, 1973, the date on which the first Camillian missionaries from Italy (Sicilian-Neapolitan Province) responded to the call of the late Bishop Christophe Adimou, then Archbishop of Cotonou. Fathers Luigi Cisternino, Vincenzo Di Blasi, and Brother Antonino Pintabona were the pioneers of this mission. But the story began even earlier, on January 8, 1971, with the arrival in Dogbo—at the request of the same prelate, then Bishop of Lokossa—of Fathers Christian Steunou, Roger Peter, and Brother Michel Mathieu, all from the French Province.

This mission reached a decisive turning point on January 2, 1990, with the entry into the Year of Spirituality of the first class of sixteen Camillian aspirants. Seven years later, on September 14, 1997, the province celebrated the perpetual vows of its first three religious in Sègbanou, followed in 1998 by the very first priestly ordinations. Another important milestone was reached on May 13, 2023, with the establishment of the provincial novitiate, which for thirty years has been based in the Camillian Province of Burkina Faso.

Today, the Camillian ministry in the province is carried out with passion and dedication in various health-related fields.



The religious work as doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, chaplains, etc. They visit the sick at home, care for the elderly living alone, and thus bear witness, with discretion and fidelity, to God's mercy toward those who suffer most.

This missionary vitality is grounded in a promising vocation promotion ministry. About fifty young people are currently in formation, accompanied by a team of competent and dynamic formators, eager to nurture the Camillian spirit within them.

Thus, from its humble beginnings to its current structure, the Camillian Province of Benin-Togo charts a path of hope and service, faithful to the charism of St. Camillus de Lellis, in the heart of the suffering world in Africa and beyond. ■



Dr. Fr. Marius Yabi at Camillian hospital in Zinvie

BRAZILIAN PROVINCE

By Fr. Mateus Locatelli



The Brazilian Camillian Province was established by the General Council meeting held from 6 to 8 April, 1946, with Father Inocente Radrizzani as its first provincial. Brazil, a country of continental size located in South America, welcomed the first religious in 1922 and subsequently founded a Camillian mission. Currently, the Province consists of 58 religious with perpetual vows, 6 religious with temporary vows, and 3 novices, present in 13 communities in Brazil and one community in the Delegation of the United States.

The Camillians arrived in Brazil in

1922, when the Archbishop of Mariana, Dom Silvério Gomes Pimenta, sent a letter of invitation to establish a community in the Archdiocese of Mariana-MG. On September 15, Fathers Inocente Radrizzani and Eugênio Dalla Giacoma, members of the Lombardy-Veneto Province sent to launch the new mission, arrived in Brazil.

Faced with the missionary zeal of our founders and the difficulty of remaining in Mariana, the first community was established in 1923 in the city of São Paulo, where today we have the Community and Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii. Little by little, with the arrival of new religious from the mother province, the mission expanded to other neighborhoods of the city of São Paulo, to Santos, Iomerê, and Santa Catarina, with the construction of the São Camilo Seminary, which produced many vocations, leading to the foundation—and subsequently to a commissariat—being elevated to a Province 24 years after the arrival of the first religious.

In these more than 100 years of Camillian presence in Brazil, there have been many challenges and crises. However, the figure of Fr. Inocente was fundamental in fostering a sense of unity among the religious. The Province has experienced periods of great expansion with a greater number of vocations, but also periods of decline, especially in the post-conciliar era. The courage, strength, and faith of our religious have been essential in overcoming crises, both in the early years and today.

The Camillian ministry today is carried out through chaplaincies in 19 hospitals, 9 parishes, and spiritual care in



Some members
of the Brazilian
province

healthcare ministry, both at the national level through the commission of the Episcopal Conference and in various dioceses and archdioceses. Our ministry is also expressed in three dimensions: healthcare, with 42 hospitals—31 owned and 11 non-owned—and two emergency rooms; education, with 2 university centers and 2 high schools; and social services, with 16 early childhood education centers, 1 youth center, and 1 center for children and adolescents. The Province is also responsible for an Institute of Pastoral Care in Health (ICAPS) and the Camillian mission in Foz do Rio Amazonas, which for over 50 years has provided health and spiritual care to riverside communities.

The Province has three houses of formation: aspirants are welcomed at the São Camilo Seminary in Lagoa Redonda, Fortaleza – CE; postulants and juniors at the São Camilo Seminary in Belo Horizonte – MG; and the novitiate house is located in Pinhais – PR. We also acknowledge the important work carried out by the more than 150 lay members of the Camillian Family,

who collaborate in the Province’s missionary and vocational outreach activities.

The Province maintains a quarterly newsletter, a blog, and other initiatives on social media as part of its outreach efforts. Scientific journals are published by the São Camilo University Center, such as “O mundo da saúde”, “Em Pauta São Camilo”, among others.

The Camillians’ century-long presence in Brazil and, since 2011, in the Delegation in the United States, shows us that our charism is alive. Our Province plays a leading role in Brazilian society, especially in the healthcare sector, since over 60% of the care provided in our hospitals is delivered through the Unified Health System. In the field of education, our programs are highly regarded and enable us to train excellent professionals, particularly in the healthcare sector. As a religious community, our presence in various communities and settings provides significant support to the local Church while also serving as a vibrant and active charismatic presence. ■

PROVINCE OF BURKINA FASO

By Fr. Pierre Yanogo

The Camillian Province of Burkina Faso is a young entity but one that is already deeply rooted, both nationally and internationally. Officially founded in 2016, the Province stems from a long history that began fifty years earlier, in 1966, when the first Camillian missionaries from the Roman Province, responding to the invitation of Cardinal Paul Zoungrana and the call of the Second Vatican Council, arrived in Ouagadougou to plant the charism of St. Camillus de Lellis on African soil. Welcomed into the community of the Missionaries of Africa, Fr. Pasquale del Zingaro, Fr. Gaetano De Sanctis, and other confreres immediately found themselves faced with the vast scope of the mission that awaited them.

As of this writing, the Province counts 124 religious, including 9 from the French Delegation, 48 temporary professed, 8 novices, 12 pre-novices, 16 young men in a year of spirituality, and more than 110 boys in the minor seminary. Their presence is organized into 15 active communities: nine in Burkina Faso, one residence in Ghana, two in Italy (in Florence and Pescara), and four in France (Bry-sur-Marne, Lyon, Arras, and Chambéry).

This growth has fostered an intense development of

relationships with other Camillian provinces around the world. The Roman Province is considered the “Mother Province” due to its historical and spiritual role. The novitiate has long been shared with Benin-Togo; the French province became a Delegation of the province in 2022, while the Spanish, Polish, and Northern Italian provinces actively collaborate by sending missionaries and training young Burkinabé religious. Burkinabé Camillians are now also present in France, Italy, Spain, and Ghana.

The Province’s apostolic activity spans various fields. Hospital chaplaincies and parish ministry are an integral part of the Camillian mission. In Burkina Faso, the religious are present in major healthcare facilities such as Yalgado Hospital, Charles de Gaulle Pediatric Hospital, Bogodogo Hospital, and the regional hospital in Tenkodogo, in addition to their own healthcare ministries. They administer two parishes, one in Ouagadougou and one in Tenkodogo. In France, they work at Saint Camille Hospital in Bry-sur-Marne and in various nursing homes, while in Italy they serve in chaplaincies, parishes, and rectories.

The healthcare sector is one of the pillars of the Province. Saint Camille Hospital (HOSCO)



in Ouagadougou, founded in 1968 as a dispensary, became a hospital in 2014. The Nanoro Medical and Surgical Center, established in 1992 as a health promotion center, was recognized as a CMA in 1997. The Notre Dame de Fatima Medical Center (CANDAF), opened in 2001 to care for people with HIV/AIDS, became a medical center in 2018. CERBA, the Pietro Annigoni Center for Biomolecular Research, inaugurated in 2006, is today a regional and international hub for research in genetics, virology, and oncology.

The Province does not neglect the most vulnerable. The San Camillo Social Works Association is dedicated to welcoming and assisting the poor, the elderly, and people with leprosy, particularly in Paspanga and Sakula. This concrete attention to the most vulnerable groups represents one of the most authentic expressions of the Camillian charism.

Another fundamental area is formation. The Camillians in Burkina Faso run three major houses of formation: the Juvenat San Camillo for young men in discernment, the Novitiate for initiation into religious life, and the Studentate for university and postgraduate students. Added to these are the Saint Camille Professional School of Health, which trains nurses and midwives, and the Camillianum, Center for the Humanization of Health, where courses and activities are offered in collaboration with public and private universities. The religious also participate in the academic and practical training of doctors, pharmacists, biologists, and other healthcare professionals. Vocational animation is overseen by a dedicated group of religious.

Collaboration with the laity is a vibrant and multifaceted reality. Groups such as the Camillian Lay Family, the Flame of Charity, and the Friends of the Sick support the religious in their apostolic and social activities, forming a rich and engaged community fabric.

The Camillian Province of Burkina Faso is today the largest in the entire



Order, a sign of the vitality and appeal of the Camillian charism on the African continent. However, this growth also brings significant challenges. The strategic vision for Camillian healthcare facilities aims to ensure quality care, grounded in up-to-date scientific expertise, the adoption of rigorous protocols, and the continuous professional development of staff. At the center of it all is the person, particularly the most vulnerable, and the desire to offer care and hope in accordance with the Catholic Church's teachings on ethics and bioethics.

Among the emerging challenges are the qualified formation of religious, the opening of new missions despite limited resources, and the consolidation of existing works. Projects in the pipeline include the opening of a mission in Burundi or Madagascar, the construction of a new formation house, a medical center in Tenkodogo, a community and clinic in Nakaar in the Diocese of Diebougou, a provincial headquarters, and the technological modernization of healthcare facilities.

With the growing number of young religious, the Province dreams big and looks to the future with a shared and unified vision. As sons of St. Camillus, it wishes to continue to be experts in charity toward the sick and the poor, offering not only care but also dignity and hope. ■

GERMAN PROVINCE

By Fr. Gabriel Jörg



St. Camillus house
in Essen

It all began in 1884 in Roermond, a Dutch city on the border with Germany, where a seminary was established for candidates for the Order coming from Germany. In 1901, the first facility on German soil was inaugurated in Essen, a sanatorium for alcoholics. Thanks to numerous religious vocations, other locations were soon opened, for example in Tarnowitz/Upper Silesia (1907) (now Poland), Neuss (1911), Freiburg (1920), Berlin (1922), Münster (1923), Hindenburg/Upper Silesia (1927) (now Poland), and Mönchengladbach (1929).

Outside Germany, the German Camillians operate in Aalborg, Denmark (1889), Lima, Peru (1901), Vienna, Austria (1910), and Milwaukee, USA (1923).

The aftermath of World War II led to the separation of the houses outside of West Germany. The decline in religious vocations made it necessary to abandon some houses in Germany and to sell or close certain facilities.

Since May 25, 2006, the Dutch Province, previously independent, with a delegation in Tanzania and a mission in Colombia, has been part of the German Province. On December 8, 2024, the Austrian Province of the Order, with locations in Salzburg and Nyíregyháza (Hungary), has become part of this Province. The history of the Camillians of the German Province shows that the confreres, whatever country they worked in, have always responded to the needs and challenges of their time. What responses do we offer today?

The progressive secularization in Western countries and the resulting decline in practicing Christians is leading to a radical change in church life. Parishes are disappearing, churches are being closed. In Germany, this has now become the norm. This situation also affects our province: in Germany, our church in Essen is no longer used by the diocese. In Berlin, the archdiocese has dissolved the Camillian parish. In Vienna, we are selling our convent. In the Archdiocese of Freiburg, the confreres work in parishes because there are no longer jobs for priests in hospitals. The province faces the challenge of what to do with the churches that the dioceses no longer wish to use. Revenues are falling sharply because the number of confreres is declining. Facilities are being closed, and properties must be sold to build up the reserves required by law. Despite these painful cuts, the confreres continue to carry out their apostolate with great fidelity:

In Essen, the confreres continue to be present at the Kamillushaus specialist clinic, albeit under different management. There they run a pulmonology clinic and two nursing homes. For many decades, the Filipino community has celebrated its

religious services in the Kamilluskirche. Two confreres assist this community. Although the parish of St. Camillus has been dissolved, the religious continue to care for people.

In Freiburg, two religious work in university hospitals, one as a chaplain and the other, who is also a professor of nursing science, as a nurse. Since there are few positions for priests in hospital chaplaincy, one religious serves as a parish priest. One religious provides spiritual guidance to future priests of the Archdiocese of Freiburg. Through a weekly Sunday greeting (“Sonntagsgruß”), German Camillians have been accompanying many sick people in public hospitals, nursing homes, and in their homes with a word of spiritual comfort for 100 years.

In Nyíregyháza, Hungary, the confreres run a home for people with disabilities, assist a parish, and provide spiritual care in local hospitals. In Transylvania (Romania) and western Ukraine, care associations founded by a confrere provide the elderly, the disabled, and the sick with basic foodstuffs and social assistance. A summer camp for children is organized once a year. The associations collaborate with Caritas, local dioceses, and state authorities.

In Bad Schallerbach (Austria), the Province runs an academy for healthcare

professions. In Salzburg and at a nursing home in Vienna, the confreres spend their retirement. In Roermond (the Netherlands), at the “Verpleeghuis St. Camillus,” the brothers provide spiritual care to the elderly and those in need of nursing care and offer various social services to the needy. They also provide affordable housing to those in need.

In Tanzania (Africa), several parishes, a health center, and spiritual care for the sick at Muhimbili Hospital in Dar es Salaam are our main areas of activity. One confrere is a professor at the University of Dar es Salaam. In Morogoro, young ones are preparing for religious life.

In Barranquilla (Colombia), a confrere and a sister run a large social center for children with disabilities, assist a center for the elderly, and care for the poor, the sick, and refugees from neighboring Venezuela.

For over 60 years, the missionary works in Germany and Austria have supported the work of the Camillians in the world’s poor countries. Through publications, benefactors receive regular updates on our work. Through our two foundations, the Camillo Foundation and the Father Heinrich Dammig Foundation, we aim to preserve the Camillian ideal for the future, for the benefit of the suffering, the sick, and the poor. ■



INDIAN PROVINCE

By Fr. Bijoy Kuliraniyil



St. Camillus
minor seminary,
Mananthavady,
Kerala, India



The Indian Camillian Province was founded in 1984. Geographically, its presence extends across various states of India, such as Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Assam, and extends its missionary work to Ireland and Uganda. As of this writing, the Province has 86 perpetually professed members and nearly 100 candidates and scholastics in formation, serving on three continents in 17 religious communities.

The history of Camillians in India began with a courageous missionary endeavor launched by the North Italian Province in the 1980s. Responding to the call to bring Christ's compassionate care to the suffering, Fr. Antonio Crotti, one of the pioneering missionaries, laid the foundations of the

Camillian mission in India. The North Italian Province nurtured this nascent presence until it matured into a Vice-Province in 2009 and was established as a full-fledged Province in 2016.

The Province's apostolic mission is diverse and dynamic. Hospital chaplaincy remains at the heart of its service, particularly in various hospitals in India and abroad, where Camillian religious provide sacramental, psychosocial, and spiritual care. In addition, the Province currently operates healthcare facilities: Snehadaan (hospital), Sneha Care Home, Snehasadan, St. Camillus Ashram, and Snehagram (homes for orphaned and vulnerable children), and Snehatheeram for the care of adults living with HIV. Specialized ministries include pastoral and spiritual care, services for people with



disabilities, the terminally ill, and the abandoned, the provision of counseling and psychosocial support services, disaster management, and relief efforts under the banner of the Camillian Task Force. Collaboration with lay healthcare professionals, pastoral volunteers, and the Lay Camillian Family (LCF) enriches the mission and ensures its continuity.

Formation remains a priority, with structured phases including the minor seminary, pre-novitiate, novitiate, philosophy and theology programs, and ongoing formation. The Province has four minor seminaries—Mananthavady (Kerala), Eluru (Andhra Pradesh), Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu), and Guwahati (Assam)—for the initial stages of formation, a novitiate house, and a scholasticate in Bengaluru (Karnataka), which offer opportunities for discernment, study, and community life.

In the field of communication and culture, the Province publishes various books, journals, and articles written by its members, as well as *Vitae Camillians*, its biannual publication, the annual reports of the various ministry centers, and the newsletters of the formation houses. The Province has published several devotional songs written and composed by its members and scholastics. Social media outreach and ministry have been the Province's strong point in promoting vocations and healthcare ministries.

Internationally, the Province has expanded its collaboration with various provinces and delegations,

such as Austria, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Spain, and the United States, making its members available for chaplaincy services and pastoral care ministries. The Province has played a key role in the development of the foundation in Uganda since 2010, through the exchange of personnel for formation, mission development, and ministry. As of 2024, the Province assumed responsibility for the Anglo-Irish Province after the latter was suppressed as a delegation of St. Camillus Province of India.

Looking to the future, the Province is committed to strengthening its formation programs and developing infrastructure to expand ministries and missions in underserved regions. While the Province's strength lies in its vibrant, young members—always ready to engage in diverse ministries—and the steady number of vocations to the Camillian life, the challenge is to secure financial resources for the expansion of ministries.

Ugandan Mission

The Camillian mission in Uganda was founded in 2000 by the Anglo-Irish Province, with Fr. Tom O'Connor and Fr. Tom Smith as the first missionaries. The mission began with chaplaincy ministry in Nyenga and quickly prioritized the formation of diocesan chaplains for healthcare. Ten diocesan priests were trained at *Camillianum* in Rome, strengthening



1. St. Camillus house at Jinja in Uganda;
2. Members of the Ugandan Mission

the Camillian presence throughout Uganda.

Vocation promotion developed alongside pastoral ministry. In the early years, candidates were trained in Kenya and Tanzania, with the support of both delegations. As the founding

missionaries grew older, beginning in 2010 the Indian Camillian Province began assisting the Ugandan mission, especially in formation. Today, the formation facilities—which were established gradually and thanks to the ongoing collaboration of the Tanzanian delegation—are located in Jinja (postulancy), Masaka (novitiate), and Fort Portal (theology).

In 2025, the mission celebrated 25 years of presence, with 8 perpetually professed members (4 priests and 4 deacons), 7 temporary professed members, 5 novices, 10 philosophy students, and 9 aspirants. Two Indian Camillian priests continue to support formation and administration. The mission also operates two health centers and provides chaplaincy services.

Following the merger of the Anglo-Irish Province with the Indian Province, the Ugandan mission became part of the Indian Province in 2024 and hopes to become a delegation soon. ■

NORTH ITALIAN PROVINCE

By Fr. Angelo Brusco



The North Italian Province, canonically established in 2015, was formed from the merger of the Piedmontese and Lombardy-Venetian Provinces, both of which have a long and rich history.

The Piedmont Province, whose origins date back to 1835, experienced its greatest growth in Piedmont but also extended its presence to Liguria and Tuscany. Spiritual care in numerous hospitals, the two healthcare institutions (in Turin and Forte dei Marmi, the latter having been sold), the nursing home in Genoa, the Madian community—a refuge for the poor and abandoned and a source of support for many missionary initiatives—the

Church of St. Joseph in Turin, the House of Spirituality in Piosasco, Edizioni Camilliane, the mission in Haiti, and support for the foundation in Georgia are some of the main indicators of the activity carried out by the religious of this province.

The Lombardy-Veneto Province, established in 1862, the last of the provinces in Italy in chronological order, is the one that has experienced the greatest development, contributing decisively to the expansion of the Order throughout the world. It owes its origin to an exceptional man, Fr. Camillo Cesare Bresciani (Verona 1783–1871), considered the second founder of the Order because he promoted a reform aimed at restoring the Institute

“San Giuliano”,
Verona

to its original spirit, reviving the figure of the brother, the physical and spiritual care of the sick in hospitals, and fraternal life in community. Over nearly two centuries, the religious of the province have opened new paths for the practice of the Camillian charism, including their own healthcare and social-healthcare institutions, the promotion of a culture of healthcare, the involvement of the laity, and missionary zeal. The zeal of Fr. Stanislao Carcereri, a collaborator of St. Daniel Comboni in Africa, was revived in the last century through missions in

Brazil, China, India, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Kenya, Colombia, Armenia, and Mexico. The Blessed Enrico Rebuschini, Luigi Tezza, and the Servants of God Fr. Rocco Ferroni and Br. Ettore Boschini are flowers that have blossomed in this province.

Currently, the North Italian Province extends across five regions: Veneto, Lombardy, Piedmont, Liguria, and Emilia. Two Delegations (Kenya, Colombia-Ecuador) and three Foundations (Mexico, Armenia, and Haiti) depend on it. The Italian section of the Province comprises 93 religious, including 13 brothers, 79 priests, and 3 temporary professed, distributed across 14 communities.

The religious carry out various types of ministry, all linked to the charism of the Institute: management of the Province's own institutions (4 nursing homes, 1 hospital, 1 outpatient clinic, 1 health center, 2 shelters for people in need); spiritual assistance in 7 state hospitals; 2 parishes, 1 shrine ("San Camillo" in Milan), 3 rectories, 2 houses of spirituality; 1 Camillian Formation Center (Verona); 2 magazines ("Come Tralci" and "Missione Salute"), 1 Center for Youth Ministry and Vocation Promotion. ■

St. Camillus shrine,
Milan



PHILIPPINE PROVINCE

By Fr. Evan Paul Villanueva



The Camillian presence in the Philippines is part of a broader Camillian mission in East Asia, which began in 1946 in China and was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution. From this experience, a new mission was established in Taiwan in 1952, from which, in the 1970s, the plan to expand into the Philippines took shape.

In 1974, two young Camillians, Fr. Ivo Anselmi and Fr. Pietro Ferri, arrived in Manila to pursue theological studies, where, thanks to their encounter with Father Hernando Maceda, SJ, the idea of founding a Camillian community in the country

took shape. Other religious soon joined them, including Fr. Ernesto Nidini, and the support of the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin, was decisive.

On March 8, 1975, the first Camillian community was officially founded in Quezon City, under the Lombardy-Veneto Province. In 1976, the community was incorporated into the Vice-Province of Taiwan, with which it grew in close collaboration until the establishment, in 1997, of the Vice-Province of the Far East. This was finally elevated in 2003 to the Province of the Philippines, thereby consolidating the Camillian presence in the country and its commitment to the service of the sick.

The Province of the Philippines now comprises 16 active communities: seven in the Philippines and three each in Taiwan, Australia, and Indonesia.

The Camillian religious are engaged in a wide range of ministries: hospital chaplaincy, healthcare, formation, parish ministry, and assistance to the poor and the sick. To date, the Province administers 30 hospital chaplaincies, manages 16 social and healthcare institutions, and serves in 23 parishes. These ministries are often carried out in collaboration with lay professionals, healthcare workers, and partner institutions.

In the Philippines, the Camillian presence is strongest in the healthcare sector. The Province oversees hospital chaplaincies in public and private institutions, provides formation for future priests and lay collaborators, and serves in rural clinics and long-term care facilities. Special ministries include pastoral care for people living with HIV/ AIDS, mental health programs, and responses to natural disasters. We also

manage Camillian-owned social and health centers—hospitals, a nursing home, a polyclinic, and a pastoral center—ensuring that the charism is exercised not only through collaboration but also through direct and concrete ministry.

Formation is essential to the life and future of the Province. Currently, there are seven houses of formation: three in the Philippines and four in Indonesia. In the Philippines, these include the Scholasticate and the adult formation center in Quezon City; St. Camillus College Seminary in Marikina City; and the novitiate in Baguio City. These programs provide spiritual, theological, pastoral, and human formation. Candidates are guided through all stages of initial formation, from the aspirancy to the pastoral year program.

The mission is no longer carried out solely by religious. The Lay Camillian Family (LCF), present in nine chapters in the Philippines, plays an active role in pastoral care, formation, and social engagement. Alongside them are CADIS volunteers and a growing group of committed benefactors who support the Province's ministries through concrete acts of charity, professional expertise, and the generous sharing of resources. Together, they extend the reach of the Camillian charism into homes, hospitals, and communities. Their presence affirms that the spirit of mercy and service entrusted to St. Camillus is a shared mission, embraced not only by religious but

also by laypeople and friends who walk with them in solidarity.

As the Province of the Philippines celebrates its fifth decade of growth, it faces persistent challenges and new opportunities that require deeper discernment, collaboration, and fidelity to its mission. Vocation promotion demands renewed creativity and credibility. In an increasingly individualistic and distracted society, the witness of joyful, committed, and compassionate Camillians, especially in healthcare, is the most powerful invitation to the next generation.

Despite limited personnel, the Philippine Province continues to support international missions and the needs of the Order worldwide. Currently, twelve Filipino Camillians are serving abroad in formation, disaster response, financial stewardship, and even in leadership positions within other Provinces. These assignments are both a sign of the Province's maturity and a call to continue demonstrating generosity.

Interprovincial collaboration is beginning to take deeper root through shared formation, the exchange of resources, and coordinated apostolic projects. At a time of global decline in religious vocations, this kind of synergy is not only prudent but necessary. The Philippine Province, characterized by youth, resilience, and missionary zeal, is in a privileged position to contribute significantly to the life of the Order as it moves toward the future. ■



POLISH PROVINCE

By Fr. Mirosław Szwajnoch

The Province was founded in 1946. Currently, we have 71 solemnly professed religious, 11 communities in Poland, and 4 abroad. Outside of Poland, we are present in Germany (Berlin), Georgia (Tbilisi), Italy (Rome), France (Lourdes), and Madagascar.

The Polish Province was founded somewhat by chance, due to the upheavals caused by World War I and World War II. At the beginning of the 20th century, the German Province established a clinic for alcoholics in Upper Silesia. After World War I, Germany's borders changed, and with them, the Camillian hospital became part of Polish territory.

Since part of Upper Silesia still belonged to Germany, the German Camillians built a church and a hospital in Hindenburg (today Zabrze). This city remained within Germany's borders until the end of World War II in 1945, when it was annexed to Poland. Thus, two religious houses of the German province ended up in Poland, along with many Polish confreres. This marked the beginning of an independent province, and the house in Tarnowskie Góry remains the seat of the Polish province to this day.

The beginnings of the Polish province coincided with the communist regime in Poland. The government authorities of the time took the hospitals away from the Camillians and allowed them only to carry out parish ministry. The turning point came in 1989, when, after the fall of communism in Europe, the Order was able to return to living out its charism. The new government returned one of the two hospitals to the



Camillians and permitted the creation of several other facilities for the sick, disabled, and marginalized.

Currently, we serve as chaplains in numerous hospitals. We also continue our ministry in four parishes. We operate one hospital, five nursing homes, a homeless shelter, and an HIV center. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, which borders Poland,

Some members
of the Polish
province

1. Hospital and provincial house in Tarnowskie Góry;
2. St. Camillus healthcare facility in Madagascar



we have actively supported refugees, providing them with a dignified place to live in our religious house and helping them start an independent life in Poland.

In recent years, we have experienced a lack of new religious vocations. Our seminarians and postulants come exclusively from Madagascar. Some of them are studying in Poland and will likely remain here after receiving priestly ordination. Some of our confreres are actively involved in academic life, promoting above all the idea of the humanization of medicine.

Although we do not lose faith in the province's future development, we are now focusing on the issue of the aging of our religious and, above all, on their care.

We recognize the call of the times to devote increasing attention to collaboration with laypeople who can ensure the continuation of the Camillian charism in Poland. ■

ROMAN PROVINCE

By Fr. Antonio Marzano

Founded in 1605, the Roman Province of the Order of Ministers of the Infirm has its roots in the heart of central Italy, extending its presence today even to the distant lands of Chile. As of this writing, the province counts 29 religious distributed across 9 communities, who continue to bear witness to the Camillian charism in the service of the sick, according to the spirit of the founder: “to relive the ever-present merciful love of Christ toward the sick” (C 1).

Its history is woven with growth and reevaluations, marked by significant foundations that bear witness to a journey of dedication and service. The first

communities were established as early as the late 16th century, such as the Church of San Gregorio in Florence (1599) and that of Santa Maria del Poggio in Viterbo (1603), culminating in the emblematic founding of the Shrine of St. Camillus in Bucchianico in 1605. Other historic milestones were the Roman communities: San Giovanni della Malva (1713), Santa Maria in Trivio (1657), San Rufo in Rieti (1747), Ospedale San Giovanni (1836), and SS. Vincenzo e Anastasio (1839). In all these locations, the Camillians distinguished themselves through their constant care for the sick, both in hospitals and in homes.

A renewed momentum came during



St. Camillus shrine
and community
house at
Bucchianico





Some members
of the Roman
province

the period of the Second Vatican Council, when the House of Formation was moved to Rome, to the Villa Sacra Famiglia: a strategic location for the cultural and spiritual growth of young religious. These were dynamic years, marked by a significant expansion of the ministry, with the assumption of new parishes such as St. Camillus in Rome, Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence, and the enhancement of the Shrine of Bucchianico.

Their presence in hospitals was particularly impactful: Forlanini, San Giovanni, San Camillo, San Giacomo, San Filippo, and CTO in Rome, and the CTO in Florence. The Camillians were among the first to introduce Hospital Pastoral Councils, innovative tools for spiritual and organizational leadership.

At the same time, their commitment to healthcare education grew: teaching ethics in nursing schools, organizing conferences, seminars, and study days on bioethics and the human sciences, shaping a pastoral ministry capable of engaging with the contemporary world.

Numerous associations emerged from this direct ministry: the *Fiaccola della Carità*,

the *Guardia d'Onore al Sacro Cuore, la Sorgente*, as well as the Institute of the Handmaids of the Incarnation, founded by Fr. Primo Fiocchi, a sign of the Province's spiritual fruitfulness.

The spirit of the Council then ignited the missionary zeal: in 1966, the mission in Burkina Faso was established, becoming an autonomous Province in 2016, while in 2004 a new community opened in San Bernardo, Chile, bearing witness to an openness toward new frontiers of evangelization.

In response to the needs of the local area, valuable healthcare and social works were launched: Villa Immacolata in San Martino al Cimino, originally established as a sanatorium and now a rehabilitation center; the Eugenio Litta Village in Grottaferrata, designed for young people with disabilities; and Salus Infimorum, in the densely populated Borgata Ottavia neighborhood of Rome.

The Province also made a significant academic contribution to the founding of the "Camillianum", an international institute of pastoral health theology, to which it provided facilities and prominent figures such as Fr. Spogli and Fr. Cinà.

In recent decades, the decline in vocations has prompted the Province to engage in profound reflection. Some formation houses have been converted into healthcare facilities, such as the RSA San Camillo in Sora (FR) and Villa Sacra Famiglia itself, while the center in Bucchianico has become a Center for Spirituality, a place of prayer and discernment, where two General Chapters have been celebrated.

The spirit of communion has been strengthened through collaborations with other Provinces, particularly with Burkina Faso and Poland, also welcoming religious who have come to Rome for their studies.

Enriching the Province's journey are figures of holiness such as Nicola d'Onofrio and Maria Aristeia Ceccarelli, recognized as Venerables by the Church, signs of a spirituality embodied in daily dedication. ■

SICILIAN-NEAPOLITAN PROVINCE

By Bro. Carlo Mangione

The Sicilian-Neapolitan Province of the Order of Ministers of the Infirm has its roots in 1605, when it was founded by St. Camillus de Lellis under the name of the Sicilian Province. After a period of suppression, the Province was officially reestablished on October 4, 1935, taking on its current name of the Sicilian-Neapolitan Province. Since then, it has continued to embody the Camillian spirit in the heart of Southern Italy, extending its presence across six dioceses: Palermo, Messina, Acireale, Manfredonia, Naples, and Caserta.

St. Camillus, the central figure and inspiration behind the entire Camillian mission, left an indelible mark on the founding of the houses in Palermo, Messina, and Naples. His charism continues to guide the life and activities of the Province, which is distinguished by its commitment to caring for the sick and the most vulnerable, in the spirit of mercy and evangelical service.

As of this writing, the Province consists of 29 religious and 7 confreres from the Province of Benin-Togo, active in nine apostolic communities. Since its rebirth in 1935, the Province has maintained a stable presence of religious, ranging between 30 and 40 members, a sign of constant vitality despite changes in the historical and social context.

The places of ministry are varied and diverse: four hospital chaplaincies in public facilities, six parishes and rectories, three contracted healthcare facilities, as well as three houses dedicated to welcoming the most vulnerable—the homeless, those with



AIDS, and the poor. Another significant activity is represented by the Camillian parish missions, which are carried out at the invitation of local parish priests, confirming the Province's willingness to respond to the needs of the local area.



Particular attention is given to the formation of new vocations, with two dedicated houses: “Come and See,” a vocation space for young people in discernment, and the student residence for those in temporary vows. Alongside the religious, a valuable role is also played by the laity, who identify with the Camillian charism through the Lay Camillian Family and lay volunteers, actively contributing to the Order’s mission.

The Province’s communication today relies on various digital tools: a Facebook page, an Instagram profile, a YouTube channel, and a blog, through which activities are shared and the Camillian charism is

spread in the contemporary world.

Of particular significance is the founding, in 1973, of the Camillian mission in Benin, West Africa, now established as the autonomous Province of Benin-Togo. The bonds with our African confreres remain strong and are marked by fraternity and collaboration, reinforcing the Order’s missionary and universal dimension.

Finally, a sign of the times and a fruit of the Spirit is the birth of a Camillian priestly fraternity, a further expression of the vitality of the Province and of the desire to live in communion the service to the sick, according to the style of St. Camillus. ■

SPANISH PROVINCE

By Bro. José Carlos Bermejo

The Camillian presence in Spain has its roots in the vision and direct commitment of St. Camillus, who in 1599 made his first attempt to establish a house of the Order on the Iberian Peninsula. That initial effort came to fruition several decades later, in 1634, with the opening of the first community in Madrid. From there, the Camillian charism began to spread, leading to the official establishment of the Spanish Province in 1684. However, this history suffered a sudden interruption in 1835, when the confiscation of church property imposed by Mendizábal temporarily put an end to the Camillian presence. Despite this obstacle, the spirit of St. Camillus did not fade, and the Province was reestablished in 1893, leading to the formal reconstitution of the houses in Spain as an autonomous Province in 1909.

Today, the Spanish Province comprises six communities—five in Spain and one

in Argentina—and counts 38 religious, supported by another 14 confreres from sister Provinces. In Argentina, the *Casa San Camilo* cares for 70 people with severe disabilities and a high level of dependency, offering a respectful welcome and attentive care that respects the dignity and needs of each person.

In Spain, the Camillian presence is distinguished by a wide range of pastoral, charitable, and educational activities, rooted in the heart of major cities and in some more intimate settings. In Barcelona, the focus is on spiritual accompaniment at the Hospital Clínic, the liturgical life of the church, and social initiatives in collaboration with Caritas to assist the homeless. In Sant Pere de Ribes, the community provides invaluable service to the sick in the hospital and supports the region's healthcare ministry, while also welcoming the Province's elderly and ailing religious. In Seville,



San Camillo
Humanization
centre, Tres
Cantos, Madrid





pastoral work extends to the Virgen del Rocío Hospital, the community chapel, the Listening Center, and the Home Care Service, which reaches out to those in need directly in their homes. In Valencia, the ministry focuses on religious assistance at La Fe Hospital, support for the Listening Center, and the accompaniment of the Theatine Sisters. Finally, in Tres Cantos, an extraordinary operational and human heart beats: here there are wide-ranging facilities and services, ranging from an assisted living facility with 144 beds and a day center for the elderly to a palliative care unit with 33 rooms, where comprehensive and compassionate care is offered to those facing advanced and irreversible illnesses.

The work of the Camilo de Lellis Foundation also fits into this context, supporting over 80 centers of 40 religious congregations throughout Spain, helping them care for their elderly or dependent members. The Home Care Service, active primarily between Madrid and Seville, extends care to homes, clinics, and residences, always with an attentive and personalized approach. A fundamental role is played by the Listening Centers, points of reference for those experiencing the pain of loss, illness, loneliness, or situations of profound existential crisis. In these places, welcoming and listening become concrete acts of humanization.

Alongside all this, Camillian volunteerism represents a quiet yet essential force. Volunteers actively participate in three areas: general services, daily activities, and personal accompaniment, including a program dedicated to loneliness in the terminal phase of life.

A cultural and educational beacon of particular importance is the Center for the Humanization of Health, which promotes the holistic care of the person through academic training, events, seminars, and postgraduate programs. With its offerings available both in person and online, the Center fosters ongoing reflection on ethics, the helping relationship, and spirituality in healthcare. The Research Department is committed to producing knowledge consistent with the values of the Camillian charism, while the journal *Humanizar*, for over thirty years, has offered an authoritative voice in the field of the humanization of care. The publishing output is extensive, with more than 150 publications that contribute to spreading culture, awareness, and hope.

In all this, the Spanish Province continues to bear witness with consistency and dedication to the charism of St. Camillus, placing the suffering person at the center and translating evangelical compassion into concrete gestures of care, listening, and humanity. ■

PROVINCE OF THAILAND

By Fr. Paul Cherdchai

The Camillian presence in Thailand began in 1952, when the religious, expelled from Communist China, accepted the invitation of the Diocese of Ratchaburi to settle in Thailand. It was a beginning marked by simplicity and trust in Providence: a small hospital, St. Camillus, was opened in Baan Pong, which over time evolved into a modern healthcare facility with 100 beds. From this first step, a dense network of ministries, communities, and presences has sprung up, which today make up a solid and vibrant religious Province, canonically established in 2010, with eleven communities, twelve major ministries, and forty-two religious, including priests, brothers, and professed members in formation.

In the 1960s, the Camillian activity expanded into the capital, where a small hospital was established in Bangkok, now transformed into the modern Camillian Hospital with 150 beds. In Prachinburi, in 1965, a mission for the care of lepers was launched, which over time became a shelter for sick and abandoned elderly people. In 1973, the presence was consolidated with the official registration of the St. Camillus Foundation of Thailand, recognized as a public benefit organization. In 1977, a seminary for young vocations opened in Sampran, and subsequently, next to it, a retirement home that also serves as a formation center. The formation program was further enriched in 1989 with a center for young students in Sriracha, where vocation discernment is supported after high school.

The Camillian response to the country's emerging needs has also distinguished itself

in the delicate challenge of HIV/AIDS. An initial attempt at assistance in 1993, in the suburbs of Bangkok, was hindered by social stigma, but in 1996 a Social Center for terminally ill patients and HIV-positive orphaned children was inaugurated in Rayong. This initiative was followed by the Garden of Eden, for abandoned HIV-positive people with disabilities, and the Independent Center, dedicated to young people. The expansion of the work continued in 1999 with a new nursing home in Chianthaburi, on land granted by the diocese, and in 2004 with the Chiang Rai Social Center, designed for poor children from mountain tribes and abandoned children with disabilities. In 2008, a home for disabled orphans was opened in Latkrabang, on the outskirts of Bangkok, featuring a day care service and a center for pastoral health care that also houses the Foundation's central offices. In 2011, the



St. Camillus
hospital in
Bangkok





Sitthida House was opened in Ratchaburi to provide daytime care for disabled children.

Two years later, in 2013, a woman donated the use of a village in the Pathanakan area, which was transformed into a home for seventy elderly people. More recently, in 2017, the fifth nursing home was inaugurated in the Diocese of Nakhon Ratchasima, with a capacity of one hundred and fifty beds.

Charitable activities have multiplied, all directed

toward those living in conditions of extreme marginalization: orphaned children with HIV/AIDS, abandoned people with disabilities, and poor and lonely elderly people. These works stand as quiet yet profound presences in the human and geographical peripheries of the country, where the gratuitousness of care is a tangible sign of the Gospel of compassion.

In 2012, a new expression of the Camillian charism emerged: the “Sharing for Life” foundation, designed to operate with greater freedom within the local context, beyond religious or cultural labels. This initiative has enabled the launch of interfaith projects and collaborations with civil organizations, garnering strong support from the local population, local governments, and supporters. “Home-care” activities, that is, direct visits to the poor in areas where the Camillians are present, have been developed in Sampran, Chianthaburi, Chiang Rai, Latkrabang, Korat, and Prachinburi, thanks to teams composed of religious and volunteers. Several facilities have been brought under the umbrella of this new foundation, such as the Garden of Eden, the House of Charity in Korat, and the centers for people with disabilities in Chiang Rai.

This new approach has fostered valuable relationships with Caritas Thailand and numerous social organizations, facilitating events, fundraisers, and synergies aimed at the concrete proclamation of mercy. In this context, CADIS has also contributed, with confreres dedicated to managing relationships and planning in the field of cooperation.

The missionary momentum of the Thai Province has extended to the borders of Myanmar, where initial contact was established with the Diocese of Kengtun, launching a program to support the poor and a vocational campaign. As a testament to the fruitfulness of this project, a religious originally from Myanmar took his solemn vows right in the house at Sampran.

Nearly seventy-five years after its founding, the Camillian presence in Thailand presents itself as a living tapestry of service, dedication, and evangelical courage. It is the story of a seed planted in suffering that has taken deep root and today blossoms in works of mercy, faithful to the charism of St. Camillus and ready to renew itself wherever human frailty calls for answers of hope. ■

VICE-PROVINCE OF PERU

By Fr. Alex Ballena



The Vice-Province of Peru was founded in 1735, the year in which the convent of *Buenamuerte* in Lima was legally recognized. However, the Camillian presence in the country has even older origins, dating back to the arrival of Fr. Golbodeo Carami in 1709. With the help of various local figures, he founded the first Camillian community on the American continent in 1716, consisting of three religious. Despite the initial failed attempts by Fr. Andrés Sicli, it was Carami himself who established the Order's permanent presence in Peru. The General Council had already authorized his mission to the Indies in 1704 with the aim of raising funds for the beatification of St. Camillus and making the Order's charism known.

Currently, the Vice-Province of Peru has six religious communities: the Convent of Buenamuerte in Lima, founded in 1735 and composed of eight religious; the Mártires de la Caridad Community in Arequipa, established in 1981 with four religious; the San José Community in Trujillo, active since 1991 with three religious; the Pedro Marieluz Garcés Community

in Lima, opened in 1995 with three religious; the Blessed Luigi Tezza Community, founded in 2002 with six religious; and finally the Our Lady of Health Community in Huancayo, established in 2007 with three religious.

Over the centuries, the Camillian presence has experienced periods of great expansion, crisis, and renewal. In the 18th century, thanks to the acquisition of five haciendas in the Cañete Valley, the Convent of Buenamuerte experienced a remarkable economic and missionary flourishing, which allowed the Order to expand into other regions of Peru such as Arequipa and Huamanga, as well as into Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia. However, the wars of independence and regulatory changes led to the suppression of many houses, leaving the convent in Lima as the sole remaining presence; it was suppressed and restored several times due to the inability to maintain the required minimum number of religious.

The revival occurred thanks to the arrival of religious from various European countries, who revitalized community life and enabled the

reintegration of the *Casa della Buenamuerte* into the jurisdiction of the General House. The sale of agricultural properties also allowed the Order to clear its debts.

A second period of growth occurred in the mid-20th century, with a significant influx of foreign religious. During this period, important social and healthcare initiatives were launched, including the San Camilo Free Clinic and the construction of the Vagues Seminary. However, with the creation of the Peruvian Province, the Order faced a new period of crisis due to the decline in the number of religious and the lack of vocations. The minor seminary was closed, and some priests left the community. Recovery was made possible thanks to the support of the Lombardy-Veneto Province, which sent new religious, reopened the seminary in 1980, and gave new impetus to hospital and social work by establishing the San Camilo Health Training Center and launching new initiatives.

Currently, the Vice-Province is engaged in various apostolic areas. Among the hospital chaplaincies, there are significant presences in Lima, Arequipa, Trujillo, and Huancayo. The San Camilo Mission, with its clinic and outpatient clinics, serves as a key healthcare resource. Particularly significant are the projects aimed at the most vulnerable, such as the Hogar San Camilo centers in Lima, Arequipa, and

Huancayo, which offer programs for people living with HIV/AIDS, shelters for children and the elderly, and facilities like *La Posada* and the Rebuscchini Shelter for the homeless and cancer patients.

In the field of formation, the Vice-Province manages the San Camilo Minor Seminary, welcomes novices and juniors, and is active in the San Camilo Health Training Center. There are also counseling centers and a network of collaboration with healthcare workers, volunteers, and lay groups.

Future challenges include strengthening the response to the needs of the sick and the poor, the restructuring of social works, the expansion of the services of the *Opera di San Camilo*, and the formation of new religious capable of assuming pastoral and formative responsibilities. Among ongoing projects, particular attention is given to economic self-sustainability and the possibility of becoming a full-fledged Province.

In 2014, the Vice-Province solemnly celebrated the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Camillus, welcoming the Heart of the Saint and renewing apostolic commitment. In addition, the façade of the Buenamuerte Complex was restored, a symbol and the beating heart of a centuries-old presence that continues to animate the religious and social life of Peru. ■



VICE-PROVINCE OF VIETNAM

By Fr. John Toai

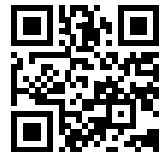


The Camillian Vice-Province in Vietnam was officially established on December 7, 2024, marking a significant milestone in the development of a mission launched over thirty years ago. Currently, the Vice-Province comprises 40 religious with solemn profession, 16 temporary members, 6 novices, and 5 communities, with the Vice-Provincialate headquarters located in Ho Chi Minh City.

The roots of the mission date back to 1992, when Camillian religious from Taiwan explored the possibility of promoting vocations in Vietnam. Despite initial difficulties, the Province of Thailand assumed responsibility for the mission. Key figures in the launch and consolidation of the work were Fr. Sante

Tocchetto and Fr. Armando Te Nuzzo. Thanks to coordination with the Salesians—in particular Father Peter Nguyễn Văn Đệ and Father Joseph Đinh Tiến Mỹ—the first house in Ho Chi Minh City was purchased in 1993, with the support of the Austrian Province. Formation programs began immediately thereafter, and the first Vietnamese Camillians began their formation abroad.

Between 1995 and 2000, Father Armando Te Nuzzo devoted himself deeply to inculturation within the Vietnamese context, learning the local language, building relationships with bishops and clergy, and promoting Camillian vocations. Initial formation took place in India, the Philippines, and Thailand. In 2000,



government pressure forced the foreign Camillians to limit their regular presence in the country; Father Armando was therefore forced to return to Thailand. Nevertheless, local vocations continued to grow. In 2004, Father John Phuong Dinh Toai became the first Vietnamese Camillian to return to his homeland after making his perpetual vows in the Philippines, marking the beginning of indigenous leadership of the mission. That same year, local religious began to engage in the response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in Vietnam, establishing a significant pastoral network for people living with HIV in the Archdiocese of Ho Chi Minh City.

On March 20, 2009, Cardinal John B. Pham Minh Man approved the first canonical Camillian community in Ho Chi Minh City. The mission was then elevated to a Delegation in 2013 and finally to a Vice-Province in 2024. The year 2020 was particularly significant, as the Order of Ministers of the Infirm in Vietnam obtained legal recognition from the government, thereby fully acquiring legal rights as a religious congregation in the country.

The Vietnamese Camillians have grown rapidly, both in the number of members and in their pastoral activities. They provide numerous services for people living with HIV/AIDS, the elderly, the disabled, abandoned children, and the poor. They operate four charitable clinics and lead the archdiocese's HIV/AIDS ministry. The Camillian projects in Vietnam are distinguished by their deep commitment to

disadvantaged and marginalized communities, often in collaboration with local dioceses, healthcare networks, and laypeople.

The Vietnamese Camillians have a wealth of experience in international formation, particularly in India (one novitiate batch), the Philippines (four batches of philosophy and theology students), and subsequently in Thailand. This interprovincial collaboration has contributed decisively to shaping the character and resilience of the mission, with groups of religious who have studied and served in Thailand, Taiwan, Spain, Italy, and the United States. Beginning in 2015, the formation of candidates began to take place in Vietnam, with the first generation of philosophy students. Starting in 2024, the entire formation program, from postulancy through theology, will be carried out entirely in the home country. The Vice-Province actively collaborates with healthcare workers and lay volunteers, fostering a spirit of shared mission. Numerous young people have been inspired by the Camillian witness of self-sacrificing love, joining in vocation discernment and various service activities.

Now, as an autonomous Vice-Province, the Camillian mission in Vietnam focuses on formation programs, the care of new vocations, and excellence in healthcare and pastoral activities. With a solid foundation in charity and fidelity, the mission looks to the future with joy and hope, giving thanks to God for the wonderful seed of Camillian love planted in this land. ■



DELEGATION IN AUSTRALIA

By Fr. Rodel Enriquez

The Camillian Delegation of Australia was founded in 2002 at Sacred Heart Parish in Westmead, New South Wales. The first community consisted of three religious sisters from the Philippine Province. Since then, its presence has expanded into various pastoral and parish settings, serving in 13 hospitals and parishes in the states of New South Wales and Queensland. The Camillian Delegation of Australia comprises three religious communities with a total of 10 religious: 9 engaged in active ministry and 1 retired due to age and illness. Vocation promotion has been undertaken since the foundation, but with limited success, as is the case for most religious groups in the country. In the last quarter of 2026, three Camillian religious from the Camillian Delegation of Indonesia will arrive to meet the growing demand for hospital spiritual care.

The delegation has established lay organizations whose members are dedicated to spreading the love and compassion of Christ in service to the sick and the poor in collaboration with the Camillian religious. These include the Camillian Lay Family and CADIS. Currently, the Camillian Lay Family has grown to include three chapters: Sydney, Parramatta, and Brisbane. Their service to the poor and the sick includes visiting the sick, celebrating the Eucharist, organizing fundraising activities for communities affected by disasters, and more. We also participate in the care of a church and an Italian community.

The call to religious life is a major challenge in Australia, so we have launched initiatives to promote our Camillian charism, in the hope of attracting some local vocations in the future. Overall, the Camillian community, both religious and lay, works side by side to respond to people's spiritual, medical, pastoral, and humanitarian needs, bearing witness to Christ's merciful love for the poor and the sick through words, deeds, and the sacraments. ■



DELEGATION IN COLOMBIA-ECUADOR

By Fr. Ceron Medina Diego Fernando

On July 3, 1964, the first Camillian religious arrived in the capital, Bogotá. They were Fr. Emilio Sténico, Fr. Pietro Merlo, Fr. Silvestro Caresia, and Fr. Renzo Roccabruna, who formed the first community at San Juan de Dios Hospital, from where they began to spread the ministry of mercy and care for the sick in various healthcare institutions. It should be noted that this was the second time Camillian religious had been present in Bogotá, since several years earlier the Camillian charism had been present in the city of Popayán, but for various reasons that presence had ended, leaving traces of love and service in the land of Payán.

The anticipation and the warm welcome given to the charism in the Colombian capital generated a positive and enthusiastic outlook for this new foundation, which at the time walked hand in hand with its sister province of Peru, forming the Colombia-Peruvian Delegation. In a brief historical overview, the foundations were laid for what is today the Colombia-Ecuador Delegation, beginning with the trust and generosity of our mother province, Lombardo-Veneta (now the Province of Northern Italy); passing through the Colombia-Peru Delegation, now the Vice-Province of Peru; and arriving at what we are today, the Colombia-Ecuador Delegation, looking toward a future of strengthening and growth as a Vice-Province.

Bearing in mind the brief context described above, it can be said that the Colombia-Ecuador Delegation has undergone a very positive and favorable development process compared to what was originally the request and reason for its presence in Colombian territory. In this sense, its development has been able to consolidate itself as a journey of spiritual, vocational, and ministerial maturity specific to this context, as well as the self-sufficiency and economic independence that, while remaining a challenge, carry forward the legacy of the Mother Province and of the Religious who taught us to love and serve the sick, as our father St. Camillus taught us in the School of Charity.

We have experienced vocation crises, economic

crises, ministerial crises, and so on, but above all, we have felt the presence of the Lord who continues to sustain this little plant of charity that has been replanted in these tropical lands—fertile and full of hope and faith—to meet the needs found in so many hospitals. For this reason, in 2024 we thanked God for allowing us to celebrate 60 years of the Camillian Charism’s continuous presence in this land of Colombia. Currently, the delegation consists of six communities and 24 religious.

The primary ministerial activity of our charism is expressed through chaplaincy service in various healthcare institutions.

Within the healthcare facilities, our Delegation operates the Juan Rey Medical Center, which has two locations in Bogotá. Additionally, the Hospis San Camilo does great work in Quito, where, as a palliative care center, it not only cares for terminally ill patients but also trains healthcare staff on topics related to our charism, such as humanization, end-of-life palliative care, healthy and healing relationships, etc.

Among the projects for the most vulnerable, we have the community soup kitchen in the Juan Rey neighborhood of Bogotá, which, in collaboration with the district municipality, provides lunch daily to approximately 400 people. The Delegation also manages a shelter that offers accommodation to family members of patients who travel from afar to accompany their loved ones receiving medical care. At this shelter, they receive three meals a day, lodging, and laundry services completely free of charge. There is also a counseling center for people who wish and need support in their various emotional situations. This work is carried out by the Camillian Center for Pastoral Humanization in Health.

Inspired by the love taught by St. Camillus, the Camillian Center for Pastoral Humanization in Health works to train healthcare professionals, volunteers, and members of the Lay Camillian Family. In collaboration with the Colombian Episcopal Conference and CELAM, it provides healthcare training on various topics and realities



Members of the delegation with the superior general and the consulta

related to the Camillian charism. The work carried out by the Camillian Center over the years has been highly enriching for the country's various dioceses, promoting the establishment of Pastoral Care in Health Delegations in every region. For this reason, the mission carried out in communion with the Colombian Church is highly appreciated by bishops, priests, laypeople, and healthcare personnel who have come to know the life and spirituality of our father St. Camillus de Lellis.

As a fundamental part of the continuity of the Charism, our Delegation dedicates particular attention to the promotion of vocations and the formation of those aspiring to enter Consecrated Life as Camillian Religious. Without ignoring social and cultural changes, we give thanks to God for granting us new vocations for our seminary. As of this writing, the initial formation program includes the following candidates: Seminarians (aspirants, postulants) – 3; Novices – 2; Temporary professed – 5.

The work and support of lay volunteers who assist the sick in healthcare institutions are invaluable in supporting the work of the chaplains. Most hospitals have volunteer groups that, guided by the chaplains, assist the sick and support the pastoral ministry, inspired by Camillian values.

Looking ahead with hope is the challenge we must nurture in our hearts. The Colombia-Ecuador Delegation is a relatively small delegation, but with

young religious of good character and great potential. In this sense, it encourages us to know that we can continue to build a Camillian reality that continues to respond to the challenges of the healthcare world and that accompanies and serves those who experience the reality of suffering due to illness, violence, injustice, or any form in which sin manifests itself.

Therefore, a priority is to continue supporting the accompaniment and care provided to healthcare institutions and the work this entails as chaplains. Likewise, it is very important to continue seeking means to ensure the financial support of our works. Continuing to encourage vocation and fidelity to the charism and ministry is essential so that every consecrated person may cherish the treasure entrusted to them, avoiding excess and an overload of responsibilities that can end up extinguishing the light received.

The Delegation welcomes with hope the possibility of becoming a Vice-Province, thanks to what it has received from the Order and the Mother Province, by the grace of God. As long as the Lord shows us the way forward, we will continue to live out the mission entrusted to us and to love the charism entrusted to us—that of embracing and bearing witness to Christ's love for the sick. The passage of time is healing the wounds of the journey, and today this Delegation looks forward with confidence in the Lord's inexhaustible mercy. ■

DELEGATION IN FRANCE

By Fr. Moegle Bernardo

The Camillian Delegation in France, now known as the Delegation of the Province of Burkina Faso, represents a presence rich in history and transformation within the Order. Originally founded as the Province of France back in 1885, it has gone through phases of growth, crisis, and renewal. In 2019, with fewer than twenty religious, the Province was reorganized as a General Delegation, eventually becoming the Delegation of the Camillian Province of Burkina Faso in 2022. It currently has twenty-one religious—nineteen priests and two brothers—twelve of whom are from Burkina Faso itself. There are four active communities: Bry-sur-Marne, Lyon, Arras, and Chambéry, with two elderly religious from Villa Saint-Camille in Théoule now integrated into the Chambéry community.

The roots of the Camillian presence in France lie in a past marked by challenges and resilience. From the very beginnings of the Order, there have been French religious

committed to the charism of serving the sick. However, anti-congregationalist laws led to difficult times and the exile of the religious to Belgium. Despite these obstacles, beginning in 1907 the Province entered a phase of solid expansion. An emblematic figure of this period is Father Louis Tezza, the first Pro-Provincial as early as 1875, whose role was decisive in consolidating the Camillian presence. Over the decades, the Province established relationships with other Camillian communities, promoting attempts at foundation in Ireland and Canada, and supporting missionary activities in Benin and Burkina Faso on an ongoing basis between 1971 and 2024.

By 1914, there were about one hundred religious, a clear sign of the Order's vitality in France. One of the most significant projects was the construction of the Saint-Camille de Bry Hospital, a project begun in 1936 and completed in 1952 thanks to the tireless commitment of the mendicant Brothers.

St. Camillus
Hospital at Bry
sur Marne



However, time also brought difficult moments: the novitiate in Velaine was closed in 1967, and between 1968 and 1975, about ten religious brothers left the Order. At the beginning of the 2000s, the presence was still organized into eight communities, but the gradual decline in the number of active religious forced several closures. In 2015, the mission in Davougon, Benin—until then a focal point—was entrusted to the Vice-Province of Benin-Togo. At the same time, there was a growing involvement of laypeople in the Camillian Family, which today counts about fifteen active members.

Currently, although it no longer has its own institutions, the Delegation maintains a vibrant and significant presence in various pastoral and healthcare settings. The religious serve as chaplains in nursing homes in Arras and Lyon, at the Saint-Camille Hospital in Bry-sur-Marne, the Fourvière Hospital in Lyon, and in the city of Chambéry. In five healthcare institutions, they are ex officio members of the boards of directors. One religious also serves as a psychologist in Créteil. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Delegation was entrusted with four parishes, where three parish priests and four vicars are active, continuing their commitment to diocesan healthcare ministry. Among the ongoing projects is the desire to reestablish an active presence in Lourdes for vocation purposes and the intention to intensify home visits to the sick and the elderly, particularly in the Chambéry area.

Although no postulants have been accepted in the last twenty years, formation activities and vocation outreach continue thanks to collaboration with laypeople and volunteers. Some of them participate in visiting the sick and accompany them to the Eucharistic celebration in hospitals. At Saint-Camille Hospital in Bry, with the support of spiritual care, some volunteers assist patients during dinner. Once a month, the community and the Lay Camillian Family gather for a time of prayer and sharing.

In terms of communication, two newsletters—*Trait d'Union* and *Échos de*



nos Missions—are published regularly, offering updates and reflections on the life of the Delegation. A religious is in-charge of disseminating information, primarily through the WhatsApp group “Camilliens-France.”

Today, although it no longer has a permanent presence outside France, the Delegation maintains international ties: a religious from Benin has been in Bry for medical treatment for three years, while twelve religious from Burkina Faso are part of the Delegation, four of whom are currently pursuing studies.

Future prospects are focused on rediscovering and spreading the Camillian charism in all the settings where the religious work: parishes, hospitals, nursing homes, and through home visits. Among the apostolic priorities is the desire to make the Camillian message and spirituality more accessible and visible. The dream of establishing a community in Lourdes remains alive, fueled by the desire for closer contact with young people and an ever-greater openness to new generations. ■

Some members
of the Camillian
delegation in
France

DELEGATION IN HAITI

By Fr. François Erwan Jean Marie



Some members of the Camillian delegation in Haiti

The first Camillian religious arrived in Haiti on November 2, 1994. They were Fr. Antonio Menegon, Fr. Massimo Miraglio (who was not yet a religious at the time), and Br. Kamar J. Two of them left after a two-week stay in Pétion-Ville, where they were hosted by the Salesians of Don Bosco. Father Massimo, however, remained for another three months to gather the necessary information and identify a suitable location for a future Camillian settlement.

In September 1995, the first Camillian community in Haiti was founded, consisting of Fr. Adolfo Porro, Fr. Serge Mercet, and Miraglio himself. Today, the Camillian mission in Haiti comprises: 12 religious with perpetual vows, 8 religious with temporary vows, 2 novices, 3 pre-novices, and 1 postulant (despite the temporary suspension of vocation promotion in 2023). In April 2005, with the approval of the Provincial Council, Fr. Massimo was

sent to Jérémie to open a new mission in Grande Anse. For over thirty years, Haiti has been experiencing a multidimensional crisis: chronic political instability, rampant insecurity, natural disasters, and extreme poverty.

On July 7, 2021, the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in his home marked a turning point in the deterioration of the security situation, particularly in Port-au-Prince, where one of our communities is located. The city is now at the mercy of armed gangs, where even the most vulnerable are not spared. In this climate of tension and suffering, our presence is meant to be a sign of hope. Since our arrival, we have been engaged in pastoral healthcare centered on a holistic approach to the sick: physical, psychological, and spiritual. Based primarily in Port-au-Prince, La Plaine, Croix-des-Bouquets, and Jérémie, we provide: visits to the sick in hospitals and at home, spiritual care in hospitals, the operation of mobile clinics for rural areas, disease prevention (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, etc.), and the training of pastoral health workers, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, Catholic institutions, and NGOs. At the same time, work continues on the creation of the Foyer Saint-Camille hospital center.

Our work continues in neglected rural areas. Even today, in a very difficult socio-political and economic context, we carry out our vocation with faith and hope. Every day we are present in hospitals, we train healthcare workers—including from a spiritual perspective—we provide social support to the population, and we collaborate with dioceses, religious congregations, laypeople, and NGOs. ■

DELEGATION IN INDONESIA

By Fr. Oles Alfons

The Camillian mission in Indonesia began with the initiatives of the religious of the Philippine Province who, between 1996 and 2000, made several visits to Indonesia and met with the bishops of various dioceses and the superiors of various Congregations in different parts of Indonesia. Father Luigi Galvani, Father Giovanni Rizzi, Brother Angelino Aldeghieri, Father Marcelino Digal, and several other religious visited Indonesia at different times. In 2000, seven candidates were brought to Manila to undergo Camillian formation, followed by five more candidates in 2001. After completing their initial formation, Father Luigi Galvani, along with two Indonesians, Father Alfons Oles and Father Avensius, departed for Indonesia on July 3, 2009, marking the beginning of the Indonesian mission. The delegation was canonically approved on May 4, 2011.

The delegation consists of three canonically erected communities, each of which has an attached house. The “Seminari Tinggi St. Kamilus” community consists of formation houses for temporary professed and postulants; “St. Camillus Novitiate” consists of formation houses for aspirants and novices; the community of the St. Camillus Social Center houses the St. Camillus-Maumere Social Center and the St. Camillus-Kupang Social Center. The entire Delegation consists of 22 solemnly professed members, 28 temporary professed members, 10 novices, and 31 postulants.

For many years, our priority has been formation and the development of a long-term program for Camillian ministry. Since 2021, the Delegation has had a



complete network of formation houses that provide supportive environments for our young candidates aspiring to join us. While strengthening formation, the Delegation is gradually engaging in pastoral ministry, which began initially with full-time chaplaincy ministry in 2022 at the RSUD dr. T. C. Hillers, Maumere. In addition to chaplaincy ministry, there are also various socio-pastoral initiatives such as the home-based mental health program, the scholarship program for students from poor families, and the food program for malnourished children.

The Delegation has a good number of young candidates in formation, which is certainly a good sign, but it also poses an economic challenge. The Delegation is aware that investing in formation is fundamental for the future of the

Delegation and, therefore, of the Order. Like many other Congregations, we are located in a poor region of Indonesia, where the economy is largely based on agriculture and, to a lesser extent, on fishing and livestock farming. We do not want to stand still in the face of economic challenges, but rather find ways, within the local context, to gain the support of the population. We are moving in this direction and hope that this will help build a sustainable future. The Delegation intends to promote income-

generating activities through our two Pastoral Centers in Maumere and Kupang.

There is a great opportunity to establish a Camillian Family in Indonesia, especially in the places where we are located. Currently, the Delegation has a group of laypeople from the Camillian Family formed by Fr. Luigi in Maumere-Flores. Our plan is to expand the Camillian Family in Indonesia. People seem receptive and willing to join this group. ■



DELEGATION IN IRELAND

By Bro. John O'Brien



St. Camillus
nursing centre,
Killucan

The Camillians arrived in Ireland in 1905 from France. Their primary ministry was to assist sick local priests in the western part of Ireland, on the Atlantic coast. This ministry continued until 1935, when the first Irish Camillians took over from the French. Since then, the Camillians have maintained an active presence in various parts of the country.

With the decline in vocations and the continuing need for Camillian ministry to the sick, a relationship was established with the Indian Province, which generously came to Ireland to continue the long tradition of Camillian care and witness to the Gospel among the sick, particularly in hospital ministry.

With the development of this relationship and the aging of the six remaining Anglo-Irish Camillians, was born the Irish Delegation of the Province of India, now renamed the Irish Delegation.

Today, there are twenty of us Camillians living and working in Ireland. The

tradition of hospital chaplaincy continues (with another brother set to join us in the near future) with confreres serving in Dublin, Waterford, Cork, and Kerry. There are further opportunities to expand our chaplaincy presence in the country, as we are receiving requests from several dioceses wishing to explore the possibility of a Camillian ministry in their diocesan hospitals.

The Killucan Care Center continues to provide a much-appreciated service to the elderly, and there remains extensive pastoral activity by this community, considered the Mother House of the delegation.

Today's Ireland, however, is a very different place from the Catholic country of the early 20th century. Fewer people practice the faith today, and so the demographics are changing. Nevertheless, there are people who desire the sacraments, and we hope to continue meeting this need for many years to come. ■

DELEGATION IN KENYA

By Fr. Mbuvi Mwanzia Dominic

The Camillian Delegation in Kenya is today a vibrant and well-structured community, comprising thirty-eight religious, thirty-six of whom are Kenyan. Alongside them, two missionaries from the Northern Italy Province—Father Emilio Balliana and Father Paolo Guarise—continue to offer their service. There are four canonically recognized communities that form the Camillian presence in the country: St. Camillus Seminary and Bolech House/Caledonia, both in Nairobi, the community of Tabaka in the Diocese of Kisii, and that of Karungu in the Diocese of Homabay. Tabaka was the very first place where, in 1976, the Camillians took root, launching a mission that has since expanded in many directions.

Fathers Rino Meneghello and Francesco Avi were the first Camillian missionaries

to arrive in Kenya, welcomed on August 4, 1976, by Bishop Tiberius Mugendi. In the days and weeks that followed, other religious and collaborators joined them, including Dr. Cuneo, three Camillian sisters, Father Francesco Spagnolo, and Brothers Balzarini and Zeni. The official inauguration of the community in Tabaka took place on September 5 of that same year, while the canonical establishment of the house was celebrated on July 6, 1977. The Tabaka hospital thus became the beating heart of the Camillian mission, a hub for healthcare in the region.

Soon the Camillians realized the need to expand their work to Nairobi as well. Thus, on March 19, 1979, Father Rino purchased a house in the capital—Bolech House—launching a pastoral ministry that included chaplaincy work at Kenyatta, Spinal

St. Camillus
Hospital at
Karungu, Kenya



Injuries, Mater, and Mathari hospitals. At the same time, in 1982, the first efforts at vocation promotion began, and in January 1985, the cornerstone of St. Camillus Seminary was laid, officially blessed the following month by Cardinal Maurice Otunga.

In 1996, the Karungu project was launched near Lake Victoria and was officially inaugurated in 1998 by Archbishop Giovanni Tonucci, Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya. From these foundations, the Delegation has continued to grow. Today, in addition to managing the missionary hospitals in Tabaka and Karungu, the Camillians are active in hospital chaplaincies in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, and in numerous missionary facilities; in assistance programs for orphans affected by HIV/AIDS; in parish ministry; and in the clinical and pastoral formation of the Servants of the Sick. Also significant are the humanitarian projects carried out through CADIS Kenya, aimed at the most vulnerable communities.

The seminary in Nairobi and the novitiate in Karungu are the pillars of initial formation. There is no shortage of vocations: currently, there are about thirty young men on the journey, including aspirants, postulants, novices, and temporary professed. However, the financial sustainability of formation is being tested by the reduction in financial support from the Province of Northern Italy. Despite these difficulties, formation continues, with the aim of helping young people mature in their personal call to the Camillian life.

On the educational front, the Delegation offers courses in Clinical Pastoral Education for the preparation of chaplains, and the nursing school at Tabaka Hospital is recognized well beyond the borders of the Diocese of Kisii. However, the healthcare sector in Kenya is currently facing a critical phase: faith-based institutions are suffering from the crisis in the national health insurance system, a shortage of healthcare personnel due to government policies, and a growing difficulty in accessing affordable medications.

Added to these challenges is the task of rooting the Camillian charism in a constantly changing cultural context, broadening the pastoral focus to include often-neglected areas such as public health, home care, prevention, health education, and support for the domestic church. Parish ministry represents an



important space for spreading the Camillian charism, but the limited resources of some parishes do not always allow for the achievement of desired goals, including in terms of financial support.

The Delegation is also actively engaged with the Lay Camillian Family and collaborates with volunteers and healthcare workers in various areas of pastoral care and assistance. The magazine *Milome*, published in Dala Kiye, helps keep communication and a sense of belonging alive among members and collaborators.

Among the Delegation's apostolic priorities is the desire to establish a new religious community in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, to expand ministry in both hospitals and parishes. On an institutional level, there is confident anticipation of the possibility of soon evolving into a vice-province, a step that would reflect the maturity achieved by the Camillian journey in Kenya. To this end, efforts are underway to strengthen collaboration among the Camillians of East Africa, especially in the areas of formation and ministry, with a view to intercultural enrichment and greater efficiency.

In 2026, the Camillians will celebrate fifty years of presence in Kenya. This anniversary will not merely be a commemoration, but also an opportunity to renew their commitment to the sick and the poor, to bear witness with even greater vigor to the merciful love of Christ, and to chart new paths with hope in the history of the Camillian charism on African soil. ■

DELEGATION IN TAIWAN

By Fr. Digal Marcelino

The Taiwan Delegation of the Camillian Philippine Province is a living mosaic of courage, cultures, ministries, and service animated by faith. Officially established in 1952, the delegation's mission spans Luodong, Datong, Su'ao, Nan'ao in Yilan County, Taipei City, and the remote Penghu Islands. Thirteen Camillian religious, hailing from Italy, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines, animate this mission today, forming a mosaic of international fraternity rooted in a single charism: serving the sick and the poor as a living witness to God's mercy.

The roots of this vibrant community

trace back to a group of courageous Camillian missionaries expelled from mainland China. These pioneers—Father Antonio Crotti, Brother Marcello Caon, and their companions from the Lombardy-Veneto Province—arrived in Taiwan as soldiers of the faith, always ready to care for others. Armed with their missionary zeal and the motto “Preach the Gospel, heal the sick,” they began their ministry by renting a modest 12-bed clinic in Luodong, which they eventually named St. Mary's Hospital. Soon after, a small chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was built, planting the seeds of healing and evangelization in this new land.

St. Mary's
Hospital,
Luodong, Taiwan





Members of the delegation during the canonical visitation of the superior general

In the following years, their mission expanded rapidly. In 1953, they crossed the sea to reach the island of Penghu, where they founded what would later become St. Camillus-Huimin Hospital. In 1959, they opened a sanatorium in Wanshan, extending their care to the chronically ill. Evangelization flourished in parallel, reaching the Atayal tribes in the mountains of Yilan and the islanders of Penghu. Taiwan became the Far East Vice-Province of the Lombardo-Veneta Province. Years passed, and the Philippines became part of the province. Finally, in 2003, Taiwan officially became a delegation of the Philippine Province of the Camillians.

Today, after more than 70 years, the delegation continues to grow in scope and depth. It operates three hospitals, including the 600-bed St. Mary's Regional University Hospital in Luodong, long-term care facilities for the elderly and children with special needs, a nursing school, a cultural kindergarten, seven parishes, and eleven mission stations providing pastoral and healthcare services. In Penghu, construction continues on a new seven-story hospital and a long-term care center.

Although vocations are few and the Church in Taiwan faces many pastoral challenges, the Camillian mission is kept alive thanks to lay collaborators, healthcare workers, and volunteers who embody the spirit of compassionate service to the sick. The Camillian Lay Family and local partners play a vital role in supporting the mission.

To connect and evangelize, the delegation publishes the bimonthly Mandarin-language magazine "Light of Camillians", which features stories of faith, healing, and hope. Furthermore, it fosters international ties with other Camillian provinces, particularly in formation and social initiatives. The generous support of the Taiwanese people remains a source of grace and strength.

Looking to the future, the delegation remains committed to deepening its mission, strengthening collaboration within the Philippine Province, and responding courageously to the needs of the sick and the Church. With hearts burning for the Gospel, the Camillians of Taiwan move forward together, diverse yet united in service. ■

DELEGATION IN TANZANIA

By Fr. Mashauri Joseph



The Delegation of Tanzania is known as “Ministers of the Sick” since its registration with the Tanzanian government. It has twenty-six religious, of whom nineteen are perpetually professed and seven are temporary professed.

Historically, the Delegation of Tanzania began as a mission of the Province of the Netherlands. Later, the Netherlands merged with the Province of Germany. Under the

Province of Germany, Tanzania established a delegation. It is now part of the Province of Germany (Province of Central Europe).

Some Dutch Missionaries who came during those days for the mission are still with us, including Fr. Camille Neuray, who arrived as a newly ordained priest; he is now an elderly priest but continues to serve at the Lord’s altar. The Missionaries served the sick in their homes and in some hospitals, such as Muhimbili National Hospital. They also founded a health center in Ngerengere, Morogoro, and a dispensary in Yombo Kiwalani, Dar es Salaam. They also began training local people in Kenya in collaboration with the then Lombardy-Veneto Province.

Currently, we are carrying out a parish ministry where we serve the sick and needy in their homes, attending to their physical and spiritual needs. We also carry out chaplaincy work at Muhimbili National Hospital.

The vocation is growing strongly: we have a good number of young people, which will translate into a good number of novices. We are focusing on formation and are seeking to establish separate houses for the preparatory phase, students of philosophy, novices, and temporary professed members. We are seeking to collaborate with other Provinces by sending some of our students and all other members for studies and ministry, respectively.

The sole task we set for ourselves is to bear witness to our charism to the people of God, collaborating with the laity and with other sound institutions and having ongoing formation programs to renew ourselves. ■

DELEGATION IN THE UNITED STATES

By Fr. Orosa Augustine



The Camillian Delegation of the United States traces its origins to a history that began in the fall of 1921, when Father Michael Mueller, sent by the German Province, arrived to explore the possibility of founding a Camillian mission in the United States. This first step marked the beginning of a journey that would lead, on April 12, 1946, to the canonical elevation of the Commissariat to an autonomous religious province, known as the North American Province of the Order of St. Camillus.

The initial expansion led to the establishment of communities in various States, including Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Georgia. However, over time, the gradual passing of the original members and a shortage of vocations made a new configuration necessary: in 2010, the province was transformed into a

delegation, placed under the jurisdiction of the Camillian Province of Brazil. As of this writing, the delegation consists of 12 religious, hailing from various provinces and vice-provinces, such as India, Brazil, and Vietnam, united by a shared apostolic commitment in the United States.

The nerve center of the Camillian mission on American soil is the Saint Camillus Health System, Inc., a comprehensive healthcare system dedicated to the care and assistance of the elderly. The Camillian religious serve in leadership and management roles within the five entities that make up the system, ensuring a constant and qualified pastoral presence. Some of them also serve as chaplains and pastors in parishes under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia.





Collaboration with the laity is an essential dimension of this ministry. The Saint Camillus Campus is a privileged meeting place for religious and lay professionals, especially in the field of management and care for the elderly. Some residents themselves are part of the Camillian Lay Family, a tangible sign of the integration between Camillian spirituality and daily life. Furthermore, the opening of the campus to sisters from various Congregations and countries has further strengthened the quality and diversity of the service provided to the residents.

Another fundamental tool for the formation and promotion of the Camillian charism is the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program, which continues to be strongly supported. Through it, religious, laypeople, and members of other Christian denominations and religions have the opportunity to acquire the skills to practice authentic pastoral care, in the spirit of St. Camillus.

In 2021, the delegation proudly celebrated 100 years of the Camillian presence in the United States, and today, 105 years after that first arrival, it continues to renew its commitment. Among the most pressing challenges is ensuring staff continuity, given the almost total reliance on religious sent from other parts of the world.

Looking to the future, the Camillian Delegation of the United States shares the dream, together with the leadership of the Saint Camillus Health System, of extending its apostolic work beyond the campus boundaries, reaching new territories and new communities of elderly people in need of care and accompaniment. This goal requires time, vision, and fidelity to the founding charism, but hope is nourished by the welcoming of new members from diverse cultures and nations, a concrete sign of the vitality of a ministry that continues to serve, console, and care in the name of Christ's mercy. ■

CAMILLIANS IN GEORGIA



In 1991, at the request of Pope John Paul II, the Camillians arrived in Armenia to provide service. At the time, Armenia was grappling with the severe aftermath of an earthquake. The Holy See decided to build the “Redemptoris Mater” Hospital in Ashotsk, which currently has 93 beds, an emergency room, and departments of general medicine, obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics. This hospital has become a point of reference for the entire Armenian people.

In 1995, again at the Pope’s request, the Camillians arrived in Georgia to build and manage a healthcare center with the meaningful name “Redemptor hominis,” in homage to the Polish Pope’s first encyclical. The main facility is located in Georgia’s capital, Tbilisi, and includes an outpatient clinic and a rehabilitation center. Approximately 7,300

patients are registered at the outpatient clinic. The rehabilitation center provides a range of services, including those specifically for people with autism. The day center for people with disabilities is located in Akhaltsikhe, in southern Georgia. It was inaugurated on May 25, 2022. These facilities are the only ones in the entire region to offer comprehensive rehabilitation and therapy services.

Collaboration with the Sisters of St. Nino, who support the Camillian mission, is also well established. In 2022, construction began on another branch in a new region, in Kutaisi. In the near future, it will be possible to extend comprehensive care for people with disabilities and support for their families to this area as well. ■

CHAPTER FIVE

Women's Institutes of the Camillian Family

THE MINISTERS OF THE SICK OF ST. CAMILLUS

By Sr. Liberty

The religious family of the Ministers of the Sick of St. Camillus has its roots in the heart and spirit of Blessed Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini.

In her hometown of Lucca, Blessed Maria Domenica discovered the hidden world of the sick—lonely and abandoned in their homes, deprived of care and assistance.

Maria Domenica, still a young woman at the age of 23, immediately after the sudden death of her husband, in love with Jesus Crucified, ventured out at night with determined steps through the dark, narrow streets of her city, by the light of a small lantern, and knocked on the doors of the outlying cottages to keep vigil beside those



who moaned and suffered, abandoned on a straw mattress. It is above all her passionate heart that defies the darkness: the lantern burns with the love she holds in her heart; hers is a heart that sees, illuminated by the inspiring breath of the Gospel to do for Jesus himself what she does for the sick and the suffering: “You did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

The story of Blessed Maria Domenica is a tale of love; she was born in Lucca on January 17, 1789, into a social environment that offered her no security. The charism of charity sprouted and took root in her amidst numerous losses. During her adolescence, between the ages of 10 and 15, she lost three younger brothers and her father; she experienced a sense of emptiness, but God’s faith and energy were stronger, and she committed herself to planning her future. She married Salvatore Barbantini at the age of 22, and five months later her husband also died; from this love was born her son Lorenzino, the sole consolation of her life, who sadly passed away at the age of eight. Despite everything, Maria Domenica did not lose heart; from her wounds sprang forth new life, and sustained by God’s grace and the charism of charity, she “transformed her immense sorrow into love.” She chose the least among us as her children, braved dangers and hardships—nothing and no one could ever stop her. Time and again, the storm extinguishes Maria Domenica’s lamp and overturns her umbrella; she presses on, groping in the dark, defying every danger, spending the entire night at the bedside of the dying with her clothes soaked through. Maria Domenica, with her human warmth, conveys God’s tenderness. She often cares for children who have lost their mothers; for each one she has a word, a smile, a caress; her presence brings comfort and hope.

On January 23, 1829, the blessed foundress Maria Domenica established the Congregation; the city of Lucca was shrouded in the harsh winter, and almost no one noticed the masterpiece of the Spirit of God; at Via dell’Arcivescovado 26, the



first small community of the Oblate Nurses of Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Camillus was formed, later known as the Ministers of the Sick of St. Camillus. The Institute and the rules she wrote were approved on August 5, 1841, by the Archbishop of Lucca, Monsignor Domenico Stefanelli. On August 15, 1841, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, the Foundress and the first sisters consecrated their lives to God with the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In addition to these vows, the Ministers of the Sick take a fourth vow: to assist the sick even at the risk of their own lives.

A disciple of Camillus even before

meeting him, Maria Domenica felt the overwhelming power of the charism of charity toward the sick, which drove her to seek out the sick who were alone in their homes or in hovels—a human landscape that Camillus loved to call “the great ocean of charity.” It was the Camillian priest Antonio Scalabrini who introduced Maria Domenica to the figure of St. Camillus. Having come to Lucca in 1828 to preach during Lent at San Michele in Foro, Father Antonio Scalabrini met Barbantini. With great surprise and admiration, he recognized in her charism of charity striking similarities to that of his own founder, Camillus de Lellis, he encouraged her to found a new religious family and proposed that her Congregation be affiliated with the Camillian Order. Later, after Father Scalabrini became Father General of his Order, on January 27, 1842, he promulgated the decree of affiliation of the Institute of Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini to the Order of St. Camillus, calling them the Sisters Ministers of the Sick, the name that St. Camillus had given to his religious. Ten years after the decree of affiliation of the Institute of Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini to the Order of St. Camillus, the Holy See, on March 23, 1852, issued the *Decretum Laudis*, the first papal recognition of the religious family she had founded. The Holy See confirmed the name “Ministers of the Sick” and the spiritual communion between the two religious families.

The spark of the charism of charity kindled in Lucca by the Blessed Foundress Maria Domenica now illuminates various parts of the world through the presence of the Sisters Ministers of the Sick of St. Camillus: Italy, Taiwan, Brazil, Kenya, Thailand, the Philippines, China, India, Peru, Haiti, Chile, Vietnam, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso.

In the holistic vision of the human person that the Blessed Mother has handed down to us, the spiritual and physical dimensions are inseparable; illness does not merely affect a part of the body, but involves the person in their entirety. Home care, a prophetic insight of Blessed Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini in her time and in her city, remains urgent even today; it is a sign of the times. We find many sick people in their homes: the elderly and the infirm, cancer patients, those with AIDS and various other illnesses; many young people fall into depression; life is threatened

in various ways; the person is not considered in their entirety.

Every time we visit the sick at home or in nursing homes, they feel comforted; they regain vitality, a smile, and hope; they await our return, as do their family members. Often a spiritual communion is established; at the end of the visit, we pray together. Each time, we sense the need to create a support network around the patient’s home involving doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, therapists, priests, and volunteers, thereby creating an environment conducive to healing, particularly for the terminally ill. In Italy and in the missions, in addition to home visits, the Ministers of the Sick are present in some nursing homes and care facilities where they express their charism of charity and mercy, a response to a pressing social need. Our entire ministry is an expression of pastoral healthcare, as the practice of corporal and spiritual works of mercy expresses the Lord’s tenderness and mercy toward the sick and suffering.

However, there is a need to broaden our horizons and continue to take certain steps already begun some time ago: promoting health, fostering a culture of life, its ontological and ethical values. The option for the sick, for the frail and the poor, is the fundamental character of our mission and the goal of our ministry. How can we not think of the shelter for orphaned children with AIDS in Thailand, where the Ministers of the Sick are, for these children, mothers, educators, nurses, their sole source of vital and emotional support? The challenge posed by the cry of the poor invites us to reflect on our traditional and non-traditional works, seeking a new way of presence and witness.

Collaboration with the Camillians has been and remains a constant and ongoing reality within the Congregation, especially in the missions. It is important to broaden our horizons and embrace new perspectives for future collaboration among our Camillian-inspired Institutes. The goal is mutual collaboration not only in the field of care, but also in pastoral healthcare ministry in the strict sense, in the areas of formation and culture. The hope is to walk together and follow the creativity of the Spirit, the soul of our common mission in the Church: “Heal the sick and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Lk 10:10). ■

DAUGHTERS OF ST. CAMILLUS

By Sr. Bernadette Rossoni



The Congregation of the Daughters of St. Camillus was founded in Rome on February 2, 1892, by Blessed Luigi Tezza and St. Giuseppina Vannini.

Blessed Father Luigi Tezza was born in Conegliano on November 1, 1841. At the age of 15, he entered the Ministers of the Infirm as a postulant, becoming a priest in 1864 at the age of just 23. Tezza carried out his apostolate first in Italy and later in France and Lima, Peru, where he died on September 26, 1923. He was beatified in 2001.

Saint Giuseppina Vannini, born in

Rome on July 7, 1859, was baptized with the name Giuditta. At the tender age of 7, having lost both parents, she was entrusted to the Torlonia Orphanage in Rome, run by the Daughters of Charity.

Her contact with the sisters helped young Giuditta develop that particular religious vocation which led her to embrace their same way of life.

After a period of experience, she left the Institute, but a providential encounter with Fr. Tezza helped her discern God's will: to found a new religious Congregation, the Daughters of St. Camillus. After 18





years at the helm of the Institute, Mother Giuseppina died in Rome on February 23, 1911; beatified in 1994, she was canonized in 2019.

The mortal remains of both Founders rest in the chapel of the Generalate of the Daughters of St. Camillus in Grottaferrata.

“The Institute of the Daughters of St. Camillus, born from the fruitful and blessed stock of the Camillian Order, in accordance with the life and will of the Founders, recognizes itself constitutionally as united in charism with the Ministers of the Infirm. Although it has its own distinct character and full canonical autonomy, it is affiliated with the Order itself and enjoys its spiritual benefits” (Constitutions of the Daughters of St. Camillus, 2025, art. 6).

The Congregation’s charism has as its evangelical root the words of Jesus, “I was sick and you visited me” (Mt 25:36), and is expressed in spiritual and corporal works of mercy toward the sick.

In addition to the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the religious profess a fourth vow of service to the sick, even at the risk of their own lives.

“The Daughter of St. Camillus is aware that apostolic action, even when lived personally, belongs to the entire fraternity; therefore, she commits herself to living it in full communion with the other members and always in harmony with community life, which in turn supports her in her apostolic activity” (Constitution, Art. 48).

Today, the Institute is present in 24 countries: Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Ivory Coast, Cuba, the Philippines, Germany, Guatemala, India, Italy, Kenya, Mali, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Togo, and Hungary, with 87 houses and approximately 700 religious sisters.

The main areas of pastoral activity are: hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, homes for the elderly, facilities for children with physical and mental disabilities, leprosariums, and home care; in a continuous commitment to ensure that “the person is placed at the center of attention in the world of health” (Constitution, Art. 53). ■

HANDMAIDS OF THE INCARNATION

By Sr. Lourdes Calderon Flores

Between 1944 and 1946, in Rome, Father Primo Fiocchi, a Camillian religious, together with other chaplains at the Forlanini Sanatorium, devoted himself with tireless love to the spiritual care of the sick, particularly the young girls and women hospitalized there, among whom were also novices and aspirants from various Congregations.

These young women, spiritually guided by Father Fiocchi, were surrounded by a paternal and holy affection that spurred them on to grow in faith and charity.

To their generous offering of suffering, they added daily participation in Holy Mass, Communion, meditation, visits of comfort to other patients, the practice of mortification, and a constant spirit of apostolate. Under Father Fiocchi's guidance, they found in the mystery of the Incarnation the source of a profound and universal spirituality, suited to all mindsets, even the most sophisticated. There they discovered a little-explored treasure, which they desired to deepen through meditation on the Holy Scriptures, the teaching of the Church and the Saints, particularly the Church Fathers. They chose to live it out in assiduous faith and Eucharistic adoration, to perpetuate among the redeemed the mystery of the Word who became flesh and came to dwell among us.

Aware that, once healed, many religious Institutes would not welcome them back, these young women looked to the future with fear and sadness. Eager to continue a consecrated life, they asked Father Fiocchi to find a solution for them. He, who had already begun assisting those discharged from sanatoriums at a time when the state



offered very little assistance, founded a second post-sanatorium colony for women in Chieti, where he had been transferred as chaplain.

On August 9, 1948, some of the sisters already welcomed into the colony in Rome moved to Chieti, and new religious aspirants began arriving there. After enduring many trials with faith, the first communities began to take shape. On March 25, 1949, the first community of the Handmaids of the Incarnation was officially established in Chieti, in Abruzzo.

On March 25, 1951, the religious family was approved as the Pious Union of the Handmaids of the Incarnation by the Archbishop of Chieti, Monsignor Giovanni



Battista Bosio, who established for the sisters the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. In 1957, the Union was recognized as a Diocesan Congregation and, finally, on March 25, 1977, it became a Congregation of Pontifical Right.

Father Primo Fiocchi was born on May 2, 1913, in Lizzano in Belvedere (Bologna) and was ordained a priest on July 25, 1936, as a son of St. Camillus. He was a living witness to Christ's merciful love for the sick, but for us Handmaids, he was above all the one who received from the Lord the charism of interpreting all human reality in the light of the Mystery of the Incarnation: God who becomes man, who lives and suffers with us, who is always at our side.

Our religious family was born in and from suffering, like the Suffering Servant of the Lord: "He has borne our infirmities... by his wounds we have been healed" (Is 53). As our Father loved to repeat: "Christ saved us in his infirmity." In the Incarnation, Jesus grants us healing from our infirmities: every pain finds meaning in the Word who became flesh to redeem every person.

Father Fiocchi's originality as a Camillian spiritual leader shone through, as Father Angelo Brusco wrote, describing him as an authentic interpreter of his Institute's charism and a guide to new ways of living religious consecration.

The Handmaid of the Incarnation does not lead a contemplative life in the strict sense, but, faithful to her

charism, cultivates a deeply contemplative spirit. This primacy of contemplation over mere apostolic action arises from the commitment to deepen, live, and bear witness to the Mystery of the Incarnate Word. This charism is expressed: in a profound life of prayer and contemplation of the Mystery of the Incarnation; in an authentically fraternal community life; and in an apostolate at the service of the Church, according to the Constitutions.

In fidelity to the charism received, the Handmaids of the Incarnation: promote, especially among young people, knowledge of Christ and his Gospel; collaborate in the pastoral work of parishes, especially in catechesis, liturgy, and preschool education; and dedicate themselves to the service of the sick, the elderly, the disabled, and the poorest families.

From our early work in hospitals and sanatoriums, our mission has expanded to include caring for the elderly, liturgical ministry in parishes, and the education of children.

Today, our presence is structured as follows:

- in Italy, our only active ministry is the "Villa Primavera" retirement home in Rome, where about 70 elderly people and some thirty of our oldest sisters—the first generation of the Congregation—live;
- in Bolivia, in Santa Cruz, we are present at the 'San Juan de Dios' Hospital, where our sisters serve as nurses and assist poor families. We also run a long-distance sponsorship program to ensure children's education, and we lead liturgical services in the chapel of the San Martín de Porres parish;
- in Burkina Faso, since November 2024, a new community has been active, in collaboration with the Burkinabé province of the Camillians.

Currently, there are 41 of us: the Generalate is located in Chieti, with two communities in Santa Cruz (Bolivia), and a nascent one in Burkina Faso. Although there are no longer any Italian vocations, some young Bolivian women and one Colombian woman wish to closely follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, like Mary, the first Handmaid of the Incarnation. ■

MISSIONARIES OF THE SICK ‘CHRIST HOPE’

By Luisa Muston

The founder of the ‘Secular Institute ‘Missionaries of the Sick’ is Germana Sommaruga (May 25, 1914–October 4, 1995), a middle school literature teacher.

Germana first encountered St. Camillus on her 17th birthday, when she was given a biography of the saint. She was captivated by it, and throughout her life she would study (in 1938 she earned a degree in literature, presenting a thesis on Care for the Sick from the Dawn of Christianity to the Reform Carried Out by St. Camillus de Lellis), delve deeper into, and spread knowledge of St. Camillus and his spirituality.

On January 6, 1936 (when secular institutes did not yet exist), a very young Germana had a prophetic insight, which she would always call “the first idea”: a group of women—lay and consecrated—who would live a profoundly radical Gospel life in the world, serving the sick, especially the dying, in the spirit of St. Camillus; inspired by Camillus himself, to whom, on the night of the Assumption in 1582, the idea came to him “to establish a company of pious and good men who, not for pay but voluntarily and for the love of God, would serve the sick with that charity and tenderness that mothers usually show toward their own sick children”.

This “initial idea” became increasingly concrete in the following years, with the counsel and support of Fr. Angelo Carazzo (1873–1945)—of the Order of Ministers of the Infirm—and of the Archbishop of Cremona, Msgr. Giovanni Cazzani.

On January 15, 1946, Germana presented the Institute to Pius XII and, at his suggestion, to Fr. Arcadio Larraona,

undersecretary at the Sacred Congregation for Religious. On February 2, 1947, Pius XII promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, which sanctioned the birth of secular institutes!

As Paul VI told the representatives of the secular Institutes on February 2, 1972, “The soul of every secular Institute, which inspired its birth and its development, has been a profound longing for synthesis, a yearning for the simultaneous affirmation of two characteristics: the full consecration of life according to the evangelical counsels and the full responsibility for a presence and a transformative action from within the world...”.

The Missionaries of the Sick Institute was established on March 25, 1948, in the Diocese of Cremona as a diocesan secular Institute. It then continued its journey and, on July 15, 1953, by a decree of praise from the Holy See, was declared to be of pontifical right. On October 12, 1979, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes authorized the addition of the expression ‘Christ Hope’ to the name Missionaries of the Sick. In 1983, based on the new Code of Canon Law, the Institute recognized as its associates the “Christ Hope” Collaborators and the “Christ Hope” Family Communities, who commit themselves to sharing, in their state of life, the spirituality and mission of the Institute.

The charism of the Institute is “the special gift that God gave to the Institute from its very beginnings through Germana’s ‘first idea.’ Secular consecration, presence in the world, and ‘mission’ among those who suffer are its essential and inseparable components.



The spirituality that animates our charism is founded on Christ, the hope of humanity, and is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation.”

This spirituality of hope teaches us to look with trust upon every person, even in their contradictory expressions, and upon the world in all its realities, loving it as the place of God’s presence, who continues to work within it through his grace. Christ, the Hope, is the heart, the source that moves our life as consecrated laywomen and our mission toward those who suffer.

The missionaries embody the charism and spirituality above all in their work, in their daily lives, and in their family, social, civil, political, and ecclesial environments, committing themselves to bear witness—with the discretion proper to secular life—to the Lord’s love, tenderness, and mercy toward every person, especially toward those who suffer. The lives of the missionaries are lived out in the simplicity of daily life, weaving relationships, living a life of service, and embracing their own reality and fragility. Our professions are diverse: teacher, factory worker, office worker, doctor, nurse, and many others... Through our work, we provide for ourselves; we recognize its value and dignity, and, aware of the problems and difficulties present in the world of work (unemployment, precariousness, exploitation...), we share with others the insecurities of today and tomorrow, seeking possible solutions together.

Specific mission: At the Institute’s inception, the mission focused particularly on the dying, assisting them even at home and preparing, as it was said, the way for the priest.

Attentive to the evolution of society, the Church, and healthcare, over time our focus has expanded to include every form of suffering and distress—in hospitals, in families, and in society—caused by loneliness, mental health issues, migration, and the poverty that migration often brings with it, always striving, everywhere and in every way, to be faithful to the vocation we have received, cultivating and

fostering in our daily lives an awareness and sensitivity toward every reality of suffering!

The Institute has no specific works; each of us participates and collaborates with others, according to our own abilities, in various social and ecclesial contexts. Each missionary lives with her family or alone, sometimes with a friend.

The communal dimension of our vocation is very important, in addition to the personal one:

we are a community of communion and not merely of cohabitation; we come together for formation meetings, retreats, renewal courses, and the bond between us is very strong!

We are not numerous, but we are present on 4 continents: Europe (Italy, France, Poland, Germany); Africa (Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Madagascar); Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru); Asia (Taiwan, Vietnam). Our vocation is not yet widely known; it is not easy to understand and even harder to live out.

Furthermore, like many Institutes of Consecrated Life, we face the challenge of a shortage of new vocations, coupled with the aging of our missionaries, especially in Europe.

This poses a challenge to the desired generational renewal, which is also vital for revitalizing the life of the Institute, the rotation of ministries, and so on.

In today’s world, marked by fractures and divisions, by a growing individualism, we feel called, by virtue of our vocation, to safeguard and nurture the hope present in every person’s heart, and to see and grasp the seeds and sprouts of goodness present even today; in a reality saturated with “connections,” yet lacking meaningful relationships that address the desires and needs of today’s women and men, we feel called to live our daily relationships as a path of dialogue, fraternity, understanding, and humanization, not only in the world of healthcare, but everywhere and with everyone. ■



Young Germana had a prophetic insight, which she would always call “the first idea”: a group of women—lay and consecrated—who would live a profoundly radical Gospel life in the world, serving the sick, especially the dying, in the spirit of St. Camillus

DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY STELLA MARIS

By Sr. Vitoria Nazareth de Oliveira

The Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady Stella Maris was born from the courage of three young Italian women, Gilda Tatasciore, Giuseppina Volpi, and Paolina Doninelli, who left their beautiful homeland, Italy, to serve those suffering from leprosy in Brazil. They faced countless difficulties in realizing this ideal, both in Italy and in Brazil. Finally, on February 15, 1954, they were welcomed into the former Padre Bento Sanatorium for lepers, in Guarulhos.

During a visit to the Sanatorium, Governor Jânio Quadros was introduced by a patient who said, “These are our mothers.” The governor asked the director if they lived in the sanatorium with the patients. He replied that they did. But the governor retorted, “Sir, don’t you know there is a law prohibiting healthy women from living with people with leprosy?”

Mrs. Gilda, as she was called, replied: “We know that, but we also know there is another law that says: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” The governor was moved; he bowed, kissed her hand, and said: “I thank you for everything you are doing for my country.”

On Easter 1954, the presiding bishop, Dom Antônio Maria Alvez de Siqueira, had the opportunity to meet the three nurses—previously known as such—and, since they were carrying out such an important missionary service, he continued: “My daughters, today you are giving me the greatest satisfaction and joy of my life. For this reason, you will no longer be alone, because I will be your father.”

Dom Antônio, considering that the endeavor was still in its infancy, suggested establishing an entity in the form of a confraternity. But what should it be called? He asked Sister Gilda what her ideal had been upon her arrival in Brazil. She replied:



“To create luminous souls in the dark world of abandoned people suffering from leprosy and other contagious diseases—souls like stars that could show them the way to comfort and salvation. But even more importantly, it would be to show the isolated sick, almost marginalized by humanity, who endure their pain in a sea of suffering of every kind, that up there is a luminous Star, a mother who understands their prolonged martyrdom, who loves them and waits to embrace them one day.”

Thus was born the idea of forming a religious family, which would continue the ideal whose primary purpose is to provide religious, social, nursing, and cultural assistance to the sick. The Confraternity was recognized by the Ecclesiastical Authority of São Paulo on August 15, 1957, and established by Dom Antônio Maria Alves de Siqueira on October 5 of the same year; it would later become the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady Stella Maris.

In 1986, it was recognized as the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady Stella Maris of diocesan right by the Holy See in accordance with the document of the Sacred Congregation for Religious Life and the minutes of the Congregation’s establishment. ■



KAMILLIANISCHE SCHWESTERN

By Heidelinde Hinteregger

The Community of the *Kamillianische Schwestern* (Camillian Sisters) is a spiritual community whose members follow Christ and, following the example of St. Camillus, bear witness in the world to Christ's enduring love for the sick and the suffering. Founded on December 17, 1985, by Bishop Maximilian Aichern of Linz, it is recognized as a 'Public Association of the Roman Catholic Church' (cc. 312 ff. CIC).

Its origins date back to 1980–81, when Heidelinde Hinteregger, a registered nurse, dedicated herself to a holistic view of the human person, which was still uncommon in the healthcare context. Through numerous conversations with patients and their families, she came to believe that life events—whether in health or illness—have a profound and long-term impact on people's psychological and physical well-being.

Heidelinde Hinteregger noticed that some Camillians were open to new perspectives in pastoral care in healthcare. She came into contact with the Charismatic Renewal of the Church, which emphasized the importance of life stories and inner wounds. It thus became increasingly evident that there was a need for people capable of consciously sharing daily life with others, offering a listening ear, accompaniment, and support, including within family, educational, and work contexts.

From this vision, shared with colleagues and friends in the healthcare field, the idea of a community was born. Five women decided to dedicate themselves entirely to this service, adopting a lay lifestyle and offering themselves to God

through a promise or a vow. Camillian spirituality—thanks to collaboration with the Camillians—already deeply nourished their mission.

Under the guidance of Camillians Fr. Paul Haschek, Fr. Dr. Anton Gots, and Fr. Leonhard Gregotsch, the community developed in Austria. Beginning in 1982, the expansion into Germany was accompanied by the Camillian Fr. Heinrich and Fr. Dr. Johannes Dammig. The support of Fr. Calisto Vendrame helped the young community feel fully welcomed into the Camillian world. Development also began in Brazil in 1991.

The Community of the *Kamillianische Schwestern*, while inspired by the charism of St. Camillus, is autonomous in its leadership and administration and is not legally dependent on the Camillian Order.

We recognize that every human being has its origin in God's love, whose foundation is "because God is love" (1 Jn 4:8, 10, 19). Love was manifested in Jesus Christ, who showed that caring for the sick is an act of authentic love. He included love of neighbor in the first commandment, identifying with the suffering: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40).

This love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5), who impels us to collaborate in the work of salvation willed by Christ. Saint Camillus lived mercy and suffering deeply, following Christ and teaching us to serve the sick with dedication. The Church recognized in him a special mission: a "new school of charity," in which works of mercy toward the sick express and fulfill his charism.



Our community takes up this legacy in a new, spiritual form, living according to the motto: “We have faithfully entrusted ourselves to love” (1 Jn 4:16). Mercy toward the sick contributes to the good of humanity and to the growth of the Body of Christ. Every member is called to perform this service with all their heart, even at the risk of their own life, animated by a spirit of communion founded on love.

We live in friendship with Christ and cultivate a profound spirituality based on his presence in the sick and the suffering. We are spiritually linked to the Camillian Order, whom we consider “guardians of the charism,” our brothers in vocation, with whom we wish to maintain fraternal contact and collaborate.

We live out our vocation in the world as laypeople, whether single or married, according to our state of life. We work in various professional fields; some are widowed, retired, ill, or disabled. We are united by the Camillian charism, lived out according to our personal abilities and circumstances.

We pay particular attention to people’s inner wounds, which can only be recognized through an attentive and sensitive presence. Even in conditions of illness or disability, it is possible to be a spiritual support for others.

Community life takes place in small groups, where we pray, share our apostolic experience, and cultivate our formation. St. Camillus and Mary, “Health of the Sick,” are our intercessors. Our spirituality is nourished by prayer, the Word of God, and the Eucharist.

Today we dedicate ourselves above all to families: to the care of family life, the education, and the formation of children. In the family and in the workplace, positive relationships, conflict management, respect, and solidarity are learned. This also has an impact on the socio-political level.



We are spiritually linked to the Camillian Order, whom we consider “guardians of the charism,” our brothers in vocation, with whom we wish to maintain fraternal contact and collaborate.

We carry out activities in parish communities: liturgy, visits to the sick, spiritual accompaniment, distribution of the Eucharist, and the organization of pastoral and social support services.

We offer assistance in areas such as palliative care, preventive healthcare, support for those suffering from inner wounds, and connections with professionals and institutions. We also care for prisoners, sex workers, people living with AIDS, abused women and their children, people with disabilities, and the marginalized.

Our community is divided into two regions: the Europe Region, which includes Austria and Germany with 12 members, and the Brazil Region, with locations in Macapá, Greater São Paulo, and Taubaté, comprising 56 members.

Like many religious communities, we are experiencing the effects of increasing secularization. On the one hand, vocations are declining; on the other, the average age of our members is rising. During community gatherings, the number of participants is decreasing, while our remembrance of those who have left us grows.

At the beginning of our foundation, we desired to become a secular institute under diocesan law. With our recognition as a “Public Association,” a trial period began. However, due to the reduced number of members with perpetual consecration and their advanced age, on October 16, 2024, the Diocese of Linz revoked our statutes and the possibility of continuing as a secular institute.

We continue, however, to exist as the ‘Community of the Camillian Sisters,’ a public association of the Roman Catholic Church. We look to the future with hope, certain that the Camillian charism is more relevant than ever. We trust in the Holy Spirit to continue to rekindle this fire in our hearts, wherever and whenever He wills. ■

CAMILLIAN MISSIONARIES

By Eloisa Nunes

The Pious Association of Camillian Missionaries, better known as the Camillian Missionary Sisters, is one of the branches of the great Camillian Charismatic Family. Inspired by the witness of St. Camillus de Lellis, the sisters embrace service with merciful love toward the sick, the poor, and the marginalized, carrying charity in their hands and the compassion of Christ in their hearts. They serve with “heart in their hands” and their minds focused on the good of others, as true Samaritans of our time.

The Camillian Missionary Sisters are a diocesan association founded in 1985 in Monte Santo de Minas (MG) by Sister Salette – Maria José Florentino Diniz. Since its inception, the Association has been committed to living the unity of the

early Christians, drawing inspiration from the spirit of the apostolic communities. The motto “Prefer nothing to the love of Jesus Christ” is the guiding principle of their entire mission, and the charism that animates them is ‘to glorify God and serve our brothers and sisters’. This service is carried out particularly in the field of healthcare, with a strong presence in the public health system and in various community initiatives aimed at promoting human dignity.

The commitment of the Camillian Missionary Sisters is deeply rooted in total dedication to Christ, the Church, and our neighbors, with particular attention to the sick, the poor, and those living on the margins of society. Through the religious vows of poverty, obedience, chastity, and availability, they publicly express their consecration and their desire to be a living presence of mercy in the world.

Their presence in the Church is discreet yet powerful: a presence that heals, listens, accompanies, and restores hope. They tenderly care for wounded bodies and broken souls, restoring faith in life, bringing a smile to those who have lost heart, and smiling with them. Where there is the greatest pain, there they seek to be present. ■

Members of the Association of Camillian Missionaries



MISSIONARIES OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

By Maria Teresa Martinoi



The association, founded by Brother Ettore Boschini, a Camillian religious, was established in response to the extreme poverty in which the poor of the city of Milan lived. On the streets, homeless men and women were left to face abandonment and general indifference, most of them seriously ill.

Brother Ettore in Milan was a new St. Camillus de Lellis. The unique gift we offer is to “rescue” the poor from the isolation and abandonment in which their lives are mired, restoring to them a space of affection and relationships, along with what is necessary for the life of the body, without ever forgetting food for the soul: care for the inner self and dignity. Times of prayer throughout the day and Sunday Mass are shared with all members of the Community; over the years, none of our inmates—regardless of their religious background or whether they

identify as atheists—has ever missed those moments when the Community gathers; each person prays as they know how and as best they can, or simply remains in silence: God reads hearts and does not take offense.

In our homes, there is never a lack of gratitude and a constant trust in God’s generosity, who ensures His poor lack nothing; we put this into practice through unwavering faith in Divine Providence, which urges us not to hoard, but to live in constant sharing with those who lack the necessities. A passage from Scripture, taken from Psalm 112, serves as inspiration: “He lifts the needy from the dust, he raises the poor from the ash heap, to seat them among princes, among the princes of his people”; as do the words of St. Camillus, who exhorted his followers to have “more heart in their hands.”



We are a small community of three women who, through private vows, have expressed their life choice, assisted by a group of volunteers who share a spiritual journey of closeness to the least of these. Far from discouraging us, we consider this objective smallness a distinctive feature to be valued and preserved, bearing witness to it above all in ordinary life through our work, but also through social media, conferences, writings, and theatrical events.

Sharing life with the poor we welcome into our homes, allowing their lives and needs to touch us deeply, and attending to their physical and inner well-being, shapes our daily lives and defines them as an exchange that enriches both us and them.

Our homes are designed to meet the needs for shared living or assistance most suited to the person in difficulty before us. We have a large residential home, which is the heart of the apostolate, where live, essentially from the moment they arrive until the end of their lives, the most abandoned, homeless individuals who have spent decades living on the streets: it is with them that we live, and it is to them that the greatest care—especially medical care—is directed. Another home is dedicated to those who, after years spent in the residential home, have learned to live together, engaging in tasks suited to their level of ability and regained stability. Then there is the large dormitory that accommodates people passing through; but even there, through conversations and careful observation, we are able to identify situations

where we can intervene with additional help, beyond providing shelter for the night and the opportunity to wash themselves and their clothes. Finally, there is a house where people too frail for the dormitory—yet still independent—find lodging while awaiting permanent housing (a rental home, public housing, a nursing home, etc.), always with the option, should they not find a solution, to join the residential community.

The three of us are called to great flexibility, an open and non-judgmental mind, a solid life of personal prayer, and ongoing formation through Bible courses, targeted readings, retreats, weekly lectio, and discussions. Privileged and indispensable moments are those of meditation that bring us together twice a day, without fail (or almost), in the morning and in the evening via the “Zoom” online platform. Even amidst our many travels and commitments, we carve out private moments for sharing and communal life.

Today, within the Church, we believe these small communities—some have called them “little lights”—are of fundamental importance. Around them, people gather who can experience firsthand, through direct witness, that goodness exists and can be practiced by anyone: if we can do good, even just the three of us, why shouldn’t others be able to do the same? Brother Ettore used to say that the Lord can make use of even just a donkey’s jawbone; (cf. Judges 15)—and he added—it’s a shame we don’t have the courage to be a whole donkey! ■

MISSIONARIES OF MARY, MOTHER OF LIFE

By Marisete de Araujo

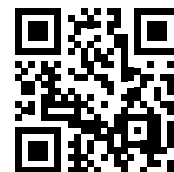
Every charism is born in the heart of God. It is the Holy Spirit who breathes simply and gently, kindling the fire of mission in the soul. In this maternal care, God the Father/Mother drew near to the heart of Father Adolfo Serripierro—a Camillian, pediatrician, and obstetrician-gynecologist—and brought forth, in the silence of attentive listening and maternal compassion, a work rooted in merciful love and charity. After years of dedication in the hospital setting and as director of the maternity hospital in Macapá (AP), Father Adolfo felt a call that surpassed all others: to leave those who were already enjoying their rights and go in search of Christ in the streets, among women wounded by violence, prostitution, chemical, psychological, and emotional addiction, and abandonment.

In Fortaleza (CE), amidst encounters with pain and abandonment, our charism

was quietly born. It is there, on the very ground of life itself, that the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of Mary, Mother of Life, was born: a consecrated presence called to be tenderness, listening, attention, care, and love, wherever dignity has been tarnished or violated.

In the light of the Gospel, we seek to be God's maternal visitation to the world: loving, welcoming, and protecting life as a concrete sign of God's love, mercy, and goodness. We are called to give our lives, to offer our hearts in defense of the lives of women in situations of social vulnerability.

We offer our hearts as a space of listening and welcome, where these women can experience the love that has often been denied them since conception. We create opportunities for them to reawaken their dreams, valuing their strengths and helping them believe in the possibility of



a renewed life, with new hopes and expectations. If we cannot change their physical environment, we help them transform their inner space. That is why helping every woman become the protagonist of her own story and feel loved is the deepest meaning of our mission.

Our spirituality is inspired by the heart of St. Camillus de Lellis, a man marked by suffering and transformed by charity. Saint Camillus did not merely care for the sick, but contemplated them through the eyes of faith, recognizing in them the suffering Christ.

As Missionary Sisters of Mary, Mother of Life, we embrace the call to serve Jesus present in women, children, and adolescents who are suffering. We are called to recognize the face of God in the wounded expression, in the desecrated body, and in the soul that cries out for love and dignity. Our spirituality is made up of presence, love, and compassion. We serve with humility, with hands that kneel not out of submission, but out of reverence for the mystery of wounded life that presents itself to us.

Every act of care is an act of faith, respect, and love. Every moment of listening is a choice, a call. Every life restored is the Gospel lived out. In the streets and squares we walk through, we encounter stories marked by violence, pain, silence, and absence, but in those hearts we also recognize the hidden presence of a God who does not give up, who persists, who makes himself small with the marginalized and waits, patiently, to be recognized, welcomed, and loved.

Our prayer also becomes service. We worship with our hands, with our eyes, with all our hearts. It is on this sacred ground that our vocation blossoms and grows: in the encounter with the living Christ, who dwells in bodies marked by violence and contempt, souls that, though wounded, continue to cry out and wait for love.

To serve with the tenderness and humility of Mary, to love with all our hearts—this is how we live the Camillian spirituality. To be a sacrament of mercy, an

expression of God's love in the suffering world of these women. This is the deepest essence of our vocation.

We live in a time marked by a constant quest for visibility, in a world that values what appears on the screen but forgets what happens in the silence of the deepest miseries of being. In this context, the scarcity of vocations becomes one of our greatest challenges. It is difficult to find hearts willing to hide themselves, to make themselves small in order to serve, to live a hidden dedication, without desiring applause and/or the spotlight. God has found it difficult to enter the hearts of young people. There are many external stimuli and noises; the inner silence, essential for hearing the call to follow Him more closely, has been stifled, and the call to a life of self-giving is often lost in a world that prioritizes the ego, visibility, performance, and consumption.

Our mission takes place where pain cries out loudest: in the poorest neighborhoods, in forgotten alleys, and in public squares. In places where the presence of violence often prevents us from reaching them. Furthermore, we face the neglect of public services, the absence of effective policies to protect and promote life, the fragility of social structures, and the indifference that numbs the collective conscience.

Every day we deal with limited financial resources, with uncertainty about how to maintain care, ensure food, pay bills, and purchase basic supplies. But even in the midst of difficulties, we remain hopeful and joyful, because we believe that where there is love and faith, there are also possibilities for growth, hope, providence, and abundance.

Nevertheless, our prayer is for more hands that “are more heart,” that join ours, for hearts willing to give of themselves, for a network of solidarity that sustains this mission—that of being God's merciful presence among these marginalized daughters, who are no less loved for it. ■

CHAPTER SIX

Lay Camillian Family Today

A Living Witness to Compassionate Service

Anita ENNIS

The Lay Camillian Family (LCF) is a global community of lay faithful inspired by the merciful heart of Jesus Christ and the charism of St. Camillus de Lellis. Rooted in the Catholic tradition and animated by the Gospel call to serve the sick and the suffering, the members of the LCF embody a spirituality of compassion, presence, and healing. Today, the LCF is active in 32 countries, united by a common mission of faith, love, and service.

The origins of the Lay Camillian Family date back to 1592, when St. Camillus de Lellis, a leading figure in Christian charity, gathered a group of laypeople to assist him in his ministry to the sick. His conviction was simple yet profound: “This is my vocation: to serve the poor and the sick with respect, for in serving them we serve Christ the Redeemer.” This vision, deeply rooted in the Gospel and in the corporal works of mercy, continues to inspire today’s lay Camillians.

The Second Vatican Council’s focus on the role of the laity in the life and mission of the Church fostered closer collaboration between Camillian lay collaborators and Camillian religious. This led to the creation of the LCF groups and the 2002 General Statutes of the Camillian Family, which affirmed the autonomy of the LCF within the broader Camillian family.



The Lay Camillian Family has grown into a vibrant international network, with communities established in diverse cultural and social contexts. The results of the 2025 global survey of LCF national presidents reveal the LCF’s presence in 32 countries, with both long-standing and newly formed groups. There is great diversity among our members, with groups ranging from 15 to over 100 members and spanning multiple generations. Despite differences in language, culture, and context, all LCF communities are united by a common spirit of service and a deep commitment to the Gospel.

Lay Camillian
Family Central
Commission

The Lay Camillian Family is guided by values rooted in the life of Christ and the legacy of St. Camillus. These values shape our daily lives and actions around the world. We are committed to loving and serving others, building strong and supportive communities, deepening our spiritual lives through ongoing formation, and showing compassion and mercy toward those in need.

Our mission comes to life through concrete acts of care and service. We serve in hospitals, nursing homes, and social service institutions, offering comfort and support to the sick. In parishes and communities, we engage in outreach activities that address local needs. We also visit people in their homes, particularly those who are sick, isolated, or in need of companionship and care.

A survey conducted in May 2025 highlighted the many strengths that sustain our community. These include a strong sense of belonging and a shared purpose, well-developed formation programs that support personal and spiritual growth, and close collaboration with Camillian

religious and parish communities.

Like any living, growing community, we face challenges that require faith, creativity, and discernment. These include an aging membership, limited financial resources, geographical distances between members, and the need to raise greater awareness of our mission and presence.

Despite these challenges, we look to the future with hope and determination. The survey revealed a shared vision for greater lay participation, improved formation, and strengthened international connections, as well as significant and sustainable growth.

The Lay Camillian Family is a beacon of hope and healing in a world often marked by suffering and indifference. Through its faithful witness, the LCF continues the mission of St. Camillus, bringing the love of Christ to the sick, the poor, and the marginalized. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and inspire the Lay Camillian Family, so that our service may always reflect the compassion of Christ and the joy of the Gospel. ■



Synergies Between Religious and Laity

Lay Collaboration in the Camillian Ministry

Felipe ALMEIDA

The history of the Order of Ministers of the Infirm is a living response to the cry of human suffering. Following in the footsteps of Saint Camillus de Lellis, who saw Christ himself in the sick, this mission has been sustained by two pillars: mercy and radical dedication to those who suffer in body and soul. Over the centuries, this mission has expanded and diversified, crossing different cultures, languages, and contexts. But one characteristic remains essential: no one walks alone. Every act of care, every hospital, every Camillian presence in frontier territories arises from a deep communion among vocations. Religious and laypeople walk together, united by the same flame.

This synergy, far from being a practical technical solution or a form of support, is an expression of the Holy Spirit who moves the Church to be ever more a communion.

In the present time, marked by social, health, and spiritual crises, this mutual collaboration is not only desirable but essential. There are many instances where Camillian religious and laypeople work side by side: in caring for the sick, in managing ministries, in

spiritual formation, in responding to disasters, and in listening to and accompanying those who suffer. The mission is not for the few: it is for all those who have been touched by the charism of mercy.

For this reason, this chapter proposes a twofold reflection: in the first part, we will see how religious and laypeople have shared the Camillian mission with concrete results in various contexts. In the second part, we will explore experiences of joint formation, where the sense of belonging, communion, and fidelity to the charism is strengthened.



Across the various continents where the Order is present, there is a growing number of instances in which laypeople assume, with competence and fervor, fundamental roles in the life and dissemination of the Camillian charism.

Laity and Religious: A Shared Mission

“Let each one perform his or her service with generosity, as he or she has received it from the Lord” (cf. Rom 12:6). Within the Camillian Family, this exhortation of St. Paul finds a concrete and fruitful expression in the collaboration between religious and laypeople. It is no longer merely a matter of help or simple support, but of a shared mission, in which different vocations act as complementary forces, animated by the same Spirit and with the same goal.

Across the various continents where the Order is present, there is a growing number of instances in



which laypeople assume, with competence and fervor, fundamental roles in the life and dissemination of the Camillian charism. In hospitals, formation centers, and pastoral and humanitarian projects, they are not merely a supportive presence but active participants committed to the integral care of the human person—body and soul—as they journey to meet the sick who, scattered throughout the world, are in need of care.

In recent times, especially since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has strongly reaffirmed and intensified the role of the laity in the mission of evangelization. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Church defines the action of the laity as “participating, in their own way, in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, carrying out, on their part, the mission of the entire Christian people in the Church and in the world” (cf. LG, 31). In the field of health and mercy, this translates into an active, creative, and deeply evangelical participation in Camillian works and missions. The Order, faithful to the spirit of St. Camillus, welcomes this collaboration as a gift and as a response to the needs of our time.

As St. Camillus said: “More heart in our hands.” Today, this Camillian heart also beats in the hearts of men and women—married or single, healthcare

workers or pastoral agents—who discover in the lay vocation a legitimate and fruitful space to live out the charism of mercy.

A significant example of this shared mission took place in Pakistan in 2022, following the devastating floods that struck the country. CADIS (Camillian Disaster Service International), an organization of the Order dedicated to disaster response, coordinated an emergency relief effort in collaboration with the Diocese of Hyderabad and the Tzu Chi Foundation. Camillian religious and local laypeople joined forces to assist approximately 33,000 affected people. Together they distributed food, hygiene kits, and psychological support, demonstrating how the Camillian mission is truly a shared endeavor.

In Brazil, collaboration is bearing fruit on several fronts: in hospitals and in the health education and promotion centers run by the Order, many laypeople hold leadership positions, serve as healthcare technicians, pastoral coordinators, and educators, always with the Camillian spirit beating in their hearts. Spiritual and charismatic formation programs and an organizational culture centered on care have helped these collaborators not only to do their work well, but to be present, with their hearts on their sleeves, as St.

Camillus teaches, caring with love and dedication for the thousands of sick people assisted by our works.

The union between religious and laypeople does not weaken each one's identity, but rather strengthens it. The religious bear radical witness to their total dedication to the service of the sick; the laypeople, through their presence in the world, reveal that the charism is a leaven that transforms reality. Together they build a Church that moves forward, where compassion translates into concrete gestures of presence, listening, and care.

Being together is not limited to something casual, operational, or administrative, but is deeply spiritual. Religious and laypeople, living fraternal communion in the charism of St. Camillus, become a sign of the Kingdom amidst human suffering. It is not just a matter of doing things together, but of being together: being a sign of a God who draws near, who cares, who lifts up, and who remains.

A passage from a well-known Camillian vocation prayer makes the greatness and urgency of the Camillian charism's global mission very clear: "Countless sick people scattered throughout the world suffer and die without proper care; the poor, abandoned, die without knowing you. The harvest is truly great, but we are few workers." Today, men and women, laypeople and religious, are united in the mission of caring for a world in such need.

"The Spirit distributes gifts to whom he wills" (cf. 1 Cor 12:11). The challenge, therefore, is not to "manage" this diversity, but to welcome it as a gift. Today more than ever, the Camillian ministry is a collaborative effort, and every voice—lay or religious—is indispensable to the symphony of mercy.

In this time of rapid transformation, when suffering takes on new forms and care requires creative and integrated responses, collaboration between laypeople and religious proves to be a true sign of the times. A living and compassionate Church needs all its forces united, and the Camillians, faithful to the legacy of St. Camillus, are called to be this symphonic and vibrant presence in the midst of the world.

Joint Formation: Growing in the Charism

"Build one another up in love" (cf. Eph 4:16): this is the vocation of every Christian community. And at the heart of the Camillian Family, this building up takes

place when laypeople and religious grow together in living the charism of mercy.

If there is one thing that distinguishes the Camillian identity, it is the ability to form communities passionate about serving the sick. But this love needs to be cultivated, matured, and enlightened. For this reason, formation is not a mere detail, but a journey of sanctification, human maturity, and fidelity to the gift received.

In recent years, the Order has placed an increasingly clear emphasis on shared formation, in which laypeople and religious not only study the same content but also share the experience of being formed by the charism. The charism of St. Camillus is not exclusive to professed religious: it is a gift of the Spirit to the Church and, as such, can and must be lived by all those called to serve the sick with evangelical compassion.

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, reminds us: "Formation is not a single event, but a continuous process" (cf. EG, 160). And this process is profoundly enriched when lived in communion.

In Camillian works around the world, it is not uncommon to find formation programs aimed at all those who participate in the mission: consecrated persons, healthcare workers, volunteers, pastoral workers, and students. In many countries, integrated modules have been designed, in which aspects of the charism, Camillian spirituality, the ethics of care, and the social doctrine of the Church are explored in a systematic and accessible way.

St. Camillus knew that caring for the sick was more than a technique: it was a school of conversion. That is why he told his followers: "Look upon the sick as the person of Christ!" (cf. S. Ciatelli, *Life of St. Camillus*). Today, this pedagogy is still alive. In joint formation meetings, participants learn not only to "do good," but to "be a presence" of compassion. And this involves listening, praying, discerning, and reflecting on one's own feelings and on the wounds of the world.

A fruitful example of inspiration comes from Asia. In 2023, CADIS organized an intensive training course in Bangkok on the spirituality of care, ethics, and emergency management. The group consisted of Camillian religious, lay missionaries, doctors, psychologists, and volunteers from Asia and Africa. For ten days, they not only studied together but also shared experiences, prayed together, and celebrated the charism that unites them.

This type of formation goes far beyond the simple



transmission of information: it is a true process of communal transformation. A community that grows together, learns together, loves together, and becomes irresistibly evangelizing—a living sign of God’s love for all of us.

Another key aspect of joint formation is the strengthening of a sense of belonging. Many collaborators in Camillian ministry, even those without religious affiliation, feel deeply part of a greater mission. When formation is experienced together, with moments of spirituality, sharing, and reflection, this identity flourishes. Values cease to be merely institutional and become personally embraced.

In Camillian experiences, this formation takes place both in person and through digital means: online courses, videos, discussion groups, and materials translated into various languages. What matters is that everyone can draw from the same spiritual source, using appropriate language but without superficiality.

For the charism is not transmitted solely through words, but through shared life, witness, and the spirit of family.

St. Camillus himself began his conversion not with a book, but through contact with suffering. The hospital was his school. Pain was his teacher. And mercy was his mission.

Today, it is urgent that laypeople and religious be formed together, side by side, so that they may share not only a mission, but also a spirituality. May they learn to love, serve, pray, decide, and build together. Joint formation is therefore a seed of communion and the driving force of ecclesial renewal.

Camillian joint formation is a powerful antidote to fragmentation and isolation. It builds bridges between generations, vocations, and cultures. And it allows the charism of St. Camillus to continue to be incarnated in the concrete realities of the world, with different faces but one heart. ■

Conclusion

450 Years of Mercy Received and Given, so that the Heart may Continue to Beat in our Hands

Fr. Gianfranco LUNARDON

February 2, 1575, which we celebrated with greater enthusiasm, invites us to give thanks for the richness of our 450-year spiritual heritage, which has benefited the Church and all humanity; yet it also confronts us with a demanding responsibility for the present time and urges us to plan more boldly for the future.

As a wounded man, St. Camillus intuited how human wounds need not only treatment but maternal care; how the wounded, sick, sorrowful, and poor person needs men and women who will take charge of him as a person, and thus give themselves to him. And, if it is true that it is characteristic of the saints not only to intuit what responds to the needs of their own time but also to anticipate the times, it is true that Camillus's intuition and charism retain an extraordinary relevance today, to respond to what, without fear of exaggeration, we can consider an "emergency": the "anthropological emergency," the question of what it means to be human. All our missions fail if man—every man—loses his centrality! Therefore: "What is man?"

Camillus instinctively draws inspiration from biblical wisdom, reminding us that the standard by which human dignity is measured is not the one used to measure things, or the results of our actions, but rather resembles the way in which the Creator himself constantly contemplates his creature: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness [...] He saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:27, 31). Even Camillus—within the culture

of his time, in which the poor man without prestige or power, and moreover sick, found no regard—discovers "this man," indeed seeks him out, and discovers that he is a man of equal dignity to every other man.

After his conversion, he would seek to serve God precisely in this man and devote himself to the whole person, with an awareness—a precursor to modernity (holistic medicine, patients' rights, ...)—that the sick person enters the hospital with his whole being: the poor man brings his rags but also his free and immortal spirit.

His zeal for works and charity arose from the discovery of human dignity, above all from having seen "in the very person of the sick person... the pupil and heart of God... his lord and master." Camillus would impart these principles to the society and culture of his time: not from the pulpit or a university lectern, but from the hospital, from that hospital of his era into which he himself had entered as incurable.

Camillus asks the Lord "what man is": for him, the question about man is the question about God! In this sense, we better understand the words of our Constitution: "Through the promotion of health, the treatment of illness, and the alleviation of pain, we cooperate in the work of God the Creator, glorify God in the human body, and express our faith in the resurrection" (C.45).

It is a question that springs from every human heart, particularly from the heart of the existential peripheries where we encounter the sick, the abandoned, and the rejected; in those peripheries of

the healthcare world characterized by a lack of access to medicines and basic health services—a question that involves fundamental human rights and thus challenges the prophetic dimension of our being Camillian religious. It is a question that demands the evangelization of human pain, of every form of suffering, to which we are called to respond.

To the man of an elitist Renaissance, which excluded many from progress and the benefits of culture and health, Camillus offers the answer of dignity, which resolutely combats that “culture of waste” denounced—even today in our post-modernity—in no uncertain terms by Pope Francis. It is the response of care that does not give up and does not stop, but always finds a way to offer support and consolation. It is the response of closeness, the response of service, which is always urgent because, as Benedict XVI wrote, “charity will always be necessary, even in the most just society” (cf. *Deus caritas est*, 28). Since “the Christian’s program, the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus, is ‘a heart that sees’” (cf. *Deus caritas est*, 31): this program also becomes a challenge for us Camillian religious to grow ourselves and to help our collaborators grow in the “formation of the heart.”

Camillus intuited this concretely and prophetically by dedicating himself to the service of the sick. And it is beautiful for us to reflect on how perhaps it was precisely that “service” that educated him, matured him, and prepared him to embrace the conversion that the Lord, through suffering, then brought to full bloom within him, transforming it into a path of holiness.

It is “anthropological conversion”; it is the proposal of a “plenary humanism,” which addresses the human person in their fullness and asks us to move from “law” to “heart,” from “heart” to “hands,” from “doing” to “giving of oneself”: a transition that leads us to authentic service, as service to life: “to all of life and

to the life of everyone.” Thus, conversion becomes an inner revolution and, as with Camillus, can profoundly revolutionize our environment and the world, bringing about the only necessary revolution, which Jesus has shown and taught us and for which we too must learn to fight ever more: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all

your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37–39). It is the revolution of love.

In the Jubilee Year of Hope, we are invited to inhabit our time—even amidst the painful historical circumstances that consecrated life is currently experiencing—as a *καιρός*, an opportune time of grace and a theological space—joyful, paschal, and ecclesial—in which to reclaim the original spiritual heritage of our Founder, St. Camillus, so as to embody this mystery in our personal lives for the benefit of the Institute and the entire Church; by questioning and integrating the evangelical

and paradigmatic significance of the Camillian charism in the emergencies of history, looking toward the future.

Continuing to draw from the mystical fire of the charism seems to us the best way to interpret, in truth, joys and hopes, tensions and challenges. The revitalization of the Order requires a journey, in the logic of the wounded healers, to develop the necessary resilience: growing in the ability to rebuild ourselves while remaining open to the positive opportunities life offers, without losing our humanity, committed through words and choices, through more widely shared decisions, and through a new style of fraternity to restore personal and interpersonal trust (self-esteem grounded in identity, charism, and spirituality) and social credibility.

With this renewed attitude, each and every one of



The more than 400 years of history that precede us are steeped in great testimonies of charity and mercy: may this legacy, an extraordinary witness to the Lord’s benevolence toward our Order, serve as a stimulus and encouragement for us to purify our present and to reactivate a virtuous cycle of hope and trust for the future.

us, as individuals and as a community, will be able to live out our service to the sick entrusted to us with serenity, trust, and awareness, with that Samaritan compassion that has channeled the finest human and spiritual resources of Camillus and so many of our confreres, who heroically lived out charity and mercy even unto martyrdom throughout the four centuries of our history.

This journey toward ever-greater awareness will also allow us to purify the deepest motivations of our Camillian vocation, so that we may decide upon and carry out “good done well” and not merely the superficial appearance of good. Thus, with Christ in our hearts and firmly faithful to the truth of history, we will be “always ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15), with a clear conscience (truth of reality), gentleness (humanity), and finally with respect (dignity) (cf. 1 Pet 3:16).

Today we are called to be “missionary disciples” in the world of healthcare, helping to foster a culture of encounter in opposition to the culture of efficiency at all costs and of discarding, to build bridges rather than walls, stepping out of our selfishness, and nurturing—as St. Augustine reminds us—the holy restlessness of the heart, of seeking, of love.

The first and fundamental witness to this conversion is manifested and nourished in the unity and fraternity of our communities: whereas until recently unity was synonymous with uniformity, today we are called to take up the challenge of building diversity in charity. This renewed perspective on fraternal life is the one that best respects the original identity of each person, called with their own talents and resources, resistances and limitations, to build a new relational style in which the brother cares for the brother, in community.

Blessed Cardinal J.H. Newman, with great wisdom and realism, reminds us that “the human heart is moved far more by the testimony of facts, by history, than by arguments and intellectual reasoning. We are influenced by a person, captivated by a voice, subdued

by a sight, inflamed by an action...”. The future must not be improvised, but strategically planned, in accordance with the values of our charism and our spirituality: our profound trust in God’s providential presence in history does not exempt us from engaging our intelligence and wisdom to collaborate responsibly in the coming of the Kingdom of God among us.

The more than 400 years of history that precede us are steeped in great testimonies of charity and mercy: may this legacy, an extraordinary witness to the Lord’s benevolence toward our Order, serve as a stimulus and encouragement for us to purify our present—with its lights and shadows—and to reactivate a virtuous cycle of hope and trust for the future. From the perspective of the Christian faith, God accompanies and sustains our personal history and that of our Order with his light, even in the events we experience as shadows, which generate fear and slow our journey toward the future. In God’s light, negative experiences appear as an opportunity to acknowledge our poverty and fragility: we can walk in peace and serenity when we accept being enlightened by Christ. Let this light penetrate our hearts, our communities, delegations, and provinces! May the faithful God continue to sustain us with goodness in our lives, with healthy and fraternal relationships in our communities, and with the precious gift of health and dignity for those poor and needy who have lost it!

A radical choice lies before us: to cultivate pessimism or to discern and nurture the seeds of hope? Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), a physician, missionary, philosopher, musician, and man of deep faith, dedicated his entire life to finding a “cure” for the disease that had afflicted all of humanity—pessimism—never resigning himself to the sad and difficult situation in which modern man found himself living: “The tragedy of life is what dies within a man while he is still alive.” Walking in hope is not an easy or immediate path, but the hope that nourishes faith can make a difference and highlight the newness of a humanity renewed in God. ■



Rome, July 10, 1614

*I send a thousand blessings to everyone
not only to those present but also to those yet to come.*

Camillus de Lellis

Camillians Today: Charism, Spirit, and Mission offers religious, laypeople, collaborators, and all those who wish to reflect on the meaning of Christian care today a spiritual and missionary reinterpretation of Camillian charism. The pages of this volume look to the future: to integral formation, to the evangelization of suffering, to vocation promotion, to dialogue with the new generations, and to the building of networks of fraternity and shared responsibility. Its pages invite us to rediscover the freshness of a charism that, though rooted in the 16th century, speaks powerfully to the heart of our time.



Generalate
Ministers of the Infirm
Piazza della Maddalena, 53
00186 Rome
www.camilliani.org