



Il Superiore Generale
Superior General

Prot.n.10/2024
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MARY, SALUS INFIRMORUM AND MOTHER OF SORROW

“Our Order venerates her with singular devotion, devoutly celebrates her feasts and honours her by praying the rosary. We recognize and love her as our Mother, and invoke her as ‘Queen of the Ministers of the Infirm’” (C. 68).

Dear Confreres,

I sincerely hope that this letter finds you in good health and serenity. We are now approaching the conclusion of another calendar year, and as we look back, we cannot but thank God for the many *blessings* He has bestowed on us. In particular, He has given us the opportunity to serve those most in need, especially the sick, in the spirit of our Camillian vocation.

We are aware of the difficulties and challenges we face along the way, but these do not stop us from moving forward, sustained like St. Camillus by the words of Jesus, “Courage, go forth ... this work is not yours, but mine.” We also find comfort in the certainty that our founder entrusted our Institute to the protection of our heavenly Mother.

In the month of November, as we celebrate Our Lady Health of the Sick (November 16), I wish to remind you that we are always under her loving protection. For this reason, I offer you a reflection on *Mary, Salus Infirmorum and Mother of Sorrows*, prepared by our Vicar General, Fr. Gianfranco Lunardon, an excerpt of which I reproduce below. I also invite you to read the full text on our website: www.camilliani.org.

*“The constitution of our Camillian Order, with sobriety makes a synthesis of the Marian dimension that accompanied the permanent interior transformation of St. Camillus and illuminates that dimension of *model* and *service* that must characterize in us the exercise of the charism of mercy toward the sick: “*Mary, the Mother of Jesus, faithful in her acceptance of the Word and in her cooperation in his work, especially in her concern for the suffering, presents herself to us as a **model** of the spiritual life and of **service** to others. She assists us with her maternal love*” (C.68).*

Camillus' life was a journey of conversion to God and spiritual maturation in the existential dimension of total entrustment to the Mother of the Lord, experienced as the health and salvation of his life, and promoted as such in the context of human suffering. Camillus, after the Crucifix, attributed every grace to the Mother of Jesus.

Everything in Camillus' life proceeded according to a providential progression of importance and succession in time so that all his most salient occasions coincided with Marian feasts or solemnities. On the day of Mary's *purification*, February 2 of the holy year 1575, Camillus repented from his straying life and converted. It was a sign God gave him and he pointed to Mary, the one who favoured the beginning of his spiritual journey. On the Feast of the *Assumption* of Mary in 1582, he cultivated the inspiration “*to establish a company of pious and good men, who, not for merit, but voluntarily and for the love of God, would serve the sick with that charity and lovingkindness, with which mothers*

would serve their sick children.” After celebrating his first Mass (June 10, 1584) at Our Lady's altar and accepting as his chaplaincy a shrine dedicated to her - the church of *Our Lady of Miracles* - on the day of Mary's *nativity*, September 8, 1584, Camillus dressed his first companions in the religious habit: “*in that way therefore the Congregation was born into the world together with the Most Holy Virgin.*” The *solemn profession* of religious vows was celebrated on the feast of the *Immaculate Conception*, December 8, 1591.

“There is no greater love than that of a mother for her only sick child,” is for us the highest parameter that can be expressed. The prophet Isaiah uses it to make us understand God's love for us, “*Does a woman forget her child?*” “*As a mother comforts a child so will I comfort you, in Jerusalem you will be comforted...*” (Is. 49:15; 66:13). Camillus prescribed this as a paradigm when he wished to express in summary the love that the nascent congregation of the *Servants of the Sick* was to set as the foundation of its being at the bedside of the sick. Believers have also well sensed this love that the Immaculate Mother of God has for the children entrusted to her (Jn. 19:25-27), brothers of her Son, “*firstborn among many brothers*” (Rom. 8:29), invoking her *Salus Infirmorum*.

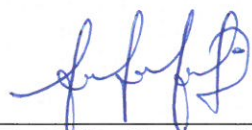
We are fully aware of our state of *infirmity*, and not only at the level of organic or functional or psychophysical dysfunction, but also in the state of moral life that generates deeper sufferings that are not easily removed, because they are inherent in that sphere of existence which belongs to the spiritual dimension of the creature, and which for us believers is called ‘the soul.’

Today, more than at any other time, the sphere of *health and health care*, is the crossroads of the great challenges that confront man: evil, life, birth, suffering, healing, death: a place where *Man* makes the continuous search for equilibrium of relationships with himself, with others, with the world around him, with transcendence; a decisive space of Man's existence that is affected by the strong wind of the secularization of life. *Health care* is the terrain where the Christian and secular conception of Man's existence clash the most. For the Church it remains the *privileged place of evangelization*, the place where the encounter with the *infirmus* Man is made, and the place where the proclamation of the Word of God is lived.

Mary of Sorrows, who stands at the foot of the Cross participating in the passion of her Son, is a witness that *pain elevated to salvific power by the messianic mission of Christ* - delivered by Him to the Church – *full of salvific meaning*, is a path of faith and growth *toward the global health* of Man. It is a synodal path, travelled in tune with and accompanied by Mary, *Health of the Sick*, contemplating her Son Jesus, present in the history of every man who suffers and dies.”

I never tire of personally witnessing the constant support I experience whenever I ask Her for help, especially in the mission now entrusted to me of coordinating our Order. Every day I entrust you to Her protection, as well as our Order, the sick and all those who assist us in the mission of caring for them.

May the feast of Our Lady be an occasion to renew our devotion, as our founder did. Encouraged by Mary's sure maternal love, let us invoke her protection on each of us. May St. Camillus intercede for us and may his 'Thousand Blessings' accompany us always.



Fr. Pedro Tramontin
Superior General



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