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Audience with participants in the General Chapter of the Order of Ministers of the Infirm (Camillians)

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapter of the Order of Ministers of the Infirm (Camillians).

The following is the Pope's address to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of your General Chapter. I address my cordial greeting to each one of you, starting from the new Superior General, whom I thank for his words and to whom I wish all the best for his ministry.

At the centre of your reflection in these days, you have placed the theme: "What is Camillian prophecy today?" Inspired by the grace proper to a Chapter – if lived well in listening to the Spirit, brothers and history – you propose to look for new ways of evangelization and proximity, with the aim of realizing your charism, which puts you at the service of the sick, with dynamic fidelity. Saint Camillus De Lellis, transformed by God's love, heard the call to give life to a new religious family that, imitating Jesus' compassion and tenderness towards those who suffer in body and in spirit, might live out the commandment of love by spreading the proclamation of the Gospel with joy and taking care of the most fragile.

Our time is marked by individualism and indifference, which generate loneliness and cause the rejection of many lives. This is our culture today, isn't it? Individualism, indifference which, what do they do? They generate loneliness and cause rejection: the culture of rejection. The Christian response does not lie in the resigned observation of the present or in nostalgic regret of the past, but in charity that, animated by trust in Providence, knows how to love its time and, with humility, bears witness to the Gospel.

This is what was achieved by your founder, who is one of the saintly figures who best embody the style of the Good Samaritan, of being close to the wounded brother along the road. In this choice of life lies the turning point to come out of the shadows of a closed world and to generate an open world (cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, chapters 1-3). To you, brothers, the gift and task of being inspired by him to look at the reality of suffering, illness and death with the eyes of Jesus. You will thus make of the Camillian prophecy an *incarnated prophecy*, which urges you to take on the burdens of others, the wounds and anxieties of your most vulnerable brothers and sisters. This requires docile openness to the Holy Spirit, who is the soul of every apostolic dynamism; and it requires a certain amount of boldness, to discover and travel together unexplored paths or express in new forms the potential of the Camillian charism and ministry.

This style of life and apostolate of yours, dedicated especially to the service of the sick and to the weak and elderly, seems to me to combine well two essential dimensions of the Christian life: on the one hand the desire for an outgoing and tangible witness to others, and on the other the need to understand oneself according to the canons of evangelical smallness.

I therefore invite you to draw ever anew from the lifeblood of the Beatitudes, to take, with meekness and simplicity, the good news to the poor and least of today's people. I also hope you will refresh each other in the confidence that the good accorded to a suffering sister or brother is a gift given to Jesus himself, and that what is lived and offered every day with joy, even if invisible to the eyes of the world, is never lost but, like a seed fallen onto the ground, germinates and bears fruit. And do not neglect to cherish the memory of the first love – the memory of the first love – with which Jesus conquered your heart, so that your choice of consecrated life may always be renewed from the roots. Always return to the roots of the first love, because therein lies our religious identity: the first dialogue with Jesus, the call...

In the wake of the creative solicitude of Saint Camillus, I encourage you to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in seeking out every way to live his charism of mercy, making the most even of the most suitable forms of collaboration with laypeople, in particular healthcare workers. Cultivating the spirituality of communion among yourselves and with everyone will help you to discern better what the Lord wants from you. Seek out God's will in communion.

Dear brothers, above all I want to thank you for what you are and for what you do in the Church. If we want to offer people a good "field hospital", where the injured may encounter and feel the closeness and tenderness of Christ, if we want this, we cannot do without the charism of Saint Camillus De Lellis. It is up to you to your give hands, feet, mind and heart to this gift of God, so that it may continue to inspire the works of God in our time. May the Lord abundantly bless your chapter works and may Our Lady always accompany your journey. And please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
