Camillian Newsletter

Religious and Laity Together

The Camillian Sister Candida, the oldest nun in the world, in conversation with Pope Francis on her 107th birthday

Crest Anglo-Irish Province
Contents

From the Editor..........................................................

A Word from the Provincial.................................

Provincial writes to Uganda............................

News in Pictures ..................................................

Lay Camillian Youth Group .................................

Rollestown/Oldtown LCF

Nana Hotel ..................................................

Nursing Centre News ............................................

Blackrock Community News ..........................

Killucan LCF News ..............................................

Irish College Paris ..........................................

Has Ireland lost its soul? .................................

Chronicles Killucan 2013 ..................................

From the Archives .............................................

Learning English .............................................
From the Editor

Our cover pictures presents us with the Man of the Year and the Woman of the Moment.

On the 19th March our Holy Father completed his first year in office, and in that time he has certainly touched the hearts and souls of all and sundry. Even the aggressive advocates of secularism have been touched by his approach and by his words. We were informed, tongue in cheek, by our Minister for Foreign Affairs that he was influenced in reopening the Vatican Embassy by the “Francis Factor”.

Some are suggesting that our Holy Father will be remembered more as the Pope of Gestures than for the encyclicals he has written or may write. Certainly his actions are challenging us in a way that no words from Rome have done in a long time: his first visit outside of Rome to Lampadusa to highlight, on the world stage, the plight of impoverished migrants, the washing of the feet of a woman who was a Muslim to boot, his shunning of the Papal Apartments and Summer Residence at Castelgondolfo, the list is long. One wag described him as living as a Franciscan, dressing like a Dominican, reaching out to the vulnerable like a Camillian and administering like a Jesuit. Interesting! May he continue to inspire the world with the real Christian message.

Sr Candida, a Camillian sister, celebrated her 107th birthday by attending the Pope’s mass in Casa Marthà in February of this year. She walked to it and chatted away intelligently to the Holy Father afterwards, and indeed to the world press who were charmed by her simplicity, clear thinking and honesty. She has been interviewed on television and appeared all over the world. She is first into the chapel of her convent in Lucca every morning for 6.00am morning prayers. She is self sufficient. To the journalist’s question as to what had been the happiest day of her life she replied: “the same day was the happiest and the saddest. The happiest was the day I walked into the Camillian sisters convent, and it was the saddest too as it meant I had to leave my home and parents”. Sr. Candida is reminding us that you are never too old to bear witness to the love of God, and that age is no obstacle to doing your bit in the building of God’s Kingdom.

We welcome to the pages of this issue of the Newsletter the young lay camillians who have recently been set up as the Junior branch of the Camillian Family. We thank them for their contribution to this issue but particularly for the life and enthusiasm that they bring to all of us. Their youthful zest for life is contagious.

May you all enjoy your perusal of these pages, and if you don’t that is okay too.

Frank
‘For there is a time of judgement for everything; and man runs grave risks, since he does not know what is going to happen; and who can tell him what is going to happen? No man can master the wind so as to hold it back, nor control the day of death.’ (Ecclesiastes 8:6)

The author of Ecclesiastes, inspired by the Holy Spirit, urges man to seek wisdom. What is life without wisdom? What is life without God? ‘Surely life is more than clothing. Do not say, what are we to eat? What are we to drink? Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you.’ (Mt. 6:25)

There is an onus on us to constantly look at our prayer life. We might ask personal questions. Am I happy with it? No! Am I giving enough time to it? No! Is Christ the centre of my life? If He isn’t, who is?

As we walk our way through the Pope’s Apostolic Exhortation, one is constantly struck by the joy of the document and how many times the Holy Father mentions the word joy. ‘Those who spread the Gospel must not look as if they have just come from a funeral.’ It is for us to be joyful and to pass this on. If we are discouraged we must pray and ask why we are discouraged. We follow Christ on the journey. He is always walking ahead. He is leading us along the way.

It is worth reading the words of the Holy Father to the newly appointed Cardinals. ‘You must avoid a court mentality. No intrigue, no gossip.’

It is good that we are all concerned about each other and it is good too that we have transparency and openness. But there are also boundaries. There are some things that are better left unsaid. No one is obliged to engage in useless gossip.

Some 20 years ago I witnessed a diocesan priests meeting and they were debating whether to accept religious priests into the membership. I was struck by how forceful some were against the motion. Two of them in particular were quite hostile. I remember thinking, ‘Wow, those guys are really negative against this.’ And then I remember thinking, ‘wow, those guys are really negative.’ They did not seem to be kind and welcoming Pastors but angry and disgruntled men. Where did this come from?
My home community was known years ago as a Pit Community. There were many of them in the area. The Pit – or Mine - was where most of the men worked. Coal was excavated and transported. Some miners would jokingly refer to coal as black diamonds. We have the famous phrase. ‘Coals to Newcastle,’ meaning you wouldn’t take something to a region when there already exists an abundance of that commodity.

There was a great camaraderie amongst the men. Many would routinely risk their lives as the work was so dangerous. Men depended on each other: not only for work together, but to survive together. Everybody helped each other out, especially underground. Your life might depend on it.

There were disasters. If there was a collapse in the Pit, the villagers would flock to the Pit in trepidation. Many women would have not only husbands, but fathers, brothers and sons working down the Mine. To discover so many dead, so many injured and so many still missing, would have a devastating effect on the Community. As Pit safety improved, conditions became better and the camaraderie in the Pit community was a constant.

Some years ago a priest moved into the parish next to mine. As a tribute to the men, the women and the history of the Pit Community, he placed the sanctuary lamp inside a pit lamp and placed it in the sanctuary. The miners’ lamps were carried by all miners underground.

There for all to see, was the pit lamp encasing the sanctuary lamp signifying Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament. It meant a lot to the people. It said a great deal without a word being spoken. It saluted the people and honoured their sufferings.
Then another priest came to the parish. He removed the miners’ lamp. This upset people. It hurt them. It offended them. People’s sensibilities were disturbed. It was an act of disrespect by an outsider; even though he was the parish priest.

An outsider came in and disrespected the community.

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As we walk our way through Lent, may the Lord guide us closer to Him and bring healing and justice to our Order and to all. May St Joseph, the man of honour, guide us and intercede for us. May St Patrick, who became holy through his sufferings, help us to be purified.

God bless you all.

Stephen Foster - Feast of St Joseph, 2014
The Provincial writes to the Camillian Community, Uganda

18 February 2014

Dear Frs Johnson, Richard, Biju & Jofree,

As I write, my first thought is one of gratitude. It has been a pleasure to meet you again and Frs Biju and Jofree for the first time. I was delighted that you both volunteered to come to Uganda with such enthusiasm.

My visit brings all the support and assurance that our Province wants to give. The Ugandan Camillian story is one that is unfolding as time goes by and it’s important that we know the history so that we can be fully informed. The Province has made a number of financial donations to the Diocese of Jinja and Lugazi in the past number of years.

I see great progress has been made in relation to the Clinic. This will soon be ready for function.

It’s important to assert that the Camillians are the owners of this property and the authority for the running of the Clinic. We would always work with the Diocese of Jinja in a cooperative manner and we look forward to many years of fruitful association. This is why any Memorandum of Understanding - which the Diocese is requesting - will need to be carefully studied and scrutinised. The idea floated that the Diocese wanted to take control is a surprise to me. As we all know, this would be unacceptable. The Clinic will be there for many years and I can only see it developing well and growing once we have a secure Camillian Community behind it. I have always believed that any Camillian Clinic in Uganda is only possible when there is a good, strong Camillian presence; which we now have. There
are of course always going to be difficulties as these are part of daily life. But facing the difficulties in faith gives us the ability to endure as St James says; and he adds, make sure your endurance carries you all the way. (Jas. 1:4) Perhaps the biggest enemy in the spiritual life is discouragement. There are many causes but the fundamental is in relation to the prayer life, or lack thereof. You will not be surprised by me encouraging you to remain faithful to the daily prayers and the daily private prayer. ‘Go to your room and pray to your Father in secret and your Father who knows all things will reward you. (Mt. 6:6)

In our faithfulness to prayer we discover joy and peace. Our many sins are forgiven and we must never grow tired of asking God for forgiveness as Pope Francis reminds us. God never gets tired of showing his mercy. All four of you have a good spirit and it is heartening for me to see the easy rapport between you all and the sense of shared purpose and common vocation inspired by St Camillus.

It was a pleasure to participate in the official opening of the Queen of Apostles school and Clinic near to our house in Jinja. They have done great work already and it will surely grow. In fact, as I mentioned, I don’t see any reason why sometime in the not too distant future we could not envisage also having a school near to our Clinic in order to educate the local children.

I mentioned too that I believe it would be worthwhile for either Johnson or Richard to visit Nairobi around Easter in order to strengthen the bonds with our Kenyan brothers and also to get an update on our students (simply professed), all of whom will be due for renewal of vows in June and July.

I was delighted to be able to meet Bishop Charles Wamika on Thursday 30 January when I visited him with Fr Johnson. He told us at that time he was concerned about his parents and sadly both of them died as you know within those next three days after our visit to the Bishop.
I believe it important for me to write to the Bishop in the upcoming months in order to inform him of our history and previous communications with the Diocese of Jinja while Bishop Willegers was the Ordinary.

We also discussed at our Community meeting the possibility of a seminary building for our Ugandan philosophical students. When we receive your plan we will discuss it at the Provincial Council meeting on Saturday March 8th. There are a number of things to consider which we touched upon at our meetings. Namely the likelihood of vocations for several years to come. The alternative use for the building should vocations become few, leaving the building unused. The possibility of adding to the building in the future if Kenya and Tanzania decide to join us for East African Formation together; although highly unlikely now in the Tanzania case given that their Province – German Province – have withdrawn all their students from formation in Kenya and have decided to form them in Tanzania.

I am delighted to see the students doing well and we have two prospective Novices. So with these brief thoughts I will sign off wishing you all the very best and God’s blessing upon your work.

Stephen Foster - Provincial - Anglo-Irish Province
March 18th-19th A group of Camillians with the Cardinal Prefect and Archbishop Secretary of the Congregation for Religious during a course on Camillian Spirituality which took place in the Maddalena in Rome

Sr. Candida of the Camillians Sisters celebrated her 107th birthday on 20th February by attending mass in the Holy Father’s residence in the Casa Marta in Rome. The mass was celebrated by Pope Francis and was followed by a chat in which he remarked to the very lucid and mobile Sister Candida that “it is great to meet somebody so young at heart”. She is the oldest nun in the world. Sister gave interviews to the world press with great clarity and simplicity. “What was the happiest day of your life?” “It was the day I entered the convent, but it was also the saddest day of my life as I had to leave home”.

News in Pictures
The Lay Camillian Family Youth Group - experiences

The Killucan Lay Camillian Family group decided that they would like to celebrate the 4th anniversary of the death of St. Camillus by founding a junior group. It seemed a daunting venture but they set about their task with conviction, and on January 8th nine young people attended a “come and see” session in the community house. It was hosted by Lillie, Brigid, Ber and Fr. Frank. At the conclusion of this animated meeting it was decided that the young people present should go home and think about the proposal which had been presented, and if they were interested they should return two weeks later. The nine returned bringing a few friends. They are twelve in number and have been meeting regularly since, and have elected their own President (Louise), Vice President (Paul) and Secretary (Laura). Here they share some of their experiences

Ten of the twelve

Healing Mass
During our time in the Young Lay Camillian Family we attended the monthly healing mass on the 30th January. We were surprised how different the atmosphere was to a normal service. Despite the large congregation, the atmosphere remained tranquil and peaceful. It was clear that not all that attended were from the locality and most had travelled distances to attend the healing mass. The mass was thoroughly enjoyed by all and in particular by the residents who were present. Three of our members participated in the offertory procession, which added to the ceremony. Prior to this we had helped to distribute mass booklets and welcome people. The mass had a lasting effect on us all and we had a desire to return the next month. Maria, Laura & Louise

Gaisce President’s award
This year I am participating in the Gaisce president’s award. Gaisce is an old Irish word, which means ‘a great achievement’. The Award programme is set out in four different areas of activity: community involvement, personal skills, physical recreation and an adventure
journey. For my community activity I went to St. Camillus Nursing Home for two weeks voluntary work.

I was nervous and I didn’t expect the friendly, open atmosphere I experienced whilst attending the Centre. I helped Bridget with activities and helped the residents at mealtime. I made friends with them and I noticed they enjoyed my company as much as I enjoyed theirs. I heard stories and they gave me advice that I will not forget. Now I find myself humming old songs at school too. I enjoyed it so much I asked to return at February mid-term and I then decided to join the young Lay Camillian Family. I look forward to every visit now and find it hard to leave most days. I was surprised at the amount of activities they partake in, they have music sessions, exercise classes, arts and crafts, bingo, card schools and they can choose to come and go as they like. I am glad I got this opportunity and I look forward to continuing my link with the Centre. Kerry

Interacting with and entertaining the residents

The Butterfly Pantomime Show

On Sunday the 16th march our group attended a Butterfly Show which is a group of adults, who come together and visit nursing centres all over Ireland and perform a little concert. We found the concert very entertaining and felt the residents enjoyed it very much as well. It brought smiles to the faces of the residents and it brought the Nursing Home to life with all the residents, community members attending and some staff that were working in the Centre dropped in to see the show.

All the residents got an ice-cream cone (which was green in colour for St. Patrick’s Day) and a drink. Our group went around and chatted to the residents before the show. The residents were involved a lot in the show as the brilliant performers danced with them and sang to them. They sang a lot of songs that the residents would have known and also songs that our group would have known.

We were also involved in the show on two occasions. We were brought up to dance and as we got up all the residents seemed to love it. We think that the concert brightened up both the resident’s day and ours as well. We felt it was a brilliant day and was enjoyed by everyone including ourselves. Mary & Paul
You can’t beat a good laugh in nice company

Three experiences at St. Camillus Nursing Home

My first visit to the Nursing Home was very different to what I thought it would be like. I learned that most of the older people couldn’t do simple little things for themselves like drinking a cup of tea. When I had to help them drink a cup of tea, I learned so much about how people live their lives in a nursing home, and realised just how small their world is. When I was talking to Mick and Tom Geraghty it was amazing that Mick asked was I related to Gerry Leech. It took me a while to discover he meant Gerard, who was my granddad. He knew about football and what sort of footballer my granddad was and where he played. He also knew my neighbours. It was very interesting to listen as he has a great memory and is a hive of information with a very interesting life. Conor

Before arriving at the nursing centre, I had expected to see the residents in bed sleeping or watching TV. However I got a great shock to see them up clapping and singing along to music. Some were dancing and singing while others were involved in some other activities, such as arts and crafts. I got to know many of the residents but one that particularly stood out was Margaret. We talked for a good while about her family and some of the major memories in her life. We got to know each other so well that when I visited the Centre the next time she recognised me and was delighted to see me again. Niamh

My first experience at the centre was a lot different to what I made it out to be in my head. Like I thought I’d go in and give them their food or drinks but no, you’re interacting with the patients a lot. Like when I went in first time I was invited to help out with the people who were painting and I was helping one lady. But when she heard the music she wanted to leave straight away. I thought this was funny because how different residents like and dislike activities and when she went up to the music she was in her element. They are free to go or not go to whatever is going on, and it is great that they can choose. Ciaran
Rolestown / Oldtown North Co Dublin Lay Camillian Family

This is a short update on the work being done by the Rolestown / Oldtown Lay Camillian Family. Altogether we met on four occasions during 2013, twice before the Summer and twice in the Autumn Winter period. In terms of visits to the sick and housebound, there are currently seven people throughout the parish being visited in their houses. Our visits to the nursing home have been sporadic over the last number of months, this being due to a number of factors. However, it is our intention to give this aspect of our outreach more attention over the coming months.

Enjoying one another’s company

As a matter of interest, the Rolestown /Oldtown parish is very close to the area where the famous horse Arkle was trained and stabled. You might well ask at this point what has the great horse Arkle (the greatest steeplechaser of all time) got to do with the LCF? The answer is with some of the people we visit, in that we have two older men who have a great interest in anything to do with Arkle. One of these men asked a LCF member to obtain a new book on Arkle, and he was thrilled to see it – with pictures of neighbours in it who were associated with looking after this horse. Another man who is visited by a LCF member has expressed a great interest in hearing a 30 minute radio interview of two local men who were closely associated with Arkle, so the LCF member is currently organising to get this interview by pod cast for this particular gentleman. There is a bronze sculpture of Arkle and his jockey Pat Taffe being installed in a prominent place in Ashbourne and this is currently being built (it will be ready for unveiling in May).

Sometimes various needs can be identified by LCF members which are important to those we visit or which can even affect their safety. With a small number of those we visit there may be no close relatives in the area and practical matters have therefore a higher priority. E.g.’s would be noting to get a battery for a fire alarm, or giving advice on getting someone to fix an item which needs repair. Most importantly we provide company and human contact, and of course the chat is what those we visit enjoy greatly.
There are twelve members involved with our group. Six of these attended the LCF retreat in the Stella Maris convent in Howth in October 2013 along with a large number from the LCF in Killucan. The retreat was led by Fr Frank Monks, and was excellent. We already have had one meeting this year in January, and we will be planning another in early April.

J.J. Cummins

6-3-14.
The Nana Hotel
A little girl came to visit
One day to great granny’s new home
She seemed comfortable in her surroundings
And set about her to roam.
The child checked each nook and each cranny
Then decided the priest she would tell
This place now home to great granny
Should be called “The Nana Hotel”.

It’s not just home to great grannies
But Mammies and Daddies as well,
There are brothers and sisters and cousins
Aunts, uncles and friends you can tell.

The Nana Hotel is our haven
It protects from the struggle and strife
No longer do we have to manage
The difficulties thrown at us by life.
The housework we all leave behind us,
A garden no longer to tend,
The only task now before us
To settle in and make a new friend.
If illness it has come to visit
And we are not feeling too strong,
The staff here just come in a jiffy
And we are comfortable again before long.

Age it does not really matter
For what is the length of a year,
Old or young, health it can become battered
But there’s help here to restore our good cheer.

We start with Mass in the morning
And then the newspapers are read,
There’s Sonas and music and dancing
Card games, then a cuppa is had.
“Fit for Life” it also does feature
Bingo, arts and crafts are designed,

But we are never too busy to chatter
For relaxation is good for the mind.
Volunteers come in at their leisure
To help us in so many ways,
They don’t realise that their presence
Really adds to the joy of our days.

Furry friends scamper in with their owners
“Pet Therapy” it’s called, I believe,
We look forward to seeing them coming
And request their return as they leave.
The cuisine here it is hotel standard
We eat of the freshest and best,
No wonder that funny word “diet”
Is never at our behest.
There’s no part of the day that is boring
We are active from morning til night,
If a day that is quiet is chosen
From each window the view brings delight.

To conclude just let me remind you
If in need of help you befell
Remember there’s always a welcome
For you at “The Nana Hotel”!!

Joan Hynes
Nursing Centre News

A big hello from all of us here at the Nursing Centre. It is now the middle of spring and so much has happened since we last put pen to paper. We are now well settled into the New Part of the Nursing Home, both residents and staff alike. We have so many bright and airy spaces that we don’t know ourselves. The front hall is a delight and a great bonus when, from time to time, we run our bigger activities. We have just finished “Seachtan naGaeilge” week. It was a great success and we had everything from St. Patrick’s Day card making to poetry, story telling, card games, music, and Anita with her hat. The week concluded with a show by the Butterfly Company. During this excellent show the residents enjoyed a drink and some green ice cones. It was the best of craic and thoroughly enjoyed by all. We were greatly helped by the Camillian Family youth group whose happy cheerful presence truly enhanced the evening.

Staff entertaining the residents

St. Patrick’s Day was a great occasion with mass and a lovely lunch provided by Caroline and her staff. Bro. Augustine had all the flags flying and sure after Ireland’s victory in Paris “it was great to be Irish”.

Marie, our administrator has done great things with the refurbishment of the Centre with lovely homely pieces, nice relaxing chairs and excellent art work every where.

During all of our activities we have not forgotten that over the last few months we have lost some of our long stay residents. This is the same for us as losing a family member. We miss them dearly and pray that their generous souls may rest in God’s peace.

We now look forward to Easter and summer just around the corner. The summer will be a busy time as we intend marking the 4th centenary of the death of St. Camillus in a fitting way.

Until then, stay healthy, keep smiling and be happy.

Brigid
The Health Care Chaplaincy Board for Ireland held a ceremony for the certification of new chaplains in All Hallows College on December 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2013. Among those being awarded certificates were three Camillians: Frs. Suresh Babu Chinta Guta and Raoul Sahouegnone from the Blackrock community and Tomy Paradiyil from the Phibsboro community.

Bishop Ray Fields, Chairman of the Chaplaincy Board, led the Eucharistic Liturgy. Frs. Stephen Foster (Provincial) and Fr. Denis Sandham (Superior of Blackrock) concelebrated.

On February 27\textsuperscript{th} Fr. Suresh Babu, recently certified as Hospital chaplain, was invited on to the interview Board for the certification of two new candidates.

The Provincial Council meetings during this term of office are rotating around the different houses and the recent one was held in our community at Blackrock.

Fr. Provincial and his council have appointed Fr. Suresh Babu Chinta Gunta as vocation promoter for the Province.

Fr. Roule is about to finish his fourth unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E). He took his first three units at the Mater Hospital. The current one (4\textsuperscript{th}) is in St. Vincent’s Hospital as will be his next one. He will then complete his final unit at St. John of God Hospital in Stillorgan.

**Killucan Lay Camillian Family News**

A big hello from all the members of the LCF. As always we remain busy with all our various activities. A few months ago we had our annual retreat in Stella Maris convent in Howth. A really lovely relaxing and spiritual day was had by all, facilitated by Fr. Frank of course. We were joined by the LCF group from Dublin and it was great to catch up with them. We finished the evening with a lovely meal in a fish restaurant in Howth.
Christmas was a very busy time as always. The LCF prepared twenty hampers which they distributed through the local St. Vincent De Paul Society. This was organised by Lillie, while Kathleen and Maureen organised the sale of Christmas goodies in the Nursing Centre, with the proceeds going to the Patient Comfort Fund.

Early in the new year we held our formation evening for our four new members of the LCF. Many of the existing group came along.

Tom and Mairead stop to sing a song to cheer up Geraldine

Our attention is now focused on the celebrating of the 4th centenary of the death of St. Camillus. One of our main projects has been to set up a youth LCF group. This is now up and running with twelve members. It is a very exciting time, and they are a very open, enthusiastic bunch who will be invaluable to us and to the Nursing Centre.

Mary is busy organising our May pilgrimage to Italy to follow in the footsteps of St. Camillus. We are preparing the Tridium of St. Camillus in July, an annual event which is going from strength to strength with each passing year. People come from far and wide and all walks of life. This year we hope that it will be extra special.

In May of this year the LCF worldwide hold their six yearly Chapter to evaluate what is happening in the Family and to elect the international president. Our Irish group (Dublin & Killucan) will be represented by Anita Ennis and JJ Cummins and we know that they will do us proud. We wish them a safe journey and good luck at the gathering.

I will sign off here wishing you all well and God’s blessing.

Brigid
Recently, two members of the Killucan Community, Bro. John & Fr. Suneesh were guests of the Chaplain at the Irish College in Paris, Fr. Dwayne Gavin. A priest of the Diocese of Meath, Dwayne is undertaking post graduate studies in scripture at the Université Catholique. While resident in Paris he also acts as chaplain to many of the Irish people living and working in the French capital.

While there, our two confreres were intrigued by this small piece of living Irish history, tucked away in the Latin Quarter of the 5th Arrondissement, only a stones throw from the great cathedral of Notre Dame and the Pantheon. Although today there are no seminarians, the College remains a monument to the great desire to preserve the Catholic faith in this country.

Irish links with France have a long history, stretching back centuries. Throughout the medieval period important ecclesiastical, intellectual, and trading connections were maintained and a small number of Irish students attended the University of Paris.

The number of students leaving Ireland for Paris began to expand dramatically in the later sixteenth century due to the religious upheavals of the 1500s when Europeans were forced to affirm particular religious identities. Most of Ireland’s Gaelic and Old English population rejected the Reformation promoted by the state. More and more young men sought out centres of Catholic education on the continent.

Meanwhile, reform within the Catholic Church after the Council of Trent placed a strong emphasis on a more educated clergy which provided another important stimulus for student migration. Thereafter a growing number of Irish students, priests and scholars arrived in university towns and cities like Salamanca, Douai, Paris, Leuven and Rome in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Irish Colleges initially sprang up in Spain and Spanish Flanders, with later foundations in France, Rome and central Europe, so that by the middle of the seventeenth century a complex network of more than forty colleges existed stretching from Prague to Lisbon and Leuven to Rome. Over time, the Irish Colleges in Paris would become the most important.
While Irish students may be found attending the University of Paris throughout the turmoil of the later sixteenth century, the emergence of a distinct Irish community was understandably tentative. Later commentators dated it to 1578, when a group of students led by a priest called John Lee entered the Collège de Montaigu, one of the city’s main university colleges. Lee’s community was probably one of a number of such groups, but it appears to have prospered, later moving to the more prestigious Collège de Navarre, before renting its own premises on the rue St Thomas.

In the early seventeenth century the community attracted an important patron, Jean de l’Escalopier, a leading political figure in Paris, whose support permitted the young community to move to accommodation in the rue de Sèvres. Lee was succeeded briefly by Thomas Dease who was replaced in 1621 by Thomas Messingham. Under Messingham’s leadership, the Irish community developed significantly.

As a college, it gained legal recognition and the right to collect money under Letters Patent granted in 1623. The following year the Irish ‘seminary’ was admitted to the University of Paris, while in 1626 the archbishop of Paris approved new rules. Messingham and a group of like-minded colleagues also improved the intellectual standing of the college. In 1624 he published his Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum, which re-told the stories of Ireland’s leading saints, including Patrick, Brigid and Columba. After this the College continued to grow and flourish.

The French Revolution which broke out in 1789, fundamentally challenged the privileges of the monarchy, aristocracy and church, sending shock waves around Europe. The initial reaction of the Irish College superiors – John Baptist Walsh at the Collège des Lombards and Charles Kearney at the Collège des Irlandais – was to affirm their loyalty to the new dispensation.

The colleges escaped the early nationalisation of ecclesiastical property by stressing their unique Irishness. Slowly, however, problems arose.

On 6th December 1790 a group of Irish students walked across Paris to the Champ de Mars (today the location of the Eiffel Tower), possibly to play football. The Champ had recently been the location of an enormous first anniversary ceremony to mark the fall of the hated Bastille Prison and a great ‘Altar of the Fatherland’ which had been constructed for the occasion was still on the site. Some of the Irish students climbed the altar to take a closer look and accidentally damaged the structure.
The first Chapel, at its original location in the Rue des Carmes. This is all that remains of the first college. In its crypt are buried several Irishmen associated with the early days of the College.

Local workmen saw what was happening and the ensuing altercation turned into a full scale pursuit. Half a dozen Irish students were captured by the crowd and almost lynched on the spot before being rescued by the Revolutionary Guard. They were tried later for damaging the monument but their innocence was recognised and they were set free. The students were loudly denounced in some quarters as counter-revolutionary foreigners.

By this stage ecclesiastical divisions in France were widening. In 1790 and 1791 the clergy were increasingly forced to support either the state-sponsored church established by the revolutionary Civil Constitution of the Clergy or take refuge in the increasingly underground ‘refractory’ church which refused to accept the revolutionary changes. In public, Walsh and Kearney continued to proclaim their revolutionary zeal. Privately, however, they opened their doors to refractory clergy and their supporters, providing secret retreats and ordinations, and an alternative venue of worship for the laity who wished to avoid the pro-revolutionary churches in the local area. Before long public disturbances broke out as local revolutionaries attacked college visitors.

The creation of a republic in August 1792 left the Irish Colleges increasingly vulnerable and Charles Kearney, for one, began to wonder seriously about their future. Two months later William Duckett and a group of radical students and former students briefly took over the Collège des Irlandais with the support of local revolutionaries, though Kearney managed to re-assert his authority. The colleges struggled on into 1793, but following the outbreak of war with Great Britain, all British (and Irish) subjects were arrested and their property seized. Walsh, Kearney and the remaining students were incarcerated, most of them in the Collège des Irlandais which was turned into a prison for this purpose.
In 1794 the prisoners were released and over the next few years Walsh and Kearney succeeded in having the Irish properties and revenues returned. In the early nineteenth century the possibility of re-opening the colleges became a reality. Rather than opening all of the eighteenth century colleges, from 1801 the French state united the remaining Irish, Scots and English Colleges (and their revenues) into a single legal entity, the British Establishments, which opened the Collège des Irlandais on rue du Cheval Vert to students in 1805. Meanwhile, the state also established a Bureau Gratuit, which had responsibility for the temporal affairs of the college.

The Irish bishops were unwilling to send students to Napoleonic France and the establishment of the royal Catholic college at Maynooth had alleviated the immediate problems caused by the sudden closure of most of the Irish Colleges in the 1790s. Accordingly, the Collège des Irlandais opened its doors to the children of Irish, English and Scottish exiles in France, as well as to French boarders. Walsh gradually came under pressure from a number of sources, but particularly from a faction within the émigré Irish community which challenged his authority.

In 1812 it succeeded in having him suspended and he was replaced by a former priest with strong connections to the Napoleonic regime, Richard Ferris.

The fall of Napoleon’s Empire and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in the person of Louis XVIII revived the battle between Walsh and Ferris for control of the Irish College. The Irish bishops also realised that an opportunity to gain control of the college had arrived and they dispatched a Dublin priest, Paul Long, as their chosen superior. In 1816, Long finally gained French government recognition for his position. He also succeeded in having the management of the Irish Colleges detached from the English and Scots Colleges, and he persuaded the Irish bishops to begin sending students to Paris for the first time since the 1790s. Even allowing for the depletion of the revenues since before 1789, the finances were sufficiently healthy to ensure that the Collège des Irlandais would remain open. Also, there was the need to supply priests for the burgeoning population of pre-Famine Ireland. Despite his successes, Long’s mission ended when Richard Ferris was once again named as superior in 1820.

The number of students at the college slowly increased, though poor management and continuing struggles for control meant that it was sometimes in a fractious condition. However, the increasingly conservative nature of the French state, especially after the accession of Charles X in 1824, meant that the claims of the Irish bishops over the college drew favourable consideration, notably in the abolition of the Bureau gratuit established during the Napoleonic era. In 1828, Patrick
McSweeny, a priest from County Kerry, was placed in charge of the college. McSweeny, an authoritarian manager, effectively completed a process which had been underway since the early nineteenth century, the transformation of what had been an ancien régime college, over which the Irish bishops had little formal control, into a nineteenth century seminary answerable to them.

By this stage, the college employed a group of professors who provided classes to students within the building, in stark contrast to the pre-revolutionary era when students had attended classes in the university. McSweeny also set about improving the upkeep of the college and, in 1834, purchased a country house at Arcueil, about an hour’s walk away. The college enjoyed a good working relationship with the regime of King Louis Philippe (1830-1848), but the 1848 revolution found an internal echo, as protests against McSweeny’s management emerged from among the other staff. In consequence, a Commission was established to oversee major changes in the way the college was run and, in the early 1850s, he was replaced by a Dublin priest, John Miley.

The Irish bishops were unhappy with continuing state involvement in the affairs of the college, but they took advantage of the changeover to press their claims and in 1848 established a Board of Trustees, composed of a group of bishops. John Miley was a noted ecclesiastical historian who had strong political and clerical connections, especially to Archbishop Paul Cullen of Armagh and, later, Dublin.

However, he was a very poor superior who quickly fell out with his staff and gradually lost the confidence of most of the bishops. Yet Cullen viewed Miley as an important ally and his uncompromising support for the increasingly beleaguered superior led to an important turning point for the college. In 1858, following what he perceived to be a protracted campaign against him, Miley locked two members of staff, James Rice and Patrick Lavelle, out of the college. In response they successfully scaled the walls, whereupon they were forcibly ejected. The episode caused uproar internally and attracted the unwanted attention of the Archbishop of Paris, the Ministry of Public Instruction and the Paris Police. In the end the college closed for a period and Miley was forced to resign. In order to avoid the problems encountered by McSweeny’s authoritarianism, Miley’s ineffectiveness and staff insubordination, the Irish bishops turned to the Irish Vincentians to bring order to the situation.

The arrival of the Vincentians eased the tensions during the 1860s as student numbers rose again and in 1869 the college celebrated its centenary in the presence of Patrice de MacMahon, a future President of the French Republic. While the Vincentians had finally brought internal stability to the college, external problems multiplied: political changes, international war, financial instability and the abiding uneasiness of the Irish episcopacy about Paris as a destination for their seminarians.
The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1 forced the closure of the college, which was transformed into a field hospital where more than 300 injured French soldiers were treated. In autumn 1871, it re-opened but the advent of the third French Republic brought new challenges. In 1873, a Bureau gratuit with responsibility for revenues and related matters was re-established. Paul Cullen and the other Irish bishops were outraged, but in the event the Bureau gratuit was sympathetic to the religious sensitivities of the college. Between 1832 (the first year for which student registers survive) and 1939 more than 2,000 students passed through its walls, with roughly 1,500 proceeding to ordination. The college was especially important in the pre-Famine period, when there was a shortage of priests in Ireland. It was also very important for particular dioceses, like Cloyne and Kerry, which had strong links with the Irish College. By the mid-1880s it was bursting at the seams, with more than 100 students, but from this point onwards the number of students gradually decreased.

In 1888, the Bureau gratuit initiated a series of repairs which reduced the number of rooms to eighty eight and in 1892 the number of bursary places was temporarily reduced to fifty to save money. The arrival of an energetic new superior, Patrick Boyle, stabilised the situation, but two further crises quickly followed. In 1905, the law of the separation of the churches and the state raised questions about the very existence of the college. That it remained open was thanks largely to Boyle’s perseverance and the British ambassador’s support.

In 1914 the college was forced to close and remained so throughout the First World War. The displaced students were mainly accommodated in Maynooth, while a group of nuns and, in 1916, a cohort of refugees from Verdun occupied the building. By this stage Patrick Boyle had already become a champion of the college. In 1901 he had published the first full history: The Irish College in Paris from 1578 to 1901, and followed it up with dozens of articles, pamphlets and translations which established not just its history, but the story of the Irish in France. Boyle was also instrumental in having the college re-opened to students in 1919.

The reports of the Irish bishops who visited in the 1920s were generally positive, but the finances were precarious and the college was struggling by the time Boyle retired in 1926. In the same year the sale of the Collège des Lombards to the city of Paris, to facilitate on-going work to widen the rue des Carmes, was finalised. The older college had been rented to various groups since the 1790s and while most of the college was demolished, the chapel was preserved. The city made it available to the present occupants, the Syriac Catholic community, who re-named the chapel in honour of St Éphrem-le-Syriaque. Against the odds, the number of students at the
Irish College gradually increased in the 1930s, but closure was once again inevitable due to war in 1939.

The superior, Patrick Travers, left the college as the German army advanced on Paris in 1940, but he got no further than Tours and eventually returned to the capital where he stayed for the rest of the war. His lonely occupation of the college ensured that it remained under Irish control. It was used to store food reserves during the German occupation and, following the liberation of Paris, Travers permitted its use to facilitate the repatriation of prisoners of war and, later, as a centre for displaced persons run by the US army. Contrary to their attitude after 1918, following the end of the Second World War the Irish bishops showed no interest in re-opening the Irish College as a working seminary. The bishops were therefore favourably disposed to a request from a group of Polish clerics who wished to establish a Polish seminary in Paris. In December 1945, following the departure of the US army, Monsignor Antoni Banaszak and a group of Polish clerics liberated from Dachau Concentration Camp took up residence.

During the Cold War, the Parisian seminary provided the Polish church with an important centre of activities in the west. One of those who visited on a number of occasions was Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II. Meanwhile the war had thrown the finances and administration of the Bureau gratuit into confusion and it was not until 1949 that it began meeting again. Once the finances had been regularised and building work undertaken, the Bureau gratuit agreed to provide summer bursaries for clerical and lay Irish students from Maynooth, Holy Cross College and the National University of Ireland colleges. From 1956 the clerical students were accommodated in the Irish College while they studied at the Institut
Catholique or the Sorbonne. The Bureau refused, however, to accommodate Irish students during the academic year and while a Vincentian superior was still in place, he did not reside in the college.

The Chapel of the present Irish College

In the 1960s, Mgr Brendan Devlin, Professor of French at St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, began to take an interest in the college and to explore the possibility of re-opening it to Irish students. In the late 1970s he assisted Liam Swords, who was granted permission to live in the college and together they set about re-establishing an Irish presence. In 1984 the Vincentians relinquished the position of superior and Devlin was appointed by the Irish bishops. In his new position, Devlin spearheaded a diplomatic, political and academic campaign in Ireland and France to increase the Irish presence in the college and to establish it as an Irish academic, social and cultural space. The Amis du Collège des Irlandais, created in the mid-1980s, played an important role in the process. Devlin’s campaign bore fruit in 1989 when an agreement was reached that Irish students would occupy one half of the college building, with the other half reserved for the Séminaire Polonais. Two years later, the Fondation Irlandaise, the legal trust in which the college was vested, and the Bureau gratuit, whose authority flowed from it, were re-cast to accommodate both Irish and French interests. In 1997, the Polish community moved to a new premises, leaving the Irish in full possession of the building. This paved the way for a complete restoration, funded by the Irish Government, between 2000 and 2002.

Today the Collège des Irlandais operates as the Centre Culturel Irlandais, it provides accommodation to students, scholars, writers and artists, houses a unique Old Library, a contemporary Médiathèque and, of course, the chaplaincy to the Irish Catholic community in Paris.
The Irish College in Paris has a history stretching back almost 450 years, longer than any existing Irish university or academic body. In that time thousands of students have passed through its doors and it continues to be a unique manifestation of the variety and depth of Franco-Irish relations.

John O’Brien

**Has Ireland lost its soul?**

Bernie Comaskey (son of one of our residents)

‘Faith of our fathers living yet, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword’ The Artane Boys Band used play that hymn in Croke Park before the national anthem and both were sung with similar gusto by the thousands of supporters present. Those days have long since drifted into the misty past; and what ‘dungeon, fire and sword’ failed to achieve, has now been surrendered without a shot being fired. If one might draw another analogy; religion is just about hanging on in this country with the same thread as are the Railway Cup Finals on St Patrick’s Day.

On entering most churches from the back door during mass times on any given Sunday, all you will see in the scattered congregation are the grey and wrinkles and the light from the stain-glassed windows reflecting off bald heads. From my bit of experience, this generation gap is not as pronounced in any other country.

At one time Ireland was known as ‘The Island of Saints and Scholars’ and for a millennium and a half we were extremely proud of our Christianity. Throughout the Dark Ages it was our country which kept culture alive in Europe. When there was nothing but anarchy on the continent of Europe, between the sixth and ninth centuries, art and literature flourished in Irish abbeys and monasteries. Can you believe that our people don’t want to hear about this anymore?

*Whatever about our soul, we have not lost our appetite thanks to our excellent kitchen*
Yes, yes, yes, the scandals within the Church have done the most indefinable damage. While the Church can accurately claim that only five per cent of clergy were ever involved in these heinous crimes, one half of one per cent would still be too much. But even before these sickening abuse revelations came to the fore, the people were slowly walking away from a Church which had abused the absolute power it came to hold over the Irish people. This unquestionable power may have evolved from the days of foreign domination and fear of the landlords, when the educated priest was the only buffer between the ordinary people (there were never any peasants in Ireland) and biased authority. Gradually the fear transferred to the all-powerful clergy.

According to American researchers, Ireland is losing its religion. This is stating the obvious and only confirms what we see with our own eyes and what we hear with our own ears. The view is backed by a leading religious writer, David Quinn, who says that it cannot be absolutely ruled out that religion could disappear in Ireland. I guarantee you one thing; if we lose the religion, we lose an awful lot more than the religion: We will lose the soul of Ireland.

Anybody who knows me will agree that I am far from being any sort of apologist for the Church. I was a critic before it was fashionable to be so. But if ever there was a case of throwing out the baby with the bath-water, we are doing it now. The country is not only throwing out the baby, which is religion, but dumping its soul as well, which is the biggest part of what we are, what we have always been and what made us what we are.

I attend mass most Sundays, but it does not bother me when I don’t go. I do not consider myself anything better than the people who never go – like the “Catch, Match and Dispatch” (Baptism, Marriage and Funeral) Catholics. I don’t like everything I hear said from the pulpit: But I don’t like everything I hear at football matches or in the pub, and that never stopped me from going there. For me, even on those Sunday mornings when I get nothing else out of it and the long-winded priest goes on and on, the mere physical act of putting myself to the trouble of going to that church is good for me and I feel better for having gone. My mind may have wandered during the mass; occupied by some business account, or distracted by a shapely woman walking up the aisle, but despite these lapses, the self discipline of going to church is good for the soul.

I attended mass in Winnipeg recently, in a church where once upon a time you might expect a strong Irish presence. The delightful celebrant was South American and 90 per cent of the [full] church looked Mexican or Pilipino.

In the parish of Richmond, BC, Canada, mass is said in Irish once a year, on St Patrick’s Day. This year was the saddest scene, when the Irish priest announced before the mass began; “I can clearly see that there are very few people of Irish origin here today and I will not be understood, but I’m here to do it anyway.” He did also take the opportunity to say how sad he was for the “shame, sorrow and pain” that had come to engulf the country of his birth.

So, is Ireland heading to be a pagan country again; like we were before Saint Patrick came? One projectionist claims that we are only a couple of census forms away from half the population writing down “no affiliation” in their answer on religion. We need to stop and
think about this. Prune the tree back to its butt by all means, but be wary of killing it. My guess that if the plane is going into a nose-dive, the “non-affiliated” will be using the God word as much as the church-goers and if there is a priest on board he will be doing a roaring business from all sides: ‘No agnostics in the trenches’.

The pertinent ceist right here and now asks if religion is dead in the water: Probably not, but the disciples have their work cut out; and that means keeping it simple. Recognise that definitive line between what is right and what is wrong and preach the commandments without watering them down. The extroverted ‘Father Trendy’ didn’t do the Church any favour by writing and eulogising that anything goes and that you can do as you please because God loves you anyway. Every club has rules and that has to include the Church. I don’t always obey the rules, but I don’t think they should ever be changed to suit me. The good priests, the 85 percent, and the outstanding priests, the 10 per cent, need not to be afraid to stand up and say, ‘this is a sin’ and they do not have to pander to anyone. Some people will always live better than the rest of us, but we all have to operate under the same commandments.

We can wear religion like a loose cloak, just doing the best we can. There are seven billion people in the world and no two are the same. We each have different strengths and weaknesses and it is how we deal with these that I believe we will ultimately be judged. We are better for having religion – with all its human faults; because if Ireland loses its religion, it loses its soul.

Don’t Forget

It is never worthwhile to argue about the religion you haven’t got.

**Chronicles of the Killucan Community 2013**

There were nine Members on 1st January 2013:  Fr. Andrew Carroll (82), retired but still chaplain to Sancta Maria & the Nursing Centre; Fr. Martin Geraghty (62) head chaplain In James Connolly Memorial Hospital; Bro. John O’Brien (47), Director of Nursing in the Centre; Fr. Frank Monks (72) superior, Bro. Augustine McCormack (88) retired, but fact totum to the whole place; Fr. Nik Houlihan (53) chaplain to St. Mary’s South Hill and Parke Nursing Home Kilcock; Fr. Baby Naikarakudiyil (45 ), curate at the Cathedral in Mullingar, Fr. Suneesh Memana (34), carer in N.Centre and ever available for priestly duties; Bro. Gabriel Brady (89) retired, but main carer to his sister.

**Life:** From January and throughout the year the community supplied cover on a regular basis in the parishes of 1)Killucan/Raharney, 2)Ballivor/Kildalkey, 3)Athboy/Rathmore/Rathcairn, 4)Delvin/Killuagh, 5)Taughmon/Turin,

Frank had a total knee replacement operation in Tullamore, which seems to have been very successful.

On 23rd of January Bro. Gabriel went for a routine check up to St. Vincent’s Hospital and ended up spending three weeks there. On his return he required total nursing care 24/7. Since the Nursing Home was full he was cared for by the community until his death on 25th March, the day after his 90th birthday. He was the first member of the Anglo-Irish Province to reach the age of 90. May his gentle soul rest in peace.

A new boiler was required as the existing one had reached its sell by date. A new hybrid heating system based on heat pumps and oil was purchased. It was expensive to install, but it means that for lower running costs we have the same heat in the house 24/7. We noticed too that we have had no visits from our plumber during this first year, which is big saving.

Holy Week is always a very beautiful time here in Killucan with the Pascal Triduum and Easter Sunday being celebrated with great devotion and solemnity. This year was no exception.

The superior was in Italy from 20th April until 18th May preaching a retreat to the Camillian Sisters and attending the General Chapter, along with Frs. Stephen Forster and Tom O’Connor. It was a traumatic experience once again for Frank, but he was just delighted to get safely home and leave it all behind.

On May 19th St. Etchin’s, the local Church of Ireland community, celebrated their Bi-Centenary with a Thanksgiving Service attended by the Superior.

Bro. John began his trips to Wales because of the failing health of his mother Unfortunately, she would die at the end of September. May she rest in peace.

On 20th May the residents transferred into the new purpose built extension in the Nursing Centre. It was a smooth operation due to the presence of off duty staff and Lay Camillian Family members.
Both the Teams of Our Lady and the Legion of Mary held their Annual retreats here. The AA continues meets here every Friday night.

The Tridium of Prayer for the Feast of St. Camillus was well attended, with the night vigil and candle lit procession on the night of the feast proving to be as popular as ever.

Fr. Stephen Forster was elected for a third term as Provincial and held his induction ceremony in the Community chapel in Killucan.

We had a lovely visit from Fr. Hubert Goudijnou, one of the new consulters from Rome. He stayed one month with us and concentrated on exercising and improving his English. He left a very positive impression on all.

Bro Augustine celebrated his sixty years of vowed life towards the end of September. It was a very joyful occasion for the community and Augustine had the health to enjoy every minute of it.

The Camillian Bishop Prosper was also to visit us, but this had to be cancelled due to visa difficulties.

November was marked as always with numerous special commemorative masses remembering the dead.

We were all stunned at the news that our Father General had been arrested in the Maddalena in Rome on 5th November, and that he was being held in custody. Frank had to make a few trips to Italy because of this.

The very talented Mulligan Sisters from Longford put on a wonderful concert in the Nursing Home chapel on 30th November.

On Saturday 7th December the Bishop of Meath blessed the new extension and upgraded Nursing Centre. The ribbon was cut jointly by Mr. Paddy Connaughton, staff member and great friend of St. Camillus, and Mrs Carmel Costello, President of the resident’s committee. It was a wonderful spiritual and social evening for our community, residents and their families. The bishop went around and blessed each room with the residents and their relatives present. A nice social evening followed.
The weeks before **Christmas** were very busy with numerous entertaining shows for the residents, parish penitential services, parties..... The Church was crowded on Christmas night and again on Christmas morning, and there was a great atmosphere. The fact that the annual Christmas Hampers, traditionally prepared by the LCF and staff, has increased in number and content during the recession years from 2 to 20 this year is worthy of note – real Christmas spirit.

We usually have between fifty to sixty removals from our chapel well spread out over the year, but during the week after Christmas our relaxation was disturbed by an inundation of funerals.

**Throughout the year as a group** we are faithful to community meetings. We have four moments during the day when we meet for prayer. We always have our midday meal together, while the other meals are optional. We are not adverse to having the odd “pizza community night” in the recreation room with a glass of wine. As a community we have our issues, but it is a good place to live, as we manage to live in harmony. The Laity are an essential part of our extended community, with the Lay Camillian family being of particular importance to our lives and to the living out of our charism. One of the most encouraging aspects of our life is to see the LCF increase in number.

**So an eventful year drew to a close** leaving us with great memories but also with exceptionally sad ones: “the best of times and the worst of times”. We feel a deep need to
thank God for His faithfulness, as He is the One Constant who keeps us half sane. Every morning we pray “God is love, and anyone who lives in love, lives in God and God lives in him”, and we need to hear this uplifting sentiment often.

Good bye 2013 and welcome 2014 and all that you will bring.

The Killucan Chronicler

From the Archives

(Prov. Newsletter, March 2014)

Fr. Calisto Vendrame is remembered affectionately by all those of us who knew him. But through his writings he is known to a much wider audience both now and for as long as the Camillian charism remains a gift to the Church and to society. His contribution to the renewal of the Constitution following Vatican II was both prolific and pivotal. Having spent twelve years as Superior General, 1977-1989, he spent the remaining years of his life in the study of the charism and the spirituality of the Founder and of the Order having in mind the needs of the sick today and our priority response at home and abroad to that calling and ministry. The following is his account of the make-up and ministry of the Motherhouse in Rome from the times St. Camillus and his early followers (including the Irishman John Bauding) moved in to the Maddalena in 1589 until the Founder’s death in 1614 and after. (TOC)

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“It was a charismatic community made up of people inspired by God and prepared to die to themselves and live only for the merciful Jesus Christ.

It was a community made up of people whose personal spirituality was based on the presence of Christ in the sick as stated in the Constitution.

It was a new and true-to-life community corresponding to the challenges of time and place in a creative and imaginative way.
It was a community considered by all as necessary since both in the hospital and in homecare it responded to the global service to the sick as its primary purpose.

It was a community whose service to the sick was having its boundaries continually pushed back without hesitation; the confères were willing and ready to get involved wherever an urgent need presented itself: pestilence, typhoid, famine, flooding, war.

It was a community open to the local and universal church; open too to involvement of the laity in collaboration with the Camillians in caring for the sick. Camillus not only encouraged many lay people to get involved with him in the charism and in the ministry to the sick; he also founded a Congregation of the Most Holy Crucified (1592) and gave them a room in the Maddalena so that they could share in the ministry to the sick with the Camillian confères. He also signed an agreement of aggregation to the Order with a group known as the “Congregation of Secular Members” (18th February 1594).

It was a community made up of people serving the sick with the care of a mother, with all their energy and for free. To avail of a community like that the poor did not have to knock on the door; those doors were always wide open especially in times of famine and epidemics. The courtyard beside the chapel was always full of sick poor. Consumed with compassion especially as he heard the cry of the sick and the dying from their hovels in the back streets calling out for a morsel of bread, Camillus ordered that large quantities of wheaten soup, rice, beans and all kinds of vegetables to be prepared every day in the house. He would then organise as many poor people as he could in the courtyard and distribute hot soup, bread, some meat and a glass of wine enough to have the person not die of hunger that same day. At times the number would exceed four hundred. On sending them away he would encourage the weakest to stay for the night. These he would have washed and shaved either by himself or by one of the confères providing a change of clothes from the filthy rags they wore to the

A happy and important interlude in a busy day
best of what he could find in the wardrobe. During an epidemic Camillus would had the house transformed into a hospice for the dying.

It was a community where it was not sufficient for the confreres to welcome the poor and the sick; it was necessary to go and seek them out as Camillus himself used to say: “dig up the ground to find them”. They were sought out under the city walls and in all kinds of hovels where the confreres washed and fed them and bandaged their wounds.

It was a community where joy and enthusiasm were tangible even in the midst of the challenging ministry of the charism; specific time was put aside for regular community life, prayer and a passionate reflection on the important component parts of religious commitment.

It was an international community made up of Italians, Spaniards, French, Irish, English and Flemish.

It was a community where members lived in evangelical poverty with limited material resources and a life lived free from any individual agendas. How could we not record yet another exemplary incident that took place in the community following immediately from the Solemn Profession of Camillus and his first companions? On that occasion (8th Dec. 1591), Camillus on his knees in the presence of the community and with tears in his eyes renounced everything that could have been considered his own. He then requested the community to grant him permission to retain the items of personal clothing he had on his back, so too with his bed and all he had in his room. At that point all the confreres, deeply impressed by the sublime gesture of the Founder, went immediately to their rooms and, taking everything they had there, they laid them at the feet of the Founder. At that point Camillus, in turn, granted them the use of whatever they had and he blessed each one of them affectionately.

It was a community that responded to the hopes and aspirations of so many young people who found in the confraternity the complete meaning for their lives. Cicatelli records: “Seeking membership of the Congregation were not only young men of noble birth and students of every noble extraction but also priests already trained to turn their hand to every aspect of ministry in the vineyard of the Lord.”

It was a community where the numbers seeking entry became so great that not all of them could be accommodated.”
Spare a thought for the poor student from abroad who comes to learn English

The English Plural

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
   But the plural of ox becomes oxen, not oxes.
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
   Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,
   Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.

If the plural of man is always called men,
   Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
If I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
   And I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?
   If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
   Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?

Then one may be that, and there would be those,
   Yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
   And the plural of cat is cats, not cose.
   We speak of a brother and also of brethren,
   But though we say mother, we never say methren.

Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
   But imagine the feminine: she, shis and shim!
   Let's face it - English is a crazy language.
   There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger;
      Neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend?
If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them,
   What do you call it?

   If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?
   If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?
   Sometimes I think all the folks who grew up speaking English
   Should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.
In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?

   We ship by truck but send cargo by ship...
   We have noses that run and feet that smell.
   We park in a driveway and drive in a parkway.
And how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same,
   While a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?
   You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language
   In which your house can burn up as it burns down,
   In which you fill in a form by filling it out,
   And in which an alarm goes off by going on.

And in closing if Father is Pop how come Mother's not Mop