

Martyrs of Charity
Camillians - Ministers of the Sick
1589-1918
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In addition to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the Camillians take a fourth vow of perpetually serving the sick. More than three hundred Ministers of the Sick, as the Camillians are also called, have given their lives in service of the sick. Only a few are known by name.

1589, Palermo, Italy. Father Pasquale and eight other Ministers of the Sick (Camillians) (out of the nine that were there) died in Palermo caring for the sick when the plague broke out in that city.

1625, Genoa, Italy. Father Francesco died, along with his other religious brothers, in Genoa in 1625 caring for members of the Spanish fleet struck by the plague.

1630, Milan, Italy. Brother Olimpo Nofri, along with sixteen sons of Camillus, died in Milan in 1630 when the Asian disease assaulted Milan. This heroic brother, after exhausting his strength in caring for the plague-stricken, noticing that he, too, had the disease, dragged himself, after receiving the sacraments, outside Porta Ludovica to the cemetery and there awaited his death --- not wanting to distract his religious brothers from serving other people.

1630, Mantua, Italy. Fr. Antonio Buccelli, who was present when St. Camillus died, was among the fifteen members of the Ministers of the Sick who died in Mantua after caring for citizens, who after being attacked by the Lansquenets, were invaded by the plague. The Camillians were seen running everywhere to give comfort to the dying. (1630).

1630, Bologna, Italy. Seven additional Camillians died in Bologna where they had been called and responded to minister to the sick affected by the plague and hospitalized at the Annunziata e di S. Giuseppe Hospital, outside Porta Saragozza. There were thirty thousand victims of the plague in Bologna in 1630.

1630, Piacenza, Italy. Fr. Marapodio and three other Camillians died in Borgonuovo (Piacenza) caring for victims of the plague. Fr. Marapodio was known for his burning love for Jesus in the Eucharist and for the poor. He dragged himself to the foot of the tabernacle and there, in adoration, he breathed his last.

1630, Monovi, Italy. Fr. Pizzorno, Fr. Morelli and Fr. Lavagna and four others died in Mondovi ministering to the sick in 1630.

1630, Florence & Lucca, Italy. Fr. Bisogni, in Florence, and Father Domenico De Martino, in Lucca, died caring for the sick struck by the plague in Florence and Lucca respectively. Fr. Domenico had lived for a long time working side by side with St. Camillus de Lellis, the founder.

1630, Rome, Italy. In Rome, almost every day of 1630 saw the death of one of the members of the Ministers of the Sick. The Major Superiors therefore requested to answer the call to assist in Bologna. The Father General, Pieri and the members of the General Consultor, Father Novati, Father Zazio and Father Prandi, hurried to Bologna to assist when the plague struck that city. Two of them caught the plague. One of them died there. The others were spared for future labors including that of 'cleaning houses' and disinfecting offices in places where the plague was present.

1630, Rome, Italy. Fr. Zazio, who was very experienced in cleaning and disinfecting houses with the caustic sprays of sulphur, bitumen and mixtures of resinous substance and even direct flames, lost his sight, and his life was shortened due to the chemical exposure. He was another martyr of charity.

1630, Naples, Italy. When the city state of Naples was attacked by the plague, the number who became martyrs of charity was the greatest. All of the Ministers of the Sick volunteered to serve in the hospital caring for the infected. Of the 100 priests who volunteered, 96 succumbed to the plague. The names of twenty-seven of these are known. Of them are: Fr. Prospero Voltabio, Fr. Giovanni Battista Crescenzi, Fr. Luifi Franco, and Fr. Troiano Positani - these four had been trained in the school of the Founder and had previously worked by his side. Of the brothers, the names of only thirteen are known.

1630, Rome, Italy. Father General Albiti died in Rome of the contagion and made there as his last recommendation to persevere "entire service to God in order to always be minister and faithful servants of the poor."

1630, Viterbo, Italy. Two additional Camillians died caring for those infected by the plague in Viterbo.

1630, Genoa, Italy. In Genoa, the loss was only second to that in Naples. The plague killed approximately 64,000 citizens in Genoa. All fifty Sons of St. Camillus who went to care for them came down with the plague. Thirty-seven of these died. Brother Giacomo Giacometti was one of the victims "who was crowned in such a worthy way a life of hard work and immolation in the apostolate of nursing charity." 1630

Additional Martyrs of Charity: Turin epidemic of 1679; Genoa, 1709; and Rome, 1714 and 1731; Plague in Messina in 1743. Twenty-six religious sacrificed themselves caring for victims of the plague which struck that city.

Additional Martyrs of Charity of the Sons of Camillus entered their field of nursing charity in a superabundant fashion: 1835-1911-Cholera; nursing war victims in Europe between 1595 to 1914-1918.

Reference:

1) Ministers of the Infirm: Camillian Religious. The Camillian martyrs to charity. Accessed 15 June 2022. <https://www.camilliani.org/en/the-martyrs-to-charity/>

2) M. Vanti (1929). San Camillo de Lellis (1550-1614), Libreria Editrice, Francesco Ferrari, Rome. 681-689.

Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.ciciams.org / www.nacn-usa.org): *to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls.* May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka