



Camillian Disaster Service International  
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**TOGETHER FOR A NEW  
ECON-RESILIENT YEAR**

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**CROSSOVER** is the quarterly news bulletin of the Camillian Disaster Service International. The name **CROSSOVER** was inspired by the gospel of Mark (Mk. 4,35-41) when Jesus invited his disciples to cross over to the other side of the lake, and then a massive storm battered their boat that it almost sank. Fear had overshadowed them; Jesus rose from sleep and calmed the sea. St. Camillus himself had crossed over the confines of the hospitals when he learned about the plague-stricken people, and the victims of floods, war, and pestilence. The enormous strength and enduring compassion of the Camillians are displayed during these difficult historical moments.

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# CULTIVATING ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION: A Cultural Revolution for Sustainable Harmony and Future

The World Risk Index Report of 2023, in its assessment of 193 countries (over 99% of the world's population), ranked countries according to their exposure to vulnerability. The top five countries are (1st) the Philippines, (2nd) Indonesia, (3rd) India, (4th) Mexico and (5th) Colombia. The Camillians have their mission and presence in these countries, which are highly exposed to natural disasters. The highest index of suffering is expected in these countries. Thus, it calls all people of goodwill to get ready with their response. (cf. <https://weltrisikobericht.de/en/>)

The world is at a crucial juncture where the need for environmental awareness and sustainable practices has never been more pressing. In an era marked by pressing environmental challenges, there is an urgent need for a cultural revolution inspired by ecological conversion principles and faith that transcend historical contexts. Pope Francis believes that there is a need for a "courageous cultural revolution" in understanding this phenomenon of the climate crisis, an imperative to "creating social environments where people are sensitive and aware of the needs of their environment and eager to find popular and workable solutions to that which threatens those needs." (Mark Lewis, SJ)

Indeed, Pope Francis has emphasized the need for a "cultural revolution" to address ecological issues and promote environmental stewardship. His views align with a fundamental shift in values and behaviors to ensure a sustainable and harmonious relationship with the natural world. Pope Francis has inspired all to embark on a new pilgrimage of "ecological conversion" by profoundly changing our attitudes and lifestyles. This transformation involves recognizing the interconnectedness of all life and understanding the responsibility to care for the Earth and its resources. It emphasizes the importance of a new mindset that prioritizes the well-being of humanity and the planet. It also includes the call for social justice, solidarity, and ethical considerations in economic and environmental decision-making. Pope Francis stresses the urgency of addressing environmental challenges and advocates for a comprehensive change in how individuals and societies perceive and interact with the environment, aiming for a sustainable and just future.

CADIS' vision of a "*fullness of life in an econ-resilient vulnerable community*" attempts to contribute to the Church cultural revolution centered around creating ecological awareness. Understanding and integrating eco-consciousness into our cultural fabric can pave the way for a sustainable future, such as promoting sustainable agriculture, adopting eco-friendly rituals, and incorporating environmental education into cultural celebrations. Culture plays a role in shaping individual and collective behaviors and promoting ecological stewardship. CADIS has been engaged in projects promoting awareness of indigenous cultural knowledge of care for our common home and smart agriculture in Thailand, Kenya, and the Philippines.



Many indigenous cultures possess profound ecological knowledge and wisdom. Integrating this traditional wisdom into contemporary practices can enhance eco-consciousness. Recognizing the value of indigenous perspectives on nature, conservation, and sustainable living can contribute to a more holistic understanding of the environment. Communities can embrace traditional, environmentally friendly farming techniques, prioritize local and seasonal produce, and encourage responsible water and land use. This preserves cultural practices and fosters a healthier relationship with the environment.

The key components to the success of the new cultural revolution through ecological conversion are **grassroots movements and community engagement**. CADIS defines it as community resilience building, the power of people's organizations and community development in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices.

The cultural revolution for ecological awareness is not just a call for change; it's an imperative for our survival on this planet. By embracing a collective mindset shift and integrating environmental consciousness into our cultural practices, we can lay the foundation for a sustainable and harmonious future. It is time for the church and societies worldwide to unite in this revolution, working hand in hand to preserve the delicate balance of our planet for generations to come. By embracing ecological conversion, fostering environmental education, and engaging in grassroots initiatives, societies can embark on a transformative journey towards a harmonious coexistence with the Earth.

This cultural revolution of the church paves the way for a sustainable and just future, where humanity becomes stewards of the planet rather than exploiters.



Aris Miranda, MI  
CADIS Director



## PROJECT

# FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE URBAN AREA OF CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES

*CADIS project in the urban area of the Philippine island of Cebu enters now in the second year.*

The Philippines is considered one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its hazard-prone location, physical characteristics, dangerously close proximity to the Pacific Ring of Fire, and a poverty-stricken and highly at-risk population, impoverished socially, economically, and in terms of overall public health.

Metro Cebu is the second biggest region in terms of economic growth in the whole country. Cebu's rapid population growth and urbanization make it vulnerable to multiple types of disaster risk-related threats and problems. Dense concentrations of communities in a particular area increase the degree of disaster vulnerability and exponentially multiplies the extent of damage and disruption caused by any kind of disaster. Moreover, social welfare services, infrastructure building, job creation,

labor-market growth, and industrialization cannot keep up with the high levels and ever-increasing rates of urban population growth, density, immigration, and movement.

In this particular context, CADIS and VPHCS, supported by the Italian Bishops Conference, are implementing the 2-year project "Building Disaster Resilient Communities in Informal Settlements of Cebu City". It integrates primary health care and food security in four urban poor communities in Cebu City, namely: Sitio Lawis, Barangay Pasil, Sitio Tierra Dulce, Barangay Inayawan, Sitio Wang Yu, Barangay Mambaling, and Sitio Nangka Villa, Barangay Quiot.

Through several activities, by the end of 2025, the people in the four urban poor communities shall have developed resilience in disaster management. The

first year is almost completed and some achievements have already been reached.

The project started with meetings of the project staff meeting and the members of the people's organizations (POs) in June 2023. This was followed by a series of seminars on Community-based Disaster Management (CBDM) and Participatory Assessment on Climate and Disaster Risk (PACDR) attended by ten members of the Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMC) and five officers in each PO, as well as three members of the respective Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (BDRRM), have been organized. The training enhanced awareness on the preventive actions and preparedness measures to be undertaken that can substantially reduce the damage caused by disasters.

After the seminars on disaster management, each of the PO officer was given disaster kits consisting of flashlights, whistles, ropes, transistor radios, megaphone and other paraphernalia to be used by the CDMC in case of disasters. With their training on disaster preparedness, the participants then reechoed the results of their training to the other members of their organizations and the plans were implemented.

Health emergencies are an inevitable part of disasters, and communities must deal with these along with the severe consequences that follow a fire, typhoon, or landslide. The community healthcare workers were given first-aid training.

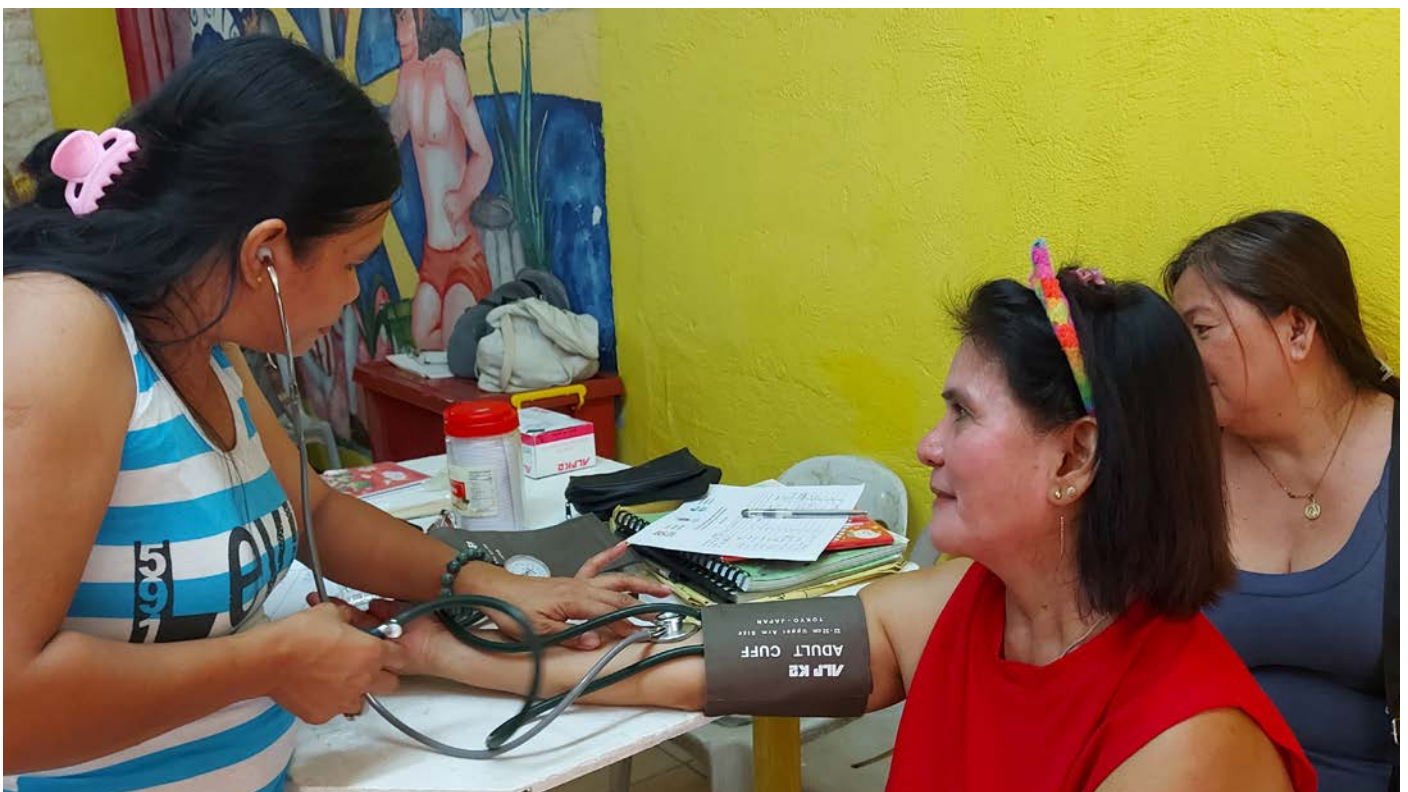
In addition, public health must be maintained to avoid serious illnesses during emergencies or, in the event that they occur, they can receive immediate proper medical attention, which many cannot afford owing to financial limitations. As a result, the community must be empowered to provide primary healthcare. Thus, basic health skills training for members of the health committee of the four women's associations was conducted in December 2023.

Through the creation of livelihood initiatives in the communities, the project will support food security among the locals by the second year. Their current status of poverty and lack of emergency savings severely hinder their ability to deal with the acute food shortage that follows a disaster while they wait for outside relief aid. Thus, in order to give them extra money, community livelihood projects are required.

The four urban poor settlers in the project areas are generally economically hard-pressed and spend much of their time selling their labor power, earning subsistence wages taking on debts to make ends meet, and making sure that one has enough just to survive and live another day. With inflation and increased tax burdens, prices of basic commodities have increased in alarming proportions.

In order to build disaster-resilient communities, the residents need to be empowered first to cope with the adverse effects of natural hazards. This is what we want to achieve with the project by the end of 2025.

***"Health emergencies are an inevitable part of disasters, and communities must deal with these along with the severe consequences that follow a fire, typhoon, or landslide."***





## Executive Summary

The Camillian Disaster Service International (CADIS) is a vision-driven organization engaged in building a fully ecologically converted (eCon) and resilient community through relief, recovery, resilience, and rights (4Rs), the four pillars of our activities. CADIS has adopted the vulnerability paradigm, i.e., the tool applied in measuring the degree of impact of a natural or non-natural event using 3 categories of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity of the community prone to or affected by disaster.


## Mission and Vision

CADIS envisions fullness of life in an econ-resilient community. It promotes and inspires the development of community based integral health programs for the well-being of disaster-stricken communities through compassionate, competent and coordinated interventions. It aims to execute its mission of re-inventing and re-creating the original vision of St. Camillus of a Camillian who is conscious of the new challenges and opportunities of the modern times and willing to live in creative fidelity to his prophetic vocation and preferential choice to serve the poorest of the poor affected by disasters through its organizational goals and objectives. Its policies and actions are guided by its four core values of compassion, competence, commitment and human rights.

## Operational Highlights

In 2023, CADIS was able to implement four (4) disaster emergency response projects in Asia, America and Europe and concluded seven (7) resilience building projects in Africa, Asia, and America serving more than 50,000 individuals (17,000 families). Most of the funds for these projects were coming from the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation (BTCCF), the Episcopal Conference of Italy (CEI), PROSA of the Camillian Province of North Italy, Camillian Delegation of Taiwan, CADIS Australia, Camillian Delegation of USA, Camillian General Delegation of Austria, Camillian Province of Germany, Camillian Provinces of Thailand, India, and other local and international partners.


### Highlights: Emergency Response 2023


Province/Delegation	<b>PHILIPPINES-INDONESIA</b>	
Place of Intervention	Nawabshah, Sindh Province (PAKISTAN)	
Type of Disaster	Flood	
No. of affected	2,289,455	
Beneficiaries	91,932 individuals (11,557 families)	
No. of Volunteers	17 (locals)	
Programs	Relief (food and non-food distribution and medical camps)	
Donors/Partners	Tzu Chi Foundation, Nawabshah Parish	
Duration	6 months	
Impact	Survivors of the flood in this district were relieved of their immediate concern and necessities. Beneficiaries felt the love of God in this difficult crisis. God feels compassion to them, and suffers with them. The beneficiaries felt this love of God through the generous support of the Tzu Chi Charity Foundation. The programs reached to those who are in the peripheries.	
Pertinent Challenge	Permanent shelter	


## REPORT

# CADIS YEAREND REPORT 2023: ONWARDS IN BUILDING AN ECON-RESILIENT VULNERABLE COMMUNITY THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS ON THIS MISSION




Province/Delegation	<b>INDIA</b>	
Place of Intervention	Manipur (INDIA)	
Type of Disaster	Ethnic violence	
No. of affected	66.145	
Beneficiaries	5.723	
No. of Volunteers	St. John's Medical College, Diocese of Imphal, CBCI Health Commission	
Programs	Medical camps, food & non-food distribution, psychosocial support & counseling	
Donors/Partners	CADIS International, CADIS Australia	
Duration	3 months	
Impact	Survivors received medical assistance, relief goods, mother & child care services, psychological first aid, educational support to children and linked to line agencies that can deliver immediate services. CTF India was able to mobilize more volunteers and engaged with the emergency response	
Pertinent Challenge	Ongoing ethnic clash and the political agenda of the ruling party complicate the main problem of the affected population. We had issues on access to the area due to transportation and distance, and the procurement of medicine.	


Province/Delegation	<b>PERU</b>	
Place of Intervention	Lima, Trujillo, Chacabayo, Tumbes (PERU)	
Type of Disaster	Flood	
No. of affected	12.200	
Beneficiaries	1.753	
No. of Volunteers	Hermanas Reparadoras del Sagrado Corazón, Hijas de la Caridad, Camillians, local parishes	
Programs	Food & non-food distribution	
Donors/Partners	CADIS International	
Duration	1 month	
Impact	A total of 428 families (1.753 individuals) received relief assistance: 150 - Jicamarca, 98 - Alto Trujillo, 100 - Conibo Shipibo Community, 90 - AA. HH El Rodeo and Cruz Blanca); mobilized religious communities who coordinated the relief distribution; sensitized lay people and institutions who collaborated with the preparation of the relief goods.	
Pertinent Challenge	Recovery	


Province/Delegation	<b>CADIS International</b>	
Place of Intervention	Mersin, Antioch (TURKEY)	
Type of Disaster	Earthquake (7,8 mag.)	
No. of affected	15.000.000	
Beneficiaries	6.000	
No. of Volunteers		
Programs	Food & non-food distribution, temporary shelter, psychosocial support	
Donors/Partners	CADIS International, Camillian provinces and delegations, Missioni dei Cappuccini dell'Emilia-Romagna	
Duration	2 months	
Impact	Survivors are involved in the management of the temporary shelter. They organized shift of duties to keep themselves busy and engaged in ordinary activities of housekeeping.	
Pertinent Challenge	Permanent shelter	


### Highlights: Resilience Building Projects 2023


Province/Delegation	<b>IRELAND</b>	
Place of Intervention	Musoli, UGANDA	
Type of Disaster	COVID 19	
No. of affected	170.544	
Beneficiaries	100 youth affected by the pandemic	
No. of Volunteers	8	
Programs	Vocational skills training, community-based fishing program	
Donors/Partners	CADIS Taiwan	
Duration	3 years	
Impact	There has been an increase on job opportunities for the out-school-youth who received vocational skills training. One got employed in a 5-star hotel in Jinja. Youth literacy level has improved. Health services of the clinic has improved and expanded. Young fisherfolks are engaged in sustainable fishing methods.	
Pertinent Challenge	Sustain the gains in the trainings and start-up micro business.	



Province/Delegation	<b>BURKINA FASO</b>	
Place of Intervention	Bourzanga (BURKINA FASO)	
Type of Disaster	Terrorism	
No. of affected	948.000	
Beneficiaries	31.000	
No. of Volunteers	10	
Programs	Access to healthcare and psychosocial services; empowerment of local leaders on rights and protection; WASH, nutrition program for children IDPs	
Donors/Partners	CADIS Taiwan	
Duration	2 years	
Impact	Healthcare and psychosocial services and trainings were provided to reinforce the resilience of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) amidst security crisis and Covid 19 pandemic.	
Pertinent Challenge	The worsening security situation has forced the closure of all the programs.	

Province/Delegation	<b>BURKINA FASO</b>	
Place of Intervention	Kation (BURKINA FASO)	
Type of Disaster	COVID 19	
No. of affected	1.500	
Beneficiaries	1.500	
No. of Volunteers	3	
Programs	Construction of a community healthcare center and maternity clinic	
Donors/Partners	CADIS Taiwan	
Duration	6 months	
Impact	Access to healthcare and maternity services to the population is realized. The project could save lives of the people in the locality deprived of healthcare services.	
Pertinent Challenge	Sustainability of the operation of the clinic and personnel.	

Province/Delegation	TANZANIA	
Place of Intervention	Dar es Salam and Morogoro (TANZANIA)	
Type of Disaster	COVID 19	
No. of affected	33.928	
Beneficiaries	Single mothers (30) and youth (100)	
No. of Volunteers	8	
Programs	Promoting economic resilience of single-mothers and families and building self-esteem and reliance of the youth through empowerment trainings and small-scale livelihood programs.	
Donors/Partners	CADIS Taiwan	
Duration	2 years	
Impact	Single mothers were able to recover their economic loss during the pandemic. Common economic endeavors were introduced such as pig raising, rice cultivation and self-entrepreneurship. The youth were empowered and built their self-confidence.	
Pertinent Challenge	Sustainability of their economic endeavors.	

Province/Delegation	KENYA	
Place of Intervention	Baringo (Kenya) - ongoing	
Type of Disaster	Flood and COVID-19	
No. of affected	3.000 families	
Beneficiaries	110 farmers	
No. of Volunteers	2	
Programs	Training on climate smart agriculture for food security; community organizing and development	
Donors/Partners	CADIS Taiwan	
Duration	2 years	
Impact	Incidence of poverty is reduced and food security is secured with the Salabani farmers of Baringo. The project has enhanced the spirit of tribal community and solidarity.	
Pertinent Challenge	Water pump system is destroyed. Repair is ongoing.	

Province/Delegation	<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	
Place of Intervention	Bohol (PHILIPPINES)	
Type of Disaster	El Nino phenomenon	
No. of affected	27 towns	
Beneficiaries	300 farmers' households	
No. of Volunteers	12	
Programs	Training on climate smart agriculture and provision of facilities such as water system, multipurpose center and community garden.	
Donors/Partners	CEI (Episcopal Conference of Italy)	
Duration	7 years (originally scheduled for 3 years but delayed due to typhoons and pandemic).	
Impact	The farmers people's organization have been strengthened and its membership is growing. Food security is established despite natural disasters.	
Pertinent Challenge	Militarization and harassment in the project areas of responsibility.	
Province/Delegation	<b>CADIS International / Religio-cultural Training Center (RTRC)</b>	
Place of Intervention	Chiangmai (THAILAND)	
Type of Disaster	Climate change	
No. of affected	14,866	
Beneficiaries	737 direct/individuals	
No. of Volunteers	15	
Programs	Youth leadership training, ongoing formation of organic intellectuals, provision of farm inputs and technology, sustainable farming and traditional methods of farming	
Donors/Partners	CEI (Episcopal Conference of Italy)	
Duration	6 years	
Impact	Indigenous youth leaders are capacitated and empowered to facilitate social inclusion and sustainable development of their farms.	
Pertinent Challenge	Sustainable presence and leadership of the new generations which are prone to urban migration.	
Province/Delegation	<b>POLAND</b>	
Place of Intervention	Warsaw (POLAND)	
Type of Disaster	Refugees (Ukrainian)	
No. of affected	956635	
Beneficiaries	1075	
No. of Volunteers	54	
Programs	Job orientation and opportunities, permanent shelter, food and non-food provision, education for children	
Donors/Partners	Tzu Chi Foundation	
Duration	1 year	
Impact	Refugees gained self-confidence, found jobs and shelter.	
Pertinent Challenge	Security concern of their home country (Ukraine)	
Province/Delegation	<b>HAITI</b>	
Place of Intervention	Croix-des-Bouquets (PORT AU PRINCE)	
Type of Disaster	Covid 19, political crisis and violence	
No. of affected	249628	
Beneficiaries	517 out-of-school youth	
No. of Volunteers	5	
Programs	Vocational training on sewing, culinary, and cosmetology.	
Donors/Partners	CADIS Taiwan	
Duration	2 years	
Impact	Some of the trained out of school youth started their own home business and others are employed.	
Pertinent Challenge	Security	

## Highlights: Capacity Building 2023

Province/Delegation	<b>THAILAND</b>
Place of Intervention	Bangkok (THAILAND) - ongoing
Type of Disaster	Capacity building
Beneficiaries	CADIS global leaders, partners and volunteers
No. of Volunteers	5
Programs	Technical training on disaster management & Laudato Si platform
Donors/Partners	Episcopal Conference of Italy (CEI), Camillian US Delegation
Duration	8 years
Impact	CADIS leaders are trained and organized country CADIS' organization
Pertinent Challenge	Funding support and organization and legalization of CADIS country groups

### Impact and Results

The emergency response interventions have given relief to the survivors of natural and non-natural disasters in Peru, Pakistan, Turkey and India while preparing themselves to recover the losses that incurred particularly assets, properties and livelihood. A total of 31.000 have benefited the programs implemented. Moreover, a total of 8 resilience building projects in Africa, Asia and Europe have benefited 7.597 families. The programs implemented have helped them for their recovery and prepared them to confront and brace to future disasters.

Almost a thousand youth beneficiaries (16-24 years old) have been assisted with the various programs implemented by CADIS. Some of them desired to share their knowledge acquired in the trainings to other unfortunate youth in their localities. One of the trained youth is employed in a 5-star hotel, a proof of competence and quality of trainings given. Moreover, the indigenous people of Thailand and Kenya who benefited from the projects are resolved to promote sustainable lifestyle, advocate for the protection of the environment and enhance community responsibility and solidarity.

Some highlights of the insights gathered upon evaluation of the projects implemented:

- Climate smart agriculture's success is measured not by its income but its capacity to share its products and knowledge.

- The Baringo project's success lies in the process of rebuilding our community after being displaced by the flood and regaining the value of solidarity that defines our identity.

- The indigenous way/s of protecting the plants from harmful insects is not killing them but creating a space for them where they can enjoy themselves rather than harming our plants. Care for them and they will care too.

### Financial Overview

2023 is a significant year of CADIS continuous engagement with the disaster mission and ministry in Asia, Africa, America and Europe. It was able to mobilize a total amount of 1.247.667,59 EUR of emergency and resilience building projects.

Funds for all CADIS' projects in 2023 were coming from private donors and internal support of the Camillian provinces and delegations. It is worth mentioning the constant support of the Camillian provinces/delegations of Germany and Taiwan. The top three private donors are the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation (BTCCF), Episcopal Conference of Italy (CEI) and CADIS Taiwan of the Camillian delegation of Taiwan.

Above all, our gratitude to all members of the Board of CADIS who evaluated, approved and support all our projects. The Board is instrumental in emanating policies of CADIS and mobilizing internal support of the entire Order of the Ministers of the Infirm (Camillians).

### Future Plans and Strategies

Three priority areas for development identified by CADIS:

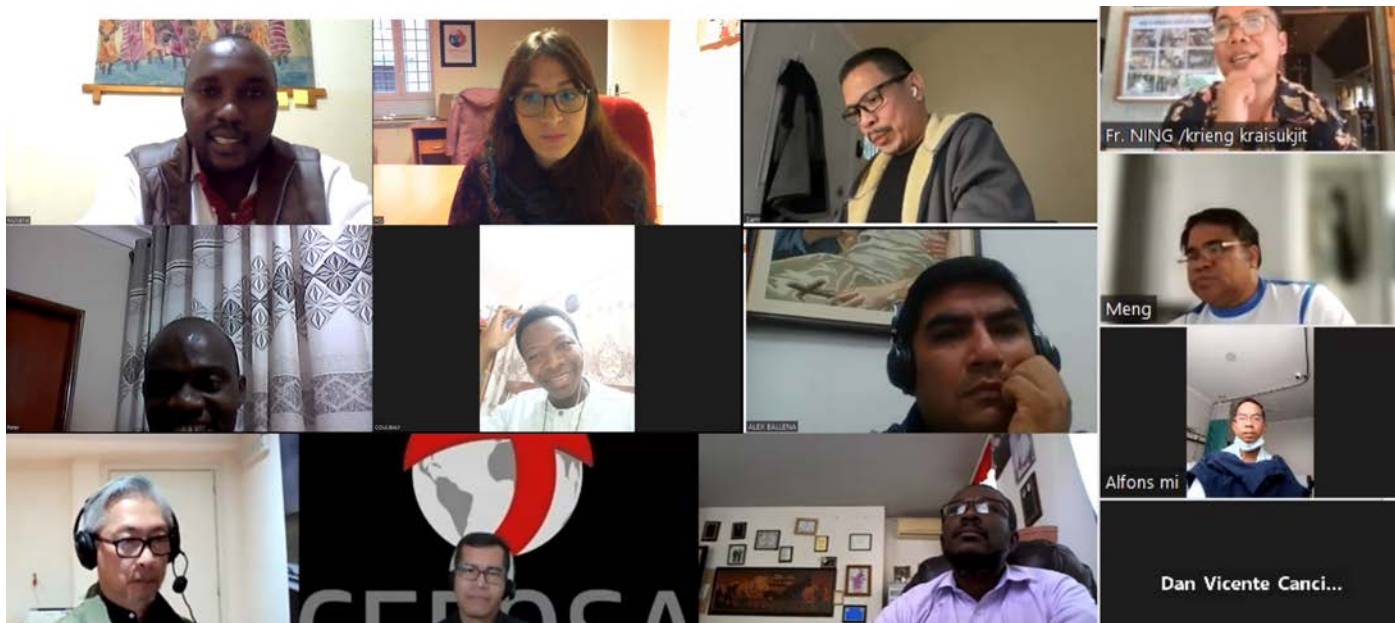
1. Resource mobilization (human, material and financial)
2. Volunteer promotion and development program
3. Laudato si Action platform implementation

To tackle the target priorities, teams of CADIS leaders are formed to brainstorm the strategies and act on it. Greater support is expected on the part of the Consulta and the major superiors.

CADIS is so grateful to the support and active participation of the Camillian religious, members of the Camillian charismatic family, private donors (CEI, BTCCF) and individual donors who believed in CADIS mission and ministry. The Camillian Disaster Service International (CADIS) supports the call of the Consulta and the major superiors – *“More Order less Province/Delegation.”*



# ON THE PEOPLE'S SIDE: NEW SYNERGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING CADIS' STRATEGIC PLAN



The year 2024 opened with plans and news in the CADIS offices. At the last conference in Bangkok last November, the resource mobilisation strategic plan was discussed and subsequently approved by the CADIS Board at the last meeting in 2023. The New Year kicked off with practical planning for the execution of some of the identified goals.

In a series of exploratory online meetings with leaders from all countries, the different situations were analysed, with a focus on the difficulties and challenges and, above all, on the opportunities to be developed in order to maximise the available resources and implement the goals set.

Direct confrontation with the CADIS contact persons is essential to have eyes on all the places in the world where we are present. The most reliable testimony is precisely the voice of those who live in the place, those who are in contact with potential beneficiaries and who have an in-depth knowledge of the needs on which to design lasting and efficient collaborations.

Moreover, confrontation is always effective in establishing new strategic relationships in different regions of the world and also in welcoming different points of view on the same issue. CADIS' intervention is moving more and more towards building econ-resilient communities, which means implementing the ultimate vision of our action.

Building the resilience of vulnerable populations means making people the main subjects of our action and shepherding future generations, but above all, it means bringing about real change in the community. Accompanied by professionals and the local team, the beneficiaries of CADIS projects are able to acquire the necessary skills to implement an integral ecological conversion. The aim is to contribute to countering the devastating effects of climate change and to make ecological and resilient changes in their lifestyles, respecting our common home and the different social and cultural contexts in which we live.

At the same time, CADIS has now consolidated its capacity to respond to emergency situations caused by natural

and other disasters, and its teams of volunteers and professionals are always ready to launch rescue missions.

In this sense, the joint action of all CADIS leaders can bring about systematic and real change. A crucial point for this and the coming years will be to consolidate a common communication strategy in order to constantly update CADIS supporters on current operations and news.

Furthermore, the preconditions for organising online and in-person events jointly in all countries involved are realistic and a feasibility study is underway to realise the ideas that have emerged during the year.

Last but not least, the support of donors who choose to help CADIS is crucial to carry out our actions, especially in emergencies, and this is why we are planning new ways to involve more and more people in the CADIS mission, as donors, volunteers and supporters. The sensitivity shown over the years is certainly one of the engines that keeps the hope alive that we can make a change.

# CAMILLIANS AND CADIS COMMITMENT IN BRAZIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF LAUDATO SI' INTEGRAL HEALTH

*Fr. Junior Moreira, MI*

*Provincial advisor for the Pastoral Health Care and  
Mission - Brazil*

The Camillian Province of Brazil, aware of its vocation to evangelization and humanization in the world of health, is called to promote the integral health of human beings. It is deeply important to consider the environment where people are with special attention. It is impossible to mention integral health and healthy life without considering our common home, where we live and relate to it. Hence, from September 2023 to September 2024, we joined the call of Pope Francis and nature, experiencing a privileged time of conversion, awareness, changing of personal and community lifestyles, and care for Planet Earth, named Camillian Year Laudato Si'.

Multiple initiatives and activities of ecological awareness and actions to care for our common home happen in our institutions and places where Camillians are present this year. There are discourses about healthy living and eating habits, information on renewable energies and the need for its dissemination in consumer markets, awareness of the requirement for responsible consumption, promotion of practices of caring of air, fauna and flora that make up our habitat, etc.

With this, we have observed a growing awareness and a sensibilization among people about the close and necessary relationship that exists between us human beings and the world in which we live. A fruitful reflection has been developed on the ecological dimension of Camillian spirituality, which has, as its fundamental feature, the integral care of the human being. An anthropological and ecological conversion is observed, as it is increasingly clear that the human being is spirit and will, but is also nature, not only inhabiting the world but being part of it.





Likewise, the cultivation of an ecological spirituality has become widespread, a consequence of the humble conviction that the divine and the human are found in the smallest detail of God's creation, even in the last speck of dust on our planet. There is a growth in understanding that caring for the environment is also caring for ourselves, and that "a crime against nature is a crime against ourselves and a sin against God" (LS, 8). Training and guidance have been offered to people and communities about the care of the common home so that awareness has been created among Camillian religious, healthcare professionals and employees that the integral care of human beings depends on the care of each person's habitat.

There is also a growth in the understanding that the charism of care and Camillian spirituality have their reason for being and are always inserted in the reality of human and planetary fragility. With this common awareness, partnerships and care networks have been established with the communities and entities that surround our works and missions.

Finally, we can see a great involvement of people in the experience and promotion of this Laudato Si' Camillian Year, which is a result of the perception that there are no lasting changes without cultural changes, without a maturation of the way of living and the convictions of society; there are no cultural changes without changes in people.

***"There is also a growth in the understanding that the charism of care and Camillian spirituality have their reason for being and are always inserted in the reality of human and planetary fragility."***





# THE CONVERSION OF ST. CAMILLUS AND ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION: A REDISCOVERY OF RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, HUMANITY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT



*Fr. Sibi Augustin Chennatt, MI*

*From the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator. (Wis. 13: 5; cf. Rom. 1: 20)*

We are at the threshold of the 450th anniversary of the conversion of St. Camillus de Lellis, whose life stands as a powerful testimony of how a profound spiritual transformation can redefine one's relationship with the world around. Camillus, with his radical and constant search for God's ways, inspires us to embrace a caring attitude and practice, not only towards our fellow human beings, but also to the entire planet that today faces unprecedented challenges and perils. This article is an attempt to reflect on the implications of the conversion of St. Camillus on our commitment to 'ecological conversion', a term that gained momentum and prominence in recent years.

## **Conversion: beginning of a journey of relationship**

In Christian faith, the experience of a spiritual conversion emphasizes a radical shift in one's relationships, not just with God, but with others and the entire universe as well. Throughout the Catholic history, countless individuals have experienced this transformative journey. For St. Camillus, conversion was an act of faith, the beginning of a new journey that reshaped his relationship with the Creator and the created world.

Camillus fostered a sense of intimacy with God that guided his actions and decisions. From the moment of his conversion he had determined to do everything for the love of God (Vanti, 1959/1980, p. 299). Every year on February 2nd he recalled his 'fortunate day of conversion', and this

newfound sense of self-awareness allowed him to confront his past sins with humility and contrition, seeking reconciliation and redemption through his service to others (Cicatelli, 1615/1980, p.27; see also Vanti, 1959/1980, pp. 342,359).

The implications of his conversion experience can well be noted in the manner in which he dedicated his entire life for serving Christ through the service of suffering humanity. Mario Vanti (1959/1980) wrote that Camillus' understanding of the 'divine fatherhood' was the key to this universal vision of relationship. This "gift of knowledge" made him understand "created things in their relationship with God." His life of service was a constant and spontaneous praise of the Creator. He recognized the inherent dignity of all created things, and therefore his ministry was a direct expression of his

love for God the Father (p. 129). Moreover, Camillus' commitment to serving the sick was rooted in solidarity and compassion for those in need. It necessitated a radical reorientation of his priorities and choices. Cicatelli (1615/1980) testifies that his compassion was not only for the poor and the sick, but also for the animals (p. 283; see also Vanti, 1959/1980, p. 338). St. Camillus' legacy of care finds resonance with the life of St. Francis of Assisi, known for his profound love for God's creation. Both embodied a holistic understanding of care that transcended human boundaries and embraced all God's creation.

### Care ethics: an inclusive approach to caring

The notion of 'care' incorporates values that determine how we act in relation with one another. 'Ethics of care', a moral philosophy that emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century, implies the values and practices which promote the well-being of all in a network of social relations (Stuart Fisher & Thompson, 2020, p. 4). Renowned care ethicists Joan Tronto and Bernice Fischer (1993/2009) construed care as "a species of activity that includes everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment." They highlighted four fundamental elements of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. These principles acknowledge the values of interrelationality and dependency (as cited in Stuart Fisher & Thompson, 2020, p. 3). Thus, care characterises social relations and involves a shift of focus from autonomy to interdependence, "a stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's" (Noddings, 1986/2013, p. 24). It extends well beyond caring for persons around, and involves all our attitudinal and behavioural choices that favour creating an environment for healthy living. In short, care ethics emphasizes the importance of nurturing relationships, recognizing our interdependence, and fostering a sense of responsibility towards others and the environment. This understanding of care that extends beyond individual well-being to encompass the interconnectedness of all life forms was already implicit in the service-driven life of St. Camillus.

### A call to environmental care: The Catholic approach

The Catholic Church considers natural environment as integral part of God's creative plan and stewarding over it as a divine duty. In his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, Pope Paul VI (1971) warned against the "exploitation of nature" and against creating an intolerable "environment for tomorrow" (n.21).

Pope John Paul II's teachings on the care for creation played significant role in shaping Catholic thought and practice. In *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), he expressed his deep concerns over the exploitation of the earth. He wrote: "... it was the Creator's will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble "master" and "guardian", and not as a heedless "exploiter" and "destroyer" (n. 15). He considered caring for the environment as one of the "new forms of solidarity", and called for careful stewardship of our natural resources. The Pope designated St. Francis of Assisi as the patron saint of all promoters of ecology (Rice, 2022).

In his Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1991), the Pope John Paul II criticised the uncontrolled growth of modern consumerism and the desire for material profits which undermine the spiritual and relational dimensions of nature. He invited all the believers to "see in





visible things the message of the invisible God who created them.” He emphasised: “Humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations” (n.37). The Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992, stated that “any disordered use” of created things would be “in contempt of the Creator” and “would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment” (CCC 339). The first Pontiff to use the term “ecological conversion” was John Paul II. In his general audience on Wednesday January 17, 2001, he said: “We must therefore encourage and support the “ecological conversion” which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading.” This is a call to “rediscover the harmony with nature and with one another.”

This theme has been further developed by his successor pope Benedict XVI. During his inaugural homily on April 24, 2005, he said: “The external deserts in the world are growing because the internal deserts have become so vast. Therefore, the earth’s treasures no longer serve to build God’s garden for all to live in, but they have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction.” He made it clear that care for creation is a moral act, and listed ‘polluting environment’ as a ‘sin’ (Stone, 2008). In his Message for the World Day of Peace 2010, he asserted that it is essential to protect the creation in order to cultivate peace, and he reiterated the responsibility of the Church towards creation (n.12).

Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’* (2015) echoes and summarises all these teachings, calling for an integral ecology that embraces care for both humanity and the planet. According to him, ecological conversion is founded on our Christian faith, and it needs a strong spiritual “interior impulse” (n.216), which is the effect of our “encounter with Jesus Christ”. The result of this encounter can be evident in our relationship with the world around (n. 217). Thus, ‘ecological conversion’ signifies making responsible and prophetic choices to renounce all ‘sinful’ and destructive practices and to engage in meaningful relationship and reconciliation with creation (cf. n. 218). This conversion is not just a personal journey, but a community endeavour of rediscovering our interrelatedness (cf. n. 219).

## Camillian ministry of caring: Promoting health, well-being, and environmental responsibility

Drawing parallels between St. Camillus’ conversion and the contemporary call for ecological conversion, we find a common thread in the concept of relationship. St. Camillus, in caring for the sick and the vulnerable, recognized this foundational value. Similarly, the concept of ecological conversion urges us to adopt choices founded on meaningful relationship with creation.

Throughout the history of Camillian Order, great attention has been given to the holistic care of the sick person. In other words, the sick person is understood and cared for in his or her totality, in relation with the world around. By undertaking “every type of service in the world of health” (cf. C. 43), Camillians “contribute towards the welfare and promotion of the whole human family” (C. 12). The Constitution and General Statutes acknowledges that the promotion of health is a way of cooperating “in the work of God the Creator” (cf. C. 45; GS.13). The Order has always been responsive to the new needs of the times, and is “open to new forms of presence and action in the world of health (cf. GS.32). Numerous studies across the world confirm that unhealthy or polluted environment poses grave challenges to the world of health today, and therefore promoting environmental health is the key to health promotion (for example, see Provincia Italiana dei Religiosi Camilliani, 2015, p.18). In other words, caring for nature contributes directly to promoting health and well-being and to preventing illnesses and human-made disasters.

## Conclusion

The 450th anniversary of the conversion of St. Camillus is an apt occasion for us to re-reflect on the Church’s call to ecological conversion. It is our encounter with Christ that inspires us to make prophetic and creative choices to care for humanity and the environment. In a world, where the pursuit of profit often takes precedence over the well-being of people and the planet, the call to ecological conversion is ever-more relevant. It is a new way of living our relationships, rooted in care and solidarity extended to all creation.

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# THE UKRAINIAN WAR SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF FR. ROMAN, A CAMILLIAN FATHER WHO WORKS WITH REFUGEES IN POLAND

*Two years had passed since the war in Ukraine started, and we met Fr. Roman Zajac, MI, who shared some reflections on the hospitality offered by the Camillians to the refugees at the seminary in Łomianki.*

*I. Almost two years have passed since the outbreak of war in Ukraine. How has your life changed in the Camillian seminary in Łomianki?*

I have known this seminary for almost thirty years. I came here for the first time when I became a seminarian for six years in the 1990s. At that time, we were around 30-36 students preparing for the priesthood and religious profession of vows. Back then, the house was teeming with monastic life. Twenty-five years ago, I was ordained as a priest and assigned to serve in southern Poland (Silesia). There I spent eighteen years of my priesthood and ministry in various capacities as a parish priest, as a chaplain of the hospital to the Provincial secretary. I returned to this seminary in 2017 and it looked different. There were six religious priests in that community. But three years ago, Malagasy Camillian seminarians joined our community preparing for the priesthood. As of now, there are nine religious in this community.

When the war broke out, our Province, led by the provincial council, opened

the seminary to shelter refugees from Ukraine. Ten days later, the first group of families arrived. Our lives were certainly changing; something we didn't expect at that time, but it happened. It was a matter of opening all the vacant rooms that had been closed for several years because of the lack of vocations. Major and minor renovations of the seminary house were undertaken. A radical change of the atmosphere took place.

There are now women, mothers and children of different ages - the youngest was then the newly born baby from a nearby hospital while the oldest was a woman above 80 years of age.

It has been almost two years since we welcomed the first refugee visitors into the seminary. Thinking about the changes that took place in this seminary and how we adjusted our lives ... is a miracle. The religious life rhythm remained intact. Each one of us tries to sincerely observe our vows and celebrate the Eucharist daily. Our seminarians are still preparing for the priesthood and religious profession of vows.

Nothing has changed here except that the house is certainly full of life and activities because of the children and mothers who sought refuge with us. No one is surprised to see the toys scattered around the house and hear children screaming. It seems that after several months, everyone is settled and adjusted easily to the new situation. It is an extraordinary service, not only to the charism of the Order but to those who suffered because of this war. Certainly, we are not serving the sick in the strict sense of the term, but we are serving people who have been wounded so many times, who are suffering in their souls, and ardently longing for the end of hostilities that everyone wants.

*2. Has the approach of the women and children who have spent or are spending their lives in Łomianki changed since the first months of reception?*

From the beginning, we did not want to accept a large group of people. We gradually welcomed individual families to give them space and time for adjustment

to adapt to the new condition. The first months were very difficult because many of them did not want to leave their rooms except when eating their meals and cleaning the dishes.

Over time, rules were adopted and encouraged them to observe. For example, everyone will volunteer two to four hours to clean the house. It is to ensure that everyone lives well together. Indeed, the rules brought some good results.

At this time, a new arrival needs at least a week or two to adapt to the new environment and then start reaching out to others, sit at the table with us and share in the conversation until they feel part of our community. There is a big improvement in terms of adaptation; no one is forced to stay in the room but join with us. This process works thanks to the project implemented with the support of the Tzu Chi Foundation, CADIS, and Missione Calcutta. Our lives seem to be different, and more dignified. Everyone feels safe to have a roof over their heads, warmth and food. Many activities that they are encouraged to participate in.

Work is also an important issue for families. The mothers go to work every day and the children go to the kindergarten or elementary school. They also share in the costs of maintaining the facility. There are currently about 50 resident refugees in our seminary.

### 3. What are the future prospects for the people currently housed in the facility?

The main goal of this project is to help them to become autonomous and independent in Poland. We encourage

them to save money. We are glad that each of them works hard. We hope that someday they will be able to rent a flat on their own either in Warsaw or Łomianki. The problem is that renting a flat is expensive. However, we prepare them to move sooner or later. Even if everything goes well, we cooperate, and there are no quarrels or serious problems, everyone is aware that the Camillian seminary is not a permanent destination for people fleeing from their country. Therefore, through encouragement and kind words, we try to constantly deepen this awareness.

4. In a recent interview with an Italian TV station, Pope Francis recounted a touching episode from last November, when he visited Ukrainian children in Rome. "I welcomed them by giving them candies, chocolate. Not one of them smiled, not one. A child who does not smile is a real defeat for everyone". What do you think and what is your idea about the war and the condition of the Ukrainian people you have met over the past two years?

Undoubtedly what Pope Francis described is a difficult episode, but we try to ensure that the children above all have a sense of security so that they can develop their personalities and go to school like the Polish children, then it will be easy for them to adapt. Sometimes it happens that the children who come to us are confused and feel uncertain. They avoid looking at us and keep their heads down. They only listen to our conversations during celebrations. After some time, it is a great joy for us to see them changing, opening up, and talking. Sometimes we are really surprised that such extraordinary harmony can be achieved by the joint presence of adults and children in a good atmosphere. We see that the children start to think in a

completely different way and integrate spontaneously into the whole community.

My parents were born in 1932 and were both in school when World War II broke out on September 1, 1939. When the war ended they were already around 12 years old. With this recollection, I see that children today have never spoken about the war in Ukraine and the question arises whether they do not want to talk about it or suppress this in their subconsciousness. War is always terrible and there are no winners or losers. The big losers are those who suffer innocently.

Undoubtedly, war reveals to people to what extent people who live in such peace are unable to help those who do not know peace. To what extent are we human and to what extent are we able to open the doors of our homes and hearts? To what extent are we also able to see in those often tired or frightened eyes of God himself?

I am not saying this because I am a priest, but because many times, when I am tired when I see that I need to withdraw, to isolate myself, to what extent I am still able to stand and prove to myself before God and to constantly bring out what is best in ourselves for our little ones.

To show that it is not necessary to raise my voice at times and that if I do it is only out of love, to help these little ones to become a good person because of a beautiful memory of the time they have lived with us. It is hard to imagine that we will soon miss the people who live under the same roof with us, but on the other hand, we know that it is necessary for their development. War itself should never happen anywhere because people have an undeniable right to live in peace.







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