

SUNDAY *to* SUNDAY



SAINT OF THE WEEK CAMILLUS DE LELLIS

1550–1614

Feast Day—July 18

This tall Italian was prone to aggression and gambling in his youth. The son of an army officer, he served for three years as a Venetian soldier. During one military engagement, he received a leg wound that would continue to plague him. At age 24, his regiment disbanded, and he gambled away all his property. Destitute, he found work as a hospital servant in Rome to pay for treatment of his ulcerated leg, but he was dismissed for quarrelsomeness. This brought him to become a laborer at the Manfredonia Capuchin monastery, where he experienced a pivotal religious conversion.

In 1575, he tried to join the Capuchins but was denied admission because his leg wound had returned. He went to the hospital in Rome for treatment, and while there, decided to devote his life to caring for the sick. He took a hospital job where he oversaw administration and introduced reforms to patient treatment. This time, he became known for his piety and prudence.

On the advice of friends and his spiritual director, St. Philip Neri, he decided to become a priest. Camillus was ordained in 1584, at age 34, and founded the Order of the Servants of the Sick, more generally known as the Camillians. The order is visibly distinguished by the large red cross they wear. He was canonized in 1746, the “founder of a new school of charity.” He is a patron of the sick, of hospitals, doctors, and nurses.



FACT OF FAITH WHAT'S A NOVICE?

by Larry Rice

Every once in a while, I'll see a movie with characters who are supposed to be part of a religious community of some sort. They inevitably will refer to a new member as a “novitiate.” But that's not correct. A “novitiate” refers to a program of formation for new members, or the building where they live. A new member is a “novice.”

In the Church, there are several different kinds of religious communities, and they all have some sort of novitiate, or formation program for new members. In many religious

orders, the novitiate is the first year of formation. For some, it's the second year. Usually a novitiate lasts one year. In some orders, like the Jesuits, it's two years. The Church's Code of Canon Law requires that a novice stay on the grounds of the novitiate for a year and a day. Novices can leave for the day with the permission of their superiors, but not overnight.

Novices are expected to spend their time in prayer, and learning about the community they are asking to join. They study the order's history, it's founder, and its spirituality. There may be a program of spiritual exercises designed for novices. Often there will also be time for work, either on the grounds of the novitiate, or in some local ministry run by the community.

Of course, while the novice is learning all about the community, the community is simultaneously learning about the novice. Over the course of the year, it will usually become clear to everyone whether this individual and this religious order are a good fit. If, at the end of the process, the novice wishes to continue, and the community agrees, a novice will make his or her first vows or promises. Usually these are “temporary” vows, renewed annually until the new member is ready to make a permanent commitment.

The key to this process is “discernment,” prayerfully considering the nature of God's call, and responding to that call. The nature of a religious commitment requires time, growth, and an openness to God's will. In this respect, we're all still novices.

GRAPHIC POINTER FOR PRAYER

