



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.



“*St Camillus de Lellis lived in a particularly complex time, in which a deep longing for holiness but also a tenacious resistance to Gospel-inspired living were widespread. With his rich personality and his witness of charity, he offered the society of his time valuable encouragement for spiritual renewal, thus contributing in an original way to the project of Church reform promoted by the Council of Trent. His life, under the influence of the Spirit, appears as a marvellous story of the love of God, the Creator and Redeemer, who reveals in a special way his tender compassion as the physician of souls and bodies.*”

—St. John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father, May 15, 2000