





Don Nazzareno (seen at the extreme right, top row) at San Gregorio, Catania, together with a



Don Nazzareno (middle row, eighth from left) next to Archbishop of Malta Michael Gonzi at Dar tal-Kleru, Birkirkara, together with a group of Maltese priests for whom he was leading their annual retreat. Mgr Salv Grima, founder of Dar tal-Kleru, is in the middle rown, sixth from left.

Don Nazzareno Camilleri: a shining Salesian beacon



Don Nazzareno Camilleri was a wonderful figure of a Salesian and a priest. He devoted his life to the teaching of theology and the formation of souls. Equipped with a thoughtful human manner and divine attention, he profoundly enjoyed friendship, appreciated life and human values, and shared in the joys and sufferings of others with exquisite sensitivity.

He was balanced and sensible in thought and action, with a clear consistency that knew no compromise. Always available, he knew how to guide souls with wisdom and firmness in the spirit of God with an ease that is the fruit of faith, detachment, humility and abandonment.

The son of Giuseppe and Giovanna née Muscat (both from Lija), Nazzareno was born in Sliema on November 18, 1906 and baptised at Stella Maris parish church. Since his family lived in St Vincent Street, corner with St Nicholas Street, very close to the Salesian oratory, from a very tender age he grew familiar with the Salesians. Indeed, since Don Bosco's Salesians had arrived in Malta in 1903, Camil leri's childhood was interlaced with the early years of the Maltese Salesian Congregation.

Although he sat for and passed an examination with the intention of becoming an apprentice at the Dockyard, with the opening of St Alphonsus Institute, Sliema, in 1920, he enrolled as an external student. He was so gripped by the joy, enthusiasm, singing and the sporting activity he found in the Salesian environment that he swiftly decided to join the Salesians and leave behind any other form of life.

After a few months of school, there was no further need for him to attend the classes. He had learned everything alone, much before the teachers came to school to explain them. In that one year, he completed the two-year





Nazzareno Camilleri as a young boy and (right) as a young professor at the Salesian University

his studies at San Gregorio di Catania, Sicily. He was one of the first students of the Salesian Congregation to leave Malta to undertake

The 1922-1923 scholastic year was his first as a novice. On October 14, 1923, he undertook his 1, 1923, Camilleri kept a diario intimo (intimate diary) which was never intended to be published or even read by others. From this diary, which he kept until his death, we know that from the onset, he had decided to conduct a life according to two callings: love for Our Lady and unity of mind and heart with God.

The 28 volumes of the diary, containing a total of some 4,000 pages, are held at the archives of the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome. Unfortunately, only short extracts of this remarkable diary have ever been published.

He studied at San Gregorio di Catania till 1926. Subsequently, he enrolled in the Jesuit Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome to pursue his institutional studies for the priesthood. There, he study programme. So, on the initiative of Don successfully completed his philosophy (1926-Pietro Stella, Camilleri was sent to continue 1929) and theology (1931-1935) courses. While

studying philosophy he was twice awarded the first prize - the Pontifical Golden Medal.

After taking his perpetual vows on September 15, 1929, he was sent to Sicily for a short stint to teach philosophy and Latin at San Gregorio di Catania.

tember 30, 1934 by Archbishop of Malta Dom Mauro Caruana, OSB, at the Salesian Oratory Chapel, Sliema. The date happened to be six months after the canonisation, on April 1, 1934, of St John Bosco, founder of the Salesian Congregation, and the place was the cradle of his own vocation.

On October 6, the Salesians organised a musical soirée in honour of the newly ordained priest. There, Camilleri took the opportunity to thank his parents, relatives and friends, and did not fail to convey a word of gratitude to Alfonso Maria Galea, the well-known Salesian benefactor, who was also present. On the following day, October 7, Camilleri presided over his first Mass at the parish church of Stella Maris, Sliema.

After completing his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1935, Camilleri was theological doctrine, the accuracy of his genius,

appointed professor of theology and prefect of studies at the Salesian oratory, situated close to the catacombs of San Callisto, Rome. He spent two years at San Callisto from 1935 to 1937 teaching and directing the school, attending university, visiting libraries, researching books, writing and discussing with Fr Giuseppe Filograssi SJ, the professor who supervised his thesis.

In August 1937, Camilleri was nominated professor of moral theology at the Institutum Theologicum Princeps, known as Crocetta, in Turin. The institute became known as the Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano since May 3, 1940. Here he stayed for another two years during which he also continued working on his thesis. He wanted to inquire and forage in depth about how the human soul, created and limited, can unite with God in heaven and enjoy encountering He who is eternal and infinite.

On January 11, 1940; he submitted his thesis, written in Latin, and on June 18, 1940, he was awarded a doctorate Summa cum Laude in theology. In 1944, Camilleri published selections from his thesis under the title De Natura Actus Visionis Beatificæ (Concerning the Nature of the Actual Beatific Vision).

In 1940, when Italy entered World War II on the Axis side, Camilleri was interned, since, as a Maltese citizen, he was a British subject. Nonetheless, the Italian authorities, considering that he was not a dangerous person, chose to detain him in a Salesian residence. Consequently. first at Chieri (1940-1942), where he was director of the Salesian theology students and later at Montalenghe (1942-1945), where he was appointed dean of the Faculty of Philosophy.

Following the death of Don Eusebio Vismara on January 3, 1945, Camilleri returned to Turin as dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Salesian Pontifical University, mainly teaching dogmatic theology and ascetism. Between 1945 and 1954 he taught many international students, including Raúl Silva Henríquez, a Chilean Salesian cardinal, and several Salesian bishops.

One of his colleagues of that time, writes: "We have seen and admired him in the long philosophical-theological discussions. We followed him with interest, admiring the firmness of his the love and attachment he had for the Pope and for Don Bosco, the goodness which he showed towards his confrères, the charity he manifested towards all, the simplicity that emanated from his attitude." Camilleri actively participated in three interna-

tional congresses, namely the Third International Thomistic Congress of Philosophy in 1949, the First General Congress of Religious Orders in 1950 and the First International Pedagogical Congress for Religious Sisters in 1951. His speeches were published in the official acts and documents of the

Afterwards, and up till 1965, he taught at the Institute of Pedagogy and Religious Studies, which was renamed the Faculty of Educational Sciences in 1956.

At the end of that academic year (1964-1965), the Turin branch of the university was assimilated by the Rome branch. Thus, Camilleri continued to teach at Salesian Pontifical University in Rome for another year until he retired from his teaching profession in 1966. During all these years of teaching, he taught students of different nationalities, some of them converts to the Catholic faith.

"He possessed a formidable academic mind. In his teachings and writings, he communicated the hope he encountered in philosophy and the grace he acquired from theology"

Camilleri suffered his first heart attack in May 1966. Between June 20 and September 29, 1972, he visited Malta for the last time. Less than five months later, his health deteriorated drastically. But the great pain and wheezing he suffered were unable to stop him from praying in front of the crucifix hanging or the wall in front of him, accompanied by the image of Our Lady, help of Christians.

In aura sanctitatis (in fame of holiness) he was called to meet his Master on March 1, 1973 at 4.30am. An austere and solemn funeral, led by Don Luigi Ricceri, Rector Major of the Salesians, was held at the main chapel of the Pontifical Salesian University. After that, Camilleri's mortal remains were interred in the chapel of the Salesians at Genzano Cemetery, Rome.

Camilleri was much admired for his spirituality. In 1983, 10 years after his death, Pope St John Paul II gave permission for the start of the canonical process for his beatification and eventual canonisation. In 1989, the so-called Evidential Statements of Witness to his heroic virtues were published.

Camilleri's intellectual, professional and practical work was above all related to the education of youths.



He possessed a formidable academic mind. In his tor whose advice was sought by common people as teachings and writings, he communicated the hope he encountered in philosophy and the grace he acquired from theology.

As a very well-known theologian and writer, apart from his thesis, he also published several other writings of spiritual and philosophical thought in journals such as Salesianum, Rivista di Pedagogia e Scienze Religiose, Catechesi, Rivista dei Giovani, Bollettino Salesiano, Voci Fraterne, Teatro dei Giovani, and L'Osservatore Romano; and, in Malta, in Buttlettin Salesjan, Lehen is Sewwa, Il-Hajja, The Future and the Times of Malta, among others.

Mind and heart: this is the binomial of Don Nazzareno Camilleri of the Salesians of Don Bosco. A man of extraordinary intelligence; a spiritual direc-

well as bishops and cardinals; a man of wisdom and piety who lived a simple life. While Malta rejoiced for giving him birth and the Salesian Pontifical University radiated with his knowledge, the entire Salesian Congregation is proud for having had him as an exemplar. Camilleri was a true teacher and a true apostle, a

professor of theology and master of spiritual life, an apostle of confession and of the direction of souls. He was eminent in science but not less in holiness. He was one who shed light on the way for others to follow in his path since he toiled with the same zeal of Don Bosco in fulfilment of the Salesian Congregation's motto Da Mihi Animas Caetera Toll (Give me souls, take away the rest).

Fifty years ago February 25, 1968

GOZITAN GIRLS IN CARNIVAL

"This year's Carnival festivities in Gozo promise to be quite entertaining. One of the companies in costume will, for the first time, include girls. This was something which in the past was frowned upon, but times have obviously changed. In the past the Gozitan woman was relegated to the kitchen sink."

Excerpt from the Gozo newsletter.

POORLY-PAID HOMEWORKERS

"The news that the employees of the Overseas Knitting and Manufacturing Co. are being given a four shilling increase makes me think of the many Gozitan girls and women who are knitting away garments in their homes and are being very poorly paid. These girls should form a society and then would be able to command the right sort of payment." Excerpt from the Gozo newsletter.

TRANSPORT BETWEEN MALTA AND GOZO

"The bus strike is off, and a good thing too. The strike would also have affected transport between Malta and Gozo. The police had announced that for the duration of the strike there would have been only two ferry trips. This is all wrong. Some other arrangements should have been made. Gozo is already suffering from lack of transport between the two islands. A reduction in the number of existing trips because of the bus strike would have caused hardship to many."

Excerpt from the Gozo newsletter.

Ten years ago February 25, 2008

PN FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENT

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi yesterday told supporters who flooded Dingli Street in Sliema for the PN's third mass meeting of the electoral campaign that the environment would be a focal point of the next PN government. In what could be taken as a direct reference to disgruntled Sliema residents, in view of the heavy construction works in the locality over the years, Dr Gonzi said: "We might not have done enough in people's eyes, especially in terms of the dust and the nuisance created by construction projects, but I promise that we will be paying more attention to this during the next legislature."

SANT UN LABUUK PULIÇIES KE **HEALTH AND CORRUPTION**

Addressing the crowd that packed the Granaries in Floriana yesterday, Opposition leader Alfred Sant said that in the health sector, Labour would work with the private sector so that with better management and more resources, waiting lists would be reduced by 15 per cent each year. He also said Labour would have zero tolerance for corruption. While the Prime Minister said he was against corruption, he was surrounded by corrupt people whom he left in top posts. He never acted on proof of corruption. A Labour government would investigate and act on every claim.