



## *Emergenza Terremoto 2016*

*Saint Camilla Battista ~  
Heart of Camerino and of the Church*

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

The catastrophic earthquakes that hit the central Italian regions last August and October affected numerous towns and areas. Our beloved city of Camerino was one of them.

Unfortunately, we - the Poor Sisters of St. Clare - like most of the population, were forced to leave, as our monastery and church are now completely

uninhabitable. The violent and terrifying shocks caused severe damage in August, but after the October earthquake, much of the structure began to collapse. Thank God, our Poor Clare Sisters of San Severino immediately and lovingly took us in to their small guesthouse where we are now safe.

Our presence in Camerino dates back to 2004 when, after yet another previous earthquake of 1997 caused the community to depart, we - as fragile branches clinging to the same obedience that compelled Abraham (the father of the faith) - left San Severino Marche to Camerino, to take on the reconstruction of the Monastery. At the time, it seemed to us like an open-air construction site. But we rolled up our sleeves and set to work and rebuilt.

Twelve years later, after so much work and fatigue, today we find ourselves, speaking honestly, at the same point when we left. In fact, I dare say, we are in a worse situation: we have nothing left and we are far from the monastery. Now we are separated from our people and are deprived of the possibility of offering the people a special place in which to pray, a silent space to encounter Christ and Saint Camilla Battista - who for centuries has rendered our church a destination for pilgrims who have come from all over the world to draw strength from her life.

Each of us, therefore, in personal and community prayer has asked ourselves: "Lord, what do you want us to do?" And the answer came to our hearts in simplicity: "The Lord is faithful to His promise, He has a plan for us!"

And so, as a small flock, we have decided to journey once again - together with so many who are in the same situation - to set forth anew. We shall be carrying on our shoulders all the fatigues and doubts, hopes and our "why's," together, however, with the certainty that every rebirth brings with it the joy of life that continues with its explosive force that opens to the future.

And we shall go forth together, with resolve and each of our talents, on our knees and in tears, with the understanding that the rebuilding of an entire city will be challenging and tiring. Yet, we will also bring joyful confidence that, in the Lord Jesus, this wounded land can be transformed into a Promised Land.

We all feel a great loss in seeing our beautiful churches and homes destroyed, watching the departure of so many and the dissolution of our community. And if at this moment we do not cling with all our strength to the hope of rising from the rubble, there is the risk of everything collapsing ~ worst of all within. But, if on the one hand the temptation to "despair" seems real, on the other we are breathing a great desire to begin anew with a sincere desire of prayer.

So many people have asked us to come back: to pray together, to reinforce the need to stand at the feet of the One who is the only stone that does not collapse, the One who alone can put our rubble back together.

For this reason, it is now more necessary than ever to take care of those wounds that are more of the soul than of the buildings. In fact, to rebuild on the "outside," we must first have reconstructed the "inside," in the interiority of our heart, in that deep place where our name is written and from which is born all trust, every hope, every new beginning.

So, this is our first goal and hope: that we may be able to construct a new, temporary housing made of wood. This will enable us to return and offer a house of prayer for all: a home of welcome for the many pilgrims who come to our monastery to encounter Saint Camilla Battista ~ a precious guide for those who seek to walk the Cammino of Loreto [Via Lauretana], a living and pulsating heart for the city of Camerino.

We envision that this temporary wooden housing will be a "miniature monastery" with small, but essential space: some rooms for us sisters, a chapel for St. Camilla and for Eucharist, some spaces for welcoming and meeting with people.

We ask you that you remain close to us, of course with prayer and affection, and to help, as much as you can, for us to realize our goal ~ that "Saint Camilla Battista will return once again to being a Heart for Camerino and of the Church"!

Camerino, January 1, 2017  
Mother Chiara Laura Serboli, osc  
and the Poor Clare Sisters of Camerino

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