



AFRICA/BURKINA FASO - "It is a great thing to serve others": the testimony of a missionary Camillian doctor from Burkina Faso

Verona (Agenzia Fides) - The Camillian priest, Father Paul Ouedraogo, a doctor, has just finished his specialization in pediatrics in Italy and is preparing to return to Burkina Faso, his country of origin, where he will be responsible for the Camillian medical center in Ouagadougou. In an interview given to father Danio Mozzi, a Camillian of the Lombardo-Veneta Province, sent to Fides Agency, Father Paul gives his testimony as a doctor and a priest.

"I started my studies in Burkina Faso, but unfortunately in 1999, due to political problems, I could not finish the first year of study - says Father Paul -. Therefore the superiors asked me to come to Europe, where there was greater social and political stability, so I did the test in Rome to enter the Gemelli Hospital. At the end of six years of study I went back to my country, where I was asked to work in the surgical ward and pediatrics, community priorities. I had experience in both areas, but I felt that I would have been 100% useful in the pediatric field. In that period I met a doctor in Italy who asked me to do the specialization at the Hospital in Brescia, who already cooperated with the Camillians in Burkina. I was welcomed in Italy in the Lombardo-Veneta Province of Camillians and I did my 5 years of specialization. Now I have finished, and I am glad to go back home to put myself at the service of my country or elsewhere."

Since I have been in Burkina Faso the Camillians are very careful about the health of a child and mother, who are the weaker sections of society in Burkina Faso. "When I return to Ouagadougou, I will work, together with my community, at the medical center St. Camillus - says the priest - which will gradually become a hospital. After 40 years it would need new services and greater internal organization. Connected to this structure, there are also active food projects in the medical center. It is a program of nutritional recovery for malnourished children."

Launching a special appeal to young people, Father Paul exhorts them: "For young people who are already working to serve the sick, such as nurses, doctors, physiotherapists, and maybe inside they feel the desire to serve the Lord in a special way, I would say do not be afraid to give to the Lord, because it is not something thrown away but 'offered' to God. One must not be afraid because it is great to put oneself at the service of others."

In his thesis, Father Paul deepened Sickle Cell disease in children. It is a hematologic hereditary disease that affects 3% of the population in Burkina Faso in its severe forms. "Every year, 12,000 children are born with this disease, and about half of them do not exceed 5 years of age. At the St. Camillus in Ouagadougou 1400 children who have this disease are followed, so this is why I decided to create a day hospital for patients who do not know where to go when they have a crisis. Our center is in fact the biggest in the whole of Burkina and offers major assistance," adds the Camillian. (AP/DM) (Agenzia Fides 18/10/2012)