



## **Prayer Intentions**

**May** – That the dignity of women may be ever more deeply respected and that young people may understand that the roots of respect are to be found in open and sincere dialogue. *Lord hear us.*

**June** – That we too, like Comboni, carried away by the impetus of that love set alive by the divine flame on Calvary hill, may dedicate our entire lives to the service of the poorest. *Lord hear us.*

## **Publications**

**Bro. Elio Croce**, *Diari di guerra e di pace*, Curcu&Genovese, Lavis (TN) 2016. In more than forty-five years in Africa – Dominique Corti writes – first as technical overseer of Kitgum Hospital, then, from 1985, of Lacor Hospital, Elio shared all the events of the Acholi people. For them and with them he built hospital pavilions, dug wells, set up technical and agricultural activities ... endured together with them the terrible years of guerrilla warfare. He buried their dead, and travelled countless miles of savannah in his truck". As the person writing the preface says "to preserve Elio's memory and thank him, these diaries, written as an exercise in the use of the computer, are now published in their complete form".

## CURIA

### **The Comboni Year of On-going Formation ends**

Twenty six Comboni missionaries of fourteen different nationalities and from four different continents concluded the XVIII edition of the Comboni Year of On-going Formation (CYOF) held in Rome from 21 September 2017 to 20 April 2018.

The CYOF consists in a period of eight months of formation offered to missionaries who have spent ten to fifteen years of mission in the various countries in which the Comboni Institute is present.

Rather than an academic exercise, it is meant to be an experience-based time of formation, holistic and personalised, that aims at helping the missionaries above forty five years of age to make a synthesis of their lives and their missionary experiences and to acquire new energy to continue the mission with enthusiasm.

On Friday, 20 April 2018, all the CYOF participants gathered in the Comboni Curia Chapel in Rome to celebrate joyfully and in a spirit of gratitude the conclusion of the Course. Many other missionaries and friends also took part in the Mass.

Towards the end of the Course, the group made a pilgrimage to Limone sul Garda, the city where St. Daniel Comboni was born, as well as to Brescia and Verona, other important places in the cultural, spiritual and missionary life of the Founder.

Those who took part in the XVIII edition of the CYOF gave a positive evaluation of the experience, describing it as a time of grace and of human and spiritual renewal and growth that helped them to feel more peaceful and motivated to continue the mission with joy and enthusiasm.

## DSP

### **Open House Days at Nurnberg and Ellwangen Houses**

#### **Nurnberg**

“Very well. Here we are!”. With these words, on 21 April 2018 we opened our house in Nurnberg to visitors. We did so in collaboration with the Pauline Sisters who live close by. They, too, invited people to visit their house. We were following an initiative launched by the Conference of German Religious to have an Open House Day for religious houses in all of Germany.

Our plan was simple: those interested were welcomed and offered coffee and cakes. Those who wished could visit the house. We presented our Institute to the visitors using a few short videos: the Pauline Sisters were first, followed by ourselves. There followed a lively discussion between the visitors, and ourselves and the Sisters. There were many questions. The meeting concluded with a prayer together in the chapel.

Most of the people, who came from nearby parishes, stayed right to the end. It was a very positive experience and the people also understood the good relations between us and the Pauline Sisters.

#### **Ellwangen**

On that same day there was a similar celebration at our Ellwangen house. We advertised the event in nearby cities and towns with posters and in local newspapers.

The Open House Day was organised because every day we have benefactors and friends coming to our door without ever having a chance to visit the house itself. We wanted to give them an opportunity to chat with us, have some coffee and cakes and then tour the house. Groups of visitors were taken on guided tours conducted by members of the community.

### **A shared initiative of the four religious groups in Ellwangen**

The Open House Day was also celebrated at another level by the four religious communities in Ellwangen: the Franciscan Sisters of Siessen, the Sisters of St. Anne, the Redemptorists and the Comboni Missionaries. After careful preparation together, a unified event was celebrated at the convent of the Sisters of St. Anne: there, too, the visitors were welcomed with coffee and cakes and were given the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers.

There was also a special separate and parallel programme for children. The highlight was a round table discussion with representatives of the four communities, chaired by the editor of one of the two Ellwangen dailies. There were statements such as “for me, joining the Order was not a loss but a gain in freedom” and also “The convent signifies abundance, not denial”. Perhaps these testimonies will not easily be forgotten. (*Fr. Karl Peinhopf and Fr. Anton Schneider*)

### **Combonis on pilgrimage to Vierzehenheiligen**

On 27 April 2018, 150 pilgrims set out on foot for the sanctuary of “Vierzehenheiligen” (Shrine of the Fourteen Saints) near Bamberg city. Among them were collaborators in the distribution and promotion of the Holy Redeemer Calendar and friends of the province and the mission. Most of them were from the areas around our houses of Ellwangen, Nurnberg, Neumarkt and Bamberg.

On our arrival we visited the Basilica with the help of a good guide. He explained the history of the building and the fourteen saints to whom the church is dedicated. Afterwards, we gathered before the altar for a liturgy of the Word.

After lunch, Fr. Reinhold Baumann presented the figure and work of Mons. Franz Xaver Geyer whose tomb is to be seen in the monastery of Banz, quite close to the shrine: “Without Franz Xaver Geyer, the DSP would probably not exist”, Fr. Baumann concluded.

Bro. Alberto Lamana presented the situation of the Institute and pointed out some challenges we must face in the near future. Three confreres spoke to us of their experiences in Africa, Latin America and Europe.

This beautiful and enriching experience was ended with a solemn Eucharistic celebration.

## ETHIOPIA

### **Official registration of the Catholic Church**

On 28 March 2018, there was an important meeting of the bishops and religious of Ethiopia to familiarise the Secretariats of the Catholic Church, the Ethiopian Bishops Conference (EBC) and the Conference of Major religious Superiors (CMRS) of Ethiopia with the regulations that go together with the official registration (according to *Declaration No. 916/2015*), directed by the Affairs for the Federal and Pastoral Development of the Catholic Church with its own juridical person and logo. For many years the Catholic Church was considered an ONG, a generic classification that the Church never regarded as satisfactory.

The Registration could become a model for other Churches, with its clear definition that the Catholic Church is autonomous and independent, that has a God-given mission (GE 1, AG, 1-6) and its own Canon Law. This Registration, far from being the subjection of the Catholic Church to the State or an attempt by the State to control the Church, opens the way to cooperation and the recognition of the right role that the Church plays in society (due also to its valid Social Doctrine and its educational principles) and in its development. The Apostolic Nunciature will have the function of connecting with the universal (Catholic) Church and of an international instrument for validating documents.

The registration deliberately avoids going into details but it is designed to be periodically renewable also because the administrative part of the Church must be monitored and, at the same time, be protected in its independence and especially as regards its primary purpose, which is spiritual in nature.

The Registration of the Catholic Church in the context of government shows its thirteen circumscriptions (Religious Institutes also have their place, each registered with its own name, including the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus) and a certain number of parishes and

chapels that are not to be considered mere ramifications of the Church but parts of the one Body.

Apart from the positive effects that will soon become effective as regards permits for foreign personnel as agents of the Church rather than just development agents, there are growing signs of gratitude and recognition towards all those people who, often under criticism, worked for many years to bring about the results obtained today.

## ITALIA

### **XII Limone Symposium**

*“Intercultural praxis as a missionary challenge and interculturality”* was the theme of the XII Limone Symposium of the Comboni Family – male and female Combonis and Secular missionaries – held in Limone sul Garda from 3 to 6 April 2018.

The aim of the Symposium was to reflect on the intercultural praxis as a new paradigm of the mission also in Europe, a continent that the Comboni men and women now consider “mission territory”, and no longer as a place from which missionaries are sent.

The Symposium was also attended by Confreres and Sisters from other continents now serving in Europe. There were thirty six participants of twelve different nationalities.

## MEXICO

### **A month of meetings**

During the month of April there were various meetings in the province that allowed us to share what we are now living through as Combonis in Mexico.

On 10 and 11 the evangelisation assembly was held. Almost all the Combonis in direct pastoral work among the indigenous population and as an urban presence were in attendance.

On 12 and 13 the Mission Secretariat met, represented by the three sectors, mission promotion, evangelisation and justice and peace. It was one of the first meetings of this secretariat under the new structure: gradually, one understands the need to integrate the three sectors so as to live out our missionary service in the local Church.

The vocations promoters held their annual assembly from 10 to 12: Fr. Moisés García and Bro. Jorge Rodríguez, who work full time in this sector, the scholastic Alohoungo Abib Ayodele Sylvain, who is doing his missionary service in our province and is assisting with vocations promotion, and Fr. Roberto Pérez who has always helped in this sector. During the assembly they discussed the difficulties and signs of hope they meet in their work and planned upcoming activities and meetings.

On 17 and 18 there was a meeting for elderly confreres between sixty and ninety years of age. On the first day, Fr. Laureano Rojo, with the help of a geriatrician, directed the reflection on how to age well. The meeting ended the following day with a small pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe where Mass was celebrated.

Lastly, the provincial team in charge of animating the work on the Rule of Life, composed of Fr. Gabriel Martínez and Bro. Joel Cruz, spoke of the meeting on this theme that was attended by twelve confreres representing the various communities of the Province. It is to be hoped that all the confreres of the province may soon initiate the same experiences in their respective communities.

## NAP

### **Provincial Assembly**

From 9 to 13 April, the Combonis working in the United States and Canada held their provincial assembly. Those were days of prayer and reflection on the Comboni life in the American context during which the participants renewed their missionary commitment and zeal.

The work was centred mostly on the Rule of Life and the Six-Year Plan of the province. Fr. Daniele Moschetti and Fr. Gian Paolo Pezzi presented to the assembly the activities carried out by the Comboni Missionaries at the World Social Forum last March in Salvador de Bahia. Fr. Daniele made himself available to visit all the parishes where Combonis are present to carry out, in collaboration with them, activities of formation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (GPIC).

Despite the paucity of personnel and the advanced age of the missionaries, the availability of each member became the way of responding to the challenges of our time. Through activities of mission

promotion, the NAP lives in solidarity with the other provinces of the Institute and, in particular, with the most needy ones in Africa.

We had the privilege of having with us Fr. John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw who shared with the province on the present situation of vocations and formation in our Institute.

Fr. John Baptist was impressed by our projects in this sector. In Los Angeles, California, our community has re-launched a programme to promote youth and vocations ministry. Fr. Jorge Ochoa houses Biblical studies, retreats and various programmes for the youth of the community. Up to now it has been a very fruitful ministry among the youth who wish to participate and understand it.

Naturally, the meeting was not all work; there were lighter moments and personal meetings, including some between confreres who had not met for years. As Fr. John Baptist said, the assembly was a celebration of communion and fraternity”.

### **Intercultural understanding**

During his time in the NAP, Fr. John Baptist, together with Fr. John Converset, took part in a seminar on “intercultural competence” and how to prepare and accompany ministers of other countries and cultures so that they may collaborate in ministry in the United States.

The workshop was very enlightening and provided – as Fr. John Baptist said – many useful points to improve the quality of initial formation and programmes of on-going formation in the Institute: “It opened our eyes, preventing us from taking things for granted but to be inventive and organise structures capable of evaluating the preparation of our candidates and confreres in view of a meaningful style of intercultural and mission life”.

### **Meeting of Comboni Lay Missionaries**

In the first week in March, more than twenty Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM) came to La Grange Park, Illinois, for a meeting. The Comboni Lay Missionaries Programme (CLMP) was started in 1993. Since then, dozens of lay people have worked in Africa and South America.

The week-end was an extraordinary moment of renewal and meetings of old friends. It is possible to learn all about the CLMP by consulting the spring issue of *Comboni Missions* magazine.

## **Providing clean water in Uganda**

Last year, for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Comboni Missionaries, the North American Province started a fund to finance particular mission projects. The supporters and friends of the Combonis were invited to take part in the celebration of the anniversary in this way.

The first objective was to collect enough money to send 150 water filters to the refugee camps in northern Uganda where there were more than a million South Sudanese refugees. To reach this objective, the Province collaborated with “Water with Blessings” (WWB), a non-profit organisation run by Lorraine Lauter, an Ursuline Sister, in Northern Kentucky, that provides these user friendly water filters to those who most need them.

In January 2018, Fr. Ruffino Ezama, together with the editor of Comboni Missions Magazine, Katie Carroll, and the WWB volunteer Jim White, paid a visit to the refugee camps to hand over the filters personally. The consignment was for the Palorinya refugee camp, one of the poorest and most crowded, where every day more fleeing families arrive. We worked in collaboration with the Comboni Sisters and the Sacred Heart Sisters. The next objective is to provide filters to our Comboni Fathers and Sisters working in the Democratic republic of Congo, in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan.

## **SOUTH SUDAN**

### **First Teachers Training College Course completed**

The Comboni Missionaries at the mission of Old Fangak, together with the Catholic network of religious solidarity with South Sudan, have organised courses of training for primary school teachers at the parish of Holy Trinity (Fangak County). The courses actually started in 2013 with 80 candidates: 44 of them graduated in March 2018. Unfortunately, due to the war and other circumstances, around half the candidates had to give up the training itinerary. More than half the population of the region are illiterate while the national average is 75%.

We wish to thank especially Sr. Barbara Paleczny of the Teaching Sisters of Notre Dame, for her tireless efforts in making the programme a success. Before these courses were started, none of the teachers were sufficiently prepared, as the education system only

started slowly to be effective in the last twenty years. Fangak County, in fact, with its population of around 120.000, had only three primary schools in the year 2000, while in 2010 it already had 27 and today, in 2018, there are about 80 village schools, even though in the County there is only one school where the pupils can obtain a primary school certificate and it is one run by the Combonis.

### **Annual retreat**

From 8 to 14 April 2018, fifteen Combonis from different missions of the province and two Comboni Sisters gathered at the Kit Good Shepherd Peace Centre for their annual retreat. The theme chosen was “The Institute as a communion of brothers consecrated to missionary service”, a theme taken from the numerous themes proposed by the commission for the re-visitation and revision of the Rule of Life. The retreat was led by Fr. Andrew Rusatsi, SJ. It was a real moment of rest and prayer during which we felt close to our Founder, Saint Daniel Comboni, whose zeal for the mission was constantly emphasised during the reflections by Fr. Rusatsi.

### **Meeting of young missionaries**

For the first time, the Combonis of the Province under forty five years of age organised their annual meeting with the Comboni Sisters of the same age group. On 15 and 16 April, five Fathers, two Brothers and eight Sisters met for two days during which they spoke of their vocational journeys and their life in the mission. It was a profound and enriching testimony as well as an encouragement to know each other’s mutual joys and sorrows, since many experiences are common to all of us. We also laughed and smiled at the surprises and paradoxes of our missionary life. On the second day we visited the grave of the missionary Angelo Vinco at Gondokoro, on the other side of the Nile, where we celebrated the Eucharist.

### **Lumko Workshop**

Twenty five people, including seven Combonis, three diocesan priests, a Mill Hill Missionary, a Sister of Charity and thirteen lay leaders from various parishes of the Archdiocese of Juba, took part in the “Lumko Workshop”, a week-long course organised to take place in April, at the provincial house, by the mission secretariat of the province. The workshop was centred upon how to set in motion, grow and

sustain small Christian communities in our parishes. The small Christian communities, as the facilitator showed, are basic structures that bring vitality and dynamism to the parish community.

Many of the participants spoke of the workshop as something long overdue and expressed their gratitude to the Combonis for this initiative.

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Fr. Luigi Zanotto (21.11.1940 – 17.03.2018)**

Fr. Luigi Zanotto was born at Povegliano, not far from Verona Italy, on 21 November 1940, one of eight children in a family of sound faith. After the novitiate in Florence and the scholasticate in Verona, he was ordained on 30 June 1968.

Immediately after his ordination he was sent to Sulmona as formator at the minor seminary and then to Rome where he studied for a year (1972-1973) at the Gregorian University, where he was awarded a BA degree, specialising in pastoral theology.

On 11 April 1973, he was appointed to Mexico to work among the indigenous people.

His first mission was that of Chiltepec (Oaxaca), a small parish in what is now the diocese of Tuxtepec. In September 1975, as we read in a letter of his, he began the construction of parish buildings that should have been finished by Christmas. Right from the start, Fr. Luigi showed his ability to work and his interest in improving the structures of the mission, even though he saw it as most important to understand the reality of the indigenous world with that pastoral concern he always showed, as Fr. Enrique Sánchez G. says.

In May 1976, Fr. Pini Giampiero suggested that he be part of a missionary group that was then starting pastoral work in the colony of Virgencitas, in the outskirts of Mexico City, "an urban mission experience".

In December 1977, while still at Chiltepec, he let it be known that the Archbishop of Oaxaca had asked him to stay at Tuxtepec to accompany the youth and begin the opening of a parish but he stayed there until October 1979 to oversee the works and hand over to his succes-

sor. In fact, he had been granted permission to return to Europe to continue his studies in Pastoral and Catechesis, as he had requested.

He spent about one year in Puerto Limón, in Costa Rica, an area inhabited by people of African descent where, at the request of the bishop, with his usual lively and creative spirit, he collaborated in the renewal of the local clergy, coordinating them and holding “conferences, retreats and courses for committed lay people – as he himself wrote – for communities and leaders of communities. We can well be proud of the appreciation and esteem of the bishop and priests for us Combonis. There are always times of trial but this is only to be expected considering our specific role of motivation in the development of a local Church”.

Eventually, in September 1981, he was able to go to Spain for a course in catechesis and stayed there for four years. He then returned to Mexico with a doctorate in Pastoral and Catechesis and it was proposed that he returned to the diocese of Tuxtepec to take charge of managing and organising the Institute of Papaloapan. He set to work with enthusiasm and dedication even though he did not always feel either supported or understood.

During that same period he also took on the national secretariat for evangelisation and catechesis and strove to continue the project of creating a branch of the Ibero-American University at Tuxtepec for the formation of the laity.

After a year spent studying English, in 1992 Fr. Luigi went to the United States for a two-year period of service which was later extended on his appointment to the NAP on 1 January 1993.

The second phase of the missionary life of Fr. Luigi began in the Afro-American parish run by the Combonis at Compton, in California, to the south of Los Angeles. After an experience of adaptation to life in the NAP at the parish of St. Albert the Great, he was placed in charge of the administration of the Spanish-speaking parish of St. Cecilia. Here, too, he once again showed his ability to ‘think outside the box’ and to identify the needs of the people; by giving each group the possibility of following their own religious and popular traditions, he not only brought life to the parish but also favoured the unity of all.

In 2006, after taking a Sabbatical to finish writing his three volumes on catechesis, *Profundizando y Madurando Nuestra Fe*, he was asked to move to the east coast of the United States and assume a new ministry in the sector of justice and peace. The agonised decision of the

NAP, in 2009, to accept the commitment of Saint Lucy, Newark, New Jersey, a multi-ethnic, originally Italian parish, gave new life to the community of Montclair, NJ. Fr. Luigi was asked to stay at the parish for a year.

It was there that he was struck by the disease that would lead to his demise, an aggressive brain tumour. However, he still had enough time to renew the dilapidated structures and to approach and bring together people from the most varied of backgrounds.

Fr. Luigi returned to the Father on 17 March 2018. His funeral bore testimony to his priestly life given for the people and this was highlighted by the active participation of the police and fire department of the city of Newark, of which he had become the beloved chaplain.

### **Fr. Adelino Brunelli (23.03.1943 – 15.03.2018)**

Fr. Adelino arrived in Central Africa on 9 July 1975. After his introduction at Mongoumba, he was appointed to Obo, in the east of the country, 110 Km from Sudan, where he arrived on 27 November of that same year.

There he made his perpetual profession on 29 April 1979. When he asked to join the Combonis he was already a priest of the diocese of Mantova, having been ordained on 3 September 1967.

After six years of mission, mostly in the savannah of Obo, he was substituted by Fr. Juan José Aguirre, the present bishop of Bangassou who, when Fr. Adelino died, recalled those few months he lived together with him before he left Obo, emphasising his availability, his consideration for people and his spirit of prayer.

On 17 July 1981, he returned to Italy to take up the post of superior at Padua Secondary School, a task he did not particularly like: he was more of a counsellor and spiritual director than an organiser, as was apparent to us here in the CAR. After seven years spent with his usual availability in Padua, Fr. Adelino returned to central Africa where he was appointed to the parish of Notre Dame de Fatima, Bangui, where the Combonis had worked since 1967 and he worked there till 1993. He then went to the Major Seminary, Bangui, that had been entrusted to the Combonis in 1987, where he helped with the finances and also lent a hand to the nearby Comboni Postulancy. In 1994 he moved to the Postulancy to assist Fr. Natale Mandelli, taking his place soon afterwards, both as formator and superior until June 1998.

Starting in 1999, he asked to have an experience of the eremitical life outside the Comboni community, in the compound of the Benedictine Sisters where he built a house with a few rooms. There he could pray and receive people seeking spiritual direction.

This demonstrated his unease as he sought a life of prayer and, at the same time, his desire to dedicate himself to the poor, to the sick in the hospitals of Bangui (3) and to the prisoners, especially the women accused of witchcraft imprisoned at Bimbo, not far from his dwelling. When he had ended this experience (in March 2003), he was appointed to Maison Comboni (the provincial house) as superior, though this was only to last a year as, on 24 December 2004, he went to live at the house of the small confraternity he had founded ("Friends of Jesus the Compassionate"). On 15 April 2007, the first (and last...) two members made their first profession.

On 22 February 2008, Fr. Adelino re-joined the Comboni community and went to the mission of Boda as superior and parish priest. He left the mission in 2014 (also for health reasons) and returned to the Postulancy of Bimbo-Bangui, where he resumed his usual activities: visiting the sick, the poor and the imprisoned. He remained there until his departure for Italy in 2017, to celebrate his priestly Golden Jubilee (3 September), while waiting for his final encounter with the Father on 15 March 2018.

**Let us pray for our beloved dead**

**THE FATHER:** Luciano, of Bro. Ruggero Moretto (I).

**THE MOTHERS:** Maria, of Bro. Konrad Tremmel (U); Josephine, of Fr. Megnihoue Codjo Bernard (U).

**THE BROTHER:** António of Fr José Carlos Mendes da Costa (P).

**THE SISTERS:** Virginia, of Fr. Giovanni Vicari (FCM); Sister Cecilia, of Bro. Carlos Cárdenas (PE).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. Giovanna Ruaro, Sr. Giacomina M. Murachelli, Sr. Ada Caterina Pontello; Sr. M. Bianca Benatelli.

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**MISSIONARI COMBONIANI VIA LUIGI LILIO 80 - ROMA**

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