

A LONG LOVE STORY

*The Comboni Mission
In
South Sudan*

*From the beginning
1857 to 2017*

Popular Edition



BIBLIOTHECA COMBONIANA 17FS

Fr Francesco Chemello mccj

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The front cover:

The love issuing from the Heart of Jesus and reverberating in the Heart of Mary, the protection of St Joseph and the Cross as a faithful spouse along the journey, have the power to regenerate Africa and lead her into this wonderful vortex of love.

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ABBREVIATIONS - INDICATIONS

Comboni Missionary Abbreviations

ACR	Archivio Comboniano Roma/ <i>Comboni Archives, Rome</i>
Ad Personam:	Personal assignment, no substitution planned.
APDESAM	Assembly of Provinces and Delegations of the English Speaking Africa and Mozambique.
CATALOGO/ANNUARIO COMBONIANO:	Comboni Members Catalogue.
CMS	Comboni Missionary Sisters.
CSSJ	Comboni Secondary School Juba.
FSCJ	Filii Sacri Cordis Jesu (<i>Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus</i>)-Italian branch.
FSSPJ	Files of the South Sudan Province, Juba.
MCCJ	Missionarii Comboniani Cordis Jesu (<i>Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus</i>) - Union between the FSCJ (<i>Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus</i> , “Italian branch”) and the MFSC (<i>Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart</i> “German Branch”).
MFSC	Missionarii Filii Sacri Cordis (<i>Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart</i>)-German Branch.
OGF	On-Going Formation.
Opera significativa:	“A Commemorative Project”.
TCF	Total Common Fund.

General Abbreviations

ACROSS	African Committee for the Rehabilitation of Southern Sudan.
AJ	Apostles of Jesus.
AMECEA	The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa.
CART	Combined Agencies Relief Team (based in Juba).
CCI	Compagnie de Construction Internationale.
<i>CORDAID</i>	Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid.
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (between SPLA/M and Khartoum Gov.).
CRE	Christian Religious Education.
CRN	Catholic Radio Network (After the independence with the RoSS).
CRS	Catholic Relief Service.
CUAMM	Doctors with Africa (Collegio Universitario Aspiranti Medici Missionari).

DOR	Diocese of Rumbek.
DOT	Diocese of Torit.
FAJSS	Files of the Archdiocese of Juba (Rep. of South Sudan).
GLRA	German Leprosy Relief Association.
GoNU	The Government of National Unity (2005).
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross.
IDP	Internally Displaced People (within Sudan).
ILACO	International Land Consultant (Financial & Technology Corporation).
IRC	International Rescue Committee.
JPIC	Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.
LWF	Lutheran World Federation.
MSBVM	Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, (known as Mupoi Sisters of T/Yambio).
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières.</i>
MSMCM	Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (from Uganda).
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid.
NCP	National Congress Party (of President El Bashir).
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation.
NPA	Norwegian People Aid.
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan.
OLSH	Daughters of Our Lady of Sacred Heart (from Australia).
PALICA	Pastoral-Liturgical-Catechetical Centre.
PROPAGANDA FIDE	- Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (then SCEP).
RoSS	The Republic of South Sudan.
RSAS	Religious Superiors' Association of Sudan.
RSASS	Religious Superiors' Association of South Sudan.
SCBC	Sudan Catholic Bishop's Conference.
SCC	Small Christian Community.
SCEP	Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.
SCIAF	<i>The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund.</i>
SCRN	Sudan Catholic Radio Network (Before independence of SS).
SEC	Sudan Episcopal Conference.
<i>SECAM</i>	Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of <i>Africa</i> and Madagascar.
SHS	Sacred Heart Sisters (South Sudan).
SPLA/M	Sudan People Liberation Army/Movement.
SS	South Sudan.
SSIM/A	South Sudan Independence Movement/Army.
SSS	Solidarity with South Sudan (a collaborative project).
UN	United Nations.

UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees.
USRATUNA	“Our Family” (in Arabic).
WFP	World Food Programme.
WVI	World Vision International.
YCS	Young Christian Students.

Vatican Documents:

AG	Ad Gentes Divinitus, <i>on the mission of the Church.</i>
AM	Africae Munus, <i>the Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortations of Pope Benedict XVI. (2nd Synod of Africa).</i>
AT	Africae Terrarum, <i>Litterae Apostolicae Motu Proprio Datae, Paulus PP. VI, 29 October, 1967.</i>
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church.
CD	Christus Dominus, <i>Decree concerning the pastoral office of Bishops.</i>
CSDC	Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.
CT	Catechesi Tradendae.
DV	Dei Verbum.
EA	Ecclesia in Africa, <i>the Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortations of Pope John Paul II. (1st Synod of Africa).</i>
EG	Evangelii Gaudium.
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi.
GS	Gaudium et Spes, <i>the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.</i>
MR	Mutuae Relationes.
PC	Perfectae Caritatis, <i>on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life.</i>
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
RM	Redemptoris Missio.
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium, <i>Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.</i>

INTRODUCTION BY THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

“A work of God”, *A Long Love Story, the Comboni Mission in South Sudan, Popular Edition*, is a shortened form of the original book “The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan”. The author, Fr. Francesco Chemello, is now placing this book in your hands for easy reading. It is not a mere reading but a reading that records “a work of God” carried out by people possessed by a passion for the Gospel and the mission.

Moreover, it is the contemplation of the liberating action of God through human persons. This history bears more meaning especially because it recognizes the life of a group of people who have gone to unknown and hostile places whose people they came to know and, above all, made it possible that those people should have life in abundance.

The premature death of our founder St Daniel Comboni (10 October, 1881), and the doubts of those in authority (because of the precarious situation of the Institute) did not deter the Institute from flourishing and becoming what it is now. Likewise, the work of the Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan (Expulsion, 6 March, 1964 and 1983 war...) has not been deterred by the various difficult situations it has encountered and undergone so far. It is the accomplishment of the vision of the Founder who desired to penetrate Africa only to proclaim the Gospel.

This history brings to memory the lives of such people as Fr Barnaba Deng and Bro Giosuè Dei Cas and many others who totally gave their lives for the Gospel. It fills the heart of the readers with gratitude and, above all, makes them aware of the compassionate and merciful hand of God at work.

The beginning was never to be easy, from the death of the Founder to the expulsion, the war of 1983 and up to the present day. None of these events have ever caused us to lose sight of the mission as the reason of our being a Comboni Missionary Province. Instead, we are grateful for the many lives consumed in this land, the Local Church that stands on its own and the all we have received from those to whom we were sent.

This book is now being published at a moment when the situation of the Province is discouraging. The mission is in a constant state of emergency and this re-reading of our history appeals to us to live this event with hope, hope that the hand of God who has started this work will bring it to fulfilment and that with fidelity we may discover the way to continue to be at the service of the Gospel and the mission which has been entrusted to us.

Fixing our eyes on the Crucified One will empower us to be faithful and persevering like our Founder.

The vocation and the mission we have received have their roots in the personal encounter with the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ (RL, No. 21.1).¹ It is a gift to be cherished and at the same time to be given out generously so that all may have life in abundance (Jn. 10:10). This reminds us of our dream to be a Province “that goes forth” always, to share the weariness and confusion of the world.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank again Fr Francesco for placing this book in more hands by producing this Popular Edition. We are indebted to you. As you go to Rome to undertake a new assignment, keep the missionary flame burning and inspire others with your long missionary experience.

I wish all the readers of this book a blessed and enjoyable read. May it refresh and strengthen in you the missionary vocation of all the baptised.

Fr Louis Okot Ochermoi Tony
Provincial Superior
South Sudan Province

¹ **The Rule of Life**, the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.

FOREWORD

A LONG LOVE STORY, *the Comboni Mission in South Sudan from its beginning in 1857 to 2017, popular edition*, is a more descriptive, less complicated historical narrative focused on the main events of a “**Love Story**” which started with Daniel Comboni’s first trip to the Central African Vicariate, in 1857, and carried on with the same unabated love until the present year, 2017, the hundred and fiftieth year of foundation of the Comboni Missionary Institute.

In the furrow of *The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, An Outline History*,² by the same author, Fr Francesco Chemello mcccj presents the reader with an historical outline of the unravelling of a Mission pervaded by a love that makes them reflect on every undertaking and every aspect of life. It is a holistic proclamation of the Gospel done through the direct proclamation of the *Kerygma*³ and expanded to all the living realities involved at religious, spiritual and social level, through the work of *Development* in the field of education, health, practical skills and other fields of action.

The initial stage is the experience of Daniel Comboni, already confirmed during his holy life, then carried on by his followers with the same spirit of dedication for Jesus bringing his Good News to the peoples of Africa, and specifically to those populating the geographical areas now called Sudan and South Sudan. It is *A Long Love Story* because, in the midst of the thousands of vicissitudes in which Comboni and the Comboni Missionaries found themselves, love, faithfulness and martyrdom were elements constituting the very core of their way of life.

² The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, An Outline of History, Fr Francesco Chemello mcccj, Juba, Fondazione Nigrizia Onlus, 2017.

³ **Kerygma:** (from the ancient Greek word κήρυγμα *kêrugma*) is a Greek word used in the New Testament for "preaching" (see Luke 4:18-19, Romans 10:14, Matthew 3:1). It is related to the Greek verb κηρύσσω *kêrússō*, literally meaning "to cry or proclaim as a herald" and being used in the sense of "to proclaim, announce, preach". It is applied to "the apostolic proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ", meaning "the core of the early church's oral tradition about Jesus." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerygma>

Even the contrasting human weaknesses which were part and parcel of their mission, showed how necessary was a deep love for Christ and for the people they were serving for its fulfilment.

A Long Love Story, with all its literary deficiencies, may be a useful means for all its readers, but especially for young people, to reflect on God's call to them, on the lives of all those hundreds and even thousands of dedicated Comboni Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, together with the thousands of Diocesan Priests, and other Brothers, Sisters and Lay people constituting the Local Sudanese and South Sudanese Church.

If this *Love Story* can help you, dear readers, with this reflection and bring you to a greater sharing in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel wherever Jesus, in his love, sends you, this *Love Story* will not have been written in vain.

Fr Francesco Chemello mccj

A LONG LOVE STORY



PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

It all began with Daniel Comboni

The whole matter started when the young priest, Fr Daniel Comboni of the Mazza Institute and ordained less than three years previously, *after having consulted Religion and God*⁴ with a spiritual retreat, decided to join the Mazza expedition to the Vicariate of Central Africa towards the end of August or the beginning of September, 1857. He himself wrote: *“this is a moment for which I have been yearning for a very long time and with more passion than two ardent lovers longing for the moment of their wedding.”*⁵

After the moving celebration before the departure,⁶ the *excellent journey* from Trieste to Alexandria of Egypt, as he described it in his letter to Dr Benedetto Patuzzi on 20 September, 1857,⁷ took place on 10 September. The journey was a recollection of all the events of ancient Greek and Roman history, so vivid in his memory.

What however focused his whole being beyond any imagination was his experience of the land of Jesus, where Jesus lived, walked, healed people and announced the Good News of the Kingdom of God present among his

⁴ The Writing of Daniel Comboni no. 9.

⁵ Ibid., no. 3

⁶ Ibid.,no. 18 To Fr Pietro Grana, Verona, 13 August, 1857.

⁷ Ibid. Nos. 20-26.

people, the very same Good News Daniel Comboni and his companions were on the journey to announce to the people in the interior of Africa, that immense Vicariate which would constitute their very field of work.

“Oh, how greatly impressed I was by Jerusalem! To think that every inch of this sacred territory holds a mystery made my feet stumble and aroused in me these feelings; Jesus Christ might have been here; here the Virgin Mary; this was where the Apostles passed, etc.”⁸

The visit to the Holy Places started with a non-stop journey of a day and a half across the Philistine plains and over the mountains of Judea. He then carried on with the visit to the Holy Sepulchre, the Mount Calvary, the Chapel where Jesus was crucified, the place where the Virgin Mary stood while Jesus was on the cross and received her dead divine son into her arms. Next came the place where Jesus was spat upon and beaten and the place where, according to tradition, Jesus appeared to the Virgin Mary after his resurrection, the sight of the Ascension of Jesus and the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the new-born Church. All these and other many places penetrated deeply into his heart giving meaning and purpose for his imminent great adventure among the still mostly unknown African tribes.

The energy the Holy Land visit gave to Daniel’s spirit cannot be measured in human terms in a person like him who would not allow any detail to get lost, especially not in the case of Jesus for whom he had already given up his life without measure. On 16 October, 1857, *the Marsey*, a French steamer,⁹ was already on his way back to Alexandria in Egypt from Jaffa. There in Cairo he received a word of encouragement with letters from his parents, but by 21 October, he and his companions were already leaving Cairo for Korosko, a journey of about a month on the river Nile and then on from Korosko for another two weeks across the Nubian desert and almost a further fortnight to reach Khartoum.

The trip was not very comfortable and at one point the wind was so strong that they feared shipwreck; only their faith and intense prayer possibly prevented it. Of course, he was very careful not to disclose all the difficulties they found along the trip so not to bring more anxiety to his elderly parents, but tried to share with them all their hopes, especially the joy he would find at the time when reached Khartoum. Khartoum, of course, was not their final destination but Holy Cross, among the Dinka

⁸ Ibid., no. 36, 27-85.

⁹ Ibid., to his parents, 101, 133, 190, 193.

Kich tribe, at the seventh parallel, but reaching Khartoum would be an achievement in itself.

They were hoping to reach Khartoum by 6 January, the Epiphany, 1858; in fact their calculations were not far out as Fr Daniel wrote to his cousin Eustachio Comboni from that very place on 12 January. By 18 January the whole group heading for Holy Cross on the White Nile was already aboard the *Stella Matutina* vessel.

*“Here I am on board the boat in the act of abandoning Khartoum and setting out for the central tribes of Bahar-el-Abiad. This vessel, in the form of a Dhow, is the largest and strongest in Sudan. She belongs to the Khartoum Mission which gave her the Italian name of Stella Matutina, almost as if to dedicate her to the Blessed Virgin so that she might truly be a morning star of light for the poor black people who are still shrouded in the darkness of ignorance and idolatry.”*¹⁰

The first missionary endeavour: a flashback

From the first paragraph one may be led to think that before the Mazza expedition, of which Fr Daniel Comboni was part, there had been no missionary venture along the river Nile. On the contrary! The *Vicariate of Central Africa* was instituted in 1846. When the *Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa* was erected, the interior of Africa was still an unknown reality. The source of the river Nile, the upper part of the Zambezi and the upper Congo rivers had not yet been discovered by European countries.

The slave trade had been banned by Denmark in 1792, the United States in 1794 and Britain in 1807, but the Arab countries were still practising it as usual. Catholic Missions, however, were already present around the coastlands of Africa, even before the time of its circumnavigation, such as in the kingdom of Congo.

The institution of the Vicariate of Central Africa.

In 1842 the Vincentian Priest, Fr Luigi Montuori, who had fled from Ethiopia to escape persecution, came to Khartoum and wrote letters to his Superiors in Europe. Together with one of his confreres, Fr Girolamo Serao, he opened in Khartoum a tiny chapel for the few foreign Christians living there. Montuori then returned to Ethiopia in 1844 and his confrere to Malta.

¹⁰ Ibid., no. 206

A Maltese Canon, Annetto Casolani, in 1846 presented to Propaganda Fide a mission project of his for Africa. A decree of Pope Gregory XVI on 3 April, 1846, established the *Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa*. The objectives of the Mission, formally approved, were the conversion of the Black Africans to Christianity, to bring assistance to the Christians who were in the Sudan as traders and the suppression of the slave trade.



The boundaries were: Egypt, Tripolitania and Algeria to the north and northwest; the Red Sea and Abyssinia to the east; the Mountains of the Moon to the South and the Guineas and the Sahara to the west. Canon Casolani was consecrated Bishop for the mission in Central Africa and obtained as companions two Jesuits, Fr Maximilian Ryllo, from Poland, who had already been a missionary in Lebanon-Syria, Fr Emanuele Pedemonte, who was an ex-officer of Napoleon, two Lay Brothers, and the two volunteer Priests: Fr Angelo Vinco, from Verona, of the Institute of Fr Nicola Mazza, and Fr Ignaz Knoblecher, a Slovenian-Austrian.

This group left for Egypt in 1847. However, Bishop Casolani resigned from the post of Vicar Apostolic, though he followed the expedition as a member, and Fr Ryllo was appointed by Propaganda Fide as Pro-Vicar on 23 April, 1847. They sailed from Cairo in September, 1847, and arrived in

Khartoum in February, 1848. Fr Ryllo was ill with dysentery throughout the long journey of 2,400 kilometres. In Khartoum he founded the first missionary station with an orphanage, a school and a church. He died in Khartoum on 17 June, 1848, within four months of his arrival. Before dying he made Fr Knoblecher his *Vicar General* who then took his place. Later on, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide nominated him Pro-Vicar on 13 August, 1851.¹¹

After the death of Fr Ryllo, Bishop Casolani also fell sick and, in that same year, returned to Europe. Fr Angelo Vinco accompanied him in order to look for financial help. He did not succeed because at that time all of Europe was shaken by revolutionary movements (1848-1849). In Verona, Fr Vinco spoke to the young students of the Mazza Institute and aroused enthusiasm: among the listeners was 18-year-old Daniel Comboni.¹²

Fr Vinco, then, went back to the Vicariate and made a journey of exploration to the South, he visited some tribes along the Nile such as the Nuer, the Cic, the Liab and the Shir until he reached Gondokoro. Once in the land of the Bari he visited some tribes on the eastern bank of the Nile, among them the Beri. The Pro-Vicar Apostolic, Mgr Ignaz Knoblecher, was as well on his way to Gondokoro and arrived just in time to assist Fr Vinco, who died of fever on 22 January, 1853.¹³

It was thus that, after four and a half years from the death of Fr Angelo Vinco, in September 1857, Fr Nicola Mazza decided to organize an expedition by members of his institute and Fr Daniel Comboni was one of them.

¹¹ La Missione del Cuore. I Comboniani in Sudan nel ventesimo secolo, Giovanni Vantini, EMI della Coop. Sermis, 2005, p. 10 and ff.

- The Opening of the Nile Basin, Elias Toniolo & Richard Hill, C. Hurst & Company Ltd, London, 1974, pp. 1-2.

- Alle origini della Missione dell’Africa Centrale, (1846-1862, Erich Shmid, Studi Comboniani/7, Novastampa di Verona, 1987, pp. 47-66.

- Servants of the Gospel. Witnesses in the footsteps of St Daniel Comboni in Sudan and South Sudan, Paulines Publications Africa, 2014, p. 15.

- The First Centenary of the Roman Catholic Mission to Central Africa, 1846-1946, Elia Toniolo, *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. 27 (1946), p. 99, Published by: University of Khartoum, p. 99. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41716739?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

- The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, An Outline of History, Fr Francesco Chemello mcccj, Juba, Nigrizia Onlus, 2017, pp. 1-3.

¹² Lozano Juan Emanuel, *Vostro per sempre*, Daniele Comboni, Editrice Missionaria Italiana (EMI), Bologna, 1996, pp. 78-80.

¹³ The Opening of the Nile Basin, op. cit., pp 75-77, 85, ff., pp. 6-7.

Khartoum description of the tribes of the South

Fr Daniel Comboni was an attentive listener to all the stories told in the environment of Khartoum. Some were quite frightening with regard to the populations of the South. However, the conclusion of his personal reflection was that all those stories were told by merchants trading in ivory and slaves while their mission was of a quite different type. He shared it with Fr Pietro Grana on 15 January, 1858, a couple of days before their departure aboard the *Stella Matutina* vessel:

“...We safely reached Khartoum four months and six hours after our departure from Verona.

Khartoum is located on the border of the tribes of Central Africa, and we are just getting equipped for the dangerous expedition. Our current intention is to follow the Bahar-el-Abiad (White Nile) until we are not far from the equator and, after carrying out careful explorations, to try to enter a tribe which should be large and have a language that is widely spoken. Here in Khartoum horrible stories are told of what the inhabitants of the Bahar-el-Abiad have done this year; but we notice that these are mostly provoked by adventurers who go there to extract elephant tusks. We trust in God who has called us to such a great enterprise. But enough, my dear Fr Pietro. I hope you will still be in Limone and will console me with a few letters. We are all five in excellent health, and we sometimes speak of you and of your liberal approach when you were at the college. Best regards to Signor Pietro Ragusini, to his good mother, brothers and sisters, Elisa and Marietta, while I remain your most affectionate, Fr Daniel Comboni. My companions send you their greetings.¹⁴

The *Stella Matutina*, (Morning Star) Vessel

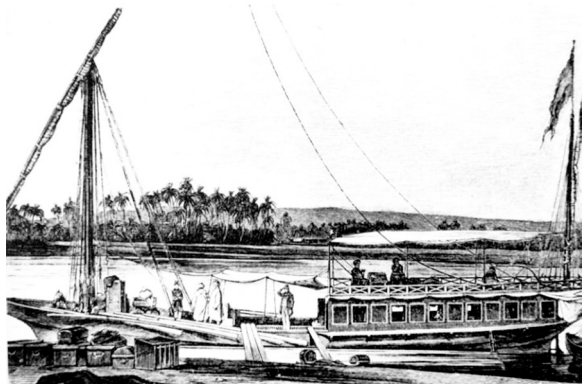
Before dealing with the journey from Khartoum to Holy Cross Mission, I think it is necessary to digress and dwell for a while on the importance of this iron vessel, *Dhahabiya*, which was bought by the Pro-Vicar Apostolic Mgr Knobler in Cairo¹⁵ in order to have autonomy from the traders in the missionary expeditions.

¹⁴ The Writings, Nos. 202-203.

¹⁵ The Opening of the Nile Basin, op. cit. p. 6; The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit. pp. 5-6.

Briefly, it is important is to remember that the exploration of the valley of the Nile, south of *Lake No*, was more complex than one can imagine. In fact, the first missionaries were accused of being the spearhead of the river Nile trade and those who opened the way to all the abuses this trade caused.

At first, Mgr Knoblecher and Fr Vinco, having no means of transport and little help from Propaganda Fide, had to fend for themselves with the help of the Khartoum traders and their boats and pay for their services with ivory which they themselves had to buy. Moreover, once the traders made their way to Gondokoro, they made their expeditions trading not only in ivory but also in slaves and exploiting the local populations in every possible way, as already mentioned above. This was certainly not the purpose of the Missionaries, who developed good relationships with the local tribes and chiefs who were able to distinguish between them and the ruthless traders.



The *Stella Matutina* was therefore a great achievement in keeping this independence, though it could not avoid being confused with traders' boats, especially in Gondokoro, where many traders' boats were docking, and being accused by the traders of all the bad luck brought upon their abusive profits.¹⁶

From Khartoum to Holy Cross

On 18 January, 1958, the whole group heading for Holy Cross, along the White Nile, was already on the *Stella Matutina* sailing southwards. Comboni had already learned much from reading the reports of previous missionaries who had already travelled this way. However, knowledge acquired from reports and literature is quite different from direct

¹⁶ - Opening of the Nile Basin, op. cit.

- Giampaolo Romanato, *L'Africa Nera fra Cristianesimo e Islam, L'esperienza di Daniele Comboni (1831-1881)*, Corbaccio, Milano, 2003. Prima Parte, I – 1.8. pp. 95-107 (Knoblecher); II – 2.3. pp. 140-160 (Il giudizio dei missionari); 2.4. pp. 161-179 (Alle origini della tragedia africana); 2.5. pp.179-189 (Missionari ed esploratori).

experience. I will now tackle his direct encounter with some of these populations and tribes and his vivid description of each one of them.

The members of the expedition to Holy Cross from Khartoum were



four: Fr Giovanni Beltrame, the head of the Mission, Fr Franco Oliboni, Fr Angelo Melotto and Fr Daniel Comboni, while Fr Alessandro Dalbosco stayed behind in Khartoum as Procurator. They were accompanied by Fr Matheus Kirchner, delegated by the Vicar Apostolic, Mgr Knoblecher, to visit the missions of Holy Cross and Gondokoro on his behalf.

Describing the *Stella Matutina* vessel, owned by the Khartoum Mission, he tells that *it was crewed by 14 able sailors, under a courageous and experienced Rais (captain), who had made the voyage before.*

Indeed, later on they came to appreciate greatly his experience and how skilled and expert he was.

The specific aim of their journey was to carry out a thorough exploration up the White Nile, in order to establish a Mission among those tribes in accordance with the plan of Fr Nicola Mazza, hence, to reach first Holy Cross. However, while sailing, in the letter to his father of the 15 March, 1858, one can notice clearly the tribes Comboni and his companions were putting interest and those they were not. Among those who were not were the first tribes they found going upstream the White Nile, specifically the Hassanieh and the vast tribe of the Baqqarah with all their subdivisions.¹⁷

Though he tries to describe all of them as far as his knowledge allowed, when he arrives to the Shilluk and Dinka tribes one notices a more specific interest. Moreover, Comboni is fully aware that Fr Beltrame, and not he, is in charge of the expedition. However he is not just a passive member being

¹⁷ The Writings Nos. 348,349, 236, 237, 250, 264, 273, 289, 370.

driven by others, but a careful observer and one who tries to have his personal opinion of places and tribes.

First of all, of the Shilluk tribe, which he describes as *a powerful tribe and of warlike character... tall, thickset, sturdy, and aggressive, who go about constantly armed with spear and shield and are always ready to engage in battles and robberies*, his personal evaluation at the level of evangelization was that *it would seem a suitable tribe for their Missionary plan, but for reasons which he will tell, they left it.*

Comboni takes great pleasure in describing the various events which brought them willingly or unwillingly into contact with the different tribes along the Nile, as well as their fears and hopes in unexpected situations like the times when the boat got stuck in the shallow waters. They even invited their chiefs to come on board the *Stella Matutina* and wondered at how they reacted on seeing such ordinary things like a mirror which they had never seen before.

We have got a very detailed description of the Nuer tribe because, contrary to the terrible stories they had heard about their fierce temperament, in Khartoum, the missionaries could walk *fearlessly among the Nuer who stood aside for them as they might for an Emperor*. It was at this point that Comboni shared the discrepancy between his knowledge acquired from books in Europe and from reports in Khartoum and the concrete reality.

Right from Europe, from books, etc. and especially after the tragic tales we heard in Khartoum, we formed a frightening impression of the Nuers that they killed and ate people, etc., etc. and we were convinced of this in Khartoum in particular, where we were advised to arm ourselves with many guns to withstand the assaults of the Negroes. Ever since the tribe of the Hassanieh we had always seen the Negroes fleeing before us. The Baqqarahs, the Shilluks, the Dinkas, the Nuers, etc., either answered our greeting or fled.

Therefore to tell you in a word, although we find ourselves, and have always found ourselves, among so many people armed with spears, shields, poisonous arrows and clubs, I must conclude that they fear us and are more afraid of us than we are of them. Which is why, when we present ourselves to the black tribes, we walk unafraid and without showing any fear, so that seeing us so firm, they flee if we do not invite them to stay with us.

I put this into practice when having reached Fandah (El Aliab),¹⁸ I wandered in among the spears at a large market of the Nuers, who as we passed made way for us as though an emperor were passing.

Of the Nuers of Fandah el Eliab Comboni gives the most picturesque description of their style of dressing and makes ups. Of course, his way of picturing them is linked to his home-way of describing and expressing things and, although now one would think he was using offensive words, in reality they were not. It was just the mentality of his own time. Not only, but of the Nuer people he has the most positive evaluation for the way they first appeared to him.

The tribe of the Nuers is the most hard-working of all we have seen and therefore in my opinion the richest I came to learn something about this people, since we stopped in Fandah-el-Eliab which is like their capital and the tribe's main market.

As in the case of the Shilluk, his personal evaluation at a level of evangelization was that:

This vast tribe of Nuer would be a most splendid area for our efforts; but their swampy land is deadly for the European. And I will tell you a little later what further reinforces our reasons. In Fandah we received on board this tribe's chief who expressed the same wonder as the chief in Hauo: but this one was prouder and more determined.

A digression: “I will tell you a little later”

In the letter to his father, Comboni insists on the fact that *he will tell the reason a little later* regarding why they would not stop either among the Shilluks or the Nuers. Indeed, he then tells it clearly and it was because they were looking for a place from where, because of the language and the location, they could be allowed to *walk into and evangelize also other tribes with language affinity.*

A second reason Comboni gives is that of the *swampy land deadly for the European*. Truly, the Nuer environment is extremely swampy, no doubt about it, and also that it is *deadly for the European*. What instead is not consequent to this reason is why the *Nuer swampy land was deadly for the European* and they ended up to reside in Holy Cross station which is not certainly a better environment than the Nuer one: *swampy, full of mosquitos, deadly and so on*, as it came to be within the same year.

¹⁸ Fandah el Eliab is the present Liab/Liap village in Adok al Bahr. The Writings, op. cit., Nos. 285, 288, 289, 290,

I (the author) ministered among the Nuer people from 2005 to 2016 and I can confirm the above concerns. However, during one of my holidays in Verona, Italy, I put this question to Fr Pietro Chiochetta,¹⁹ the main Comboni historian together with Fr Gilli. I thought this was for him just a matter of telling his reasons as the most expert person, but on the contrary he was so annoyed at this *naïve question* of mine that I thought it was not convenient to insist on getting an answer from him. Instead he gave me many reasons to think about it since my question was only *apparently naïve* while actually important.

One of the reasons Fr Chiochetta may rightly have been annoyed might have been that this question was put to him so many times that he may have been thoroughly fed up hearing it. Another one may have been that knowing that I was among the Nuer people and I had been also in charge of the Comboni Group of the so-called *New Sudan* (with the open appreciation he always manifested for the work of the New Sudan Group) he may have thought that, I myself, should have answered it without troubling him. The final one, which I think it may be the real one, was that he himself as the best historian of Comboni, could not give a real personal answer out of geographical and logistical experience and, therefore, what seemed to be a *naïve question* had caught him by surprise, unable to provide an answer.

In reality, all the geographical, logistic and theological reasons for being *suitable or not for evangelization* Comboni spoke of were bypassed by the concrete prevailing reason that *Holy Cross Station* (Shambe) was already there and they had already decided that the whole evangelization work would start spreading from that place, though, Comboni personally thought, as well, that the people in Holy Cross were not very encouraging, as he would later say. But this is what happens in reality in many crucial decisions: it is the discrepancy of discernment between ideals and reality. The reality was the existence of Holy Cross, already founded.

The Journey continues

Having gone through the experience of the Shilluk and the Nuer, Comboni finally realized they had reached the land of the Kich.²⁰ His

¹⁹ Fr Pietro Chiochetta was also my lecturer of History during my Missiology Licentiate at the Urbaniana University in Rome, 1979-1981. His historical ability made me appreciate again this subject in which other history lecturers made me lose interest during the basic course of Philosophy and Theology.

²⁰ The Writings, op. cit., Nos. 292, 293, 294.

description of this tribe, unfortunately, is the most negative of all. The present populations of these areas should not take this account as an offence, since that was the reality of the time. The point could be a stimulation to enhance their style of life in a better way than their ancestors.

“Close to Meha, we saw a woman’s corpse in the river. We realised that we were in the Kich tribe, where the bad habit of throwing dead bodies into the river exists. A Circassian Koshut with three others came there to meet us on the Stella Matutina and told us many things about the tribe of the Angai, which is situated in the heart of the interior, and whose chief a little while ago bought a handsome youth for 17 oxen and then killed him. We saw the chief of the tribe as dirty as a pig and angry because the Nuers had just descended on his tribe and rustled all their herds.

We saw the wretched hovels of the Kich which told us much of the poverty in which those poor Africans live. Passing in front of a village where one of the chiefs was, he came behind our ship saying “our lord has come” crying cham-cham which means I am hungry; and when we gave him some biscuit, he wanted to follow us armed from the bank, almost as if to protect our way from the thieves who are very numerous; indeed it can be said that the Kich are all thieves, although not very shrewd, and timid.

Having left the large town of Abu-Kuka, aided by the Negroes who were towing our ship, finally on 14th February we reached the Station of Holy Cross (6°40’ Latitude North) where we are now, in the country of Pà-Nòm, 25 days after our departure from Khartoum, a little more than 1,000 miles from that city, by precise and close calculations.”

It is at this point that Comboni reveals to his father the true reason for not setting up a mission among the above mentioned tribes, though in regard to a *safer place than the others* there is much to be said, but this point will be dealt later on:

“...Pà-Nòm is located at 7° Latitude North, and it is a magnificent central point, safer than the others, from which to undertake explorations. So here we stay; and if nothing else happens to the contrary, we are determined to organise our Superior’s plan and carry out his orders, to find a tribe suitable to our plans; and this is what we intend to do. From all our reconnoitring and the information we possess we have been able to discover with certainty that the Dinka’s language is the most widespread of all Africa watered by the Bahar-el-Abiad. It is spoken and understood not only by the tribe of the Dinka, but also by

the Nuers, the Janghèhs, the Kich, the Tuit and by the Shilluks who dwell on the left bank opposite the Dinka.

We are now stopping here with the Kich to learn the Dinka language and at the same time do some exploration to get a clearer idea on what God wants us to do. When we have learned the language, we will immediately have many tribes who speak Dinka to choose from. In this way we have more time in which to consult the Lord's will."

The Bari People of Gondokoro and beyond...

Finally, on 14 February, the Mazza expedition had reached *Holy Cross Station*, the immediate reason for their efforts. They immediately tried to get into the situation and put up in such a way that they could carry on with their purpose. Meanwhile, Fr Kitchner proceeded for Gondokoro, among the Bari people.

For the young Comboni the name Gondokoro must have stirred up all the reminiscences of his vocation to the African mission he received through an encounter in Verona, at the Mazza Institute, with Fr Angelo Vinco. He was now not so far away from that place. He had travelled quite a bit already - more than 1.000 miles - as he pointed out in his letter mentioned above, and now he was about 200 miles from Gondokoro, without counting the loops in the Nile river. His heart must have deeply desired to possibly arrive and see the place and environment which had been the subject of his reading and reflection on the missionary adventure he was going to be part of.

As a matter of fact, Comboni would never in his life reach Gondokoro, though he knew very well all the details about it and even planned to reach the Baganda Kingdom, thus passing through Gondokoro. It is enough to read his *historical report on the Vicariate Apostolic of Central Africa* he made to Mgr Luigi Ciurcia in Cairo on 15 February, 1870, in order to understand how he knew every detail of its history and how deeply he kept Gondokoro in his possible plan of action.

However, this deep desire of his never became true. Even Propaganda Fide, in this precise case, became for him a stumbling block with the new division of the Vicariate of Central Africa, to be shared in the southern part with the *Missionaries of Africa (the White Fathers) of Mgr Lavigerie*. Answering to the injunction of Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni of Propaganda Fide not to venture that way, he called it as the *greatest tooth ache of his whole life*.

“I read in *Missions Catholiques* that the northern confines of Mgr Lavigerie’s missions are Bahar el Arab, (as that prelate wrote). Bahar el Arab has been a **great heartache** for me (the original word is a **big toothache**), and I shall not be rid of it until I die or until the Sacred Congregation takes other more appropriate and necessary decisions. But I trust in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, and in the wisdom, love and justice of the Holy See to put all this right.”²¹

In spite of this *toothache* because of the whole matter he answered in full obedience that *Fr Squaranti and I are content in the knowledge that we are doing God’s will, which is so clear, and we continue with our work.*”²²

Having said this, I think it suffices in order to understand Comboni’s heart. The real matter, instead, was that *safer place of Holy Cross Mission*.

The Holy Cross events

Not even one month and a half had passed that the *safer place of Holy Cross Mission* revealed itself as it really was, a place no different from those they wanted to avoid to carry out their mission with better safety.

“*The first of us to fall ill was myself, in the Shilluk tribe on the boat, and it was a burning fever: but God willed me to be free of it. The second was Fr Francesco and he died; the third was Fr Beltrame and he is now well; the 4th, Isidoro, our craftsman, and he is now convalescing. So all of us have been hit by the African climate: but blessed be God.*” (WR. 393, 27 March, 1858).

“*Who could ever have imagined that the one who was perhaps the most robust of us all could, in just a few days, go missing from among the living, and leave us in our grief? Fr Francesco Oliboni who, just a few days ago, ordered me to send you his greetings, came down with a very strong attack of an old gastric illness complicated by a considerable inflammation of the chest; the two ailments gave him a malignant malaria fever and he expired in God’s embrace, resigned and joyful, yesterday evening at 5 o’clock. We most of all feel the burden of this loss because he was of great help to our mission.*” (WR. 389, 27 March, 1858).

“*When I wrote you the enclosed letter, we were all in the most robust health. Who could ever have thought that the one who was the most*

²¹ To Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Khartoum, 29 August, 1881 Nuba map 6971-6976

²² To Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Khartoum, 30 September, 1878, Writings, op. cit. Nos. 5392, 5393 (5392-5399)

robust of us all could have died yesterday? Fr Francesco Oliboni, who for ten years had longed to reach this blessed Africa, was the victim of the first fever he contracted. Blessed be the Lord forever: he died with the greatest resignation, with that joy which smiles on the face of those who are about to be received at the wedding feast in Paradise. I was the first to be smitten by the fever, but with heaven's help, and with the preventive method I have already overcome it three times." (WR. 395, 27 March, 1858).

On his death-bed, on 25 March, 1858, Fr Oliboni had spoken words of encouragement saying: *"Even though only one of you should remain, let not his confidence fail, nor let him withdraw."*

For the Mazza team, the experience of Holy Cross mission ended on 15 January, 1859, when Frs Beltrame, Melotto and Comboni left the place for Khartoum, though, before reaching there on 4 April, they did sail a considerable distance up the Sobat river to look for a new site, but without success. Fr Melotto died on 28 May, 1859, on his return to Khartoum.

Mgr Kirchner, who received orders from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide to take up the reins of the Vicariate after the death of Mgr Knoblecher²³, ordered Fr Beltrame to sail up the White Nile again to *recall the missionaries, to take pupils with them (with their consent), as prudence suggested, as well as some furniture which could be used in the new acclimatisation house of Shellal*. When he reached Holy Cross he ordered that everything be made ready for the evacuation. With Fr Lanz he went to Gondokoro to get Fr Morlang who was alone and they arrived back in Khartoum on 29 March, 1860. Fr Lanz died few days later.²⁴

On 4 September, 1861, Propaganda Fide entrusted the Mission of Central Africa to the Order of Friars Minor headed by Fr Johannes Reinthaler-Ducla (of the Styrian Province).²⁵

Daniel Comboni: return to Italy

After the evacuation of Holy Cross Mission on 15 January, 1859, Fr Comboni returned to his place of birth, Limone on lake Garda, Italy, to

²³ The Opening of the Nile Basin, op. cit., pp. 8-13.

- The Writings, op. cit., Nos. 2123, 2142, 2148.

- Alle origini della Missione dell'Africa Centrale, (1846-1862, Erich Schmid, Studi Comboniani/7, Novastampa di Verona, 1987, pp. 295-297.

²⁴ - The Opening of the Nile Basin, op. cit., pp. 15-17.

- The Writings, op. cit., Nos. 2857, 2858, 4348.

²⁵ The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

recover his health. He then went back to the Mazza Institute in Verona to resume his priestly duties. This time was a time for recovery but also a time of deep reflection on the Holy Cross events, on the whole issue of the Central African Vicariate and also of the whole African Mission, as such.

A character like Comboni could not certainly keep idle or just accommodate himself in the *niche of a good career*, as other *clever and wise* people would have done after such a tough African experience, though he would certainly have found it possible with his great natural and intellectual gifts. The words of Fr Francesco Oliboni: “*even though only one of you should remain, let not his confidence fail, nor let him withdraw*” were vividly imbedded in his heart and no one would be able to uproot them or divert him with the attractive prospects of a good career.

Having no specific plan or clear ideas yet, he continued being available for any undertaking his Superior and Father Don Nicola Mazza would entrust to him. Furthermore, he did not do this in a merely resigned and passive way, but actively explored how all this would possibly give rise to new solution for the African Mission. Hence, it was not a waste of time but a background to possible new inspirations from above and a help to mature his vision.

Strengthened by the openness of Fr Nicola Mazza towards the African Mission, he became, in his own right, the main animator and supporter of the missionary spirit within the Mazza Institute. He took every opportunity to enhance it and used his human and intellectual talents as a person and a priest for the African purpose, so much so that, though Fr Mazza was the rock and foundation behind all the missionary perspective of the Institute, Comboni felt very much free to link up with civil and religious authorities, prominent people, kings and queens, bishops, Propaganda Fide and even Pope Pious IX, that in the eyes of his confreres in the Institute and in Mazza’s eyes, as well, he seemed to be going his own way.

Comboni: a heart focused on Africa

It was clear that Comboni was like a horse that was only tamed with difficulty, since there were no bridles that fit the person, though he would never dare do anything that was not in line with the tasks and orders given to him by his Superior or act outside Fr Mazza’s missionary spirit. This attitude of his gave rise to all the gossiping behind his back and also bad

resolutions that, as he would complain about later, were *never done in his presence when he could have defended himself*.²⁶

His intense activity within the Mazza Institute, after the Holy Cross experience, started with the task given to him by his Superior. At the beginning of December 1860 he is in Naples on his trip to Aden with instructions from Fr Mazza to redeem from slavery a few African youths to be educated in Verona. Fr Lodovico da Casoria, who also founded an institution for the education of young Africans freed from slavery, was anxiously waiting and welcomed him and four African men courteously, though he did not share the purpose of his trip since Comboni was trying find out from Fr Lodovico the true story of how Fr Verri, who was rescuing and sending to Naples the African youths freed from slavery, incurred the indignation of all the foreign representations in Egypt.

*“Fr Lodovico da Casoria, a Franciscan, who in 1854 established two colleges in Naples. One was for boys, consisting of more than 80 young Africans; and the other for girls, with more than 120 African girls. The pious founder had these African boys and girls educated to prepare them as candidates for the missions, most of them having been ransomed from slavery by the great zeal of the late Fr Olivieri of Genova.”*²⁷

On 12 January 1861 he reaches Aden and on 18 March he is back in Verona with seven young Africans he rescued, plus Zeinab, a young Dinka girl who will help in the Mazza’s Institute on the issue of the Dinka language. At the time he was Vice-Rector of the Institute. The rest of the year he spent in trips related to his mission work and visited several places like Trieste, Vicenza and Naples. Particularly important was the trip to Germany for his first contact with the Cologne Society for the salvation of young Africans (*Jahresbericht des Vereines zur Unterstützung der armen Negerinnen*) with which he will, later on, deepen his relationship.²⁸

Letters written to him by Kirchner in Upper Egypt were pressing him to return to Africa without delay to make the expedition up the White Nile in the Stella Matutina, from Cairo to the Bari. However, since Fr Comboni was useful in the administration of the African Institute and in teaching the nine Gallas recently brought back from Aden, Fr Mazza refused to send

²⁶ The Writings, op. cit., 1042-1048

²⁷ Ibid., 2855, 477-478, 487-489, 495, 607-608, 625-626.

²⁸ Ibid., Bibliographical Notes, p. 2, Nos. 709-712

him. He thought that, for the time being, the other Missionaries of Verona stationed in Shellal could go instead.²⁹

Comboni kept up to date with the missionary work going on in the Central African Vicariate and his relationship with Propaganda Fide and even Pope Pius IX. He came to know from Cardinal Barnabò himself of Propaganda Fide of the appointment of Fr Johann Reinthaller, a Franciscan, as Pro-Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate. Moreover, the Cardinal expressed his readiness to assign to the Mazza Institute an area of the African Mission and that also the Superior General of the Franciscan would be willing to grant the Institute's wishes.

Aware that the mandate of this favourable Superior General would end in matters of months, it took no time for Comboni to write to Fr Nicola Mazza that he should immediately draft the *articles* on which to base this future co-operation in Central Africa to be submitted to Propaganda Fide, enclosing with these a request to the Franciscan Superior General for co-operation in the conversion of the Africans.³⁰

Comboni's spirituality

If Comboni was wasting no time in the practical African affairs, he was certainly not neglecting his interior life and spirituality. Without this all his work would have been meaningless. His spirituality was certainly not based on evanescent emotions bound to change according to the mood of the moment, but on the concrete and tough reality of the Paschal Mystery which Jesus had lived until his last breath on the cross while calling on his followers to do likewise.

The Holy Land visit in 1857, before the leap into the central African reality, showed, through his reflection on the various places and events of the life of Jesus, his blessed mother Mary and his Apostles, how deep the roots of his lived spirituality were. The Holy Cross experience, the death of several companions, his own health tested to the edge of the grave, focused him more and more on the spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an increasingly popular spirituality of his time.

Already during his formation in the Mazza Institute, the young Comboni was very much acquainted with the spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This spirituality grew more and more within himself, and that was the reason that he attended the beatification of St Margaret Mary Alacoque,

²⁹ Ibid., 631.

³⁰ Ibid., 652-654, 678-679.

a Religious of the Visitation Order, Apostle of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, born at Lhautecour, France, 22 July, 1647. She died at Paray-le-Monial, 17 October, 1690.

Comboni was already in Rome at the time and he could not miss being present in the Vatican for the celebration. It was precisely during this time that something extraordinary happened to him, unlocking the door of his long search for a solution to the African Mission.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Mazza Institute

"... that love of such a Heart, whose embrace is endless because divine"

(Fr Nicola Mazza,

Letter dated 9 January to Fr F. Angeleri)



The image reproduces the central panel of the "altar of devotions" in the Church of St Carlo, the spiritual centre of the male Institute of Fr Nicola Mazza.

It was Fr Mazza who commissioned the painting, along with two others, one on either side (Saint Ignatius sending Saint Francis Xavier on mission in the Indies and Saint Luigi Gonzaga in glory), from the artist Giovanni Caliarì (1802-1850) in 1833, the year in which Fr Pietro Albertini put the houses and the Church in the popular district of Santo Stefano at disposal of Fr. Mazza's young people.

The panel, clearly didactic, shows a student protected and accompanied by a Guardian Angel on an uphill route along which he meets St Joseph, Mary and - finally - Jesus, who indicates a further journey to the Father.

The theme of the Holy family, dear to the Verona founders and foundresses, especially to St Gaspare Bertoni, is combined here with that of the Sacred Hearts of Mary and Jesus.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was for Fr Mazza a clear interpretation key of the intervention of Providence in human affairs and became a pivot of the religious education of his students and collaborators: already since 1834 he obtained, among other things, permission to celebrate this feast every year, though such liturgical devotion had not yet received the recognition of the universal Church.



This devotion passed intact to the student Daniel Comboni, the generous disciple in love with Africa, who wanted the Institute he founded should be "dedicated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus".

CHAPTER TWO

THE PLAN

The Plan for the regeneration of Africa through Africans

“I believe this plan is the work of God, because the thought of it burst upon me on 15th September while I was doing the triduum to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque; and on 18th September, the day this Servant of God was beatified, Cardinal Barnabò finished reading my Plan. I worked on it for nearly 60 continuous hours... the plan takes in almost the whole of Africa, inhabited almost entirely by the black African people.³¹

Comboni was so confident that the inspiration of this plan came from God that he did not hesitate a moment to present it immediately to Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, and then, the following day to Pope Pius IX. His confidence and enthusiasm were overwhelming:

“This new plan of mine for the Association of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for the Conversion of Africa receives the approval of all... It seems that in future Cardinal Barnabò wishes to regulate all the foundations in the whole of Africa according to this plan. He wants me, immediately upon my return to Verona, to leave for France, in order to reach an agreement with Propaganda in Lyons and Paris, obliging them in the name of the Holy See to allocate whatever financial aid may be necessary... I will keep you, my dear Superior, (Fr Mazza) personally in touch with all this and I shall be happy to receive from you advice, orders and whatever you wish.

The second reason for his great joy was that, in the event that his plan should be approved by Rome, the Mazza Institute would be entrusted with an Apostolic Vicariate of its own without depending on other Religious Institutions:

As a corollary to my Plan, my dear Superior, I shall have a Vicariate Apostolic in Africa entrusted entirely and exclusively to the Mazza Institute, without it depending on any other authority but Rome alone...

³¹ The Writings, op. cit., 926; 922, **924**, 927, 930, 934, 935; 2621, 2941, 2948, 3050.

I got this idea across to the Cardinal by proposing the division of the existing Vicariate in two: that is: 1. of the Eastern Nile, 2. of the Western Nile. My beloved Superior will choose the one he wants; and I will make sure he gets it, after I have reached an agreement with the charitable Associations.

As a conclusion he invites his Superior, Fr Nicola Mazza, to start making preparations to send him to Africa by next spring, 1865, due also to his arrangement with Fr Lodovico da Casoria in Naples. The relationship with Fr Lodovico and the Superior General of the Franciscans, in the view of Comboni at this precise time, seemed quite promising regarding a possible division of the immense Vicariate and the assignment of part of it to the Mazza Institute.

Instead, the difficult relationship with his Superior, Fr Nicola Mazza and the Institute, for reasons not yet clear to him, were obviously causing deep anxiety to his sensitive heart. However, what confirmed Comboni in his undertaking regardless of the uncertain situation was that the Pope told him boldly that:

*“I am happy that you concern yourself with Africa. Now go to Paris and present the Plan to the Presidency of the Pious Association for the Propagation of the Faith. Then Cardinal Barnabò, according to the help France gives you, will write a circular letter to all the Vicars and Prefects Apostolic in Africa, and I will issue the Decree of approval... I give you my blessing, etc. **labora sicut bonus miles Christi**”... Fr Rossi, Antonelli’s confessor, Cardinal Barnabò and many others told me that my plan was the only means to plant the Faith in the centre of Africa.”*

These words “**Labora sicut bonus miles Christi**” (Work like a good soldier of Christ) re-echoed in the very depths of Comboni’s heart and their effect was to give him unshakable strength: “*Now that the Pope has told me that blessed: ‘**labora sicut bonus miles Christi**’, I am not afraid of anything.*” This was what really happened in spite of everything that would appear to threaten such an achievement for the good of Africa.

I do think that in this circumstance he also confirmed that hidden motto of his heart he will later on express with all his voice without any hesitation: “**Africa or death**”. After all this, on 4 December, 1864, he started his *Missionary Promotion trip* to introduce the *Plan* in Turin, Lyons, Paris, Cologne and London. In the same month the 1st edition in Italian of the *Plan* is printed in Turin.³²

³² The Writings, op. cit. p. 284, N. 127 (123) – THE PLAN, *ACR, A, c. 25/9 n. 1; Ref.:* N. 114 (110) – THE PLAN *ASC*, summary of the new project, nn.800-846.

Content of Comboni's Plan

The regeneration of Africa through Africans themselves was the main point of the whole of Comboni's Plan. Africans were supposed to be the main protagonists of this regeneration and he set out to gear clearly all his Institutions to this perspective, aware of the concrete situation of Africa at his own time regarding evangelization.

Even today a mysterious darkness still covers those distant expanses which go to make up the immensity of Black Africa... Despite countless such efforts carried out at very great human cost, the impenetrable veil, drawn for so many centuries across the face of Africa, has never been torn aside.

The summary of the new project, as it was presented to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, runs as follows: "THE PLAN, of the ASSOCIATION OF THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY FOR THE CONVERSION OF AFRICA, proposed to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide by Father Daniel Comboni of the Mazza Institute 1864."³³

"This project would, therefore, not restrict itself to the old-established borders of the Mission of Central Africa, which, for reasons set out above, have proved unhelpful, but it would rather include the whole African race; it would consequently extend and develop its activity over almost all the countries of black Africa.

Now, although the Holy Apostolic See has never succeeded in planting the faith with stability among the huge tribes of Central Africa, it has, however, been profuse in its loving concern for the Islands and Coastal regions which surround the great African peninsula and has founded there twelve Vicariates, nine Prefectures Apostolic and ten Dioceses. Indeed these flourish more or less splendidly.

- In the north there are the two Vicariates Apostolic of Egypt and Tunisia and the three Prefectures Apostolic of Upper Egypt, Tripoli and Morocco.

- In the west there are the five Vicariates Apostolic of Senegambia, Sierra Leone, Dahomey, Guinea and Natal and the three Prefectures Apostolic of Senegal, the Congo and the islands of Annabon-Corisco and Ferdinando-Pò.

³³ N. 114 (110) – THE PLAN ASC, summary of the new project, nn.800-846. (813-825, 829, 846)

- In the south there are the two Vicariates Apostolic of the Western and Eastern Districts of the Cape of Good Hope.
- In the south-east there is the Vicariate Apostolic of Madagascar and the three Prefectures Apostolic of Zanzibar, the Seychelles and the Nossibè, Ste Marie and Mayotte islands.
- In the north-east there are the two Vicariates Apostolic of Abyssinia and the Gallas.
- Further, among the ten existing Dioceses, those of Algiers in the north and of St Denis on Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean in the south-east are especially successful.

It is therefore natural that in order to put the suggested Project into effect, these Vicariates, Prefectures and Dioceses, already established around Africa, will have to be asked to help and co-operate.

The *Project / PLAN* submitted to the **Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith**, proposed the creation of innumerable Institutes of both sexes to surround the whole of Africa. These were to be carefully situated at the least possible distance from the interior of the continent, in stable and fairly civilised areas, in which **“both Europeans and Africans could live and work.”**

Institutes of men and women set up according to canonical regulations had to admit young African men and women and educate them in the *Catholic Religion and in Christian civilisation* and create one group of men and one of women that could gradually proceed and spread into the African interior *to plant the Faith and civilisation* they have received.

The religious Orders and the Catholic Institutes of men and women, approved by the Church or recognised or permitted by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, with the consent of the Heads and Superiors General were to be entrusted with the direction of these Institutes. With the permission of Propaganda, for the same purpose, new Seminaries for the African Missions, modelled on the existing Seminaries for the foreign Missions, suitable for Africa, had to be founded.

These Institutes were to be placed under the jurisdiction of the existing Vicariates and Prefectures Apostolic on the African Coast or other Vicariates and Prefectures the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide would decide to set up during the implementation of the *Project/Plan*. The personnel in charge of these Institutes would direct their students according to the rules and *spirit of their own Societies*, according to the requirements of the African interior.

The proposed groups of young African men and women were to be set as follows:

Groups of young African men: 1. *capable catechists*; 2. *capable teachers* instructed in important sciences adaptable to the countries of the interior; 3. *capable craftsmen*, with the necessary skills most useful in the interior: capable farmers, doctors, phlebotomists, nurses, pharmacists, carpenters, tailors, builders, shoemakers, etc.

The group of young African women: 1. *capable school mistresses*, to be educated in Religion and Catholic morals, so that they may spread these principles and their practice to the other African females on which depends almost entirely the regeneration of the great family of Africans; 2. *capable women teachers* and housewives who must promote the education of women in reading, writing, keeping accounts, spinning, sewing, weaving, caring for the sick and practising all the domestic skills most useful in the countries of Central Africa.

Comboni ends with expressions of praise and trust as follows: “*Praise and glory to the most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary to St Joseph, to the Holy Apostles, to St Francis Xavier to Blessed Peter Claver and to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque.*” He signed the document with: “*Fr Daniel Comboni of the Mazza Institute, Apostolic Missionary of Central Africa*”, ignoring all the troubles going on in the Mazza Institute in his regard, as he had no doubts he was acting on its behalf.

Comboni at a crossroads

Unexpectedly, at a certain point, Daniel Comboni found himself standing in the middle of a crossroads regarding to the future of the African venture. It was a very crucial time for him who thought he had in Fr Mazza and his Institute a stronghold from which to look at the future of Africa with confidence³⁴ and to have in Fr Lodovico da Casoria a trustful counterpart in the future sharing of the mission on the ground and in dealing with the concrete division of the Central African Vicariate in two, opening up the undertaking to a brighter future.

Neither of them could be counted on any more: the Mazza Institute had other critical problems to look after and the African Mission would have become too burdensome for it, while Fr Lodovico, though a holy man himself, showed himself to be totally unreliable and his institution incapable of responding to the real needs of the African Mission being totally unqualified and lacking organization and vision.³⁵

³⁴ The Writings, op. cit., 1292-1296.

³⁵ Ibid., 1286, 1287; 1301, 1308, 1309, 1314, 1317, 1330-1332, 1386.

Comboni too had spent much time and energy and finally found himself obliged to bear the entire burden alone. Only cardinal Alessandro Barnabò of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide was still there waiting for a possible positive outcome to all these uncertainties and confident that the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa presented to him was the only viable strategy for the whole African issue.

Surely, the positive welcome of so many Prelates, Bishops, outstanding Lay people and even the Pope, were all very encouraging factors in that seemingly hopeless situation. That *'labora sicut bonus miles Christi'* Pope Pius IX uttered in front of Comboni was indeed necessary for Comboni at this point to avoid withdrawing in discouragement and to carry on looking for possible solutions. Indeed, the solution came through rather unexpected ways,³⁶ which led to the decision to open two institutes for the African Mission: one for men and one for women on 1 June, 1867, under the patronage of the Bishop of Verona, Mgr Luigi di Canossa.

*I have the pleasure to announce to Your Most Reverend Eminence that the Distinguished Mgr Canossa has opened a Seminary in Verona for our dear African missions, which in better times will be called the Institute of the Good Shepherd for the Regeneration of Africa; he also opened a female Institute to train good women missionaries, and they are given an education exclusively suited and most appropriate for the specific needs of the African apostolate... The devout and able African missionary, Fr Alessandro Dalbosco, my former companion, has joined me, thanks to the efforts of the Bishop.*³⁷

While the male Institute for the African Missions took immediate effect, the opening of the Women's one was postponed for five years.

The attentive eye of Cardinal Barnabò did not waste time assessing the importance of this foundation and he took care that Comboni would not get entangled in too many things, however important for the African Mission, and fail in what was most important: the consolidation of this Institute:

*"Either bring me a certificate that guarantees you will live for 35 years, or put the College in Verona on a firm footing: in either of these two cases I will give you a mission in Central Africa: otherwise, if you don't set up the College properly for me and an accident occurs that carries you off to the other world, there's the fear that your Work will perish with you".*³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., Nos. 1395-1399; 1402.

³⁷ Ibid. To Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò, Verona, 11 June, 1867, Nos. 1416, 1417.

³⁸ Ibid., no. 2336, to Mgr Luigi Ciurcia - 18.11.1870.

Meanwhile, Comboni carried on with the projects previously started with the engagement of the African girls.³⁹ He engaged also the Camillian Institute in the African venture and founded three institutions in Cairo, Egypt, for the formation of African personnel for the interior of Africa.

1867 - Comboni Institutions in Italy and Cairo ⁴⁰

In Verona (Italy), in June 1867, Comboni founded, for this purpose, the male *Institute for the African Mission*, by diocesan decree. The same decree foresaw also the foundation of a missionary institute for women, as Comboni called it, *The Virgins of Charity*. However, after an initial trial in 1867, its foundation had to be postponed to 1872 and it was given the name of the *Pious Mothers of Africa*. In both Institutes, their members were to be taught in the same spirit. In order to provide financial support for the two Institutes, he also founded the *Association of the Good Shepherd*, with the same aim of *the Regeneration of Africa*. These Institutes were all under the governance and the supervision of Bishop Canossa of Verona, assisted by a Council of respectable ecclesiastical and secular personalities.⁴¹

At Propaganda Fide there was consensus on the foundation of Verona that would assure the stable future of the Mission of Central Africa and there was a great deal of pressure on Comboni to consolidate the institutions supposed to prepare suitable personnel for the African environment at human, physical and spiritual levels, properly trained to be able to face the difficult challenges they would be encountering. Hence, after the wise injunction of Cardinal Barnabò, Comboni concluded:

*“Since up to the present I have not found anyone who can assure me that I shall live another 35 years or even another day, it is necessary that I busy myself with the Verona College.”*⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., Nos. 1404-1414

⁴⁰ The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit. pp. 20-23.

⁴¹ La Missione Cattolica nel Sudan, Elisa Pezzi, Pie Madri della Nigrizia, Verona 1972, pp. 45-47.

- L'istituto Pie Madri della Nigrizia, Elisa Pezzi, Studi Comboniani/6, EMI Bologna, 1980. pp.13-21

- The Writings, Nos. 2884, 2893, Report to Card. A. Barnabò, 2 March 1872;

- Ibid. Nos. 2567, 2571, 2575, 2576, Report to the Society of Cologne – 6 June, 1871.

- The Writings, 4086, 4087, to Cardinal Alessandro Franchi – 15 April, 1876

⁴² The Writings, n. 2568, Report to the Society of Cologne - 6 June, 1871.

In Cairo, Egypt, Comboni founded three Institutes

- A. The house of the Sacred Heart, an Institute for male Africans. (Founded in 1867)
- B. The house of the Sacred Heart of Mary, an Institute for female Africans. (Founded in 1867)
- C. The house of the Holy Family, a school for African girls in Old Cairo. (Founded in 1869)⁴³

A) The Institute of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the conversion of Africa

Its primary goal was the moral and religious education of young Africans and their instruction in all the branches of knowledge and craft skills that seemed useful for Central Africa, the acclimatization of European missionaries and craftsmen to help the European missionaries to learn Arabic, the languages and dialects of the African tribes, to be a time of apprenticeship in this Institute, equivalent to a period of instruction and trial. The secondary aim of this Institute was the conversion to Christianity of the black people resident in Egypt.

The Institute of the Sacred Heart of Jesus included: 1. the Missionaries; 2. the Catechists and assistants; 3. the Catechumenate and the educational centre for Africans; 4. a small hospital for African males.

B) The Institute of the Sacred Heart of Mary for the regeneration of Africa

This was the Institute for African girls which was entrusted to the direction of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition. It was located close to the Nile. This Institute's primary and secondary aims were similar to that of the one for African boys, except for a few differences which had to be made for purposes of the education which aimed above all to train young Catholic girls to help with the apostolate among African women, both in Egypt and in Central Africa. This Institute consisted of: 1. the Sisters; 2. the African girl missionaries; 3. the Aspirants and the assistants; 4. The

⁴³ Ibid, Nos. 2480-2488; 2511-2513; 2524-2527; 2572-2574.

- The Writings, Nos. 2884, 2893, 2895, 2897, 2898, 2899, 2902, 2903, Report to Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò, "The Institutes of Verona and Egypt for the regeneration of Africa and Plan of Apostolic Action to be followed in reassuming the Vicariate of Central Africa", Rome, 2 March, 1872.

Catechumenate; 5. a small hospital for African women. In Cairo, then, Comboni was the ordinary Superior for the Sisters of St Joseph.

C) The Institute of the Holy Family

Its goal was to demonstrate and promote the talents, the dignity and the esteem of the Africans in Egypt and to administer the public school in Old Cairo, run by African women Missionaries (see B, above), for young girls of every race and religion. The teaching extended principally to Catholic faith and morals, to elements of the various branches of knowledge and to feminine skills, and was done in various languages. These three Institutes were under the jurisdiction of Mgr Luigi Ciurcia, Vicar and Delegate Apostolic of Egypt, with a decree dated 23 May, 1869.

On 21 December 1871, the *perpetual members* of the Verona College,⁴⁴ apart from many laymen and craftsmen of proven good conduct (without counting the two Camillians) were the following Secular Priests, who were living as religious:

In Old Cairo:

1. Fr Daniel Comboni, Superior
2. Canon Pasquale Fiore, (*Dep. Superior of the Institutes in Egypt*)
3. Fr Bartolomeo Rolleri
4. Fr Giuseppe Ravignani
5. Fr Elia Calis, cleric in theology
6. Fr Vincenzo Jeramolinski

Due to arrive with Comboni to Cairo within a month.

7. Fr Pietro Perinelli, *Comboni's secretary*
 8. Fr Giovanni Losi from Piacenza
 9. Fr Pietro Rossi (*then studying at the Verona College*)
 10. Fr Ilario Zanon (*then studying at the Verona College*)
 11. Fr Antonio Squaranti, *the Rector of the College*
- A total of eight missionaries operating in Africa.

On 2 March, 1872, the missionary priests in Cairo, including the Camillians, were:⁴⁵

1. Fr Daniel Comboni, Superior, aged 40
2. Fr Pasquale Fiore, Canon, Vice-Superior, aged 34
3. Fr Bartolomeo Rolleri, aged 30

⁴⁴ The Writings, no. 2631, To Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò – 21 December, 1871

⁴⁵ The Writings, 2898, 2906, 2907, 2914, Report to Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò – 2 March, 1872.

4. Fr Giuseppe Ravignani, aged 37
5. Fr Stanislao Carcereri, (*Minister of the Sick*), aged 29
6. Fr Giuseppe Franceschini, (*Minister of the Sick*), aged 25
7. Fr Vincenzo Jeramolinski, aged 32
8. Fr Giovanni Losi, aged 30
9. Fr Pietro Perinelli, aged 29
10. Fr Elia Calis Gerosolimitano, Cleric in Theology, aged 21

From the above date, the following personnel were available to resume responsibility for the Vicariate of Central Africa:

- 8 Missionary Priests.
- 9 Lay Assistants.
- 4 Sisters, one of whom is from Bethlehem.
- 20 African women teachers.

Of the four Stations founded in the past, only 3 remained, Shellal, Khartoum and Gondokoro, a possible operational base for extending the activities as far as the source of the Nile. Holy Cross had been destroyed.

The *Postulatum pro Nigris Africae Centralis*

(The *Postulatum* (proposal/petition) in favour of the black peoples of Central Africa).

It is important to devote some space to this issue, due to the significance of this proposal of Fr Daniel Comboni presented to the Assembly of the First Ecumenical Vatican Council in Rome, where the Bishops from all over the world were gathering together to discuss the most relevant issues concerning the Catholic Church in the XIX century.

The *Postulatum* was signed by hundreds of Prelates and submitted to Pope Pius IX by the Secretary of the Commission for Postulata, Mgr Alessandro Franchi. Pope Pius IX signed it and established that it should be addressed at the Council in the category of *de Missionibus Apostolicis*. (Apostolic Missions). Unfortunately, it could not be discussed because the Council was suspended. However, the fact that the Pope accepted the *Postulatum*, and agreed that it should be included in the section dealing with the Apostolic Missions, was an unprecedented achievement.⁴⁶ At that

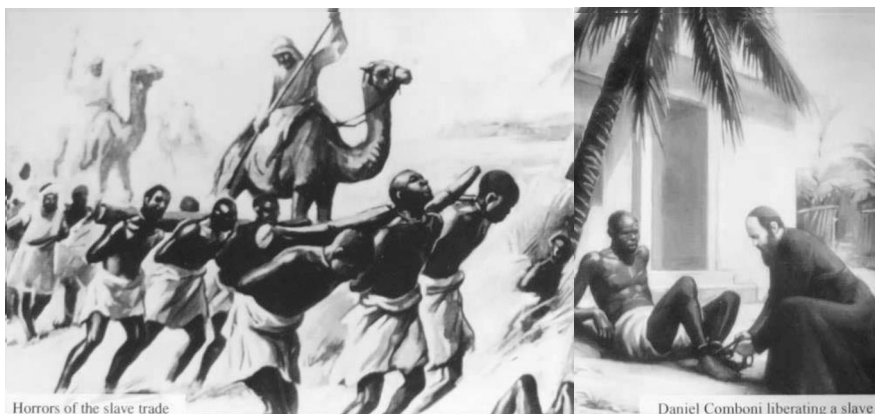
⁴⁶ The Writings n. 2412, To the Emperor Franz Josef – 2 March, 1871; Nos. 2479, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, Report to the Society of Cologne – 6 June, 1871; n. 2795, to Mgr Luigi di Canossa – 1872; n. 2881, to Canon G.C. Mitterrutzner – 28 February, 1872; n. 3884, to Cardinal Alessandro Franchi – 21 August, 1875; Nos. 2294-2309, Circular to the Council Fathers – 24 June, 1870; n. 2336, To Mgr Luigi Ciurcia – 18 November, 1870.

time, Fr Daniel Comboni could be present in the Council only because Bishop Luigi of Canossa took him as his personal expert in theology.

Comboni's pragmatic vision

Fr Comboni was elected Pro-Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa on 26 May, 1872. On 2 July, 1877 he was elected Vicar Apostolic and Bishop and his consecration took place on 12 August, 1877.⁴⁷

Once he consolidated his institutes in Cairo, the springboard towards Central Africa, he started implementing his plan by moving into present-day Sudan. His undertakings developed in Khartoum and in the area of El Obeid, Kordofan,⁴⁸ with works of exploration, geography, language study, evangelization and the care of slaves. The mission of Malbes,⁴⁹ a few hours travel from El Obeid, was a model of integration between evangelization and human promotion for freed slaves.



Malbes: Christian farming village of freed slaves

In Malbes, the Priest in charge of the mission was Fr Antony Dobale, born in Marago (Galla) probably in 1851, the first African Priest of Daniel Comboni, educated at the Mazza Institute in Verona,⁵⁰ who, unfortunately, died at the end of September, 1881, struck down by typhoid fever.

⁴⁷ http://www.comboniani.org/?page_id=8544

⁴⁸ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04152b.htm>

⁴⁹ The Writings Nos. 4499, 4500, 4527, 4528, 4529,

<http://www.comboni.org/en/contenuti/100901-10-malbes-mission>

- G. Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore*, op. cit., p. 13-14;

⁵⁰ The Writings, n. 743, to the President of the Society of Cologne – 4 October, 1863; n. 4722; Nos. 5086, 5212, 7146, to Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni – 24 April, 1878 – 21 June,

Of the group of African girls educated in Europe, two young ladies were selected by Comboni to open the new mission station in El Obeid in 1873; they were Bakhita Kuashe (*Fortunata Quaschè*), a Nuba by tribe, and Domitilla Bakhita, a Dinka. (Domitilla stayed with the Combonis until her death in Cairo in 1921). Bakhita Kwashes asked to become one of the Pious Mothers of Africa. In 1879 she began the two years of Novitiate of prayer, contemplation, and preparation that was required to become a Sister. On Easter Sunday, 1881, she took her vows. *Fortunata (Bakhita) Kuashe*⁵¹ was the first African woman to join the Female Institute. Mgr Comboni was finally able to realize his dream of regenerating *Africa through Africans*.

It is also worth mentioning Fr Daniel Sorur, (Farim Deng) a Dinka, whom Comboni had ransomed from slavery. He was born in 1859 or 1860 in Bahr el Ghazal. He was captured by Baqqara in 1871, when he was eleven or twelve and was given a new name, *Surur* (Sorur), which means happiness. He escaped from his owner and ran off to the mission of El Obeid where Fr Comboni welcomed him. He converted to Christianity and was baptized by Fr Comboni in 1874. In 1876 he was chosen to be sent to Verona (Italy) and in 1877 he was admitted to the *Collegium Urbanum* in Rome. He became the first Dinka to be ordained a Catholic Priest. He spent only eighteen months in Sudan, living mainly in Europe where he shared his experience as an African, talking especially about the evil of the slave trade, and advocating for Africa. Ill-health was probably the reason for his return to Cairo in 1891, where he remained during the final period of his life, teaching at the mission schools in Cairo, Suakin and Helwan. Sorur died in Cairo at the Abbasiyya Hospital on 11 January, 1900.⁵²

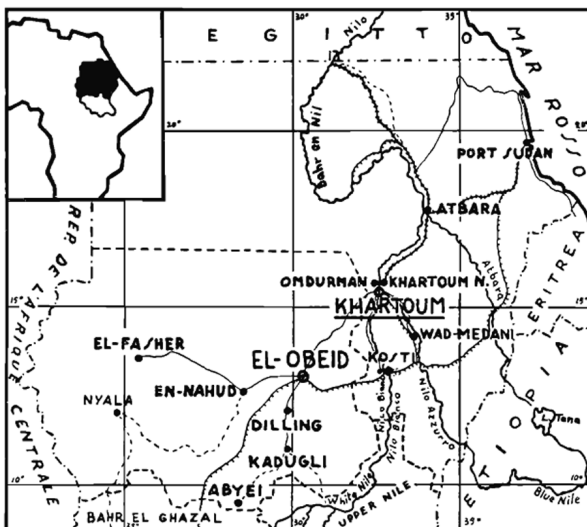
1878; 24 September, 1881; 6674, to his Father – 24, April, 1881. <http://www.comboniane.org/who-we-are/women-in-our-history/sr-maria-rosa-colpo>
<http://www.comboni.org/fr/contenuti/100229-egsd-egypt-sudan>;

⁵¹ The Writings, Nos. 754, 1542, 2013, 6714, 6717; when in 1896 a new Comboni school was opened in Aswan, she was appointed a member of the teaching staff. The new school being located in Aswan and not Shellal, most of the students in the new school were children of Egyptians. In 1897 some of them protested to the school authorities about the suitability of an African woman teaching their children, and they began taking them out. Bakhita was reassigned back to Cairo in 1898, and though she protested to the Vicar about what happened, she remained at the Colonia Antischivista of Zamalek. She died a year later in 1899. http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/bakhita_kwashe.html
 - Servant of the Gospel, op. cit., pp. 28-34.

⁵² The Writings, 4683-4685, to Cardinal Alessandro Franchi – 15 July, 1877; 4695-4697, *To Daniele Sorur and Arturo Morsal* – 23.7.1877; 6018, 6729; http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/sorur2_daniel.html

Mgr Comboni's vision, however, was not limited to Kordofan. Only financial reasons and personnel did not allow him to go beyond it. His gaze was turned towards the southern part of his huge Vicariate, especially the River Nile and the *Nyanza Lakes*. For this he asked the help of the Governor General Gordon Pasha in Khartoum who agreed upon it and to whom Mgr Comboni answered with words of thanks for the generous offer.⁵³

However, meanwhile, a letter of Cardinal Simeoni of Propaganda Fide had already informed Mgr Comboni that the Missionaries of Algiers⁵⁴ were on their way to the Nyanza Lakes and that new boundaries of Comboni's huge Vicariate were to be drawn up. To facilitate the Algiers Missionaries (of Bishop Lavigerie), Comboni had already sent a letter of recommendation to the Governor General of the White Nile and Equatoria to welcome them as if he were receiving him personally and his missionaries,⁵⁵ to whom those areas were entrusted and still belonged.



Propaganda Fide and the New Boundaries

Though Mgr Comboni and especially his Vicar, Fr Antonio Squaranti, were already studying with great care everything related to the exploration of those areas, in full obedience, though painfully, he answered:

“By the last post I received your esteemed letter of 14th August in which you command me to defer my expedition to the Nyanza Lakes for the time being. You were good enough to present just and prudent

⁵³ To Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni Khartoum, 21 June, 1878, The Writings, Nos. 5203-5212

⁵⁴ The “Missionaries of Africa” or “White Fathers”, founded by Mgr Lavigerie, Bishop of Algiers.

⁵⁵ To Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Khartoum, Khartoum, 23 August, 1878, The Writings, op. cit., Nos. 5374-5381.

reasons, and I comply with God's will, of which I have clear knowledge through my Superior. I have discontinued preparation for the expedition in the assurance that God will provide for these poor souls in the best way possible... Fr Squaranti and I are content in the knowledge that we are doing God's will, which is so clear, and we continue with our work."⁵⁶

However, when Mgr Comboni came to know, while in Rome, about the new Vicariate of the Missionaries of Algiers and its boundaries reaching the Bahr el Arab River, bordering with South Kordofan, it was a great shock for him and so he wrote to Cardinal Simeoni:

*"I read in **Missions Catholiques** that the northern confines of Mgr Lavigerie's missions are Bahar el Arab, (as that prelate wrote). Bahar el Arab has been **a great heartache** for me (the original word is **a big toothache**), and I shall not be rid of it until I die or until the Sacred Congregation takes other more appropriate and necessary decisions. But I trust in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, and in the wisdom, love and justice of the Holy See to put all this right.*"⁵⁷

Mgr Comboni was writing these reports to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide between 1878 and 1881 when the powerful countries of the time were already planning to pursue their interests in the African Continent. King Leopold II of Belgium had already founded the *International African Society* and in 1878 invited the explorer Henry Morton Stanley, who had already mapped the Congo River, to go back to Congo as his envoy, in view of economic goals. So did France on the western Congo basin. All this led to the Conference of Berlin (Germany), 1884-1885.

King Leopold II of Belgium convinced France and Germany that an overall agreement on common trade in Africa was in the best interests of all three countries. With support from the British and the initiative of Portugal, Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, called on representatives of Austro-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden-Norway, the Ottoman Empire and the United States to take part in the Berlin Conference, which started on 15 November 1884, and worked out a joint policy on the African continent. The Conference resolved to end the *Slave trade*, but the **General Act of the**

⁵⁶ To Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Khartoum, 30 September, 1878, Writings, op. cit. Nos. 5392, 5393 (5392-5399)

⁵⁷ To Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Khartoum, 29 August, 1881 Nuba map 6971-6976

Berlin Conference, in reality, was seen as the formalization of the *Scramble for Africa*.⁵⁸

Mgr Comboni died in Khartoum on 10 October, 1881 and the above developments at the political level were to give new shape to the African reality and spheres of political influence. He left a vast empty space in the missionary arena, but his legacy and vision did not die with him. In the following years the Mahdi⁵⁹ revolution would destroy everything he and his missionaries had achieved and many of his missionaries, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, had to undergo the long and excruciating period of the Mahdiyya captivity until the Mahdi army was defeated by the British General, Sir Herbert Kitchener in 1899.

Changes within the Institute for the African Missions

The time between the death of Bishop Daniel Comboni and the end of the Mahdiyya, was a time of change within the Institute he had founded. His successor, Mgr Francesco Sogaro, thought it was better to give the Institute a clear religious status. With this intention, he asked and obtained from the Holy See that the Institute be transformed into a Religious Congregation with the name of *Filii Sacri Cordis Jesu (FSCJ), Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*.

The direction of the Institute was given to the Priests of the Company of Jesus (*Jesuits*). They helped the Comboni Institute to strengthen their consecrated life with the three religious vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. The first religious profession took place in 1887.⁶⁰ Not all the former Missionaries of Comboni agreed to profess vows in the new congregation; nevertheless, they carried on working together.

The FSCJ Congregation (*Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*)

The Institute for the African Missions was founded in Verona on 1 June, 1867, by Fr Daniele Comboni under the authority of the Bishop of Verona, Mgr Luigi di Canossa, who issued the Decree of diocesan erection on 8 December, 1871.

⁵⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Conference

⁵⁹ El-Mahdi: Muhammad Ahmad bin Abd Allah (Arabic: الله ع بد ابن أحمد محمد ; August 12, 1844 – June 22, 1885) was a religious leader of the Samaniyya order in Sudan who, on June 29, 1881, proclaimed himself the Mahdi (or Madhi), the messianic redeemer of the Islamic faith. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Ahmad

⁶⁰ Mondo Comboniano, Giuseppe Franzelli, EMI 2004, pp. 19-20.

Rectors of the Institute

Fr Alessandro Dal Bosco	1867-1868
Fr Antonio Squaranti	1871-1877
Fr Paolo Rossi	1877-1879
Fr Giuseppe Sembianti (Stigmatine)	1880-1885

On 28 October, 1885 the Jesuit Fathers started the novitiate of the *Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, to transform the Institute into a Religious Congregation.

Jesuit Superiors

Fr Pietro Frigerio	1885-1887
Fr Antonio Voltolina	1887-1892
Fr Samuele Asperti	1892-1893
Fr Giacomo Mogni	1893-1897
Fr Antonio Voltolina	1897-1899

Meanwhile, the Rules and Constitutions were approved by the Holy See with the Pontifical Decree of Praise of 7 June, 1895. The General Chapter opened in Verona on 19 June, 1899, and the Jesuits withdrew from the direction of the Institute, which from that time onwards had its own Superiors General.

The first Superior General of the new-born Institute was Fr Angelo Colombaroli FSCJ, elected on 21 June, 1899.

Bishop Antonio Maria Roveggio FSCJ, direct successor of Mgr Sogaro and second successor of Mgr Comboni, a member of the newly constituted Institute of the *Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, was the one who took on the responsibility of leading the Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus into the new missionary adventure, by the end of year 1900.

CHAPTER THREE

A NEW MISSIONARY ENDEAVOUR 1900-1964

The first missionary endeavour for the evangelization of the South was the one which started with the erection of the *Central African Vicariate* and Comboni himself, while the second one would start in 1900 until the expulsion of the Expatriate Comboni Missionaries in 1964.

The second missionary endeavour for the South (1900-1964)⁶¹

With the battle of Kerreri, Omdurman (2 September, 1898), the British General, Sir Herbert Kitchener, leading the British-Sudanese-Egyptian army, defeated the Mahdi army led by Abdullah al Taashi (Khalifa) and sealed the final defeat of what was left of the Mahdist armies in the battle of Umm Diwaykarat on 25 November, 1899.⁶² After the battle of Omdurman, Kitchener won fame for winning and securing control of the Sudan and was given the title "Lord Kitchener of Khartoum".

Though the Mission of Khartoum had become property of the British Government after the above events, new opportunities for evangelization in the Sudan opened up. These new opportunities were taken up with great enthusiasm by Bishop Antonio Maria Roveggio FSCJ, the direct successor of Mgr Sogaro and second successor of Mgr Comboni, who did not waste time in acquiring the most essential equipment. First of these was the vessel *Redemptor* which, like the *Stella Matutina*, was needed to sail the river Nile and other possible navigable rivers of the South.

The firm desire of Mgr Roveggio and his successor Mgr Geyer,⁶³ was to return to those places that had witnessed the great missionary zeal of their predecessors, as Mgr Comboni himself always desired, but could never

⁶¹ The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit., Part One, Section Two, p. 33 & ff.

⁶² Omdurman, Kerreri, Abdullah al Taashi, Abdallahi ibn Muhammad
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Omdurman
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener,_1st_Earl_Kitchener
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Umm_Diwaykarat
<http://www.comboni.org/in-pace-christi/106263-angelo-colombaroli>

⁶³ G. Vantini, La Missione del Cuore, op. cit., p. 505.

achieve. The memories of the tribes along the White Nile and the great hospitality shown by the Bari tribe were very much alive in their hearts. The historical and political events of their time delayed that return, but the desire for a presence in the South was so great that it developed in a wonderful way. It was finally fulfilled when the Apostolic Prefecture of Bahr el Jebel was erected and could fully develop.

A very extensive study of this period of time was done by Fr Giovanni Vantini in *La Missione del Cuore, I Comboniani in Sudan nel ventesimo secolo*, (in Italian), by Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomia in *History of the Catholic Church in Southern Sudan, 1900-1995*, (in English) and by Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, *The Comboni Missionaries, an outline history 1867-1997* (in English and Italian) and others mentioned in the bibliography. I suggest then to refer to them for a deeper study, while I limit myself to giving an outline that may help us to acquire a general view of the historical development of the Comboni Mission and of the Church.

Britain's Southern Policy

During the above-mentioned development, it is worth mentioning briefly and in broad outline what the British policy was and how it also developed, since it was affecting directly all the undertakings at the level of evangelisation and planning.

From the beginning of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, the British sought to modernize Sudan by applying European technology to its underdeveloped economy and by replacing its authoritarian institutions with others that adhered to liberal English traditions. However, Southern Sudan's remote and undeveloped Provinces - Equatoria, Bahr el Ghazal, and Upper Nile - received little official attention until after World War I, except for efforts to suppress tribal warfare and the slave trade. The British justified this policy by claiming that the South was not ready for exposure to the modern world. To allow the South to develop along indigenous lines, the British, therefore, closed the region to outsiders. As a result, the South remained isolated. A few Arab merchants controlled the region's limited commercial activities while Arab bureaucrats administered whatever laws existed. Christian Missionaries, who operated schools and medical clinics, provided limited social services in Southern Sudan.

The earliest Christian missionaries were the Verona Fathers, founded by Daniel Comboni.⁶⁴ Other missionary groups active in the South included

⁶⁴ Comboni, Verona Fathers, Nelson's Dictionary of Christianity. edited by George Kurian.

Presbyterians⁶⁵ from the United States and the Anglican Church Missionary Society.⁶⁶ There was no competition among these missions, largely because they maintained separate areas of influence. The government eventually subsidised the mission schools that educated Southerners. Because mission graduates usually succeeded in gaining posts in the Provincial Civil Service, many northerners regarded them as tools of British imperialism. The few southerners who received higher training attended schools in British East Africa (present-day Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) rather than in Khartoum, thereby exacerbating the north-south division.

British authorities treated the three Southern Provinces as a separate region. The colonial administration, as it consolidated its southern position in the 1920s, detached the South from the rest of Sudan for all practical purposes. The period's *closed door* ordinances, which barred Northern Sudanese from entering or working in the South, reinforced this separate development policy. Moreover, the British gradually replaced Arab Administrators and expelled Arab merchants, thereby severing the South's last economic contacts with the North. The colonial administration also discouraged the spread of Islam, the practice of Arab customs, and the wearing of Arab dress. At the same time, the British made efforts to revitalize African customs and tribal life that the slave trade had disrupted. Finally, a 1930 directive stated that black people in the Southern Provinces were to be considered distinct from Northern Muslims and that the region should be prepared for eventual integration with British East Africa.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ - Presbyterianism: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterianism>
- Is a part of the Reformed tradition within Protestantism which traces its origins to the British Isles. Presbyterian churches derive their name from the Presbyterian form of church government, which is governed by representative assemblies of elders. The word "Presbyterian," when capitalized, is often applied uniquely to the churches that trace their roots to the Scottish and English churches. The Presbyterian denominations in Scotland hold to the theology of John Calvin and his immediate successors, although there are a range of theological views within contemporary Presbyterianism.

⁶⁶ **Church Mission Society:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Mission_Society
The **Church Mission Society (CMS)**, formerly in Britain and currently in Australia and New Zealand known as the **Church Missionary Society**, is a mission society working with the Anglican Communion and Protestant Christians around the world. Founded in 1799, the name Church Missionary Society began to be used and in 1812. The Principal missions are in Africa.

⁶⁷ History of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Britain's Southern Policy, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Anglo-Egyptian_Sudan

A new start (1900-1913)

What happened with the new start for the South at the time of the Vicar Apostolic Mgr Antonio Roveggio, was precisely what young Daniel Comboni envisaged during his first trip to the South of Sudan. The first mission was precisely among the Shilluk tribe. Then, for historical reasons which we will see later on, it developed in different geographical areas on the western side of the South: it went on to the Ndogo, Jur and Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal and other tribes of the area; to the Zande of Mupoi, Tombura/Yambio and other related tribes; finally, to the Bari of Juba and other tribes of Equatoria and to the tribe of the Nuer of Yoonyang (present-day Rubkona).⁶⁸

Things took this path because of the British *Mission Spheres*⁶⁹ regulations issued in 1905. The purpose of these spheres, according to the British Rulers, was to prevent competition and keep order and peace among missionaries belonging to different Church Denominations, but also to prevent the whole territory being occupied by non-British Missionary Societies. The regulations also included other legal issues related to land

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 91, 93, 278-280, 69-70, 381-385, 352, 366-369.

⁶⁹ - G. Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore*, Op. Cit., pp. 74-75. "*On 7 January, 1903, in front of the Governor General Wingate - present Lord Cromer - there were the representatives of the three missionary societies: Fr Banholzer (accompanied by Fr Ohrwalder) of the Catholic Church; the Reverend Llewellynn Gwynne of the Anglican Church; the Rev John Kelly Giffen for the Presbyterian Church of America. The discussion was extremely animated. Wingate then divided the Sudan in areas ... The official document, known as "Mission Spheres System", was published in 1905.*"

- M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile, The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934*, Cambridge University Press 1986, Education and health, 1898-1919, "the Mission Spheres", p. 253.

- "*In 1905 the government issued regulations governing missionary work in the Sudan. No station was allowed in any area north of the 10th parallel that was recognized by the government as Moslem. South of that line, "spheres" were allotted...*

In the 1905 division, most of the Bahr-al-Ghazal was allotted to the Catholics, the Americans were assigned the Upper Nile Province east of the Bahr-al-Zaraf and north of the 7°30' parallel, while the remainder of the south was assigned to 'British Missionary Societies'. Missionaries were 'not permitted to act as intermediaries between natives and government'.

- "*Trading in any form was forbidden. Missions could not own land. It has been postulated that Wingate published the regulations at this time 'simply because it was convenient to incorporate them in the same document as that which partitioned the whole of Southern Sudan into exclusive denominational spheres'. Certainly the spheres were drawn up not only to prevent competition among missionaries but also to ensure that the dilatoriness of the CMS would not result in the occupation of the whole region by non-British missionaries. The 'sphere system' later gave rise to serious problems.*"

property and trading. North of the 10th parallel was considered Moslem territory and the area south of it was given to the Christians, either to the Catholics or other Protestant Denominations with specific boundaries.

The Catholics were given the western side of the Upper Nile River and most of the Bahr el Ghazal region, whereas the Eastern bank was given to the Protestant Churches. The *Mission Spheres* policy was never fully accepted and, at a later stage, became quite controversial; for the Roman Catholic Church it was *anathema*.⁷⁰ As for the Catholic Mission, it immediately started developing the Shilluk and the Bahr el Ghazal area with new mission foundations.

The new Pioneers

Mgr Antonio Maria Roveggio (1858-1902).

Mgr Antonio Maria Roveggio, the second successor of Comboni and the one who started the new venture to the South of Sudan, left Khartoum on 13 December, 1900, with the *Redemptor*, together with some missionaries and, leaving aside the Nuba Mountains where the populations were still in rebellion against the foreign government, he sailed straight up the river Nile. He founded LUL station (12 April, 1901), among the Shilluk tribe. In December, 1901, he made his second trip to the South, with the intention of reopening the old station of Gondokoro (abandoned in 1862).

The British Government of the Protectorate of Uganda, which was then administering the area, did not allow him to found any new stations there. He returned to Omdurman (April, 1902) seriously weakened by malaria fever. Despite the fever he departed by train for Egypt to prepare other foundations in the South. Death overtook him at the train station of Berber (2 May, 1902). **Wilhelm Banholzer** temporarily took his place as Apostolic Administrator until the election of the new Vicar Apostolic, while residing in Lul.

Franz-Xaver Geyer (1860-1943)

The appointment of Fr Franz-Xaver Geyer was approved by the Holy Father on 28 August, 1903: *Francis-Xaver Geyer, Titular Bishop of Trocmad i.p.i., Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa*. He intended to open

⁷⁰ Richard Owen, *Sudan Days, 1926-1954*, University Library Durham, ed. Duff Hart-Davis, 2015, p. 149.

missions in Bahr el Ghazal, and at least one station in Uganda. But the area of Uganda was under the government of Entebbe, and so it was not possible. Instead, Boulnois Bey, Governor of Bahr el Ghazal, was actually looking for a mission in his Province.⁷¹ Mgr Geyer accepted immediately and in less than fifteen days he prepared the first Comboni expedition to Bahr el Ghazal.

Missionary methodology: to Civilize or to Evangelize?

At the beginning of the XX Century, just when the new missionary adventure had restarted in Southern Sudan, the question of missionary methodology became rather acute because of two different approaches to evangelization.⁷² The issue, already a matter of discussion among the confreres of Khartoum, reached its hottest point between the newly elected Apostolic Vicar Mgr **Franz-Xaver Geyer** and Fr **Antonio Vignato**. Mgr Geyer maintained that, before *Evangelizing people* it was necessary to *civilize them*. Only at later stage would evangelization find the proper ground to germinate and develop. This stand was partly due to the fact that in the mission where there were Shilluk (Lul) and Jur (Mbili) it was thought that quick evangelization would be seen by the chiefs and the people as a threat to uproot the tribal traditions and that this would ruin the good relationship Mgr Geyer had created with the chiefs.

Fr Vignato, (in Kayango), who had already started the regular Catechumenate, instead, was of the opposite approach and thought it was good to start immediately with evangelization, and that people, by becoming Christian, would also become more civilized. His stand was also due to the fact that Kayango mission was among the Ndogo, Golo and other tribes who were not as inflexible as the Shilluk and Jur tribes. The dispute between the two missionaries went on with Fr Vignato telling Mgr Geyer that he had come to Africa *to evangelize*, if not, he would have just stayed home. Mgr Geyer contacted Propaganda Fide on the matter and the answer was: “*translate into vernacular the texts of prayers and the Catechism of the Catholics in England (Christian Doctrine) and intensify the religious instruction to those who dwell on the ground of the mission, the casual workers and those who come to sell goods.*” This was the end of the controversy, at least for Kayango.

⁷¹ Lilian Passmore Sanderson, Neville Sanderson, Education, religion & politics in Southern Sudan, 1899-1964, Ithaca Press London, Khartoum Univ. Press, 1981, p. 56.

⁷² Centenary of the Mission in Bahr El Ghazal, main historical events, 1904-2004, Fr Salvatore Pacifico mcccj, p.16.

Fr Vignato was prominent for missionary methodology based on his own experience and that of other missionaries of his and other institutes working in Africa. He prepared the liturgical books in the vernacular and a handbook where he gave methodological lines to get in touch with people in order to create sympathy and interest in the faith. He insisted on the importance of the study of the language of different peoples, understanding the local cultures and giving attention to people. He gave clear instructions to Christians on how to live their faith and morality in a pagan world. He taught how to follow the Christian communities with only a few pastoral agents and how to organize the visits to the villages. He promoted the African Ministerial Priesthood, the Religious Life for men and women and gave great importance to the formation of Catechists. In his old age, he retired to Verona and wrote a documented history of the Comboni missions, which is still a fundamental text.

In 1915, Mgr Geyer dealt with the mission methodology in his book in German, *Handbook for the Missionary of the Apostolic Vicariate of Khartoum*, while Fr Vignato, in 1935, circulated his own booklet in Italian, *Collection of Advice and Doctrine for the practical use of the young missionary*⁷³

Mgr Paolo Tranquillo Silvestri (1867-1949)

He was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Khartoum to succeed Bishop Geyer, who had resigned (1924). In 1930 he too resigned and retired. His authority included also the area which would later become the MISSION SUI JURIS OF KODOK.

The Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa (1846-1913)

The Vicariate of Central Africa, *the largest Vicariate in the world*, as Mgr Comboni called it, underwent many changes throughout its history, in regards to its boundaries, starting from the time of Mgr Comboni. In the XX century, it underwent many other changes and internal subdivisions into smaller Apostolic Vicariates and Apostolic Prefectures, entrusted to

⁷³ Handbuch für die missionäre des Apostolischen Vikariats Khartoum, Franz-Xaver Geyer, 1915.

- Raccolta di suggerimenti e dottrine per utilità pratica del giovane missionario, P. Antonio Vignato FSCJ, Missioni Africane Verona, 1935.

- <http://www.comboni.org/fr/contenuti/100923-padre-antonio-vignato>

- <http://www.comboni.org/en/contenuti/101224-how-we-work>

the Comboni Institute,⁷⁴ except for Malakal (Mission Sui Juris of Kodok) which was entrusted to the Mill Hill Institute.

Ordinaries of the *Vicariate of Central Africa*

Mgr Annetto Casolani, Apostolic Vicar	1846-1847
Fr Massimilian Ryllo S.J., Apostolic Pro-vicar	1847-1848
Mgr Ignatius Knoblecher, Apostolic Pro-vicar	1848-1858
Mgr Matthew Kirchner, Apostolic Pro-vicar	1858-1861
Fr John Reinthaler, Apostolic Pro-vicar	1861-1862
Mgr Pasquale Vuicic, Apostolic Administrator	1862-1866
Mgr Luigi Ciurcia, Apostolic Administrator	1866-1872
Mgr D. COMBONI, Apostolic Pro-vicar	1872-1877
Mgr D. COMBONI, Apostolic Vicar	1877-1881
Mgr Francesco Sogaro, Apostolic Vicar	1882-1894
Mgr Antonio Roveggio, Apostolic Vicar	1895-1902
Mgr Franz Xaver Geyer, Apostolic Vicar	1903-1913

Divisions of the *Vicariate of Central Africa*

From 1886 onwards, the Vicariate of Central Africa was increasingly called The Apostolic Vicariate of Sudan. The various *Missionary Circumscriptions* into which it was divided all became Dioceses with the erection of the Church hierarchy in Sudan in 1974. The data are documented according to their historical development.

The Apostolic Vicariates (1913-1964)

It is now worth mentioning the various Circumscriptions, Prefectures and Vicariates which were established during the history of the evangelization of the South. This will also become a link with the Comboni Circumscription of South Sudan itself (*Representation / Delegation and then Province*) of which I will speak dealing with the period from 1981 onwards. The political developments during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium were mainly the reason why the Circumscriptions happened to be so defined within the South. The borders North-South at the time of the independence of Sudan in 1956 and the erection of new Dioceses within

⁷⁴ Congregation of the Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Catalogo, January, 1977, pp. 5-6. (Fr Aldo Gilli, FSCJ)

the South resulted in the arrangement of diocesan boundaries we have at present.

The Apostolic Vicariate of Khartoum ⁷⁵

With the new divisions, out of the former *Central African Vicariate*, new Apostolic Vicariates and Apostolic Prefectures came into existence. The Apostolic Vicariate of Khartoum (now an Archdiocese), was erected on the 30 May, 1913. After two later subdivisions, it was made an Archdiocese on 18 November, 1974.

Ordinaries

Mgr Franz Xaver Geyer, Apostolic Vicar	1913-1922
Mgr Antonio Stoppani, Apostolic Administrator	1922-1924
Mgr Paolo Tranquillo Silvestri, Apostolic Vicar	1924-1930
Mgr Francesco Saverio Bini, Apostolic Vicar	1930-1953
Mgr Agostino Baroni, Apostolic Vicar	1953-1981

The Apostolic Prefecture of Bahr el Ghazal ⁷⁶

(now the Diocese of Wau)

It was erected on the 30 May, 1913. Later it became an Apostolic Vicariate which included also the North of Uganda. After several subdivisions, it became a Diocese on 8 November, 1974.

Ordinaries

Mgr Antonio Stoppani, Apostolic Administrator	1913-1917
Apostolic Vicar	1917-1933
Mgr Rudolf Orler, Apostolic Vicar	1933-1946
Mgr Edoardo Mason, Apostolic Vicar	1947-1960
Mgr Ireneo Wien Dud, Apostolic Vicar	1960-1974

Mgr Antonio Stoppani (1873-1940), born at Lecco, Como, (Italy) was first a mission Procurator in Khartoum from 1902 to 1910, when he went to Wau, again as Procurator. In 1913, when the southern part of the *Vicariate of Central Africa* was separated from Khartoum, Fr Stoppani was appointed Apostolic Prefect and became a Bishop in 1917, when the Prefecture became a Vicariate. For the first ten years his responsibility extended to the

⁷⁵ Catalogo, op. cit., January, 1977, p. 6.

⁷⁶ Catalogo, op. cit., January, 1977, p. 7.

- Centenary of the Mission of Bahr El Ghazal, op. cit., p. 18 & ff.

whole of Equatoria and Northern Uganda; the Ugandan part was detached in 1923 and included Eastern Equatoria (Bahr el Jebel). Bishop Stoppani developed Bahr el Ghazal and Mupoi area in his twenty-year term of office. In 1933 he resigned and retired to Italy.⁷⁷

Mgr Stoppani was considered *a gentleman and a man of culture at the service of the Missions*. With his appointment, the mission of Bahr el Ghazal developed considerably. Elementary, intermediate and secondary schools were opened. He enjoyed the sympathy of the local population and the approval the government for the institution of workshops with modern machinery, for the formation of capable artisans and prepared many youth and families for conversion. This added to the esteem for the mission on the part of government authorities. Appreciation and esteem were also shown by Major E. W. Witley, Governor of Bahr el Ghazal during his visit⁷⁸.

Mgr Rudolf Orlor (1892-1946), born at Vulcan, Michigan, U.S.A. of Italian parents and raised in Trento (Italy) was a missionary in Bahr el Ghazal, at Kayango, Wau and Mbili from 1921 to 1929; back in Italy, he was elected Assistant General in 1931 and appointed Apostolic Vicar of Bahr el Ghazal in December 1933. He died in Wau not yet 54.⁷⁹

Mgr Edoardo Mason (1903-1989), born at Limena, Padua, went to England soon after his ordination (1926) and mastered the English language; in 1927 he arrived in Bahr el Ghazal and was involved in teaching and organizing schools at primary and intermediate level: one of them was Bussere Intermediate (1933); another one was the *Normal School* at Mupoi. In 1935 he was transferred for one year to the Shilluk missions. In 1936 he returned to Wau as director of Wau and Bussere schools. In 1938 he was sent to U.S.A. to open some centres for the Verona Fathers in that country. He was back in Wau before the beginning of World War II in 1940 and was Education Secretary for Bahr el Ghazal. On the death of Bishop Orlor, he was appointed Bishop of Wau (1947). In this capacity he developed education and opened new stations, especially among the Dinka. In 1949 the southern part of the Vicariate became the Apostolic Prefecture of Mupoi under Mgr Domenico Ferrara. In 1960 Bishop Mason became the first Bishop of El Obeid. In 1964 he had to leave the Sudan and retired. Now in his early seventies, he spent five years in Kenya (1972-77). He died

⁷⁷ Vittorino Dellagiocoma, *Catholic Missionaries in Southern Sudan 1900-1964*, (revised reprint), Khartoum 1998, p. 49.

- G. Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore*, op. cit., pp. 249-251.

- Catalogo, op. cit., January, 1977, p. 6.

⁷⁸ The Comboni Missionaries, *An Outline History*, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

⁷⁹ V. Dellagiocoma, *Catholic Missionaries in Southern Sudan 1900-1964*, op. cit., p.37

in Verona.⁸⁰

Apostolic Prefecture of Bahr el Gebel⁸¹
(now the Archdiocese of Juba)

Bahr el Gebel, detached from the Circumscription of Northern Uganda, became an Apostolic Prefecture on 14 July, 1927, becoming an Apostolic Vicariate on 12 April, 1961. With the establishment of the Catholic hierarchy on 12 December, 1974 Juba became an Archdiocese with the suffragan Dioceses of Wau, Tombura, Rumbek and Malakal.

Ordinaries

Mgr Giuseppe Zambonardi, Apostolic Prefect	1927-1938
Mgr Stefano Mlakic, Apostolic Prefect	1938-1950
Mgr Sisto Mazzoldi, Apostolic Prefect	1950-1951
Apostolic Vicar	1951-1964

Mgr Antonio Vignato (1878-1954), born at Gambellara, Vicenza, (Italy) was a pioneer missionary priest in Bahr el Ghazal, founding and directing the station of Kayango from 1904 to 1911. He was then called to direct the newly founded missions in Northern Uganda (1911-1919), where he supervised the opening of Gulu, Ama, Ngal, Kitgum and Moyo. Elected Assistant and Vicar General of the Society in 1919, he was appointed, in 1923, head of the new Prefecture of Equatorial Nile, which included Northern Uganda and Eastern Equatoria (Bahr el Jebel). The latter Province was erected an autonomous Prefecture in 1927 while Mgr Vignato continued to develop the Northern Ugandan section.

Mgr Giuseppe Zambonardi (1884-1970), born at Gardone, Brescia, (Italy) was first a missionary priest in Uganda and a founder of Ama mission station (1911-1920). After three years (1920-1923) of activity in the newly-founded Rejaf,⁸² he was called again to Uganda to be the religious Superior of the Verona Fathers there. In 1927 Eastern Equatoria was made an autonomous Apostolic Prefecture and Fr Zambonardi was appointed *Prefect*. As such he developed the existing stations of Rejaf, Torit and Isoke and opened Palotaka, Okaru and Kapoeta; he extended the pastoral care to Lafon and, by agreement with the Protestants (1935), to Yei

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 32.

⁸¹ Catalogo, op. cit., January, 1977, p. 7.

⁸² Passione per l’Africa, Mario Cisternino, Urbaniana University Press, 2001, pp. 391-394.

with residence in Juba, having obtained an exception to the *spheres policy*, the western bank of the Nile being a CMS zone. As a result of the Italian war in Ethiopia, the British Government demanded his replacement by a non-Italian Apostolic Prefect; consequently, in July 1938, Mgr Zambonardi left the Sudan.⁸³

Mgr Stefan Mlakic ((1884-1951), born in Fojnica, Bosnia, worked in Khartoum (1920-1927) as director of the school and Administrator in Port Sudan (1931-1933), Yoynyang (1927-1931, 1933-1937) and Malakal (1937-1938). In 1938 he was appointed Apostolic Prefect of Bahr el Jebel and resided in Juba. In 1950 he retired and died in Cairo a few months later.⁸⁴

Mgr Sisto Mazzoldi (1898-1987), born at Nago, Trent, (Italy) was a Diocesan Priest in his home Diocese for six years (1922-28); soon after becoming a Comboni Missionary he went to Southern Sudan. He re-opened and developed Kapoeta (1931-46); he was a Rector of Okaru Minor Seminary (1946-7) and Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Bahr el Jebel Vicariate (1947-50) and then Apostolic Vicar of the same territory up to the expulsion (1964).⁸⁵

The Mission Sui Juris of Kodok

(now the Diocese of Malakal)

It was erected on 10 January, 1933 and was given to the Mill Hill Fathers as an Apostolic Prefecture on 4 August, 1938. It was made a Diocese on 18 November, 1974.

Ordinaries⁸⁶

Fr Matteo Michelon, Superior <i>Sui Juris</i>	1933-1934
Mgr Francesco Saverio Bini, ApoSt Admin.	1934-1938
Mgr John Ambrose Wall, Apostolic Prefect	1938-1947
Mgr John Henry Hart, Apostolic Prefect	1947-1962
Mgr Herman Gerard Te Riele, Apostolic Prefect	1962-1964

Fr Matteo Michelon (1885-1964), born at Bassano (Vicenza) was first a missionary in Egypt (1922-32) (Helouan, Cairo), in the years 1908-1912; arriving in Bahr el Ghazal in 1912 he worked first at Mbili, and then founded the mission of Rafili (1914); he spent the rest of his life in Italy,

⁸³ V. Dellagiocoma, Catholic Missionaries in Southern Sudan 1900-1964, op. cit., p. 54.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 34.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 32

⁸⁶ Catalogo, op. cit., January, 1977, p. 6.

except for a period in Egypt (1922-32) and in the Sudan: appointed Superior of Kodok (later Malakal) Prefecture in July 1933 he accepted reluctantly and resigned, for health reasons, in 1935. He was then 50 and actually lived to be 79. He clearly shied away from the responsibility of the new job. The Shilluk area was again administered by the Bishop of Khartoum until it was entrusted to the Mill Hill Missionaries in 1938.⁸⁷

Mgr Francesco Saverio Bini (1886-1953) was born in 1886 in Medicina (Bologna) in 1886, entered the Diocesan Seminary and from there joined the Comboni Institute in 1904, after he read a report of Mgr Roveggio on the Mission of Central Africa. After his religious profession (1906), he obtained a degree in philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University. He was ordained Priest in 1908. In 1930 the Apostolic Delegate, Mgr A. Hinsley, proposed him to the Holy See as Vicar Apostolic of Khartoum, in succession to Archbishop Silvestri. Appointed titular Bishop of Vallis and Apostolic Vicar on 29 November of that same year, he was consecrated Bishop on 7 December and, in January, 1931, took up his post. In 1933, following the resignation of Fr Michelon at the *Sui Juris Mission* of Kodok, he accepted that responsibility as Apostolic Administrator.⁸⁸

The Apostolic Prefecture of Mupoi *(now the Diocese of Tombura)*

It was erected into an Apostolic Prefecture on 3 March, 1949, with the territory taken from Bahr el Ghazal and Bahr el Gebel and, later on became a Diocese based in Tombura on 18 November, 1974.

Ordinaries⁸⁹

Mgr Domenico Ferrara, Apostolic Prefect 1949-1974

Mgr Domenico Ferrara (1905-1998) was born at Zeme, Pavia, was a missionary among the Zande people (Yubu, Mupoi) and for a short period also in Wau and Rafili, between 1930 and 1939. Transferred to Cincinnati, U.S.A., he was Parish Priest there and adopted American citizenship. In 1949 he was appointed Prefect Apostolic of the newly erected Prefecture of Mupoi, embracing all Parishes and activities among the Zande. He was

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 34

⁸⁸ G. Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore*, op. cit., pp. 491

⁸⁹ *Catalogo*, op. cit., January, 1977, p. 7.

entrained in the general expulsion of 1964, and in 1966 was consecrated Bishop. He continued to assist Zande Priests and Christians and visited Zande refugees in Zaire and The Central African Republic.⁹⁰

In the Prefecture, he appointed Fr Martin Penisi, a Zande Priest, as his Vicar. (His failure to resign from his position as Apostolic Prefect would cause resentment among the Zande clergy, who felt the desire to exercise leadership in the Church). In 1966 he was appointed and consecrated Bishop, and continued to provide assistance to the refugees. He put the Zande Priest Jerome Bidai in charge of the translation of the liturgical texts into the Zande language and financed and took care of their printing in Vigevano. In 1972 the Diocesan Priest Joseph Gasi Abangite was appointed as his Vicar General. In 1975, with a special permit from the Sudanese President Nimeiry, he was present at the consecration of the Sudanese Bishops, among whom there was also Mgr Joseph Gasi, his successor. In 1986 the Diocese of Mupoï changed its name to the *Diocese of Tombura-Yambio*, the two main centres of the region)⁹¹

Apostolic Vicariate of Rumbek

(now Diocese of Rumbek)

The district of Rumbek, with territories taken from the Circumscriptions of Mupoï and of the Apostolic Vicariate of Bahr el Gebel, was made an Apostolic Vicariate on 8 July, 1955, and a Diocese on 8 November, 1974.

Ordinaries⁹²

Mgr Ireneo Dud, Apostolic Vicar	1955-1960
Mgr Lino Tiboi, Apostolic Administrator	1960-1972

Comboni Institute and Superior Generals

The *Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus FSCJ (Filii Sacri Cordis Jesu)*

Superior Generals

Fr Angelo Colombaroli	21.6.1899
Fr Federico Vianello	4.10.1909
Fr Paolo Meroni	25.9.1919

⁹⁰ V. Dellagiacoma, *Catholic Missionaries*, op. cit., p. 20.

⁹¹ G. Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore*, op. cit., pp. 718-720

⁹² *Catalogo*, op. cit., January, 1977, pp. 7-8. (P. Aldo Gilli, Fscj)

In 1923 the FSCJ Institute split into two: the new German speaking one took the name of MFSC (Missionari Filii Sacri Cordis), the one with Verona as its centre carried on with the same name FSCJ.

Fr Paolo Meroni	17.9.1925
Fr Pietro Simoncelli	5.9.1931
Fr Antonio Vignato	2.9.1937
Fr Antonio Todesco	3.5.1947
Fr Antonio Todesco	2.7.1953
Fr Gaetano Briani	22.7.1959

Comboni Superiors of Mission/Regionals (1913-1964)

The term *Superior of Mission* was used during the time when the *Central African Vicariate* was the only mission of the *Verona Institute* and during the division of this same Vicariate into other Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions. The sequence was: Superior General, Superior of Mission and Local Superior.⁹³ The term, *Circumscription Superior*, came into use in 1951 with the creation of other Comboni Circumscriptions in the world.⁹⁴ The term *Regional Superior* came into use in 1958, when the above-mentioned Comboni Circumscriptions were called *Regions*.⁹⁵ The same happened within the Sudan.

Bahr el Ghazal (from 1913)

Fr Giuseppe Bernabe' (1876-1922), born at Ischia, Trent, (Italy) was a mission Procurator in Cairo (1905-1909) when he was elected Assistant General and Novice Master (1909-1919). Sent to Wau (1920) as Regional Superior, he died after a short illness in 1922.

Fr Angelo Arpe (1889-1946), New Regional in 1923⁹⁶. Born at Monte Rosso, Genova, he was the founder and *patriarch* of Mboro. He worked also at Kayango, before and after the Ndogo were removed from that area. He was murdered in Mboro on All Saints' evening, November, 1, 1946, the day Fr Arkanjelo Ali celebrated his first Mass there.

⁹³ Fr Paolo Meroni, 8 December 1923, *La voce della Congregazione*, Scuola Tipografia Nigrizia, Verona, 1957, "*Regarding the government of the Institute*", p. 58-64. Ibid. 20 June 1924, "Major Superior", p. 71.

⁹⁴ Catalogo, op. cit., 1 March, 1951, "Circoscrizioni" = "Circumscriptions"

⁹⁵ Catalogo, op. cit., 15 November, 1958, "Regions"

⁹⁶ G. Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore*, op. cit., p. 312

Fr Ercole De Marchi (1884-1958), born at Resana, Treviso, (Italy) was a missionary in Uganda for most of his priestly life (1924-1934, 1949-1958). In October, 1934, he was sent to Wau as Regional Superior of the Comboni Missionaries. In 1935 he established his residence at Bussere. At the expiry of his term (1937) he was transferred to Italy and later again to Uganda, where he died.

Fr Domenico Seri (1910-1991), born at Comurano, Macerata, (Italy) was a missionary in Bahr el Ghazal, Mupoi and Brazil; he was in Raja and Mboro (1936-1949) and was Regional Superior; in 1950 he was transferred to Mupoi and in 1953 to Brazil.

Fr Francesco Colombini (1914-1979), born at Civezzano, Trent, (Italy), he was a missionary priest in Bahr el Ghazal from December, 1945 to mid-1953; he was first assigned to Kwajok and then to Wau as Procurator. He was later was appointed Regional Superior of the Comboni Missionaries.

Fr Gaetano Briani (1900-1984), born near Verona, he went to Bahr el Ghazal in 1934; after a short period in Dem Zubeir he was appointed Regional Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Bahr el Ghazal (1937-1947), residing in Mbili and Wau. After a term as Vicar General of the Society in Verona (1947-1953) he returned to Wau as Regional Superior (1953-1959).

Fr Valentino Saoncella (1920-), born at Casalia, Padua, (Italy) was a missionary at Mboro (1947-1959) and, as Comboni Regional Superior and Parish Priest of the Cathedral, at Wau (1960-1964) up to the expulsion.

Bahr el Jebel (from 1927)

Fr Giuseppe Zambonardi was first a missionary priest in Uganda, then for three years (1920-1923) in the newly-founded Rejaf, and from there he went back to Uganda as religious Superior of the Circumscription of Northern Uganda, until he was elected Apostolic Prefect of Bahr el Jebel in 1927.

Fr Luigi Molinaro (1888-1985), born at Volpino, Verona, (Italy) was a missionary priest mostly in Northern Uganda from 1913 onwards. Then for some periods in Eastern Equatoria, between 1920 and 1931, at Torit, Loa, Nagishot and Lerwa. In the last two years (1929-1931) he was also Regional Superior.

Fr Fausto Federici (1900-1955), born at Sanguinetto, Verona, (Italy). As a missionary priest he was in Loa (1925-1929) and Okaru (1929-1934),

serving from 1931 to 1934 as Regional Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Bahr el Jebel.

Fr Alcardo De Berti (1898-1969), born at Roverchiara, Verona, (Italy) was a missionary priest in Uganda and Sudan. From Gulu he moved to Torit in 1927 as director of the Artisan School; the following year he was transferred to Isoke, which was at its beginnings as a mission station; from 1934 to 1947 he was Regional Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Bahr el Jebel, residing successively in Torit, Okaru, Palotaka and again Torit.

Fr Stefano Patroni (1901-1966), born at Sernio, Sondrio, (Italy) was in the Sudan as a missionary priest in 1930-1939, 1948-1953 and 1957-1960. He was mostly in Rejaf and, for short terms, in Juba and Kadule. On 1 February, 1960, he was suddenly deported after a summary trial for allegedly causing a students' strike in protest at the change of Sunday to Friday as a weekly holiday. He had high responsibilities in the Society (Rector of Minor Seminary, Master of Novices, Provincial Superior in Bahr el Jebel and in Mexico).

Fr Alberto Guidi (1915-1994), born at Montecalvo, Pesaro, (Italy) graduated in Theology (S.T.L) in 1940; after the war he worked in Torit and Okaru from 1946 to 1964, being Regional Superior of Comboni Missionaries from 1953 to 1964.

Mupoi (from 1949)

Fr Riccardo Simoncelli (1894-1979), born at Borgo Poncile, Brescia, (Italy) arrived in Bahr el Ghazal in Dec. 1923; he spent most of his missionary life in Yubu, except for a few years in Rimenze and Mupoi; he was also for a term Regional Superior of Comboni Missionaries in the Prefecture of Mupoi. He was forced to retire in 1958 and spent the rest of his life in Italy.

Fr Pietro De Angelis (1914-1992), born at Massignano, Ascoli Piceno, (Italy) was a missionary in the Prefecture of Mupoi from 1953 to 1964, at (Maridi), Yubu, and at Mupoi, where he was also Regional Superior.

Kodok

Fr Giovanni Battista Pedrana (1881-1967), born at Livigno, Sondrio, (Italy) was a pioneer missionary priest in Bahr el Jebel, being posted at

Gondokoro in 1913.⁹⁷ The following year he went to Gulu in Northern Uganda. He was back in Sudan from 1921 to 1935 working among the Shilluk at Lul, being also Regional Superior. All the others were Mill Hill Missionaries.

Comboni Regional Superiors in 1964

*At the time of the expulsion from South Sudan in 1964*⁹⁸

Region of Bahr el Ghazal

Regional Superior: **Fr Valentino Saoncella**

From 1960 up to the expulsion in 1964.

Region of Bahr el Gebel

Regional Superior: **Fr Alberto Guidi**

Regional Superior of the Comboni Missionaries from 1953 to 1964.

Region of Mupoi

Regional Superior: **Fr Pietro De Angelis**

He was Regional Superior up to 1964.

Evaluation of the period from 1900 to 1964

It is a fact that this period of time, which also witnessed the destruction, the disorder and the hostilities caused by the First and Second World Wars, was a most fruitful time from the point of view of evangelization in the Sudan. The apostolic zeal of the Comboni Missionaries held firm despite the crosses they had to bear. Their witness of total confidence and dedication to God and to the Sudanese people bore abundant fruits in conversions. In a wonderful way, evangelization carried on spreading and new Circumscriptions and mission posts multiplied.

Missionary Methodology

In line with the original plan of our founder Daniel Comboni of *Saving Africa with Africa*, the missionary methodology of the Comboni Missionaries, Priests, Brothers and Sisters, developed along the following lines: the formation of Catechists, the formation of Indigenous Priests, the foundation of Religious Institutes for Men and Women, inculturation,

⁹⁷ *Passione per l’Africa*, op. cit., pp. 392-393.

⁹⁸ *Catalogo*, op. cit., January, 1963, pp. 143, 155, 169.

education (both theoretical and practical) through school and laboratories and a strong Christian formation, Health care (almost exclusively done by the Sisters) and missionary spirituality.

As part of the missionary methodology, at the time of the slave trade in Sudan, Comboni planned to have several Christian farming villages where freed slaves could live protected lives of full human dignity and respect. Malbes was the first one. With the second endeavour in the field of evangelization the Sons and Daughters of Comboni followed the spirit of his *Plan for the regeneration of Africa* along the above mentioned lines.

At the time of Comboni the word used by the European countries in relation to the African tribes was *Civilisation* and we have witnessed the dispute between the two missionary approaches of Mgr Gayer and Fr Vignato. Both of them were convinced of the need for Civilisation (human promotion, education, development, etc.) and evangelization. Their disagreement concerned which should come first.

Formation of Catechists: enlightened by the experience of the *Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)*⁹⁹ in the Buganda Kingdom of Uganda, this became the real first priority and it never ceased to remain so even to the present day.

Formation of Priests:¹⁰⁰ Mgr Daniel Comboni personally saw to the formation of African youths for the Priesthood. Fr Daniel Sorur and Fr Anthony Dobale were the first fruits. As for the Comboni Missionaries in Southern Sudan, the great care taken to prepare future Diocesan Priests, who would then take charge of the new-born Christian communities and of evangelization, was clearly part of their missionary methodology. To start with, no one would forget the great service rendered in this field by the Seminary of Okaru and the Major Seminary of Tore River and Bussere.

Foundation of Religious Institutes of Men and Women¹⁰¹ since the time of Comboni, together with the two Priests already mentioned, three young women had already entered religious life.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ The beginning of the White Fathers' mission in Southern Uganda and the organization of the Catechumenate 1879-1914, Marinus Rooijackers, translated by Ivan Page, Rome, Society of Missionaries of Africa, 2008.

¹⁰⁰ The Comboni Missionaries, An Outline History, op. cit., pp. 188-189.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pp. 191-194.

¹⁰² - Sr Zeinab Alif (Mary Josephine Benvenuti):

http://www.ofmconv.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=135&Itemid=251&lang=en

- Sr Bakhita Kuashe (Sr Fortunata Quasce):

http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/bakhita_kwashe.html

Sr Bakhita Kuashe, (1841-1899), a Nuba, who became the first Comboni Sister. In November, 1867, Comboni took sixteen of the educated African young women to Cairo (Egypt) to open the first school called *Institute of the Blacks* (Istituto di Neri) and Bakhita, with eleven years of training behind her, was one of the teachers.

Sr Zeinab Alif (Mary Josephine Benvenuti) - 1845/6-1926, OSC (Poor Clare Sisters) from Kordofan. She became also the Vicarress of the monastery of Serra de' Conti (Ancona-Italy) and in 1910 Abbess.

Sr Josephine Bakhita, (1869?-1947) from Darfur, a Canossian Sister. Once freed from slavery she asked to be baptized and then became a Sister. She lived mainly in the convent of Schio, (Vicenza-Italy). She was canonized on 1 October, 2000, and became *Saint Josephine Bakhita*. Her feast day is on 8 February.¹⁰³

In the XX century, the following Institutes were founded:

The Sisters of the Sacred Heart in 1952, in Juba by Mgr Sisto Mazzoldi, Vicar Apostolic of Bahr el Jebel, who entrusted the novices to Sr Domitilla, (a Comboni Sister).

The Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Sudan of Mupoi, out of the amalgamation of *The Sisters of Nazareth* founded by Mgr Edoardo Mason in 1956 and that of *Our Lady of Victories* founded by Mgr Domenico Ferrara of Tombura in 1957.

St Martin de Porres Brothers founded by Mgr Mazzoldi with the assistance of Fr Giuseppe Gusmini and Bro Alessandro Pelucchi in 1953, with the main purpose to prepare qualified teachers for the direction of Catholic schools.

The Brothers of St Joseph founded by Mgr Mason in Wau in 1955 with the multiple aim of the vocation to Brotherhood, according to the Comboni style.

- Sr Josephine Bakhita: <http://www.cfl-sacramento.org/html/SaintJosephineMargaretFortunataBakhita.html>

- Josephine Bakhita the lucky one, Jean Maynard, Catholic Truth Society, Publisher to the Holy See.

¹⁰³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephine_Bakhita

The Apostles of Jesus. The first Religious Institute in Africa to be exclusively missionary. It was founded in 1968 by Fr Giovanni Marengoni under the patronage of Mgr Sisto Mazzoldi, then Bishop of Moroto.

Inculturation

Our missionaries always took as their first task the study of local languages and produced a wide range of material in the vernacular, according to the needs. However, in this regard, there were some confreres who were really *outstanding* and, among these were Fr Pasquale Crazzolara, Fr Filiberto Giorgetti and Fr Stefano Santandrea, whom I want to present here

Fr Pasquale Crazzolara¹⁰⁴ *Linguist and Ethnologist* He was one of the first missionaries to arrive in Uganda at Omach in 1910. He started immediately to learn Acholi and when he was transferred to Southern Sudan he learned the Nuer language and published a Nuer grammar, a translation of the catechism, the most important prayers, various hymns and the first-year books for mathematics, geography and history.

Fr Crazzolara attended courses of phonetics and anthropology at the Universities of Vienna and London. He published an Acholi grammar and dictionary and a Lugbara (Madi) dictionary, with scientific phonetic signs and accents; they are genuine classical works. He also wrote two volumes on Lwo migrations, the first of their kind. He was awarded the Medal of the Royal Society of London, the M.B.E (Member of British Empire) and the nomination of *Commendatore* of the Italian Republic.

Fr Filiberto Giorgetti¹⁰⁵ (1902-1978) *Ethnologist and Musician with an African soul.* He learned the language of the Azande drum, the *gugu*. Fr *Jero*, his nickname, was a musical genius and, in this field, the best of our missionaries so far. He had the intelligence and the interest to study the Azande Drum, as the originality of African music lies neither in the melody, nor the harmony but in the rhythm given by the drum. The intervals and major/minor tone-messages are also transmitted by the

¹⁰⁴ The Comboni Missionaries, An Outline History, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

- Diary of Yoynyang Station (in Italian), 14 November, 1930, ACR 145/16. "*Today is the fifth year (14 Nov. 1925) since the start of our mission station. During this time Fr Crazzolara has translated into Nuer the Catechism, the most important prayers, various hymns, the books of Maths, Geography and History for the first year class. These days he completed the Nuer Grammar in English.*"

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pp. 201-202

drum; moreover different kinds of drums are used for different occasions and performances. It was after the study of the drum that Fr 'Jero' became supreme in Azande music.

Fr Stefano Santandrea¹⁰⁶ (1904-1990) *A living encyclopaedia*. He was seen as an authority on everything African and his opinion was sought and appreciated by international scholars. This knowledge increased during the years when he was in charge of the library in Rome.

To the admirers of his works he always gave the following answer: *"The whole thing isn't worth much. I hope that Jesus Christ will take pity on me and out of my thirty years of work will give priority to my predilection for the old and abandoned people, for the lepers, particularly the years of Khor-Malang with Bro Giosuè, and when I was alone."*

Fr Arturo Nebel¹⁰⁷ (1888-1981) A true friend of the Dinka. *"Because of the horrible crimes the slave traders inflicted on the Dinka people in the past"*, said Fr Nebel, *"the missionary is looked upon with mistrust and suspicion"* Kwajok was the first mission opened at the end of 1923 in Dinka land and it did not have an easy start, because of the above mentioned mistrust.

Fr Nebel applied himself deeply to the study of the language and the customs of the Dinkas also taking care of the few catechumens and Christians. He published a Dinka dictionary, Dinka/English and English/Dinka, a Dinka grammar, then Dinka folklore, primary school books I, II, III, IV and other school textbooks, together with all the other religious books the mission was using.

The Comboni Brothers¹⁰⁸ and the Comboni Sisters¹⁰⁹

The Comboni Brothers. If we remember that almost all the facilities we could see in Sudan, from 1900 to the present time in every mission, have one or more Comboni Brothers to thank for their existence, we can

¹⁰⁶ The Comboni Missionaries, An Outline History, op. cit., pp. 201-203.

¹⁰⁷ - Servant of the Gospel, op. cit., pp. 116-119.

- Diary of Yoonyang Station, op. cit. in date 2 Dec. - 29 Dec.1933, ACR 145/16.

"Fr Nebel arrived today and will remain for a month to study the Dinka Dialects."

"The presence of Fr Nebel was very helpful for our Dinka people of Lake NO. He corrected the common prayers translated by Michael, son of Bilkwey, and translated a small Catechism."

¹⁰⁸ Richard Owen, Sudan Days, 1926-1954, University Library Durham, ed. Duff Hart-Davis, 2015, pp. 151, 154.

¹⁰⁹ The Writings, Nos. 5106, 5117, 5442, 5443, 6356.

really admire and wonder at their great work such as residences for the mission personnel, schools, catechetical centres, agricultural schools and workshops for carpentry, mechanics, and other trades for the training of capable and skilful workers

It is no surprise that the British Administration viewed them with great respect and admiration. The best account of the Comboni Brothers (and of the Catholic Church) I found was given by Mr Richard Owen, Assistant District Commissioner in Wau at the end of the twenties and Deputy Governor and then Governor of Bahr el Ghazal from 1945 to 1953. He was particularly impressed by the way people were trained: "*The training given in its technical schools in carpentry, iron-work, printing and mechanics held the field to the last against anything the Government could show, and has been of the utmost value to the community.*"¹¹⁰

He was even more impressed by how a Brother could pass from the mechanic workshop to the kitchen "*He was chief mechanic of the mission, and a most competent one too. Yet when an occasion required higher cuisine, it was he who was called in as a chef, and the hand that could be firm with the spanner was light and persuasive with the rolling-pin.*" And "*Not content with that, he even helped hand round the 'pommes de terre à la maitre d'hôtel'.*"¹¹¹

As regards evangelization, the Brothers were the ones who *tilled the ground* with their simple and daily contacts and relationships with the workers and their life problems, thus becoming the very people who were showing practically what it meant to be a Christian and preparing them for a deeper commitment in the Christian faith. Not to forget the beautiful example of Bro Giosuè dei Cas among the lepers and a leper himself.

The Comboni Sisters (*The Devout Mothers of Africa*). The presence of the Comboni Sisters, as consecrated women, whom Daniel Comboni specifically prepared for Africa, was a real blessing for the work of evangelization in Sudan. The fact that women were not felt as a threat in the African society and environment, allowed the Comboni Sisters to enter everywhere and be welcome any time they were visiting villages and families, thus, they could relate to everybody without any restriction..

They were involved in education, in various types of schools for small children, primary and secondary schools and, through this school activity, they could meet with parents and relatives of the children and students. They were dealing with sick people in the dispensaries and other health

¹¹⁰ Richard Owen, op. cit., p. 154.

¹¹¹ Richard Owen, Sudan Days, op. cit., p. 151.

facilities and, therefore, in direct contact with the sufferings of people and with the most vulnerable because of many diseases such as leprosy and malaria. Through their work and service everybody knew them, trusted them and felt confident in their motherly care.

Just as the Brothers evangelised through their relationships with workers and the people, so, too, the work of the Sisters, in their daily relationship with all kind of people and situations was a real evangelization and the first step for a future religious Christian commitment.

Again the appreciation of Mr Richard Owen, the Bahr el Ghazal Governor is worth mentioning: *“In some ways the Sisters seemed to me the most remarkable of all. By the standard of the world their life lacked all the essentials for content - company, exchange of views, creature comforts, variety. Yet you only had to look into their eyes to see the quality the world lacks - serenity...”*¹¹²

The Progress of the Catholic Mission in the Sudan

The progress the Catholic Mission in the Sudan was going through was very much evident and the Superior General, Fr Antonio Todesco, in his letter of March 1955 dealt with it extensively especially for the following reason: *“I was able to admire with emotion and holy satisfaction the apostolic dedication and heroic sacrifice of all missionaries, Priests and Brothers: their efforts of spontaneous missionary generosity in the apostolate and in the work in order to make up what was lacking in their number.”*¹¹³

However, this was the time of change for colonization and the African countries were all pushing for independence. So was for Sudan, but the British Government got it through in a deceitful way for the Southerners and the same British administrators in Sudan, like Sir Richard Owen, felt it as a betrayal of all their previous policy.¹¹⁴

Religious and Ecclesiastic Authority

At the beginning, Fr Daniel Comboni founded an institute of Priests and Lay Brothers who were not bound together by religious vows, but as

¹¹² Richard Owen, Sudan Days, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

¹¹³ Fr Antonio Todesco, La voce della Congregazione, op. cit., 19 March, 1955, pp. 337-338.

¹¹⁴ Richard Owen, Sudan Days, op. cit.

Diocesan Priests and Lay people kept together by promises that they would totally dedicate their lives to proclaiming the Gospel to the African People until death.¹¹⁵ The Bishop, (Comboni) with his ecclesiastical authority, was their only authority. With the conversion of the Institute into a *Religious Missionary Institute*, the Ecclesiastical Authority (e.g. the Vicar Apostolic) was exercising his authority in whatever regarded the administration of his Vicariate, but the *Religious Authority* (the Superior) had direct authority on the Religious Confreres. Thus, the two authorities had to be aware of the boundary between each other's responsibilities.

This, at times, was not an easy relationship and could give way to interference in each other's field of responsibility, especially in cases of strong personalities. Though both Religious and Ecclesiastical Authorities were belonging to the same FSCJ institute, thus facilitating mutual understanding, for some other reasons, it could lead to strained relations. The Superior General had to intervene in certain critical cases, in order to restore harmony between the two parties.

The expulsion of the Comboni Missionaries

February-March 1964

As a follow-up to the *Missionary Societies Act of 1962*,¹¹⁶ on 27 February, 1964, the Government of Khartoum ordered the expulsion of all the missionaries. The news was a great shock for everybody. The Comboni Missionaries comprised 4 Ordinaries, 64 missionary priests, 42 Brothers and 92 Sisters. It left one Bishop, Mgr Ireneo Dud and 28 priests in Southern Sudan. They had to fend for themselves and were the first fruits of a Sudanese Church with a local leadership.

¹¹⁵ For a better understanding of this issue see: Inserti Famiglia Comboniana, 2017, P. Fidel González, mcej, Roma, febbraio 2017; Giovedì 9 marzo, 2017.

<http://www.comboni.org/contenuti/108833-l-evoluzione-storica-dell-istituto-dei-missionari-comboniani-1>

<http://www.comboni.org/contenuti/108834-l-evoluzione-storica-dell-istituto-dei-missionari-comboniani-2>

¹¹⁶ Anders Breidlid, Adelino Androga Said, Astrid Kristine Breidlid, Anne Farren, Yosa Wawa, "A concise History of South Sudan", new revised edition, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2014, pp. 211-212.

- http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/ngalamu_elinana.html

The impact of this event was kept alive by the vivid memory left in the diary of Fr Ivo Ciccacci which he wrote down on the last days before the expulsion.

He described in a very emotional way the moment of the farewell to all missionaries on the 6 March, 1964, and the blessing of Mgr Ireneo Dud, Bishop of Wau. On the day of the **good-bye** he wrote:



Expulsion of the Missionsries 1964

"We are about to leave Wau for Khartoum by plane. We are surrounded by officers and policemen. Around the airfield government soldiers are on the watch. No civilian can approach us. Christians and pagans, defying police and spies, expressed their affection. But the government press will say that the population has received with joy the news of our expulsion. Among the participants there is also, almost agonizing, Sr Ines. She leaves Sudan after 33 years of missionary life. She does not complain. She smiles. Tomorrow she will die in Khartoum: the most precious drop of the chalice...

We kneel in the dust: Mgr Ireneo Dud, our Bishop, raises his hand and blesses us... The Bishop embraces us. We turn away. And he remains there, alone. He has to take care of half a million baptized people, hundreds of seminarians, the sick, the old, children and lepers.

We will keep in our heart his last look, along with the tears of the young Christian Community, lost, helpless, at the mercy of the enemy."¹¹⁷

This painful experience of the expulsion of the Comboni Missionaries working in Southern Sudan closes one cycle and opens another. The period of time which follows will be a time full of very important events at both political and church levels in Africa and in the world. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church was celebrating the Second Vatican Council (11 October, 1962 - 08 December, 1965), a starting point for a deep renewal.

¹¹⁷ The diary of Fr Ivo Ciccacci on the 6 March, 1964.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SUDAN, THE WORLD and THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARENA

Historical context from 1964 to 1981

The expulsion of all the *Expatriate Comboni Missionaries* from Southern Sudan, in March 1964, left all the Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions deprived of their Ordinaries, except for the Apostolic Vicariate of Rumbek where Mgr Ireneo Wien Dud was its Bishop. All the others were headed by an Apostolic Administrator until the erection of the **Sudanese Catholic Hierarchy** on 12 December, 1974. The Apostolic Prefecture of Mupoi, with the Apostolic Prefect Mgr Domenico Ferrara, was an exception. Consecrated Bishop after the expulsion, he never exercised his authority within the territory of the Sudan, except through Mgr Martin Penisi.

This period of time can be divided into two: the time of *keeping the mission alive (1964-1972)*, from the expulsion to the Addis Ababa Agreement, and the time of *preparing a better future*, from the Addis Ababa Agreement to the start of the new Circumscription of South Sudan. This latter period of time would embrace all the new Catholic Church set up with the installation of the Sudanese Hierarchy. With the expulsion, the leadership of the Catholic Church in the Sudan was as follows:

1. **Bahr el Ghazal:** Apostolic Vicariate of Wau
 - Apostolic Vicar Bishop **Ireneo Dud**
2. **Bahr el Jebel:** Apostolic Vicariate of Juba
 - Ap. Admin. Mgr **Silvestro Laharanya**
3. **Rumbek:** Apostolic Vicariate of Rumbek
 - Ap. Admin. Mgr **Lino Tiboi**
4. **Malakal:** Apostolic Prefecture of Malakal
 - Ap. Admin. Mgr **Pio Tukwani Deng**
5. **Mupoi:** Apostolic Prefecture of Mupoi
 - Ap. Prefect Bishop **Domenico Ferrara**
 - In Mupoi itself Mgr **Martin Penisi**

According to the historical account of Fr Vittorino Dellagiocoma, a *second era* for the Church in South of Sudan, began with the opening of mission stations in Lul (March 1901), in Kayango (7 March, 1904) and in Mbili (March 17, 1904). Its growth was counted in tens in the first years and by hundreds and thousands in the climax year of 1964. The years which followed this date saw the Local Clergy and Laity assuming total responsibility for the administration and expansion of the Church, though there are no accurate statistics because communications were impossible between 1964 and 1972.¹¹⁸

Thus, for the Local Sudanese and South Sudanese Church, life continued without interruption, though in a very difficult and painful historical situation.

For the Comboni Missionaries in the South, instead, 1964 was a cut-off moment. The *expatriate* Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan were all expelled and only Sudanese Radical Members remained behind. However, there was no Comboni Circumscription in the South to which they could refer, so they had to be attached either to the Region of Khartoum or be meanwhile assigned, as actually happened, to the various Regions (*Regione di...*) in Uganda.¹¹⁹

The situation was not easy either for the Sudanese confreres (Radical Members) and the Superiors in Rome, who were directly responsible for them, had to take action regarding their safety in that very unstable situation and future.

The world arena

This was the time of the *cold war*¹²⁰ between the Western Countries and those of the East causing a lot of unrest everywhere the two sides were extending their influence and Africa was directly affected. The struggle between the communist ideology headed by Russia and China and their satellite countries, and the capitalist ideology led by the USA and its western European allies, made of several African countries a place of struggle and a fight for communist or capitalistic hegemony.

¹¹⁸ V. Dellagiocoma, History of the Catholic Church in Southern Sudan 1900 – 1995, Khartoum, 1996, pp. 77, 7, 13, 95-96.

¹¹⁹ Regions, Regione di, see: Catalogo della Congregazione dei Figli del S. Cuore di Gesù' al 1 gennaio 1965.

¹²⁰ The Cold War was a state of political and military tension after World War II between powers in the Western Block (the United States, its NATO allies and others). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War

Many armed movements for independence in Africa were linked to the Communist ideology and were supported by Russia or other Communist countries in their struggle for liberation against the dominant European colonial powers belonging to the *opposite block* of capitalism.

The period of time from the sixties until the beginning of the eighties witnessed the independence of many countries in the world from the British Empire and other European colonial powers such as France, Belgium and Portugal. In Africa, the Dutch and Italian colonies had already gained their independence before the end of World War II, while the great majority reached it precisely in the sixties.

By the year 1977 the process of independence in Africa was practically completed, except for the existing struggle against *Apartheid* in South Africa. The South Sudanese situation had many similarities with that of South Africa, as the Arabs were not giving equal rights and opportunities to the black population of the South. This was the real reason for the struggle.

During the period July-August, 1955, a few months before independence, the political temperature in Southern Sudan was raised by several events: two Southern ministers left the Council of Ministers; participants in the Liberal Party's Conference of July, meeting to discuss the formation of the Southern Block were arrested; the Northerners refused to discuss federalism with the Southerners; on 8 July, 1955, striking workers of the Zande Scheme were shot.

On 18 August, 1955, the Equatoria Corps of Sudan Defence Force (which became the Sudanese Army with independence) in Torit was scheduled to be transferred to Khartoum (widespread rumour had it that the Southern troops would be massacred upon arrival in Khartoum). The Southern corps was instructed to disobey the order of transfer to the North. The rejection resulted in mutiny. Several hundred Northerners were killed and, with the arrival of Northern troops, many mutineers were also killed. Some of them fled to remote areas and started organizing resistance which affected mainly Equatoria.

On 1 January, 1956, the Sudan gained independence from the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium as one country, sidestepping completely the deep differences existing between its two parts, the Arab and Islamic North, and the South, made up of Black African tribes which were mainly Christian and Animist. The Southerners felt betrayed by the British who were the main rulers in the Condominium (1899-1956) and felt they had been tricked by the Northern rulers in the first years of Independence.

In the North the language was Arabic, while in the South it was English. North and South also had two sets of public holidays, Moslem in the North

and Christian in the South. Both in the colonial and postcolonial period, Sudan had never been brought to feel it was one nation.

*“To guide such a country into unity of purpose may have needed much more insight and good imagination from the founding Fathers. But unfortunately, those who took over power immediately from the colonial administration failed miserably to live up to the country’s expectations”*¹²¹

The follow-up of the Torit Mutiny and of the Northern policy towards the South triggered off a civil war called the “ANYA-NYA” (*cobra’s venom*) war, which lasted from 1956 to 1972. On 17 November, 1958, the first *coup d’état* brought to power General Ibrahim Abboud’s regime that carried out a firm policy of Islamization and Arabization in the South, mainly through the education system. Instead of trying to solve the problem and creating consensus, Khartoum opted for the military solution, with repressive activities, thus making the situation even worse.

In 1962, the Abboud military regime intensified its repression by producing the *Missionary Societies Act of 1962*, aimed at regulating the activity of the Christian Missionaries in Sudan with many implications both for expatriate missionaries and indigenous Pastors. The October Revolution of 1964 overthrew by popular uprising the first military regime of Ibrahim Abboud. The new leaders, however, continued the same policy, but they, too, were overthrown on 25 May, 1969, by the military headed by Colonel Jaafar Mohamed Nimeiri.

In 1969, an effective organized political and military movement emerged, the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and its military wing, the ANYA-NYA, a guerrilla force led by a young officer, Joseph Lagu. The new military Junta, under the command of Colonel Jaafar Mohamed Nimeiri started a period when both North and South tried to get along together peacefully.

Indeed, the Addis Ababa Agreement brought a complete new situation in the whole of Sudan and especially in the relationship between North and South. President Nimeiri immediately declared a plan to grant regional autonomy to the South, though its implementation had to be postponed until the Communists were excluded from the Government after the abortive *coup d’état* in July, 1971.

A constitutional referendum gave more power and legitimacy to President Nimeiri. The Addis Ababa Agreement was signed in February

¹²¹ Arop Madut-Arop, *SUDAN’S Painful Road to Peace*, 2006, Book Surge, LLC, Introduction.

1972 and its implementation started the following month, giving substantial regional autonomy to the South, which opened a period that was a *golden opportunity* for the Church.¹²² That was from 1972, the date of the Addis Ababa peace agreement, until 1982. After that date, a new revolt broke out with the start of the SPLA/M army and movement.¹²³

The Catholic Church arena

With the election of Pope John XXIII (*Ioannes XXIII*), on 28 October, 1958, (his civil name being *Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli*) at 76 years of age, the Catholic Church started an unexpected opening up which surprised the whole world. Pope John XXIII, far from being a caretaker pope, surprised many by calling the historic Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

He opened the first session on 11 October, 1962, but he never saw the end of the Council as he died of stomach cancer on 3 June, 1963, four and a half years after his election and two months after the completion of his final and famed encyclical, *Pacem in terris*. However, a new time of fresh air and renewal had started within the Catholic Church, positively affecting its relationships with the other Christian Churches and the whole secular world.¹²⁴

The Second Vatican Council

(Rome 11 October, 1962 - 08 December, 1965)

The great event of the **Second Vatican Council** in the Catholic Church, that took place in Rome from 11 October, 1962 to 8 December, 1965, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. This event was a true *revolution* within the Catholic Church itself and brought about very deep reflection on the Mission of the Church in the modern world. The whole reflection affected deeply the way of understanding *Mission* within the Church.

In this context, the institutions most affected were the Missionary Institutes. They were called upon to *re-think Mission* according to the new Vatican II spirit and guidelines. All this brought the Missionary Institutes and their members through a time of deep crisis, of painful journey, but

¹²² V. Dellagiaco, History, op. cit., pp. 82, 85-86

¹²³ - Arop Madut-Arop, op. cit., pp.1-13 and following ones.

- Anders Breidlid, Adelino Androga Said, Astrid Kristine Breidlid, Anne Farren, Yosa Wawa, "A concise History of South Sudan", new revised edition, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2014, pp. 191-193, 211-216, 234-241

¹²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_XXIII

also to a journey that led to great renewal in *understanding* and *doing* Mission in the world.

To help in this positive and difficult process, the *Post Vatican II Documents* accompanied the gradual implementation of Vatican II renewal by tackling the most important and delicate areas and issues dealing with the *Mission of the Church*.

The document which dealt directly with the *Missionary Activity of the Church* was the Decree **AD GENTES** which put the basis of a new understanding of Mission. It is described as the *magna charta* of mission and certainly a very remarkable document.¹²⁵ The ultimate foundation for the Church's missionary activity is based on *its participation in the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. This participation, through Baptism, in the very life of the Trinity makes the Church *Missionary by its own nature* and the Holy Spirit makes people share in the same mission of Christ.¹²⁶

Then, on 28 October, 1965, Pope Paul VI issued the decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, **CHRISTUS DOMINUS**, which constituted one more great change from the old legacy, in the way of understanding Mission, in relationship to the *Local Churches and the Conferences of Bishops*. In this context, in the Church of Africa, even the visit of Pope Paul VI to Uganda was a huge contribution to this new missionary awareness, inviting all Africans to be *Missionaries to themselves*: "*in other words, you Africans must now continue, upon this Continent, the building up of the Church.*"¹²⁷

Basic to evangelization is the catechumenal preparation. The publication of the **RCIA - the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** of 1972 was a major factor, not only for the whole Church, but in particular for Missionaries, as the hoe in the hands of the farmer.

The Apostolic Exhortation **EVANGELII NUNTIANDI**, of 8 December, 1975, was written at a time when the very idea of mission was undergoing a deep crisis. Vatican II and AG had opened up fresh perspectives and a new understanding of Mission, but some reflections on the issue reached conclusions which were certainly not in line with it.

¹²⁵ SVD Superior General, Fr Johannes Schütte, Stephen Bevans SVD,
<http://www.maryknollvocations.com/mission.pdf> "Ad Gentes"

¹²⁶ Ad Gentes, no. 4

¹²⁷ HOMILY OF PAUL VI, Kampala (Uganda), 31 July, 1969. Eucharistic celebration at the conclusion of the symposium organized by the Bishops of Africa.
https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/homilies/1969/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19690731.pdf

Moreover, the growing secularized mentality in the missionary-sending countries was giving more and more attention to the social reality of the third-world ¹²⁸ countries than to *Mission* and the proclamation of the Gospel.

It was issued by Pope Paul II after the Synod of 1974 with the theme '**Evangelization in the Modern World.**' Because of a strong aversion for the word *mission* that had emerged in the churches and even in missiology, the pope uses the word **evangelization**. The first significant teaching of EN is that *The Church's Mission Continues the Mission of Jesus*, and that, like in *Ad Gentes*, the essential missionary nature of the Church is emphasized. However, it does not start with the Trinity, but with the mission of Jesus preaching and witnessing the Kingdom of God.

"As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything else becomes 'the rest,' which is 'given in addition'. Only the kingdom therefore is absolute and it makes everything else relative" (EN 8). "Those who sincerely accept the Good News...gather together in Jesus' name...and make up a community which is in its turn evangelizing." (EN 13) "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize..." (EN 14)¹²⁹

However, the Church should not be only concerned in evangelizing **other people**, but in order to be true, she should start evangelizing herself first and be aware of being in constant need to be evangelized. (EN 15, 16).

The Sacred Congregation for Bishops and the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, instead, gave birth to the document **Mutuae-Relationes**, concerning the relationship between Bishops and Religious, on 14 May, 1978. This was a very important document for the Missionary Institutes and the missionary personnel at a time when the **Jus Commissionis** was already a past memory and the Bishops and the Conferences of Bishops were fully aware of their new responsibilities and

¹²⁸ The term Third World was originally coined during the Cold War to distinguish those nations that were neither aligned with the West (NATO) nor with the East, the Communist bloc. Today the term is often used to describe the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. The term, however, has a taste of discrimination and therefore is rejected by the very same people.

¹²⁹ (EN 14) "**She (the Church) exists in order to evangelize**, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection."

power in the administration of their Local Churches.¹³⁰ The Institutes' missionary service was now carried out in a completely new situation.

The apostolic exhortation **Catechesi Tradendae** was given to the Church on 16 October, 1979, by Pope John Paul II. It came after the long series of documents dealing with the *Mission of the Church* since *Ad Gentes*. Having dealt with evangelization in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI wanted the Synod to carry on with the issue of Catechesis for the present time, a reflection on the activity of formation to the faith of the contemporary Christians, with particular reference to children and youth. *Catechesis* as one phase of evangelization with no division or opposition but reciprocal complementarity between the two.

“All in all, it can be taken here that catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life... catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission... These elements are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching through the kerygma to arouse faith, apologetics or examination of the reasons for belief, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial community, and apostolic and missionary witness.”¹³¹

Evangelii Nuntiandi, R.C.I.A. and *Catechesi Tradendae* are all documents that go hand in hand and, for missionaries, this last Apostolic Exhortation was another step forward in order to help in evangelization and they were all new steps forward on this path of renewal.

Old and new legacy

The old *Mission legacy*, based on the *Jus Commissionis*,¹³² had come to an end. The *Local Churches* and the *Conferences of Bishops* were born. A *new era of Mission* had dawned during this so important period of time starting from 1964 and lasting through the seventies. It was the span of a *Missionary revolution* affecting the **Missionary Institutes**, the **People**

¹³⁰ - *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, no. 22

- **Christus Dominus**, Decree concerning the pastoral office of Bishops (CD 3, 11, 15, 35, 36, 37, 38)

¹³¹ *Catechesi Tradendae*, op. cit., no. 18.

¹³² “*Jus Commissionis*”, that is the commission of certain territories to a missionary institute for their evangelization.

called to **Missionary Life**, but also the *New Local Churches* in this all-embracing process of renewal.

Missionaries could no longer *simply refer to the past*. Both **Missionaries and Local Churches** were obliged to accompany their new legacy by seriously deepening their understanding of all it implied for both sides. Clearly, in this new era, the Religious/Missionary Institutions were no longer the main protagonist of Mission, but entities at the service of the Local Church from within it.

No wonder then if Missionaries who, in their zeal, thought they were **Protagonists** would be reminded, sometimes politely and sometimes in no uncertain terms, that the times had changed and that **Leadership had changed sides too**. After a country's political independence this, within the Church, was equal to **Church independence** from the former legacy.

All of this was indeed positive, though its emotional effects required a long period to heal the old historical wounds on the part of Local Bishops and Diocesan Clergy and also the new wounds which certain utterances on their side were inflicting on the expatriate missionaries, regardless of whether they had either an old or new mentality. As a matter of fact, the new legacy required a deep conversion of heart from both sides.

The Moratorium on Mission

Missionaries Go Home! It is in this context of new freedom and independence of the African countries and their new awareness of being the new protagonists of their history that, in a Presbyterian Church environment, this loud cry and plea, was heard. It was not necessarily a cry of hatred, but certainly a cry with many implications at personal, psychological, political, society, religious, and Church level.

This bold exclamation found its first public expression in 1971, with a Presbyterian Pastor, the Rev Dr JOHN GATU, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (he died on 11 May, 2017, at Karen Hospital, Nairobi, aged 93) who proposed a ***Moratorium on Mission***.¹³³

The call for a ***Moratorium on Mission*** came from a Protestant environment and from Africa in a time of ***post-colonial mission*** when the great majority of the countries in Africa had already gained independence. On the African side, it was certainly a ***cry for freedom*** also at the religious level, though not always very consistent, if not in contradiction with its

¹³³ Moratorium on Mission, John Gatu,
<http://mis.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/09/03/0091829613502143.full.pdf>

content. The call for a moratorium took place at a mission festival in 1971 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (US) with these words:

*“The time has come for the withdrawal of the expatriate missionaries from many parts of the Third World, that the Churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity and that the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the Church.”*¹³⁴

Inevitably, there was an immediate and vigorous reaction and a debate about Mission. Gatu’s motivation for such an abrupt and controversial declaration needed to be properly investigated. The issue of the moratorium was, however, a milestone in mission history, marking the symbolic end of the colonial mission paradigm and the start of the postcolonial mission era. The keywords of John Gatu were: *moratorium, imperialism, dependency, interdependence, postcolonial missions and spiritual renewal.*

John Gatu, repeated this call for a moratorium on expatriate missionaries and foreign funds (Wagner, 1975: 166) also at Lusaka, Zambia at the All-Africa Conference of Churches in 1974 (Hastings, 1976: 22). The reaction to the moratorium was intense in the 1970s.

The call for a moratorium included both expatriate missionaries and foreign funds. However, those big meetings of the All Africa Council of Churches (in the Protestant environment) were run with funds from abroad, from the very people who should have gone home. It did not take long for the people critical to the Moratorium to point out that it may not have been the refusal of funds as such, but their administration directly carried out by **Locals** without foreign interference: in a word: ***Give us the funds and you stay at home; let us decide how to use them freely.***¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Gatu, in Sundkler & Steed 2000:1027.

http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/2972/dissertation_makofane_%20k.pdf?sequence=1

¹³⁵ Robert Reese, Roland Allen and the Moratorium on Missionaries, p. 5.

http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/reese_ems_2012.pdf

“Peter Wagner emphasized that the AACC’s stand against foreign input was “the proverbial bulldog with rubber teeth,” because the AACC received 80 per cent of its budget from overseas (1975:167). Wagner noted that AACC General Secretary Burgess Carr actually modified the proposal for a break in funding, saying rather that the moratorium was “a demand to transfer the massive expenditure on expatriate personnel in the church in Africa to programme activities manned by Africans themselves” (1975:167). In other words, Carr saw the moratorium as a way to divert foreign funds from obsolete missionaries to African churches. Wagner also accused mainline denominations of using the moratorium as “a smoke screen to hide some much more fundamental problems in their missionary programmes” (1975:170). By this he meant

In any case, it was clear that even though the whole thing started in a Protestant environment, the matter was also present in Catholic circles, though not expressed publicly as such, since the same desire of **freedom** and recognition of being now a **grown up Church** and the rejection of dependence upon expatriate missionaries was very much felt.

On the side of the *Expatriate Missionaries* there was also a growing resentment: “If the Africans are tired of us, let the ‘**Moratorium**’ be there. Let us **stop, suspend** the foreign help and missionary endeavour for the so-called **mission ad gentes** and leave the local leadership to **fend for itself**. Let them **stand on their own two feet** regarding Ministry, Finances and Evangelization: is not this what they want...?” Thus, on both sides, it was not a matter only of finding a space or allowing a period of time to grow in freedom, but a matter of changing attitude, with wounds to be healed and a new relationship and dialogue to be established.

The **Local Side** felt hurt by long years of **political** but also **religious** dependence, and the **Foreign Side** felt also hurt by this attitude of **rejection**, perceived as mere arrogance and lack of acknowledgement of all the efforts, dedication and work done. **On both sides a creeping desire for retaliation could hardly be disguised.**

Historically, what was true for both sides was that **an era had just ended** and **a new one was starting**. The Moratorium and Suspension were a way of stating clearly that **a break with the past was needed**. It was the time of **Empowerment of the Local Clergy** and this was in need of finding **a new way of relating, a new relationship**, a new communion and dialogue out of the painful experiences of the past. What was needed was **deep renewal** and a new understanding of the inner life of the Church, fully present in the **Local Church**.

Then, we must say that the Protestant understanding of the relationship among Churches and the Catholic one were rather different. In the Catholic Church, the **Local Church** is a smaller unit of the whole **Catholic Church**, but its internal life reproduces in full all the components of the former one and the bond of communion is so tight that, on key issues, a certain way of dealing and deciding, would in reality break their communion.

The moratorium, in this case, would touch the very centre of the Church’s nature, that is, its **evangelizing mission**. To tell the missionaries to **go home** would have broken the same command of Jesus: **go and make**

that the mission boards of these denominations were already shifting their policies “to decrease involvement in evangelization and church planting and increase involvement in worldwide social and political action” (1975:170).”

disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19) and all that the Second Vatican Council said about the Mission of the Church and its responsibility in this issue.

Hence, the Moratorium issue, as understood in the Protestant Churches was not so acute in the Catholic Church. A new awareness was developing acutely within the new Local Churches that saw the need for reflection and proposals on the issue of change and their own identity to be addressed with new insight. Africa had to find “*its own way*” in the Catholic Renewal of the Vatican II and also in “*re-appropriating the Gospel*”¹³⁶

Mgr Zoa,¹³⁷ Bishop of Yaoundé (Cameroon), though convinced that cooperation between young and old churches had to continue, he also clearly believed it should take on *new forms* and *new structures* of Christian life and that a change was necessary. Mgr Kalilombe, Bishop of Lilongwe (Malawi), was advocating that the Churches in the mission land had to get rid of the dependence from overseas and adopt ways and means to be *self-reliant Christian communities*,¹³⁸ a point in line with the Moratorium and with the Catholic approach. The Local Church needed to become *self-reliant*,¹³⁹ that is, a Local Church standing on her own feet, but not cut off from the wider Catholic Communion.

This change was very hard for missionaries, but also had its difficulties for the locals (*Bishops and Priests*) who may have assumed for themselves the same former model, as if it was just a matter of a swapping responsibilities and benefits. The real challenge was the *Copernican Change of Jesus* who came “**not to be served but to serve**” (Mk 10:45).

¹³⁶ Valentino Savoldi, Renato Kizito Sesana, *AFRICA il Vangelo ci Appartiene*, EMI, Bologna, 1986, p. 156

¹³⁷ <http://users.telenet.be/arseen.de.kesel/kameroen.htm>
Yaoundé (Fides) – *The first Congress on the figure and work of Archbishop Jean Zoa of Yaoundé who died on 20 March, 1998... Various papers and testimonies described the late Archbishop Zoa as a tireless promoter of ecclesial initiatives, highlighting also the theological and pastoral aspects of his work. The Congress revealed all the interior riches of Archbishop Zoa: a man of deep faith, great humanity and dignity, a shepherd who loved his people and traced an African path for Christianity, and predicted for this tormented continent a future of hope. (18 December, 1998).*

¹³⁸ Savoldi/Sesana, *AFRICA il Vangelo ci Appartiene*, op. cit., pp. 153, 155. See also from p. 153 to 171.

¹³⁹ <http://www.smallchristunities.org/africa/africa-continent/231-historical-development-of-the-small-christian-communitiesbasic-ecclesial-commuiancommnities-in-africa.html>
Joseph G. Healey, MM, *Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa*, “*Two of the founders of SCCs in Eastern Africa were Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr, of Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi and Bishop Christopher Mwoleka of Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania.*”

The Comboni Missionaries and the Colonial Rulers

The standpoint towards colonial rulers was always an issue since Daniel Comboni's time. He always opted for the autonomy from all of them and, if he accepted the protection of Austria it was because it had a senior influence among the diplomatic corps but no real colonial aspirations.

Moreover, since 1921 the missionaries in Sudan were mainly Italians and with no allegiance to any colonial power, on the contrary, they found themselves frequently discriminated for being against certain rough policies towards the indigenous people. Since they were Catholics and the colonialists were Protestants, the affinities and ways of thinking were quite divergent, so they could not be thought of as working hand in hand with them. The *Missionary Spheres*¹⁴⁰ then, was a reason of frequent opposition and resistance.

Nonetheless, it was true that some confreres were behaving like colonialists, with attitudes of superiority as part of their general behaviour and tendencies. This was a reason local people and priests, later on, may not have wanted certain confreres to return to South Sudan.

As to the issue of the Moratorium, thanks be to God, the Comboni Missionaries had outstanding people who always believed strongly in the "Mission ad Gentes" and were able to animate the Institute along these lines and help to rediscover Mission in a new way according to the needs of the time and help also other missionary institutes, especially the Italian ones, to overcome in a positive way the time of missionary crisis.

The invitation of the Second Vatican Council to rediscover the values of the roots of each institute was yet another hint for us Comboni Missionaries to rediscover our founder Daniel Comboni, his spirituality and his total dedication to the *Mission ad Gentes* and to the *African Mission*.

Inculturation

The word *inculturation*, in the seventies, was just emerging.¹⁴¹ This word intended to express the implantation of the seed of the Gospel into a culture, so that the germ of Faith could develop in it and express itself according to the resources and the genius proper to the culture itself.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore* op. cit., Mgr Zambonardi, pp. 439-440, 447-448;

¹⁴¹ Francesco Chemello, *Il Catecumenato Missionario nel Rinnovamento Post-Conciliare in Africa Orientale*, Pontificia Università Urbaniana, Facoltà di Missiologia, Tesi di Licenza, Roma 1981, p. 206-211.

¹⁴² - Seumois A., *Théologie Missionnaire IV, Eglise Missioinaire et Faceur Socio-Culturel*, Roma, Università Urbaniana (Biblioteca) 1978, pp. 14-15.

The Second Vatican Council in its documents used the term *adaptation* (AG. 22; SC 37-40)¹⁴³ to indicate the attitude that the Evangelizers had to adopt in regard to socio-cultural and religious realities that they encountered in their work. This term, however, in the 1970s, was accepted with difficulty by the Young Churches that preferred instead to use terms such as *incarnation, indigenisation, Africanization*. So, if we approach the problem of inculturation as a process in its development, we can possibly describe it in stages: first stage *adaptation*, second stage *incarnation* and third stage *indigenization or Africanization*.

In the phase of *adaptation* the Gospel is announced faithfully and, in full respect of the people. In the phase of *incarnation* the message is accepted and appropriated. In the third phase of *indigenization / Africanization*¹⁴⁴ the message received is assimilated and becomes an integral part of an ethnic group which now begins to express it according to the genius of its own culture.¹⁴⁵

In the Vatican documents the term *inculturation* is used in the apostolic exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*

“(CT. 52). ... As I said recently to the members of the Biblical Commission: the term 'acculturation' or 'inculturation' may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the Incarnation. We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelization in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures.

Thus, it is of paramount importance that the message of the Gospel may go deep into the culture and transform it accordingly. Missionaries can help and do their best to facilitate it, but who can do it better than the local people and their leaders? Henceforth, also the Comboni Missionaries, from within the Local Church, would contribute to make it more missionary minded and evangelizing.

- Editoriale, Il Problema dell'Inculturazione Oggi, in Civ. Catt., Vol. 4 (1976) p. 315

¹⁴³ Nigrizia Magazine: R. Pazzi, adattamento e evangelizzazione, 12/1970, p. 20; Evangelizzare, 10/1971, p. 30.

¹⁴⁴ - Mgr Zoa J., Non più “Adattare” ma “Africanizzare”, in Butturini G. (a cura di), Le nuove Vie del Vangelo, Bologna, EMI, 1975. I Vescovi Africani parlano a tutta la Chiesa, pp. 246-247.

- Mgr Maanicus A., Bishop of Bangassou (RCA), Il termine “Adattamento” dispiace a vescovi Africani, in Le nuove vie del vangelo, op. cit., pp.267-268.

- Mgr Sangu, J. D., Evangelizzazione in Africa, pp. 47-48.

¹⁴⁵ Francesco Chemello, Il Catecumenato Missionario, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

CHAPTER FIVE

KEEPING THE MISSION ALIVE to PREPARE A BETTER FUTURE

The Comboni Missionaries in Southern Sudan: the third phase 1964-1981¹⁴⁶

For the Church in Southern Sudan, the period 1964 to 1981 was just the continuation starting from 1900 onwards, which Fr V. Dellagiacomma called *the second era*.¹⁴⁷ For the Comboni Missionaries, 1900, was also the starting of the second endeavour (phase/era) but the time (1964-1981) was for them another new stage, a transitional period of time in regard to their presence in Southern Sudan, with no clear future. Furthermore, because of the different situations involved, it is good to divide this period of time into two: from 1964 to 1972 and from 1972 to 1981.

The characteristic of the period of time between 1964 and 1972 was the special relevance of the work of the Sudanese Comboni Missionaries who were Radical Members, since the expatriate Combonis were not then present. That from 1972 to 1981 is characterized both by the growth in number of the Sudanese Radical Members and the gradual return of the Expatriate Combonis to Southern Sudan.

Events from 1964 to 1972

The period of time between 1964 and 1972 was the most difficult and unsettled one for the Church in Southern Sudan and for the Comboni Missionaries. Church and people had to put up with all the difficulties created by the forced Islamization policy of the Khartoum Government. The Expulsion of the Expatriate Combonis was a crude and irreversible reality. The students in Comboni Priest and Brother formation were in the

¹⁴⁶ The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit. p. 95 & ff.

¹⁴⁷ V. Dellagiacomma, History. op. cit., p. 95

final stages, while the Sudanese Comboni Priests ordained before 1964 were already ministering in this difficult reality.

Immediately after the expulsion, the following Sudanese confreres were attached to the Region of Khartoum, with Fr Ottorino Sina as the Regional Superior. All of them carried on with the following responsibilities:

Fr Barnaba Deng in charge of the Parish of Aweil (Wau)

Fr Peter Magalasi bursar of Kit Seminary (Juba)

Fr Angelo Umedo in charge of the Parish of Wau

Fr David Urasi, Rector of Kit Seminary (Juba)

Bro Benjamin Majok in charge of the carpentry shop in El Obeid Diocese with temporary vows on 6.1.1965.

(Fr Macram Max Gassis belonged to the Region of Khartoum)

Though working in other Vicariates, all of them were attached to the Apostolic Vicariate of EL OBEID,¹⁴⁸ with Mgr Edoardo Mason as Apostolic Vicar.¹⁴⁹ The first South Sudanese Comboni Martyr, Fr Barnaba Deng, was killed on 23 August, 1965. After the first post-expulsion year of very tough and perilous work and the deteriorating security situation, all the South Sudanese Comboni Confreres were assigned to other Comboni Regions outside the area of Southern Sudan.

The political and religious events were closely followed up by the General Administration with concern, care and hope in order to identify any possible positive sign that could give way to any feasible new engagement among the beloved people of Southern Sudan.

The Sudanese Comboni Students in Formation (*Radical Members*)

The number of Sudanese Scholastics in the year 1964, after the expulsion, preparing for Priesthood and those in temporary vows for Brotherhood was really encouraging and promising. The only dark cloud on the horizon was that of their future assignment since the situation in the South was in such disarray with no immediate hope that it would soon improve.

The Scholastics

- **Hilary Boma** was in Florence (Italy) 1962-1963 and took first vows on 9 September, 1963. He then he went for the Scholasticate to

¹⁴⁸ Catalogo, op. cit., January 1965, p. 158

¹⁴⁹ Present address: Missioni Africane - Verona

Venegono (Italy) where he obtained a Licentiate in Liturgy. He was ordained on 28 June, 1966. He was appointed to Uganda, 1966-1970: He worked first at Kangole Parish as coadjutor, and then went to Lacor Seminary as Vice Rector and teacher. Later on, he went to Pakele and was in charge of the Sudanese Pre-Seminary students. He then went to Italy (1971-1974) for a course in liturgy at the Pontifical University of St Anselm. In 1974, he was appointed Vicar General of El Obeid Diocese.

- **Paolino Lukudu Loro** was in Florence, Italy 1965-67, took first vows on 9 September, 1967, and then went to Verona for the Scholasticate, 67-70. He was ordained on 4 April, 1970, and appointed to Khartoum, 1971-1972.
- **Hector Ayon Oyamute** was for a few months in TORE (South Sudan) after the expulsion, and then went to KIT (Juba). In April, 1965, he left for Lacor Seminary, Uganda, and then went to Florence, Italy, 1965-1967 and Venegono for the Scholasticate 1967-1970. Once ordained Priest on 17 May, 1970, he was appointed to Uganda from 1971 to 1972, and then went back to Southern Sudan.
- **Elia Lodu** was in Florence, Italy 1965-1967, took first vows on 9 September, 1967, and then went to Venegono for the Scholasticate but could not study regularly because of medical treatment up to 1971 in Rome when he left.
- **Angelo Ibele** was in Florence, Italy 1966-1968, took first vows on 7 October, 1968, and was ordained on 27 June, 1970. He was appointed to Khartoum, in 1971.
- **Michail Suliman** Novitiate and Scholasticate in Sunningdale (UK), took first vows on 9 September, 1967, but left the community by 1971.
- **Abel Mödi Nyörkö** was in Florence 1968-1970 and took first vows on 9 September, 1970. He went to the scholasticate in Rome, 1970-1971, and was ordained on 3 March, 1971. He was then appointed to South Sudan from 1972.
- **George Longokwo** took the cassock in 1967 and first vows on 9 September, 1969. He then continued the scholasticate in Rome. He was ordained on 18 March, 1971, and then appointed to Uganda.
- **Joseph Ukelo** was in Florence 1967-1969 and took the first vows on 9 September, 1969. Then he carried on with the scholasticate, first in Verona 1969-1970 and then in Rome 1970-1972. He was ordained on 23 April, 1972, and then appointed to South Sudan from 1972.

- **Patrick Mura Ondok** took the cassock in 1968, while in Florence 1968-1970, and first vows on October 10, 1970. Then he went to Rome for the scholasticate year 1970-1971 and then left.
- **Louis Lotimoi** was ordained on 9 June, 1972, took first vows on May 31, 1973 and was then appointed to Kapoeta. He died in a car accident on 29 July, 1974, in Juba.

The Brothers

- **Bro Philip Arik Kwol** took first vows on 9 September, 1970 and went to Khartoum for the course of training as a mechanic.
- **Bro Munir Fahmi** took first vows on 29 June, 1970, and was appointed to the service of Assuan Parish.
- **Bro Benjamin Majok** took first vows on 6 January, 1965. He was put in charge of the carpentry in El Obeid Diocese 1969-1971.
- **Bro Angelo Makur** (*Dinka-Rumbek*), left.

All the Sudanese Radical Members

	Name	Born.	Vows.	Perpetual V.	Ordination
1.	Fr Peter Magalasi (<i>Belanda</i>)	1.12.1929	9. 9.1956	9. 9.1959	7.7.1957
2.	Fr Angelo Umedo (<i>Jur</i>)	6. 7.1931	9. 9.1956	9.9.1962	29.3.1964
3.	Fr Barnaba Deng (<i>Dinka</i>)	30.11.1935	9. 9.1959	9. 9.1961	7.4.1962
4.	Fr David Urasi (<i>Belanda</i>)	1. 1.1935	9. 9.1959	9. 9.1961	7.4.1962
5.	Fr Hilary Boma (<i>Pari</i>)	26 .12.1941	9. 9.1963	9.9.1965	28.6.1966
6.	Bro Benjamin Majok (<i>Dinka</i>)	1.4.1941	6. 1.1965		
7.	Fr Paolino Lukudu (<i>Bari</i>)	23. 8.1940	9. 9.1967	9.9.1969	12.4.1970
8.	Elia Lodu		13. 8.1942	9.9.1967	
9.	Fr Hector Ayon (<i>Didinga</i>)	1.1.1940	9. 9.1967	9.9.1969	17.5.1970
10.	Fr Angelo Ibele (<i>Didinga</i>)	17. 2.1943	7.10.1968	-	27.6.1970

- | | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 11. Joseph Ukelo
(Pari) | 1. 1.1946 | 9. 9.1969 | 6.3.1974 | 23.4.1972 |
| 12. George Longokwo
(Toposa) | 1. 1.1941 | 9. 9.1969 | 7.6.1974 | 18.3.1971 |
| 13. Bro Philip Arik Kwol
(Dinka) | 15. 6.1964 | 9. 9.1970 | | |
| 14. Abel Mödi Nyörkö
(Mundari) | 31. 7.1943 | 9. 9.1970 | 27.9.1976 | 3.4.1971 |
| 15. Patrick Mura Ondok | 15. 9.1948 | 10.10.1970 | | |
| 16. Louis Lotimoi
(Didinga) | | 31.5.1973 | (Died car accid.) | 9.6.1972 |
| 17. Clementino Logwe
(Didinga) a Novice, he died in Italy in car accident, Florence,
12. 9.1955 | | | | |
| 18. Bro Angelo Makur (Dinka) he left. | | | | |

Northern Sudan

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| 19. Fr Max Macram
(Sudanese) | 20. 9.1938 | 9. 9.1957 | 9.9.1963 | 28.6.1964 |
| 20. Bro Munir Fahmi
(Sudanese) | 11. 9.1938 | 29.6.1970 | | |
| 21. Mikhail Suliman
(Sudanese) | 8.12.1945 | 9. 9.1967 | | |

Some of these confreres were assigned to other Provinces, especially Uganda, but the confreres working within the Sudan, for the time being, were appointed to the Region of Khartoum under the authority of its Regional Superior, until the date of the election of the SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE of the Superior General for Southern Sudan in 1981.

South Sudanese Martyred Priests

With the expulsion of all the Christian Expatriate Missionaries, the Khartoum Government thought it had solved the main problem by getting rid of all the possible foreign witnesses. It then intended to carry out the Islamisation policy by dealing severely with all resilient local leaders and breaking down any possible resistance. The main people targeted were Christians in key positions in society, in the education system and in the

Church. Especially targeted were the members of the Catholic Church and, of course, Bishop Ireneo Wien Dud and the Catholic Priests and Religious.

This short account is only a reminder of what these leaders (Clergy and Lay People) had to suffer: death threats, imprisonment, trials, torture, being stripped down of their positions and cheated, being promised better career if they would defect and all a long list of other possible threats for their families and relatives. Some very prominent among them were targeted in a special way and murdered. At this point I will mention the four, most outstanding among them, chronologically. Three were Diocesan Priests and one a Comboni Missionary.

They were martyred between 1965 and 1968. The first one was Fr Arkangelo Ali (Rumbek, 21 July, 1965), the second Fr Barnaba Deng (Wau, 23 August, 1965), the third Fr Saturnino Ohure (Padibe, 22 January, 1967) and the fourth Fr Leopoldo Anywar (Palabek, 9 November, 1968).¹⁵⁰

Remembering that time, Fr Peter Magalasi confirmed that: *“The trials we encountered did not discourage us but strengthened our faith and our courage since we were referred to by people as ‘elders’ in that situation.”*¹⁵¹

Fr Arkangelo Konogo Ali (Rumbek, 21 July, 1965)

Fr Arkanjelo Konogo Ali was an Ndogo of Fei, one of the villages evangelized from Kayango. He was born in 1918 and baptized in 1928. He completed the Minor Seminary in Bussere and attended the philosophical and theological courses at Gulu (1939-1946). He was ordained Priest at Mboro on 1 November, 1946 by Bishop F. X. Bini Vicar Apostolic of Khartoum. The big Church of Mboro was packed with people. The celebration was a time of sheer joy until sunset. Fr Arkangelo was actually the first Ndogo priest. The ordination took place in the morning with great joy, but at evening there was mourning and anxiety due to the killing of Fr Arpe, at the hands of an Ndogo.

Fr Arkanjelo was taking care of the pastoral work at Dem Zubeir, Raja, Kwajok, and Warrap. When the Rumbek Vicariate was erected in 1955 he was stationed in Rumbek and later in Maridi. In 1961 he went to Brussels, Belgium, for a one-year catechetical course at Lumen Vitae. A most active

¹⁵⁰ The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit. p. 99 & ff.

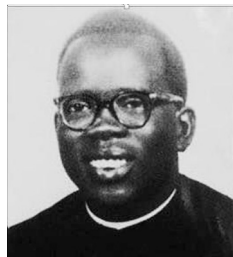
¹⁵¹ Recorded interview with Fr Peter Magalasi by Bro Andrés Gaspar Abarca, June, 2016, in The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit. p. 260.

and zealous Priest, he spoke Arabic, English, Italian, French, Ndogo, and several other languages of the Sudan.

On 21 July, 1965, military trucks burst into Rumbek mission compound at about nine am. Fr Jerome Bidai and Fr Arkanjelo who were stationed there were ordered to walk ahead of the soldiers. Suddenly there was a volley of gunfire and Fr Jerome Bidai fell, wounded, while Fr Arkanjelo was taken under the veranda and killed. His body was hidden by the soldiers. Fr Arkangelo, murdered by Arab soldiers in Rumbek, stands as an example of courage and principle for all Sudanese: he was 47 years old.¹⁵²

Fr Barnaba Deng (*Wau, 23 August, 1965*)¹⁵³

Fr Barnaba Deng, a Dinka Malwal, son of Akec Kwac and Alwel Agol, was born at Atokwel about 1935 and baptized at Kwajok in 1947. As a seminarian he was trained in Bussere, Gulu, and Tore River before going to Florence, Italy, where he joined the Comboni Missionaries in 1959. At the end of his theological course he was ordained at Milan by Cardinal Montini (who later became Pope Paul VI) on 7 April, 1962. He returned to the Sudan the following year and worked in the missions of Gordhiim and Aweil.



In late July, 1965, he went from Aweil to Wau for the monthly retreat for Priests. In his luggage he had a transistor radio and a tape recorder. On the train, a policeman noticed those items and, suspecting that their owner was a rebel, wanted to shoot him. A brave Nuba soldier stopped him, but Barnabas was now under investigation.

In Wau, the Bishop advised him to remain until better days. Barnaba wanted to visit his mother, who was sick in Gogrial, sixty kilometres from

¹⁵² Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore* op. cit., p. 564; Dictionary of African Christian Biography, V. Dellagiacoma, http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/arkanjelo_konogo.html; Fr Arkangelo Ali, Arch. Gabriel Card. Zubeir Wako, <http://catholicradionetwork.org/?q=node/2371>

¹⁵³ - Dictionary of African Christian Biography, http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/deng_barnaba.html
- Deng P. Barnaba - ultimi giorni, (The last days of Fr Barnaba Deng), Mccj Bulletin, n. 76, pp. 41-44.
- Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore* op. cit., pp. 851-853
- *Fr Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi, mccj*, <http://www.comboni.org/en/contenuti/106122-anniversary-of-the-martyrdom-of-fr-barnaba-deng>

Wau. He did so and returned (1-2 August). He then returned to Aweil to attend to other matters. On Sunday, 9 August, after celebrating two masses, he asked the police for permission to go to Wau. Their reply: *it's better if you wait a few more days.*

Someone suggested Barnaba should leave immediately, through the forest, not by train. That evening, at 18.30, another person came running to tell him: *leave immediately, flee!* Barnaba ran off into the forest, spent the night in the hut of an acquaintance and then continued on foot, in stages, keeping away from the road, until a few kilometres from Wau. From there he sent a note to the Bishop.

Mgr Ireneo Dud received it and, just after he ended the Holy Mass, he left by truck together with Fr Egidio Ukelo to get him. He found Fr Barnaba very tired and scared, dressed in black shorts and a coloured shirt, as he had dressed at his departure from Aweil. Around 10.30 he brought him back to the mission and, to let him feel more secure and quiet, he put him in the room that had once been occupied by the Procurator. He allowed him to celebrate Mass in the Cathedral, at 4 pm. at a side altar. Mgr Dud, who had to go to Rome for the Second Vatican Council, advised Fr Barnaba to go to Khartoum and from there to go together with him to Rome. He accepted the proposal.

On 23 August, at 3 pm. Fr Barnaba asked Fr Angelo Umedo for his van to go to greet the family who had hosted him before reaching Wau. On the way he met a military convoy coming from Aweil. They told him to stop. Somebody alighted from a truck and asked Fr Barnaba: “who are you?” “I am Barnaba Deng”, he replied. “How is it that you are here, while we have been looking for you in Aweil?” Fr Barnaba did not answer. There are two gunshots and Fr Barnaba fell next to the roadside. In the evening, at home, they were waiting for him anxiously. The soldiers in the convoy hid the corpse in the grass.

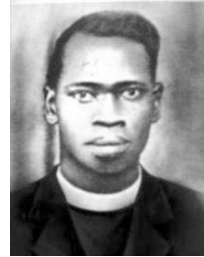
The next morning, Fr Egidio and Fr Angelo went looking for Fr Barnaba. A man who was living near the site of the assassination told them: “Go away from here! There are soldiers hiding in the grass!” The two Fathers returned to Wau and reported to the Bishop. The Bishop phoned to the police to enquire about Fr Barnaba. They said they would carry out a search. In the evening (August 24), the Chief of Police called to the Bishop saying: “We are sorry, Fr Barnaba was killed by soldiers who found him after curfew and did not know who he was!”

During that night, the corpse was buried somehow by some inmates of the prison. On the evening of 25 August, the police brought the van back to the mission.

Speaking of Fr Barnaba Deng, Fr Peter Magalasi said: “*Fr Barnaba was a strong Dinka man and used to face directly the challenges and the people who were showing no respect: you could not joke with him; he was a kind of ‘hot Dinka’ one would not joke with. He would go to the police with all their guns without fear, ‘let them shoot’, he would say.*”¹⁵⁴

Saturnino Ohure (Padibe, 22 January, 1967)¹⁵⁵

The first Lotuho Priest, Saturnino Ohure was born to Xillange and Ixonom about 1921 and was baptized at Torit in 1931. Soon he asked to enter Okaru Seminary and he went to Gulu in 1938. On 21 December, 1946, he was ordained Priest with Fr Avellino Wani at Gulu. Some years later he was given responsibilities with the same Father at Lirya mission until 1955, when the existing Sudanese Priests were transferred to the new vicariate of Rumbek under Bishop Irenaeus Dud.



At the first general elections he stood for Torit and was elected. He soon became a leader of Southern MPs in the Constituent Assembly. When the Assembly was dissolved by the military government in November 1958, Fr Saturnino retired to Yei and Porkele. In 1961, informed of his imminent arrest he fled to Uganda together with other ex-parliamentarians where he helped and counselled Sudanese refugees. In one of his travels in this connection he was killed by a Ugandan soldier near Kitgum on 22 January, 1967. He was a distinguished Priest, and an unselfish, prudent, and courageous leader. In January, 2009, his body was exhumed from its grave in Kitgum and transported to Torit for reburial.

¹⁵⁴ Recorded interview with Fr Peter Magalasi, op. cit. p. 260-261.

¹⁵⁵ Dictionary of African Christian Biography, V. Dellagiocoma, http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/ohure_saturnino.html
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturnino_Ohure

- Regarding Fr Saturnino’s involvement in politics, the attitude of the Comboni Missionaries at the time (who were still in charge of the Sudan mission) was supportive of his choice, though without making a fuss of it. He was on good terms with them and they had a great appreciation for him personally and thought he could really do something good. (a witness report).

Fr Leopoldo Anywar ¹⁵⁶ (Palabek, 9 November, 1968)

Fr Leopoldo Anywar, a Torit Priest from Magwi, was killed in 1968 in a combined military operation by forces from Uganda and Sudan in Kitgum, along the Uganda border. Fr Anywar met his death while bringing support to South Sudanese displaced by the war. On 2 July, 2011, his body was exhumed and brought to Torit to Our Lady of the Assumption Church for a memorial and thanksgiving Mass. The solemn reburial of Fr Leopold Anywar's remains took place the following day at a mausoleum built in Magwi, Eastern Equatoria.

His Grace Archbishop Ireneo Wien Dud

I am including a brief biography of Archbishop Ireneo Wien Dud at this point of the historical account, together with the South Sudanese martyred Priests, not because he suffered a violent death, but because he really was a living martyr who suffered painfully the harassment and the martyrdom of



his Priests, Religious and Lay People. He was like Mary, the mother of Jesus, under the cross and he had to endure all with faith and hope while unable to do anything to save them from the hands of Khartoum army or its allies. All this surely pierced his heart much more than if he himself had suffered direct martyrdom. We cannot allow such a great and outstanding figure to go without mention.

He himself was subjected to all the political and religious pressures by the Khartoum Authorities to get him to comply, as the top figure in the Catholic hierarchy, with their requests in the religious, educational and political fields. To resist all these machinations truly required the strength of a martyr in faith and heroic courage in order to protect his priests and all the church personnel from the above dangers. The eyes of all were looking to him to find inspiration and courage.

At the time of his death, the magazine *Nigrizia* carried an article by Fr. Elia Toniolo entitled: *"A dream come true: remembering the first Sudanese Bishop Ireneo Wien Dud"*.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Fr Leopoldo Anywar, <http://catholicradionetwork.org/?q=node/4285>

The first Sudanese Bishop died in Wau, South Sudan, on 24 April, 1983. Archbishop Ireneo Wien Dud was a Jur, born in the mission station of Mbili (Bahr el Ghazal) in 1912. His father was chief Dud Akot and his mother, Akumo, was Dud's second wife. At twelve years of age, Wien Dud entered the catechumenate: on 8 June, 1923, he was baptized with the name of Ireneo. He began attending elementary school in Mbili and completed it in Wau where he began the intermediates. It was there that the Lord called Ireneo to join the first group who wished to enter the seminary. In the Seminary of Bussere (Wau) he completed secondary school and studied philosophy, always coming top of the class. In 1940 Ireneo went to Gulu (Uganda) for theology. On 21 December, 1944, Mgr. Rudolf Orler, Bishop of Wau, ordained him priest.

Fr. Ireneo showed himself a true minister of God full of initiative. The parish of Raffili, among the Belanda-Bor people, was his first place of work. In 1947 he was in Mayen among the Dinka-Twic. In 1951 he was appointed parish priest of the new mission station of Warap among the Dinka-Rek. (One should remember that he exercised his ministry in Wau, Raffili, Kpaile, Mbili, Tonj, and Warap. He was fluent in Jur, Dinka, Belanda-Bor, Bviri, English, Arabic, and Italian).

On 12 July, 1955, in the middle of the rainy season, the roads between Wau and Warap were impassable and it was dark when Fr. Ireneo opened the telegram brought to him by Mgr. Edoardo Mason, the new Bishop of Wau. The telegram said: "**Fr. Ireneo Dud, elected Titular Bishop of Barcuso and Vicar Apostolic of Rumbek**". It was a truly historic date. In fact, Mgr. Dud was the first Sudanese bishop: the dream of Daniel Comboni to save Africa with Africa was fulfilled. The new vicariate, created by the Holy See on 12 July, 1955, comprised three districts: Rumbek, Yei and Maridi, with a total of 420,000 people.

On 20 November, 1955, Mgr. Ireneo was consecrated in the new Cathedral of Wau. The sixth of April, 1975, remained a landmark date for the Church of Sudan. On 12 December, 1974, there was the erection of the Catholic hierarchy of the Sudan and on the sixth of April the Holy See implemented it with the consecration of three new Sudanese bishops: Mgr. Gabriel Zubeir (Wau), Mgr. Joseph Gasi (Tombura), and Mgr. Pio Yukwan (Malakal). Mgr. Ireneo was transferred to Juba, in Equatoria, the capital of South Sudan, as Archbishop of the new ecclesiastical province of Southern Sudan.

¹⁵⁷ Un sogno realizzato: ricordando il primo vescovo sudanese, Ireneo Wien Dud", E. Toniolo, Nigrizia, June, 1988, p. 53; http://www.dacb.org/stories/sudan/dud_ireneo.html

Meanwhile, the health of Mgr. Ireneo became more and more precarious: in July 1982 he resigned. He then returned to Wau in Bahr el Ghazal for a well-earned rest.

Time of unrest and exile

During these years people no longer felt safe, especially the Christians, and therefore a huge number took the way of exile in Uganda, Congo and in the Republic of Central Africa. Thus, the Comboni Missionaries dedicated themselves to the care of the refugees in **Kilomines** in Congo, **Agbosi** and **Mboki** in RCA and **Pakele** in Uganda. They also hosted Brothers, Sisters, Aspirants, Postulants and Novices of the Sudanese Local Congregations. **Lacor** (Gulu, Uganda) hosted the Major Seminarians under the direction of Comboni personnel. Fr Hilary Boma was there as a teacher and Vice Rector.

All the Sudanese confreres (Radical Members) received new assignments and a new commitment. **Fr Peter Magalasi** was in Lacor (Uganda) and **Fr David Urasi**, Director of the *Aspirant Brothers* of the Vicariate of Juba, was in Patongo Parish, Diocese of Gulu. **Fr Angelo Umedo**, Novice Master of the *St Joseph's Brothers* of Wau, was attached to El Obeid Vicariate. **Bro Benjamin Majok** was in charge of the carpentry in El Obeid. **Fr Hilary Boma** was assigned to Uganda, 1966-1970: Kangole Parish as a Parish coadjutor, then to Lacor Seminary as Vice Rector and Teacher and to Pakele, as well.

The Region of Khartoum and the South

The expulsion in 1964 from Southern Sudan engaged the Region of Khartoum in new commitments and responsibilities. The South Sudanese confreres could not be juridically abandoned to their own fate without a proper juridical set-up. New students of theology were at the conclusion of their formation and ready to go back to the Sudan and Southern Sudan. Due to the situation it was not advisable just to erect a Comboni Jurisdiction in the South in such a fluid period of time with no solid bases, so it was thought wise to entrust the whole Southern Sudan issue to the care of the Region of Khartoum.

The regional Superior of Khartoum after the expulsion was Fr Ottorino Sina and the immediate issue he had to face was the assignment of the Sudanese Confreres and the type of commitment which could be still viable in the South. The matter had to be taken up with urgency by the new

Regional Superior Fr Ferruccio Rovelli, who was elected on 9 December, 1969, and his council, with the mandate to start on 15 December, 1969.¹⁵⁸

At the election of the Councillors there were only two Sudanese confreres who had the right to active and passive vote (to vote and to be voted for). They were Fr Angelo Umedo and Fr Hilary Boma. They did not receive many votes, but the way was opened, so much so that, at later stage, Fr Hilary Boma was also elected Vice Regional Superior, witnessing a growing trust in the Southerners.

The most acute issue of the time was the community assignment of the newly ordained confreres, particularly of Fr Paolino Lukudu and Fr Angelo Ibele. The main concern of the Superior General and of the Regional was that they should be introduced to community and pastoral life in a Comboni Community where they could have a proper welcome and introduction so that they could have positive experiences at the start of their missionary ministry. The place chosen was the community of Khartoum, as Coadjutors to Ss. Peter and Paul Parish,¹⁵⁹ and they started their ministry immediately.

During the post-expulsion period, the situation of the Sudanese confreres, who were not very numerous, was that of “displaced or refugee people”, though this term would not be appropriate for us missionaries since our mission is where we are sent. Nonetheless, they had been sent somewhere for reasons of security like other diocesan priests, since such was the real situation.

Fr Peter Magalasi (to Morulem - Uganda) Coadjutor, **Fr Angelo Umedo** (to Port Sudan) teacher, **Fr David Urasi** (to Gulu - Uganda), **Fr Hilary Boma** (to Pakele - Uganda) in charge of the Sudanese Pre Seminary, **Fr Paolino Lukudu** (to Khartoum) Coadjutor at Ss. Peter and Paul, **Fr Angelo Ibele** (to Khartoum) Coadjutor, at Ss. Peter and Paul, **Fr Hector Ayon** for medical treatment to Uganda until 1971.

By the end of the same year they were asked to go back to Southern of Sudan. Meanwhile, Fr Angelo Umedo, in Port Sudan, was undergoing a personal crisis and wrote a letter to Fr Rovelli in order to leave the Priesthood.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, Fr Angelo Ibele, after a positive experience in

¹⁵⁸ Fr Salvatore Calvia, Secr. Gen.: Appointment of Fr Rovelli Ferruccio as Regional Superior (of Khartoum), Rome, 10 December, 1969. ACR 341/1.

¹⁵⁹ Catalogo, op. cit. 11 April, 1971, p. 133.

¹⁶⁰ - Fr Rovelli to Fr General, Kh, 8 May, 1971, Kh. 16 May, 1971, Kh. 23 May.1971. ACR 341/2/2.

- Fr Agostoni to Fr Rovelli, 1 November, 1971, 400/71. ACR 341/2/2

- Catalogo, supplement, op. cit., 1972, p. 27

Kadugli, went to Lebanon.¹⁶¹ There he again underwent a crisis and was given some time to reflect on what to do.¹⁶² He then also left the Congregation and by 1974 he did not appear any more in the Catalogue of the Comboni Missionaries.

Commitments in the South

Properly planned care of the Region of Khartoum for the South started when Fr Paolino Lukudu Loro was given the task of contacting Mgr Silvestro Laharanya of the Vicariate of Bahr el Jebel. The proposal from the Regional Superior of Khartoum was a possible opening of a commitment to be entrusted to some of our Comboni Confreres, in a spirit of collaboration between the Congregation and the Local Church, in the Vicariate of Bahr el Jebel.

The Regional Council was waiting for the results of the enquiry,¹⁶³ but this preliminary dialogue with Mgr Silvestro Laharanya of Juba did not lead to any concrete results, so Fr Rovelli and Fr Sina, who was on visit from Rome, decided to go to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Ubaldo Calabresi, in order to finalize the matter with him. The final agreement reached was to open the mission of Nzara.

Fr Lukudu and Bro Majok were ready to start their journey to Juba and Nzara with the idea of opening Nzara by Christmas.¹⁶⁴ It was also agreed with Fr Abel Mödi that he would travel to Nzara on 21 December. The opening of Nzara was perceived by everybody as a *golden opportunity* not to be missed. Fr Agostoni, the Superior General, not only welcomed and approved the opening of one community, but also encouraged opening a second one, as long as there were three members in each community.¹⁶⁵

The re-opening of Nzara Mission took place on 6 December, 1971, by Fr Lukudu together with Bro Benjamin Majok. Fr Lukudu was accompanied by Bro Matthew Yangadakpio, a Brother of St Martin de Porres from Juba. Fr Mödi and Fr Urası (the future Superior) joined them later on. They settled in the former house of the Comboni Sisters, which was in fairly good shape.

¹⁶¹ Fr Rovelli to Fr Sina, 24 February, 1971. ACR 341/2/2.

¹⁶² Fr Rovelli to Fr Sina, 6 May, 1972, ACR 341/2/2.

¹⁶³ Minutes of the Council (Khartoum) 18-20 September, 1971, par. 3. ACR 341/4.

¹⁶⁴ Fr F. Rovelli to Fr T. Agostoni, 5, October, 1971, and of 24 October, 1971; Fr F. Rovelli to Fr O. Sina 12 December, 1971. ACR 341/2/2.

¹⁶⁵ Fr T. Agostoni to Fr F. Rovelli, 1 November, 1971 (400/71). ACR 341/2/2.

At that time, the Fathers' house was occupied by the personnel of a local factory but they soon left it. The other buildings were not occupied by the soldiers, but had been damaged by the *Simba* of Congo and by termites.

Thus, by the end of 1971, Nzara became the first mission to be reassumed by the Comboni Missionaries in the South.¹⁶⁶ The big difficulty was to get enough funds to be able to run it. This was done, first of all, with a lot of trust in Divine Providence and partly with donations received by the confreres, possibly with some help from Propaganda Fide through the Apostolic Delegate, from the Mission Procure and some *locally*.

Since the expulsion of 1964, no Father had resided in Nzara. When Fr Lukudu and the other new Combonis arrived, they found that the Christian community had kept going under the care of the Head Catechist, Mario Motawari, a very committed ex-seminarian who set up a Parish committee of four persons whom he personally instructed. This committee was in charge of collecting the offerings on Sunday, dealing with the various issues of the Christian community and especially with marriage problems.

In the area of Nzara, the majority of people were Protestant, but in school they were only fifty per cent, due especially to the returnees who were mainly Catholic. Relations with the Protestants were a bit tense, but there was hope for improvement. From Nzara, the Fathers were taking care also of the Parishes of Ringosi and Yambio.

The main difficulties the Combonis experienced on their arrival in Nzara were: the matter of the Zande language, since none of them was a Zande; there was only one car for transport; the shortage of fuel which could only be found in Juba; the lack of financial resources. People were living in a very poor situation; sometimes the Fathers would pass on their donations, preferring to give them to needier people.

Regarding a possible Sisters' presence in Nzara, since they were ten Sisters in Tombura, the Fathers thought they might have problems with their upkeep in Nzara. If they did decide to return there, the Fathers were ready and willing to leave the house to them.¹⁶⁷

Regarding the proposed second Comboni Community in the South, the Regional Council of Khartoum left the question pending; Kapoeta would have been the preferred location. As for the political situation, since the

¹⁶⁶ Kh. 12 December, 1971. Fr F. Rovelli to Fr Sina (Rome): "Fr A. Mödi is leaving for Juba and then Nzara on the 21 December, 1971." 341/2/2; Lettera di Collegamento (Link Letter) Interview of Fr Paolino Lukudu – Nzara – 1 April, 1973. ACR 341/5/1.

¹⁶⁷ Lettera di Collegamento (Link Letter) Interview to Fr Paolino Lukudu, op. cit.; Newsletter (by Fr V. Dellagiacomma, Gulu, Uganda, No. 4, February, 1972. ACR 341/5/1.

middle of 1971 it had become more unstable and it was very dangerous to travel towards the South or in the South itself because of guerrilla attacks.¹⁶⁸

Facing new situations

The Regional Council of Khartoum found itself in a situation of having to follow its commitments in the North and, at the same time, to follow the issue of the South, a new and unforeseen development for the Region. The General Administration was asked to clarify the matter of the territorial extension of the Region of Khartoum to the South.

Another very important issue was the renewal brought about by the Second Vatican Council and the actual situation within Sudan. This made the Regional Superior and his council aware of the pressing need for the confreres to reflect on the *signs of the times* calling for a renewal of the style of life and attitudes.

This renewal needed to be extended to all the aspects of missionary life and situations: the field of finance, the community style and decision-making in a spirit of communion, collaboration and fraternal sharing according to requirements. Better care that finances be clearly used for the specific purpose of evangelization and implantation of the Church.¹⁶⁹

As for the issue of the South, once the juridical aspects were clarified, a real spirit of collaboration between the Comboni Missionaries and the Local Church was to be developed. Regarding the newly appointed Sudanese Confreres, the concern of the Regional Superior and his Council was to ensure that personal freedom and equality had to be afforded to all the members of the Congregation so to prevent any possible discrimination.¹⁷⁰

The historic-political arena of Sudan

All that has been said above was what the history of Sudan brought until 1971. However, new and very important political and military events were

¹⁶⁸ Fr Rovelli to Fr Sina, Kh. 6 June, 1971. ACR 341/2/2.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of the Council (Khartoum) 4-5 September, 1970, op. cit., paragraph 8.

¹⁷⁰ Minutes of the Council (Khartoum) 18-20 September, 1971, op. cit., paragraph 3. ACR 341/4.

coming up and gaining increasing political and religious consensus, ending up with the sealing of the Addis Ababa Agreement on 27 February, 1972.¹⁷¹

This was certainly not an easy issue either militarily or politically, but at religious level many people were rather sceptical and did not trust the promises of Khartoum which, as experience was teaching the Southerners, always acted deceitfully, promising much and, once the agreements were made, changing the terms according to the wishes of the ruling party, disregarding the agreements.

This was a big issue also among leading Comboni confreres at the time. Fr Adriano Bonfanti was the most sceptical and did not see any good for the future in a possible agreement. Many Southern military commanders on the Dinka side were also very sceptical and ten years later this would come out clearly. However, the general situation was that everybody was tired of war, hardships and displacement and were looking for any agreement which could lead to a fair conclusion of peace.

Eventually, this latter part of society became the majority and they believed that there were positive signs that Mohammed and his government would reach a fair conclusion and an agreement with the Anya-Nya Rebel Movement of General Joseph Lagu. General Joseph Lagu himself was convinced that the time was right and he followed this path.

However, he would later on regret having signed the Addis Ababa Agreement and worked hard to dismantle it. The reason being, as stated above, the cunning policy of Khartoum and President Nimeiri who cleverly dodged his expectation as the possible top leader of the South. The Vice President of Sudan, Mr Abel Alier, was instead put to cover it. General Joseph Lagu was instead promoted to higher rank in the army, but clearly in a subordinate position.

This move by President Nimeiri was never accepted by General Joseph Lagu and contributed to fuelling discontent among other already sceptical army commanders of the South, particularly on the Dinka side. It also prepared the way for the next armed struggle led by SPLA guerrilla movement in 1983.

Nonetheless, this period of time between 1972 and 1983 is one of great development in the South and not again experienced until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005. It seemed that North and South Sudan had really found the way to coexist peacefully and in

¹⁷¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Addis-Ababa-Agreement>
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Sudan/The-Addis-Ababa-Agreement#ref48975>

collaboration, with due autonomy being given to the South according to the Addis Ababa Agreement.

The time between 1972 and 1981 was the most identifying experience for the Comboni Missionary Sudanese confreres (Radical Members), while for the Sudanese Local Church, it was the starting point of its definitive identity with the installation of the Sudanese Hierarchy.

CHAPTER SIX

BACK TO THE BELOVED SOUTH

Events from 1972 to 1981

In the previous chapter I stressed the fact that the period of time between 1964 and 1981 was a time for keeping the mission alive to prepare for better future. The time from 1964 to 1972 was one of unrest and exile. The ability of the Sudanese Comboni confreres to work in such conditions was put to the test and not found wanting. They were committed even to the point of martyrdom.

The period of time from 1972 to 1981 witnessed the deep commitment and the growth in number of the Sudanese Radical Members. Expatriate Combonis also began to return. Three main events formed a framework for all others:

1. The signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement
2. The installation of the Sudanese Catholic Hierarchy.
3. The preparation for a new Circumscription in South Sudan.

It was within this context involving the Local Church and the whole of Sudan, together with that of the broader Comboni reality, that the following matters would develop for the Comboni Institute in the South:

- consolidation of the Comboni community of Nzara and the opening of the Community of Kapoeta.
- gradual return of the Expatriate Comboni Bros, Frs and Srs.
- opening up to other Missionary Congregations.
- speech of the Comboni Superior General, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, on the installation of the Sudanese Catholic Hierarchy.

The signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement

The Addis Ababa Agreement was signed on 27 February, 1972, and sealed the desire of peace which prevailed over war. The positive acceptance of the agreement brought the South to enjoy its autonomy from

the North. Mr Abel Alier Kwai¹⁷² became the President of the High Executive Council of the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region from 1972 to 1978 and the South started looking positively towards a future of peace and prosperity within the framework of the agreed autonomy. I just state this without expanding it since I have already dealt briefly with it and the people's reactions in the previous chapter.

The Comboni communities of Nzara and Kapoeta

When the Addis Ababa Agreement was signed, the Comboni community of Nzara had already started its journey three months earlier. This was meaningful in that it showed that the planning was not just dependent on the political situation, but was following its own parameters, the needs of the Mission in Southern Sudan. Peace was a welcome reality.

Within this context of hope, the confreres in Nzara were carrying on their work according to the directives of the General Council and the Regional Superior and his Council in Khartoum. The reopening of Nzara on 6 December, 1971, under the care of the Sudanese Comboni Missionaries, opened a new horizon for the Comboni presence in the South.

The South Sudanese confreres, feeling at home, got into the pastoral/missionary work with energy and confidence. Notwithstanding the still existing difficulties of the process of repatriation of the people in exile and the struggle to reconstruct Church structures and strengthen the Christian faith, a faith tested by persecution, the future appeared bright and hopeful and it was also planned to open a second community at Kapoeta.

The work of the Sudanese Comboni Radical Members.

With the wind in their sails, the Combonis were full of hope for the future and new confidence as they made plans to open Kapoeta as Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, Superior General, had suggested. This was done that same year, 1972, counting on the newly ordained South Sudanese confreres. By the end of 1972 this was the situation of the two communities:

Nzara community was made up of **Fr David Uras**i (Superior), **Fr Paolino Lukudu**, **Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö**, and **Bro Benjamin Majok**. Bro

¹⁷² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abel_Alier

Abel Alier Kwai is a South Sudanese politician and judge who served as Vice President of Sudan between 1971 and 1982 and as President of the High Executive Council of the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region between 1972 and 1978.

Benjamin Majok, by the end of 1972, was not admitted to the renewal of his vows and was given time to reflect.¹⁷³ He went to Rumbek but, after some time, he left the Institute definitively.

Kapoeta was opened in 1972 and was supposed to be composed of **Fr Longokwo**, **Fr Ayon** and **Fr Ukelo**. By this time, Fr Louis Lotimoi Nyabanga had already been ordained priest and was available to join the others but had not yet taken perpetual vows.¹⁷⁴ From that moment, **Fr Longokwo** resided in Kapoeta with Fr Nereo Lopé, a Diocesan priest

Fr Ukelo, was supposed to be part of the community, but was sent temporarily to Terakeka parish to help a Diocesan priest. He would go to Kapoeta only later on. **Fr Ayon**, never resided physically at Kapoeta, but lived all the time in Chukudum, joined later on by **Fr Lotimoi**.

The fact of having been able to open these two specific communities with Sudanese confreres and having some of them helping in other locations was surely a notable achievement which witnessed the great desire of both the General and Regional Councils to get things moving in the Comboni commitment in the South, though with over-stretched personnel.

However, there was real pride in the fact that this was fulfilled by the South Sudanese confreres themselves. Nonetheless, one cannot fail to notice the immediate difficulties encountered in the setting up of Kapoeta community and the assignment of personnel handicapped by strong personal drives of confreres concerning the understanding of “obedience”, an issue the Superiors had to deal with later on together with the issue of the number of confreres constituting the community.

Serious demands were made on the Superiors of the existing communities to keep the Regional Council informed about the life of their communities, about relationships with the Local Ordinaries and about the financial reports and, in a particular way, to continue reflecting about which type of Mission and missionary approach was to be considered most adequate at that particular time. For this last point the Council of Priests was indicated as the most appropriate place to deal with such a matter.¹⁷⁵

Of the two communities, Nzara was more settled. The work was quite demanding due to the lack of priests and the extensive area to be taken care of. Besides the pastoral/missionary work, the community was deeply involved in education through the primary school where the youth could

¹⁷³ Fr Rovelli to Fr General, 29 April, 1973. ACR 341/2/3.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of the Council (Khartoum) 9-12 November, 1972, paragraph 4. ACR 341/4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. paragraph 4, 6. ACR 341/4.

receive basic education. Bishop Joseph Gasi Abangite and the newly arrived Comboni Fathers were convinced of its importance.

All were deeply involved in pastoral work, not only in Nzara but also to other places. Fr Abel Mödi, at a certain point, together with the pastoral care, was in charge of the school and said:

“About our experience in the community of Nzara in 1971, we were the first Comboni Missionaries to restart the presence of the Combonis in South Sudan. It was a good experience; we were very keen to start our mission in South Sudan... At that time, we belonged to Khartoum Province and some confreres from Khartoum, like Fr Sina and Fr De Bertolis, came a couple of times to visit us. We were looking forward to the peace agreement.

Fr Paolino (Lukudu) and I took care of Nzara Parish, but we were also visiting Tombura, Maringido, Source Yubu, Mupo, Yambio, Maridi and Mundri. We then felt responsible for the missions in Tombura/Yambio Vicariate. We planned our pastoral work very well. We had 41 chapels, each with a Catechist, assisted by committee members... I did my best to care for the Parish, the chapels and the primary school we had opened.

Education was important. We decided to open a Comboni Primary School. I was appointed to take charge of the school. Comboni Primary was working very well. Twice it was the first in the whole of Western Equatoria. Our dream was to have Primary, Junior and Senior Secondary. I got enough land for all these levels. Thank God today we have the Primary and the Junior running in Nzara.”¹⁷⁶

The South: moving on

It was in January 1973 that the Regional Superior, Fr Ferruccio Rovelli, accompanied by Fr Max Macram, could arrange a visit to the South, starting from the community of Nzara. This was a very important event one year after the opening of Nzara and the more recent Kapoeta.

The meeting with the community of Nzara was very positive, the situation was good and there were no serious problems. From there he proceeded to Kapoeta and then back to Juba. In Juba he found all the Priests were having a retreat. The Comboni confreres Fr Lukudu and Fr Mödi, from Nzara, Fr Longokwo, Fr Ukelo and Fr Ayon from Kapoeta were with them as well. Mgr Paolino Doggale, the new Apostolic

¹⁷⁶ 21 July, 2016, Shared experience of Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö.

Administrator of Juba, was also there and, at the end of the retreat, was supposed to appoint the Priests to their different posts.

Fr Rovelli thought it important to have a meeting with the five Comboni confreres and he realized that some matters that did not come out in the meeting of Nzara community had emerged and needed to be tackled urgently: one was the issue of leadership among the confreres; the other was the problem of the great distance between the two communities of Nzara and Kapoeta and, finally, the financial issue of the community budgets.

Fr Rovelli realized that he could not give an immediate answer to all these matters which needed to be discussed at Regional Council level. However, as for the second issue, the suggestion of the confreres of Nzara of having a community around Juba instead of Kapoeta so far away, Fr Rovelli reminded them that, before taking up Nzara, an enquiry was carried out by Fr Paolino Lukudu himself with Mgr Silvestro Laharanya, but there was no follow-up and, as a result, Nzara was finally chosen. As for Kapoeta, it was already proposed as the favourite site for a second opening.

With the mediation of Mgr Paolino Doggale the matter ended with the acceptance of the situation as it was in reality. As for the recently ordained confreres who were supposed to make up the community of Kapoeta there was no real problem, their interest was to get immediately into their ministry in the assigned place, which they did with all their zeal.

However, though assigned to the community of Kapoeta, Fr Ayon always remained in Chukudum, Fr Ukelo was sent to help temporarily in Terakeka and only later on would he reach Kapoeta, while Fr Lotimoi was elected by the Socialist Union Party for the Didinga district as a Member of the Regional Parliament in the South, so he would remain in Chukudum with his residence in Juba. Thereafter, Fr Longokwo remained in Kapoeta with a diocesan Priest, Fr Nereo Lopé.

By the end of 1973 the commitments in the South under the jurisdiction of the Region of Khartoum with Fr Ferruccio Rovelli as Regional Superior were as follows:¹⁷⁷

NZARA: Fr David Urasi (*from 1972*), Fr Abel Mödi (*from 1971*), Fr Paolino Lukudu (*from 1971 to 1974*).

KAPOETA: Fr George Longokwo (*coming from Moroto-Uganda 1972*), Fr Hector Ayon (*coming from Nabilatuk, Mototo-Uganda 1972*), Fr Louis Lotimoi (*from 1973-1974*). *He died in a car accident in Juba on 29 July.*

¹⁷⁷ Catalogo, op. cit., 1 January, 1974.

TERAKEKA: Fr Joseph Ukelo (*temporary assistance: mission run by Diocesan Clergy*).

Post Addis Ababa: time of reconstruction in the South

The post Addis Ababa stage was a propitious time for the reconstruction of the South and it was evident that also the Catholic Church was working hard in this field. For the Comboni Missionaries this was a golden opportunity to offer their availability in this line. However, the matter was not as easy as it had seemed. The situation, the feelings and the approaches required a new approach and extensive discussion on acceptable attitudes.

The experience and the type of relationships of the time previous to the expulsion left in the indigenous Church a lot of positive realities, but also wounds that needed time to heal and needed clarification and new understanding. If in other African nations there was the issue of the “Moratorium” on “Expatriate Missionaries”, it was not so in South Sudan.

The issue was never there for discussion in the Church since the Khartoum Government just got it through with no discussion: all Missionaries were expelled and this was the most radical “Moratorium” which prevented it becoming an issue in the Church. However, at the time of the return of the missionaries, the issue was clearly present. The word “Moratorium” was never mentioned, but the matter was there. ***The Comboni Missionaries returning to South Sudan? How? Who? and with what attitudes?***

First of all the issue was with the new High Executive Council of the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region. Though in favour of the return of the missionaries, they could not expose themselves too much in front of the Khartoum Central Government. An abrupt opening in this sense would have been totally counterproductive. They had to be quite cautious on the matter of permits for missionaries coming for a religious purpose.

It was quite a different matter for permits granted for the promotion of social activities and projects in the various fields of masonry, mechanics, carpentry, health and education. All these fields were places where Brothers and Sisters or even priests would fit in wonderfully, without mentioning too much the religious side.

As for the Church’s needs, the requests were going along these lines, as well. The return of missionary priests was also seen as going back to the pre-expulsion situation, getting missionaries again in key position of leadership in the Church and leaving the Local Clergy again in a subordinate position. Also in this instance nothing was automatic. There

had to be honest dialogue to see where the missionary priests were really needed.

Some confreres, because of their former relationship with influential people in key government position, believed they could get their permits by themselves but this proved to be the wrong approach, at both political and religious levels. The time had come for such confreres to understand this.

This was the reason why, at this precise time, the Ordinaries were asking for Comboni Missionary Brothers because of the urgent need to reactivate, rebuild or build from the scratch the most essential facilities. No doubt it was the easiest way to start since it did not touch conflict issues in the religious field and especially on leadership. Since the Brothers were committed in specific social matters and situations they could do a great amount of good work acceptable to everybody, laity, clergy and Ordinaries.

The Superior General, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, and his Council, in connection with the Region of Khartoum, agreed that this was certainly the most appropriate way to get everything moving and that the Holy Spirit would indicate gradually the way forward. So, some brothers, either on temporary bases from Khartoum or with short permits from the Government of the South, could start some commitments in various locations of the South according to the Ordinary's request.

Time of reconstruction in the Catholic Church

All this desire to move ahead came after an extraordinary meeting of the Sudan Episcopal Conference¹⁷⁸ with H. E. the Pro-Nuncio, Archbishop Ubaldo Calabresi. All the Ordinaries were present, except that of Rumbek, due to unforeseen circumstances. There was also a representative of *Cor Unum* from Rome and the secretary of Sudanaid. This extraordinary meeting was very important because it dealt with the reconstruction of the South and with the most important priorities and issues of the time.

These priorities were the starting point of a plan of action in which all the components of the *Local Church* were affected. Since the Comboni Missionaries and the other Religious Institutes were an integral part of the Sudanese Local Church, the outcome of this Episcopal Conference was coming as a challenge to all and to their involvement in the whole process.

¹⁷⁸ Extraordinary meeting of the Sudan Episcopal Conference, Khartoum, 28-30 March, 1973. ACR C/342/2/9.

The priorities of the agenda were the following:

1. The Major Seminary: Bussere
2. Senior Secondary Seminary
3. Katigondo & Gaba Sudanese Seminarians
4. Religion Teaching Inspectors in the Southern Region
5. Statute for Sudanaid to be approved
6. Sudan Council of Churches
7. Catechist Training Centres
8. Letter of S.C. Propaganda Fide on the subsidies to the Ordinaries
9. Collective plan to staff vacant Parishes
10. Report of Bishop Baroni on fund-raising for reconstruction in the South.
11. Priority list of reconstruction projects
12. Winding up of Procure
13. Pastoral work study-week for the clergy at Juba and Wau
14. Any Other Business

Looking at the agenda, one can clearly see what the major concerns of the Episcopal Conference were. Moreover, it was evident that the preparation of future Priests was the top concern (Nos. 1, 2, 3) starting from **the Major Seminary**. The suggestion was that it had to be temporarily placed in Bussere (Wau Diocese) until a definitive place could be found. However, the place was still occupied by the Anya-Nya Armed Forces, so on a temporary basis, it was agreed to move it to the premises of Juba Senior Seminary.

Point no. 4, the issue of the **Religion Teaching Inspectors in the Southern Region**, was again a top priority and a great opportunity, considering the fact that, since independence, the government of Khartoum had tried in many ways to dismantle the Christian schools, both Catholic and Protestant. It was decided that the contract be permanent in nature, that the Priest be appointed by the Sudan Episcopal Conference, and that the Ordinary of Juba be the contact person with the Regional Government. Fr Jacob Rondiang was appointed by the SEC as *Inspector in the Southern Region*.

Point no. 9, **the Collective plan to staff vacant Parishes**, was also a key issue in the pastoral/missionary field, together with no 7, **the training of Catechists**, and one the Combonis were giving high priority.

Points 10 and 11 dealing with **fund-raising for reconstruction in the South** and **the priority list of reconstruction projects** were, not only for the Local Church, but also for the Combonis, the real field of commitment to tackling, in the meantime, the difficult issue of permits for Comboni priests

for direct evangelisation. From this time onwards, the specialized ministry of the Comboni Brothers opened the way to the gradual return, in every field, of the Comboni Missionaries.

Bishop Ireneo Dud, being the Primate among the Ordinaries, the one who blessed the expelled missionaries in 1964, was also the one who tried to facilitate the return of the Combonis, but he had to deal with the opinion of his priests who were showing considerable resistance and needed more time to deal with past wounds of the pre-expulsion era.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the expulsion, this resistance must have been so deeply felt as to pressurise Bishop Dud to write a letter to the Governor Ali Baldo supporting the expulsion of the missionaries.¹⁷⁹ That was the reason why in Wau the matter needed time and a positive human and true Christian relationship. Bishop Pio Yokwan of Malakal was instead facilitating in a much more positive way the issue of the permits. This was considered very encouraging on the part of the Major Superiors in Rome and Khartoum.¹⁸⁰

The result of the whole issue of application for the entry visas was a matter of reflection for everybody, but the General Administration needed to interpret it and give proper directives on the matter. Sometimes the Superiors, with regret, could see that certain difficulties were coming not so much from the Government, but from certain Ordinaries themselves and certain Diocesan Clergy in their constituencies. What was encouraging, though, was the general appreciation of other members of the Diocesan Clergy who had a welcoming attitude.

The Regional Superior and his Council were eager to appoint confreres to the South, but with the firm policy that they would do so only as long as the Ordinaries would take care of the applications for permits. The reaction of the Local Church authorities appeared also very clearly to go along the same lines as follows:

- 1) The applications for visas should be made only by the Ordinaries of the South.
- 2) The Ordinaries of the South alone will have to take care of the permits.

¹⁷⁹ Vantini, *La Missione del Cuore*, op. cit., Erezione della gerarchia locale, p. 868. *"It is enough to recall that Bishop Ireneo Dud, after the general expulsion, wrote a letter, most likely at the suggestion of the priests, to Governor Ali Baldo in these terms: 'You were right to expel the Italian missionaries, because they were keeping us in an under-age condition'. (His letter came into my hands!)"*

¹⁸⁰ Letter of Fr Rovelli to Fr General, Kh. 29 April, 1973. ACR 341/2/3.

3) All the confreres concerned should keep in mind this procedure and understand how harmful their *private initiatives* would be.

As already said, the Government was not as interested in giving permits to expatriate priests as to people who could help in the social field. The same trend was there for the Local Ordinaries: they were asking for Brothers¹⁸¹ to renovate the buildings of former institutions in need of urgent repairs. They were less inclined to ask for Fathers/Priests who may have interfered with their newly acquired freedom from the former missionaries.

This, according to the assessment of the Superiors, was giving way to a certain exploitation of the Brothers, without taking into account their religious and spiritual needs while they were busy with their specialized practical work. The reluctance to have proper bilateral agreements opened the way to several misunderstandings that would sour mutual relations.

All this needed to be properly tackled in order to prepare a process of true collaboration and common trust. All sides had certainly to work hard to achieve that, since neither side was totally faultless in that time of change.

Hidden fears, prejudice and gossiping were of no help in creating a positive environment which needed the contribution of indigenous clergy and religious, as well as the contribution of the *Expatriate Missionary Personnel*, called to assist especially in the Seminaries and other Institutions in need of specialized skills.

It was precisely during this time that other Institutes were invited to work in Southern Sudan by the Ordinaries with the Jesuits among the first, followed by others. On the part of the Combonis, their presence was considered positive and enriching for the Church of Southern Sudan.

Regarding the situation of the Sudanese Radical Members (*Zone Circumscription South*), by September 1973, they had the joy of becoming ten in number: *Fr Hector Ayon, Fr Louis Lotimoi Nyabanga, Fr George Longokwo, Fr Paolino Lukudu, Fr Peter Magalasi, Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö, Fr Joseph Ukelo, Fr David Urası, Fr Hilary Boma, and Fr Angelo Ibele.*¹⁸²

The Comboni Brothers in Southern Sudan

The first Brothers to give their skilful services to the Church in 1973 were Bro Rodolfo Cogliati and Bro Tarcisio Soardi. They were asked by

¹⁸¹ Fr Agostoni to Fr Rovelli, Rome 6 September, 1973. ACR. 341/2/3.

¹⁸² Instructions for the election of the zone delegates to the Assembly of the Regional Directory, from the minutes of the Reg. Council September, 1973, Zone Circumscription South. ACR 341/4.

Caritas, through the Pro-Nuncio, to go to Yubu to restore the buildings annexed to the Hospital, but, when their permits expired, it was thought best not to ask for renewal and that they should go back to Khartoum.¹⁸³

At the same time Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri and Bro Ottorino Gelmini arrived for the work of reconstruction in the South, requested by the Ordinaries, but were then diverted to Juba to work for the projects of Sudanaid. The Ordinary of Juba agreed that the Comboni Community could have a separate residence and that they should remain together in the various works needed in different locations.

Bro Ragnoli got a commitment to set up some social centres sponsored by Sudanaid in Malakal, but was advised not to accept them without a decision from the Regional Superior. He was left free to reside in a Comboni Community or elsewhere according to the works. Regarding the proposal of Bro Ragnoli to have a “*key centre*” in Malakal for the works in the South, the Council thought it was still premature.

Bro Confalonieri and Bro Gelmini, in Juba since December, 1973, started their work in KIT by April, 1974, putting in order various premises for the Sudanese *St Martin de Porres Brothers* and Aspirants (4 Brothers and 18 Aspirants of the 1st Junior Secondary). Fr Magalasi, joined them in June 1974, helping with spiritual direction. The Region of Khartoum had to provide the financial support for their maintenance, but then it was included in the budget of the projects sponsored by Sudanaid. Fr Adelmo Spagnolo became the Superior General of the Sudanese Brothers of Kit.

For Nyamlel, instead, Fr Pasquale Boffelli and Fr Dino Rebellato, who were supposed to be there since October, because of an unforeseen misunderstanding about permits, had to postpone their departure until the return of Bishop Ireneo Dud from the Synod of Rome.¹⁸⁴

With the erection of the Catholic Hierarchy, Mgr Ireneo Dud was moved to Juba and the issue had to be dealt with by the new Bishop Mgr Gabriel Zubeir Wako himself.

Fr Louis Lotimoi Nyabanga

Fr Lotimoi Nyabanga Louis was a Didinga from Chukudum and was ordained on 9 June, 1972. He took his first vows in Lachor (Uganda) on 31

¹⁸³ Lettera di Collegamento (Link Letter), Bros. Cagliati and Soardi, 1 May, 1973. ACR 341/5/1.

¹⁸⁴ - Minutes of the Reg. Council, 16-19 October, 1974. ACR 341/4.

- Bishop Ireneo Dud to V.R. Fr Phillip Sina, Wau, 19 October 1972, Short term plan for reactivation and evangelization in the Vicariate Apostolic of Wau.

May, 1973, and was then appointed to Kapoeta. He was elected by the Socialist Union Party for the Didinga district as a Member of the Regional Parliament in the South. He died in a car accident on 29 July, 1974, in Juba.

He was one of the three Priests (the others were Fr Vincent and Fr Zakary) who agreed to be elected as Members of the Regional Parliament. The Episcopal Conference had very severe words to say regarding these three cases because of the obvious matters involved, but especially because they saw the great risk of making people and government think that the Church was involved in politics at the expenses of its spiritual responsibility. They ordered that they should carry out their political duties outside the premises of the Church in order to give a clear message to everybody.¹⁸⁵

Fr Louis, was a very precise and punctual person in his activities as a Member of the Regional Parliament. He was held in very high esteem by everybody, especially by his Didinga people. He had his residence in room no. 4 of the Procure of Juba. As a Priest, he was exercising his pastoral ministry without any regard for himself and, especially on Sundays, he used to go to the most difficult places. On Sunday the 28 July, Fr Rovelli, the Regional Superior, went to greet him but he was told he had gone to celebrate Holy Mass on an island 10 Km south of Juba, a very dangerous trip by local canoe in the middle of the river Nile during the rainy season.

On Monday afternoon of 29 July, he was in a Land Rover, beside the driver, going down from the hospital near to the Procure towards Kator. A big lorry was coming from the opposite direction and both were travelling at a fair speed. In order to avoid a cyclist, the driver swerved abruptly towards the middle of the road and crashed into the lorry. The impact was terrible and Fr Louis died instantly. On 30 July, 1974, his funeral Mass was held in the church of the Juba Procure (St Joseph Parish) with all the Priests of Juba and in the afternoon he was taken to be buried in Chukudum, according to the wishes of his people.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Fr F. Rovelli to Fr General, Kh. 6.3.74, ACR 341/2/3; Circular letter of the Sudan Episcopal Conference to the Sudanese Clergy, in Lettera di Collegamento (Link Letter), Jan. 1974, ACR 341/5/2.

¹⁸⁶ Fr F. Rovelli to Fr General, Kh. 20.8.74, ACR 341/2/3. Bollettino FSCJ, 107, 1st Jan. 1975, pp. 66-67.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LOCAL CHURCH IS RIPE

The Erection of the Catholic Hierarchy 1974

The local Catholic Hierarchy¹⁸⁷ and the Sudan Episcopal Conference (SEC) were established on 12 December, 1974 and by 1976 it became known as the *Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC)* with headquarters in Khartoum. This was a real historical event in the history of the Catholic Church in the Sudan and the sign of a fully established Local Church in the country. With the erection of the *Catholic Hierarchy in the Sudan* one could say that the dream of Daniel Comboni and the work of evangelization of the Comboni Missionaries found its fulfilment.

This event was a real *turning point* also in the experience of the Comboni Missionaries. The era of the *Jus Commissionis* and of being the protagonists of the Mission was definitely over and they had to look ahead towards a new way of being missionaries in South Sudan, living their missionary vocation hand in hand and from within *the Local Church*.

This great event, was certainly not a matter only of *Leadership Change* but of leading the whole Church into a new experience towards a *fully mature Local Church* whose key dimension was to be *missionary, to evangelize*.¹⁸⁸ The Bishops /Ordinaries had the responsibility of overseeing that their own Local Churches/Dioceses should become fully grown up and mature.

The Catholic Hierarchy of Sudan

On 12 December, 1974¹⁸⁹ the Vicariates and Apostolic Prefectures were elevated to Dioceses and the Catholic Hierarchy was as follows:

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/events/day1212.html>; V. Dellagiacom, History, op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁸⁸ Evangelii Nuntiandi, 14 . “*Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize*”

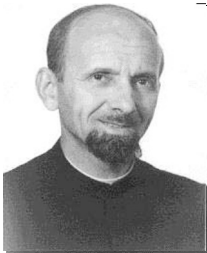
¹⁸⁹ <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/events/day1212.html>

- The Apostolic Vicariate of El Obeid elevated to the **Diocese of El Obeid**, Mgr **Paolino Lukudu Loro** (FSCJ) Apostolic Administrator.
- The Apostolic Vicariate of Juba elevated to the **Archdiocese of Juba**, His Grace Archbishop **Ireneo Wien Dud**.
- The Apostolic Vicariate of Khartoum elevated to the **Archdiocese of Khartoum**, His Grace Archbishop **Agostino Baroni** (FSCJ).
- The Apostolic Prefecture of Malakal elevated to the **Diocese of Malakal**, Bishop **Pio Yukwan Deng**.
- The Apostolic Vicariate of Rumbek was elevated to the **Diocese of Rumbek**, Bishop **Gabriel Dwatuka Wagi** . (appointed 24 Jan. 1976)
- The Apostolic Prefecture of Mupoi elevated to the **Diocese of Tombura**, Bishop **Joseph Gasi Abangite**.
- The Apostolic Vicariate of Wau elevated to the **Diocese of Wau**, Bishop **Gabriel Zubeir Wako**.

The homily of Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, Superior General

on the occasion of the erection of the Sudanese Catholic Hierarchy

The erection of the ***Catholic Hierarchy in the Sudan*** on 12 December, 1974 was a key event in the history of the Sudanese Local Church which could not be allowed to pass as if nothing had happened.



It was the responsibility of the Superior Generals and their Councils (MCCJ/CMS) and of the Regional Superiors to acquire first the deep sense of this great event in order help the confreres/co-sisters to develop in the practical field of their missionary ministry.

In this regard, the homily given in Khartoum some four months after the event, on 14 April, 1975, by the Superior General, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, ***on the occasion of the erection of the Catholic Hierarchy in the Sudan***, was a very important speech marking a historical

era and guiding confreres and co-sisters towards new attitudes, approaches and new relationships in their missionary service.

Stating clearly the meaning and the bearing of this great event and turning point constituted by the establishment of the hierarchy, he tried to help all Combonis to enter into the new legacy with the right spirit and attitude. Fr Agostoni pointed out that, with the establishment of the Sudanese Hierarchy, the *Jus Commissionis*, that is the mandate of the Comboni Missionaries for the evangelization of Sudan, reached its conclusion.

However, *if requested by the Ordinaries of the Local Church, the Combonis would accept to remain*. In any event, *they would remain in a different way* at the service of the Local Church, *which alone would have the authority and the responsibility of decision-making* regarding the matter of evangelization.

Due to the new legacy, in order for missionary service to be properly carried out, a juridical instrument, like a convention, would have to be drawn up between the Ordinary and the Comboni Institute. He carried on stating that the service to be given would be on a *qualified temporary basis*, on the lines of the *ad gentes mission*, in a context of *first evangelization* and among the *most poor and abandoned*.

As for the priorities of this mission, he put first the *formation of Priests and Religious Men and Women*, and the *formation of Catechists and Lay Leaders*. He confirmed that the service would be given in a spirit of *co-responsibility* and *subsidiarity*.

Then, aware of the great existing needs, constituted by all the above realities, **he called for other Religious Institutes** of Priests, Brothers and Sisters, to get involved in this undertaking and, finally, he manifested a deep sense of joy and satisfaction to see fulfilled the plan of Comboni of *saving Africa with Africa*.¹⁹⁰

Ecclesiastical Situation in the South 1975

The report of Khartoum on the overall ecclesiastical situation in the South in January, 1975, gave an immediate idea of the great need for personnel to cover the pastoral demands. The Comboni Missionaries were contributing through the work of our Sudanese Radical Members, but it

¹⁹⁰ Homily of Fr Tarcisio Agostoni on the occasion of the erection of the Catholic hierarchy in the Sudan. Khartoum 14 April, 1975. "Omelia ai missionari in Sudan" MCCJ Bulletin 109/4-7.

was clear that the main burden of the pastoral activity was on the shoulders of the Sudanese Diocesan Clergy. The majority of the Parishes had only one Priest and many still had none. The situation was indeed critical from this point of view.¹⁹¹

The following statistics help us to understand how much the various Christian Communities (Churches) in Southern Sudan needed assistance and how necessary it was to overcome the controversies of the past for the good of the people who had the right to be nourished with the Good News of Christ

Diocese of Juba: Archbishop: H.G. Ireneo Wien Dud

Procure: Fr James Ladu

Secretary: Fr Aquilino Wani, Fr Marco Latong

- KATOR: Fr Agostino Oboma
- LIRIA: Fr Anania
- REJAF: Fr Costantino Pitia
- KADULE': Fr Quirico
- LOA: Fr Julio Ida, Fr Ercolano
- PALOTAKA: Fr John Baptist Lohitu
- TORIT TOWN: Mgr Silvestro Laharanya
- TORIT MISSION (Seminary): Fr Cesario Lukudu, Fr Aleardo
- LAFON: Fr Valente
- ISOKE: Fr Nereo
- **Kapoeta**: Fr G. Longokwo, Fr J. Ukelo, Fr H. Ayon (Chukudum)
(Comboni Missionaries)
- **Kit** (Juba): Fr P. Magalasi, Bro O. Gelmini, Bro A. Confalonieri
(Comboni Missionaries)
- *Without Priests*: Tali, Lowoi-Okaru, and Kwörejik

Diocese of Malakal:

- Bro Francesco Ragnoli *(Comboni Missionary/Sudanaid)*

Diocese of Rumbek: Mgr Dominic Matong

Fr Raphael Riel

Bro Angelo Makur

- THIET TOWN: Fr Daniel Deng
- TONJ: Fr John Dinki
- YEI: Fr Peter, Fr Tarcisio, Fr Simon Khamis
- MARIDI: Fr Gabriel Dwatuka, Fr Mario Toronigano

¹⁹¹ Situazione Ecclesiastica al Sud, (Ecclesiastic Situation in the South, January, 1975, From Khartoum. ACR 583/2/1.

- MUNDRI: Fr Justin
- TORE: Fr Felix Lokosa

Diocese of Tombura - Mupo: Bishop Joseph Gasi Abangite
Fr David Saatini

- YUBU MISSION: Fr Martin Penisi
- YUBU TOWN: Fr Matthew Samusa
- MUPOI: Fr Anthony Gaka
- NAANDI: Fr Jerome Bidai
- YAMBIO: Fr John Mikanipare
- **NZARA**: Fr Abel Mödi, Fr Hilary Boma, Fr David Urasi
(Comboni Missionaries)
- **Without Priests**: Maringindu, Ezo.

Diocese of Wau: Bishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako

- Fr Charles Ufeo, Cathedral
- Fr David Deniki, Secretary
- Fr Marco Matong, (new)
- Fr Raphael Thabit, (new)
- NPAILE: Fr Charles Ukola
- DEM ZUBEIR: Fr Lino Rani
- RAGA: Fr Peter Dabura
- MBORO: Fr Peter Nambuku
- AWEEL: Fr Paolo Mongu
- KWAJOK: Fr Alipio
- **Without Priests**: Raffili, Kayango, Nyamlel, Warap, Mbili, Bussere, Mayen, Gordhim.

Growing Comboni Commitment in the South

During these years, little by little, some more Expatriate Confreres were granted entry permits for the South. After the experience of the journey from the time of the expulsion of the missionaries until 1976, it is quite interesting to see the reactions of the Ordinaries and of the Local Church of the South where the Comboni Missionaries, both *Radical Members* and *Expatriates* were working.

Reports coming from the various visits of the Regional Superior and others who held positions of responsibility were showing satisfaction on hearing that the Ordinaries were happy with the presence of the Combonis and their activities and that they were asking to have more of them to come and take up further commitments.

Another positive factor to be fostered was that where the confreres were working in community, the work was better organized and much more fruitful. Good pastoral planning was seen as a way of achieving good results in so demanding a time. Particularly relevant was the reflection going on regarding the relationship between Comboni *Radical Members* and *Expatriate Members* with the Local Church, Ordinaries, Priests and Laity.

This was considered as helping the missionaries to be *incarnated* into the reality of the Local Church and the whole environment in a spirit of mutual esteem, love, reciprocal understanding and prayer, involving all that was concerned in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the whole enterprise.

Very important also was the matter of accountability in giving reports to the community, and to the authorities concerned, about the way funds were used, and to adopt more and more the attitude of having a *community common fund* for the needs of all the members, where all confreres would feel the responsibility of contributing and of sharing what was available from their personal sources such as their benefactors. This sharing was considered meaningful also as a specific African value.¹⁹²

Of great importance was the need for pastoral guidelines and directives for institutions like the Catechumenate, still carried out with traditional methods, while the new *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* had been promulgated in 1972. The formation of diocesan Presbyteral Councils, for a true dialogue on pastoral directives proper to the situation of the Church in the South of Sudan.

Some confreres feeling these issues with pressing urgency but, perhaps, asking too much from the situation in need of time to get ripe. However, something had to move in order to open up a better future. The amount of work to be faced by the Local Church and by our confreres was so great that, without real coordination, they would run the risk of exhaustion.

Appointments, changes, too many activities and isolation, were all working against sound development. Kapoeta, Nzara, Juba/Kit, Malakal were all suffering because of this situation. Even though everyone was doing their best to carry on with the commitments received, indeed, it was all too much and it was carried out in a scattered fashion.

¹⁹² Minutes of the Reg. Council 19-27 July, 1976; Minutes of the Reg. Council 20-26 September, 1976; Minutes of the Reg. Council, Nairobi 14-17 December, 1976. ACR 583/4/2; Minutes of the Reg. Council, 2-8 March, 1977. ACR 583/4/3.

The matter of our presence, projects, commitments and lack of personnel in certain locations, needed to be properly considered. The school in Nzara, for example, could possibly have been run by a well-prepared lay person, thus leaving the Father free for pastoral commitments. The presence in the area of Kapoeta, instead, was possibly better served by Comboni personnel than Diocesan Priests because of the strong tribalism there.

The internal life of the communities was sometimes hindered because of lack of time to meet and too many commitments, especially on the side of the Brothers. All these realities had to find a balance in order to create a proper smoothly-running community environment.

Other issues were the schools and the Comboni house in Juba, proposed during the visit of the Superior General in 1975 and already under the consideration of the General Council. All were considered as priorities to be taken up during this time by the Regional Council of Khartoum. There were too many irons in the fire.

The Comboni Missionaries' priorities

The Comboni presence in the South, especially in Juba, lacked a residence which would allow also logistic reference to confreres to meet when necessary. On the part of the Conference of Bishops the need was felt of a Secondary School to give the youth a better education for the future. Fr Rovelli and his Council were already looking into the matter but the whole issue passed to the next Regional Council, with Fr Sina as the new Regional Superior. Some specific steps, in line with the Chapter Planning of 1975, were taken.

The first was the issue of the *Secondary School*, linked to the *Junior School* in Juba that became an urgent matter by the end of 1976 and needed clear guidelines of implementation. On the matter, the General Council gave the conditions and the margins within which they were ready to support the project.

Regarding the question of the *Junior Secondary School*, a letter was written to the Regional Council from a group of Sudanese Clergy of Juba, with the support of Archbishop Ireneo Dud, asking the Combonis to help the Archdiocese to open a Junior Secondary School near the existing St Joseph's Primary School with the suggestion that this school would then remain the property of the Archdiocese, and remain under its responsibility like the Primary School. Its direction would be in the hands of the Local

Clergy in continuity with the Primary School, where the teachers' salaries were paid by the Government.

Three years after the opening of the Junior School, a Senior Secondary School should be started, also under the responsibility of the Archdiocese and as its property. This would be the natural continuation of the Junior School and it should be built some kilometres away. The Archdiocese asked the Combonis to help with what was needed for its construction and to run it with their personnel until local personnel were ready to take it over.

The proposal was that the two schools should have two streams per class. So they would need six classrooms for the Junior and six for the Senior.¹⁹³ During the Regional Council meeting, Fr Hillary Boma (*Vice Regional*), who was following the matter, took care of explaining the policy of the Regional Government of Juba regarding the application for entry permits

Having heard how the Government was taking into consideration and giving priority to personnel helping in projects of development, especially if the Expatriate Personnel were preparing local people to take up the administration once they were ready, the Regional Council gave its support to the proposal and asked the Archbishop to re-elaborate it and present it to the Regional Government of Juba.

With the General Council in support, the Regional Council presented the outlines of the following projects for the South proposing also names of confreres that would fit the purpose:

1. A group of Fathers to teach religion in English in a government school centre: the proposed names were Fr Luigi Cocchi and Fr Michael Barton who could move there at the opening the Junior and Senior School.
2. In 1977, a team made up by Fr Zarate and Fr G. Pellerino for the Diocese of Wau. Perhaps with a specialized person like Fr Tessitore in order to produce printed school material in the Dinka language, if the Bishop was able to get the permits.
3. A team of a Father capable of technical work plus two Brothers with a command of English and with mission experience (under the responsibility of the Regional Superior and the Bishops' Conference or of a Diocese) for any required work.

¹⁹³ **Junior School:** also called Intermediate, the three years after the P.6 leaving certificate, (J1, J2, J3); **Senior School:** the three years after the Junior School (S1, S2, S3) preceding University entrance.

4. The Regional Council was open to moving personnel from the North, if their place was covered by somebody else.¹⁹⁴

In any case, this was the time to look confidently ahead. With patience and constancy, the doors were little by little opening up.

January 1978: communities and personnel in the South

On 19 February, 1976, Fr Ottorino Sina was elected Regional Superior in Khartoum, (*and Fr Hilary Boma the Vice-Regional from 21 May*). He was invited by the Superior General to devote more time to improving the situation in the South.¹⁹⁵ After this invitation more confreres were assigned and commitments grew in number; in January, 1978:¹⁹⁶ this was the situation:

Archdiocese of Juba (6 confreres)

Juba: Bro Augusto Bazzanella, Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri, Fr Michael Barton, Bro Renato Bastianelli, Fr Luigi Cocchi, Fr Alfonso Rossi.

Diocese of Wau

Bussere, Wau-Kwajok: (4 confreres) Fr Hilary Boma, Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, Fr Raffaele Tessitore, Fr Baltazar Quiroz Zarate.

Diocese of Tombura

Nzara: (3 confreres) Fr David Urasi, Fr Abel Mödi, Fr Joseph Ukelo¹⁹⁷ (*Mupoi/Tombora*)

Diocese of Rumbek

Yei: (2 confreres) Bro Ottorino Gelmini, Bro Giuseppe Manara, (*in community with Juba/Kit*)

¹⁹⁴ Minutes of the Regional Council, 14-17 December, 1976, Secondary School in Juba. ACR 583/4/2.

¹⁹⁵ Fr Agostoni to Fr Rovelli, Rome, 13 December, 1975. ACR 583/2/1; Letter of appointment of Fr Ottorino Filippo Sina as Regional Superior of Khartoum, Rome, 19 February, 1976. ACR 583/1; Fr Hilary Boma, Vice Regional, Kh. 21 May, 1976. ACR 583/2/2.

¹⁹⁶ Catalogo, op. cit., 1978.

¹⁹⁷ -Mgr Paolino Lukudu to Fr Sina, (Fr Ukelo, proposed spiritual director of the novitiate of the Sudanese Sisters of Mupoi), Bussere-El Obeid 1 May, 1977. ACR 583/3/2.

- Fr Sina to Mgr Paolino Lukudu (about Fr Ukelo) Juba, 21 May, 1977; approval 7 June, 1977. ACR 583/3/2.

- Agreement between SCBC and Comboni Missionaries regarding Fr Ukelo, Mupoi, Rome, 10 March, 1979. ACR 583/3/2; Fr Peano to Fr Sina (on the contract) Rome, 10 March, 1979. ACR 583/3/2.

Diocese of Malakal

Tonga Parish: given in 1977; Diocese of Malakal. (3 confreres)
Fr Elvio Cellana, Bro Fahmi Munir, Bro Francesco Ragnoli.

Absent: (2 confreres) Fr Hector Ayon (*Course, Rome*), Fr Peter Magalasi (*due to come for Kit*)

Total: 5 communities, 20 Confreres, 11 Fathers, 7 Brothers and 2 absent.

In a developing situation like this, the commitment to renewal along the journey was a necessity and a priority, even though it was not easy to find people prepared to give up-to-date inputs. The Regional Assembly of Khartoum, from 14 to 16 June, 1978,¹⁹⁸ organized a workshop and the topic was *the Christian Community in its social and evangelizing dimension, which finds its communion in the Eucharist through Reconciliation*.

The reflection then went into how to know, prepare and announce the Word of God, the Eucharist and Reconciliation in the community and how to live unity in the diversity of charisms. The Vatican documents of *Lumen Gentium* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* were taken up in this effort to renewal, according to Vatican II and Post-Vatican II guidelines, with the wisdom that, even among many pressing needs, activities and projects should not lead confreres into empty activism.

Preparing for a new Circumscription of South Sudan

The Extraordinary General Chapter of June, 1979¹⁹⁹ witnessed the reunion between the FSCJ (*Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* – ‘the Italian related branch’) and the MFSC (*Missionaries Sons of the Sacred Heart* – the ‘German-speaking branch’). This was implementing a decision of the joint chapter on 2 September, 1975, later on ratified with a referendum.

On 22 June, 1979, the Holy See issued the Decree of Union of the two congregations and the Extraordinary General Chapter was opened on 28 July, 1979. The Holy See approved the official title of the reunited congregation: *MCCJ (Missionarii Comboniani Cordis Jesu), Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus*.²⁰⁰ This gave considerable impetus to

¹⁹⁸ Regional Assembly, Khartoum 14-16 June, 1978. ACR 583/20.

¹⁹⁹ Regione di Khartoum, Relazione per il Capitolo Generale Speciale della Congregazione Riunita, Giugno, 1979. ACR/D/594/12.

²⁰⁰ Annuario Comboniano op. cit., 1 gennaio 1982, p.7.

the renewal of the Comboni Missionary spirit in its international dimension.

It was during this Extraordinary General Chapter that the Region of Khartoum presented its report which took into consideration the historical background of Sudan starting from 1955, the year before independence, then the expulsion of the Comboni Missionaries in 1964, and its aftermath, and finally, the positive developments enjoyed with the Addis Ababa Agreement.

The report acknowledged the favourable attitude of the Juba Regional Government, anxious to promote the development of the Southern Region and its policy approving the entry into the Southern Region of qualified people (missionaries) with the aim of training Sudanese personnel able to run the same institutions for which the permits were asked and given.

It showed the priorities of the Regional Government in approving social projects for the building or rebuilding of structures in the areas of Juba, Yei, Mupoi, Rumbek, and in the field of education like teaching in Juba Secondary School. It confirmed the approval of all the projects requested at pastoral level such as those of formation of Catechists in Kwajok and Mupoi and the formation of Local Clergy in the National Major Seminary of Bussere.

While acknowledging that the situation needed patience and perseverance, it also recognized that the horizon ahead appeared to be much brighter and encouraging. A report on the status of personnel and commitments, though with some discrepancies with respect to other reports, was given.

The report underlined the concern, for the number of confreres living in isolation and outside of a Comboni community because of their work and activity. This issue needed a proper solution. Another concern was about two Priest confreres who had left the congregation and needed reflection.

Having dealt with the issue of *the service to the Local Church*, with *Vocation Promotion*, and *Economy* at the time of planning, in **No. 12.5**, it was proposed **to create a new independent Circumscription in the South**. Thus, the General Chapter gave the mandate to the new General Administration to follow up this issue.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ XII General Chapter, the Chapter Acts n. 21: “*The XII General Chapter delegates to the General Council the study of the problem of establishing a Province of Southern Sudan in dialogue with the Provincial Council of Khartoum, and leaves it free to take the decision it will deem opportune.*”

Henceforth, the Superior General, Fr Salvatore Calvia, and his Council, together with the Region of Khartoum and the confreres of South Sudan had this issue to be settled. On his part, Fr Ottorino Sina eagerly followed up the issue and Fr Felice Centis, the General Secretary, took care to provide all necessary information on the process.²⁰²

June 1980: communities and personnel

Under the religious jurisdiction of Fr Sina, as Regional Superior in Khartoum, the confreres and the communities in the South kept gradually increasing. By 1 June, 1980, the Comboni communities and commitments in the South had developed as follows.²⁰³

Archdiocese of Juba

Juba, (4 confreres)

Fr Luigi Cocchi, *Sup., Teacher*, Bro Renato Bastianelli, *dioc. work.*, Bro Augusto Bazzanella, *printing press*, Fr Alfonso Rossi, *Teacher*.

Kwörejik, (2 confreres)

Fr Michael Barton, *Sup., P. Priest, Teacher*,
Fr Hector Ayon (though appointed he never came).

Rejaf, (4 confreres)

Parish, reconstruction of the mission, Fr Tito Giuntoli, *Sup.*, Fr Mario Busellato, *Parish*, Fr Giuseppe Farina, *Coadjutor* and Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri, *projects*.

Diocese of Wau

Bussere, Wau, (1 confrere)

St Paul's Major Seminary, Fr Luigi Penzo, *Spiritual Director*,

Kwajok, WAU, (2 confreres)

Parish and Catech. Centre, Fr Raffaele Tessitore, *Sup.*, Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, *Catech. Centre*.

²⁰² - Fr Centis, Fr Eder, "To all Confreres of Southern Sudan", Rome, 5 November, 1980. ACR 610/8.

- Fr Sina to confreres, no. 6 "Towards an Independent Circumscription in the South", Khartoum 24 November, 1980. ACR 583/3/1.

- Famiglia Comboniana no. 354, December, 1980 pp. 1-2.

- Ibid. No. 361 July/August 1981 pp. 10-11.

²⁰³ Annuario, op. cit., 1980 supplemento all'annuario 1979, aggiornato al 1° Giugno, 1980.

(El Obeid: Cathedral, in the North)

Mgr Paolino Lukudu, Bishop, Fr Hilary Boma, Vic. Gen.

Diocese of Tombura

Mupoi, (3 confreres)

Dioc. Catechetical Centre, spirit. Assist Sisters of the B.V.M., reconstruction of the mission, Fr Joseph Ukelo, *Sup., spiritual director Sisters*, Bro Ottorino Gelmini, *projects*, Fr Pietro Ravasio, *dir. Catech. Centre.*

Nzara, (2 confreres)

Fr David Urasi, *Sup., Parish Priest*, Fr Abel Mödi, *Director of Schools*

Diocese of Rumbek,

Rumbek, (3 confreres)

Fr Peter Magalasi, Bro Mario Rossignoli (*did not arrive*), Bro Valentino Fabris, *projects.*

Diocese of Malakal

Tonga, (3 confreres)

Fr Elvio Cellana, *Sup., Parish*, Fr Justin Ogen (*arriving*), Bro Francesco Ragnoli. (for artisan school and development projects).

Total: 9 Communities in the South with 24 confreres.

17 Fathers, 7 Brothers, plus (2 in El Obeid).

Commitments in the various Dioceses

Archdiocese of Juba

Juba: *Fr Luigi Cocchi, Bro Renato Bastianelli, Bro Augusto Bazzanella, Fr Alfonso Rossi.*

Archbishop's house and Printing press: Bro Renato Bastianelli was lodging at the Archbishop's house and was in charge of the projects of the Archdiocese together with Bro Confalonieri (Rejaf). He was also taking care of the economy of the Juba Comboni Community. As for the works, he was following up the construction of the Archbishop's house and other premises. Bro Bazzanella, instead, was running the procure of the Archdiocese of Juba and was in charge of building the printing press in St Joseph's Parish, while lodging there.

The Comboni Secondary Schools of Juba: This was a top priority in the field of education. Fr Luigi Cocchi, together with two confreres from USA, Fr Alphonse Rossi and Fr Michael Barton, after spending 18 months

in Cairo waiting for the final entry permit for Sudan, they were lucky enough to get visas. They arrived in Juba in the summer of 1977 to be teachers for the Comboni Secondary School of Juba. They were lodging in an old mission house at Kwörejik, some 12 km from the town, a mud building with doors and windows that had become the favourite food of the termites.

They started teaching in the *Junior Secondary School* (intermediate) and were preparing the students to get ready for the *Senior Secondary School*, later on to be called **Comboni Secondary School Juba (CSSJ)**.

From Kwörejik they were travelling to and from the school in an old Land Rover. They lived in the hope of new structures. The students were short of books and other material but were happy with the school itself.²⁰⁴ Fr Cocchi was teaching Maths and Fr Rossi English.

Kwörejik Parish: *Fr Michael Barton*. Though Fr Barton was sent to Juba to help by teaching in the school he felt that he had to give more time to Arabic and get fully into pastoral work, so he left the school commitment for a language course and then carried on with the pastoral work, leaving to Fr Cocchi and Fr Rossi the teaching commitment in the schools. The latter, however, continued to lodge in Kwörejik. By late 1978, the house had been put in good order by Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri and living conditions improved. Fr Ayon was assigned to help in the Parish but never moved from Chukudum.

Project Rejaf/Kit: construction of Rejaf Mission, restarting its activities and caring for the St Martin Brothers.

Rejaf (Juba): The community of Rejaf was made up of Fr Tito Giuntoli (Superior), Fr Mario Busellato, Fr Giuseppe Farina and Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri. Fr Busellato was the Parish Priest, helped by Fr Giuseppe Farina. Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri was taking care of the reconstruction of the big mission.

Kit (Juba): Fr Giuntoli was responsible for the care of the Brothers of St Martin de Porres, also called the Brothers of KIT. Since 1975, Fr Hilary Boma was assigned to them and Fr P. Magalasi was giving them spiritual assistance. Fr Magalasi was also doing the pastoral work in the area and assisting sick people. By then, Bro Confalonieri, who was one of the Brothers in charge of the projects in the Archdiocese of Juba, was also taking care of those in Kit.

²⁰⁴ http://www.cocchiluigi.org/sudan_juba.html

Diocese of Wau

Bussere (National Major Seminary): *Fr Luigi Penzo and Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomina*. Bussere was hosting St Paul's Major Seminary and the Jesuits were put in charge of it by the SCBC. In 1977 Fr Hilary Boma was assigned there as part of the teaching staff, professor of liturgy and music. He was also given the responsibility of accompanying the Comboni Aspirants in Bussere and Nazareth in their formation²⁰⁵. Unfortunately, at the time, he was alone. The only hope for a real community was the opening of Kwajok mission, not far away. By 1980, however, he was transferred from Bussere to El Obeid, as Parish Priest of the cathedral and Vicar General of the Diocese. Fr Luigi Penzo was then assigned as spiritual director of the seminary and Fr Dellagiacomina followed later.

Kwajok: *Fr Raffaele Tessitore and Fr Giuseppe Pellerino and Fr Baltazar Quiroz Zarate*. The project: reconstruction and reactivation of the mission, the formation of leaders, adult education and other requirements.

The way to Kwajok was not easy: Fr Giuseppe Pellerino had already arrived in Khartoum on 19 March, 1979, and for two months waited for the arrival of Fr Raffaele Tessitore and Fr Baltazar Quiroz Zarate, but in vain. After many failed trials to find a plane for Wau he decided to go by train, together with some material needed for the new mission.

There he found Fr Arturo Nebel who had arrived in Sudan the previous year with a special entry visa through Hon. Bona Malual. Towards the middle of June, Fr Tessitore and Fr Zarate also arrived in Wau by plane. Once they had prepared the most necessary goods for the mission, they departed for Kwajok and arrived at the end of June.

Fr Tessitore was the Superior of the community and Parish Priest He had already been in Kwajok for many years before the expulsion and knew the language well. He was in charge, first of all, of the translation of the liturgical texts into Dinka, but he was also doing a good job in pastoral, catechetical and nursing fields.

At first, Fr Zarate and Fr Pellerino were very busy with the study of Dinka, helped also by Fr Arturo Nebel. Fr Zarate, however, after three months left Kwajok and the Sudan for health reasons. Fr Pellerino, after he had learned the language, committed himself to the translation of *Africa: Our Way to New Life*, helped by A Major Seminarian, Jervase Manyuat, and, with Fr Tessitore, saw to the formation of the Catechists.

Fr Pellerino, travelling even by bicycle, on Sundays was going to visit centres and schools near and far like Gogrial, Akon, Mayen Abun, Wunrok,

²⁰⁵ Khartoum: Minutes of the Council 5/6 September, 1978. ACR 583/4/4.

Thuralei, Aweng, Luonyaker, Ameth, and Akoc: very intense work. The presence in Kwajok was felt as a real enhancement of the Comboni presence in Wau Diocese.

Diocese of Tombura

Nzara: *Fr David Urası and Fr Abel Mödi.* It was the first commitment, opened on 6 December 1971 by Fr Paolino Lukudu, Bro Benjamin Majok and Fr Abel Mödi, followed by Fr David Urası. By 1980 Fr D. Urası was the Superior of the community and Parish Priest and Fr Abel Mödi the Director of the school. The centre was very important both for missionary activity and the education work involved, very much needed and appreciated. Even the protestant students were taking advantage of the school, especially for English courses.

Mupoı: *Fr Joseph Ukelo, Bro Ottorino Gelmini and Fr Pietro Ravasio.* This was the place of residence of the Bishop, but the reason for the Comboni presence, through Fr Ukelo, was specifically to care for the congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary (MSBVM). He was the Formator of the Novices and Spiritual Director, a post which the SCBC asked to be filled as a priority. The Diocesan Catechetical Centre was another important reality and Fr Ravasio was put in charge of it. Bro Gelmini was to take care of the projects which were so much needed in Mupoı, especially the construction of the house of the Sisters. Bro Fabris was supposed to join Bro Gelmini as well but then he was appointed to Rumbek in connection with the *German Leprosy Project*.²⁰⁶

Diocese of Rumbek

Rumbek: *Fr Peter Magalasi, Bro Valentino Fabris, Bro Mario Rossignoli.* This was a new commitment with Fr Magalasi as Superior and Parish Priest, Bro Fabris in charge of the projects, and Bro Mario Rossignoli (who was appointed, but never went there). Together with the pastoral work there was the project of the *German Leprosy Centre* to be carried out with the involvement of Bro Fabris (and Bro Rossignoli).

Yei: in 1977. Bro Gelmini and Bro Manara, who were part of the Juba/Kit community, were sent to Yei to carry out works for the Diocese of Rumbek, especially the building of the Cathedral. Once the works were completed, Bro Manara was sent to Khartoum to the Procure of the SCBC and Bro Gelmini to Mupoı.

²⁰⁶ German Leprosy = GLRA German Leprosy Relief Association.

Diocese of Malakal

Malakal: *Bro Francesco Ragnoli* had already been working for several years in Malakal Diocese repairing the workshops, the Martino boat, and doing many other tasks where needed. Without putting a stop to all the works, the Regional Council required that Bro Ragnoli should take care of the works required within an agreed commitment. The reopening of Tonga mission provided this opportunity. In the case of Brothers, however, as a specific policy, neither the Regional Council nor the General Council approved of all this running around to get all these jobs done at the expense of the physical and spiritual health of the Brothers.

Tonga: *Fr Elvio Cellana, Fr Justin Ogen, Bro Francesco Ragnoli.* This was the mission given by Mgr Pio Yokwan to the Comboni Missionaries to be reopened. The presence in Tonga started in 1976 with Fr Cellana, (Superior of the community and Parish Priest) and Bro Ragnoli in charge of the projects. Bro Munir Fahmi joined them later on. Fr Isturiz was also supposed to join them but the application for the entry permit needed to be made, possibly as the person in charge of the school. Bro Ragnoli, due to his abilities, was still requested for too many other works outside Tonga. During the following years, they worked hard to reactivate the Parish at the pastoral and human promotion levels with the artisan school and other projects.

It is also worth mentioning a project financed by the association *Mani Tese* (Outstretched Hands) of Milan (Italy), to provide clean water and carried out by Bro Ragnoli and his group of workers. Thus, from 1980 onwards, people could have plenty of clean water without the added danger of women becoming food for crocodiles during the dry season, when they had to go deep into the Nile to draw clean water.²⁰⁷

Preparing for the Centenary of Comboni's Death

During the process of reflection on the possible creation of the new South Sudan Circumscription, the preparation for the Comboni centenary was proceeding simultaneously²⁰⁸ The Conference of Bishops asked the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Missionary Sisters to take the lead

²⁰⁷ Centenario di Tonga, Fr Elvio Cellana, p. 5. ACR 475/22; MCCJ Bulletin no. 221, January, 2004, p. 98.

²⁰⁸ Khartoum: Minutes of the Council 28-31 December, 1979.

in it. A centenary *Ad Hoc* committee was set up and Fr Pasquale Boffelli prepared a calendar of events.²⁰⁹

In Khartoum, for the whole of Sudan, it was to take place on 10 October itself, while in the other Dioceses and in the South it would take place on other different dates still to be fixed.



Artist: Bro. Francesco Ragnoli; view of the front of the church at the Comboni House in Juba.

The image symbolizes Mgr Daniel Comboni, first Bishop of Khartoum, in the act of handing over the Apostolic Ring to his first Sudanese successor of that very seat, Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako. It is the fulfilment of his plan, *The Regeneration of Africa by Africans Themselves*, which has now become true.

The consecration of Bishop Ireneo Dud in Wau Cathedral on 20 November, 1955, the erection of the Sudanese Hierarchy on 12 December, 1974 and the taking possession of the seat of Khartoum by Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako on 10 October, 1981, are indelible milestones in the process.

²⁰⁹ Khartoum: Minutes of the Council, 28 September, 2 October, 1980.

PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE

A New Circumscription is born



With the decision of the General Superior and his Council to carry out a meaningful project in South Sudan in connection with the celebration of the Centenary of the death of Daniel Comboni in 1981,²¹⁰ a new Circumscription is born. Though historically this part of Sudan was the first Comboni Mission, since Comboni's presence in Holy Cross, among the other Comboni Circumscriptions it is now the latest in time, but the birth is finally assured.

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION

From 1981 to 1984

Representative / Delegate Superior

Fr RAFFAELE CEFALO

Setting up a new Circumscription: 1981

Fr Raffaele Cefalo was like an Olympic athlete on the starting line and waiting for the bell, at the Comboni Kenya Provincial House, Nairobi. He was busy preparing all the required items for a great undertaking, not in order to win a corruptible prize but, as Saint Paul says, to win an incorruptible one in heaven, after a hard work and struggle on earth.

He was there preparing to enter Southern Sudan with a clear mandate from the Superior General, Fr Salvatore Calvia: to prepare the way for a possible new, **South Sudan Circumscription**. He was busy making lists

²¹⁰ Postal stamp: Poste e Telecomunicazioni Italiane, Italian Post Office and Telecommunications, *Commemoration of Daniel Comboni's Centenary of death.*

of items and always on the move, trying to get everything ready. The most important item was a permit to enter Southern Sudan.

He was advised to go through Nairobi because, they said, it would be easier than through Khartoum to get the permits for himself and the confreres due to travel with him. Though he was already prepared for many “*Bukra, bukra, in-sha-Allah*”,²¹¹ things turned out quite differently. Having explained that they were going to work in education and schools construction, in few days they got all the permits needed: “Allah, God really wanted it”.

The Superior General had called him while he was on holidays to tell him about the results of the straw ballot of the confreres of Sudan, most surely because of his previous experience in Uganda and Kenya, and Fr Calvia and his Council put their trust on him. Fr Cefalo did not understand clearly the terminology used by Fr Calvia for the mandate and the inaccurate use of that terminology appeared in his first report to the General and his Council, prompting the General himself to clarify its true meaning. However, what was clear was that he had a mandate to accomplish in the very land of Comboni and that he would go for it.

It was a great honour for him to have ended up in the very place where Daniel Comboni started the whole matter which, as I have already reported at the very beginning of this *Long Love Story*, was more passionate “*than two ardent lovers longing for the moment of their wedding.*”²¹² But for Fr Raffaele was all his urgency of the same type as the one of Comboni? Was it just his character? His enthusiasm, his pride of having been chosen for a so delicate and important task? Was it only matter of experience or else?

Well... it is difficult to spell it clearly, it may have been everything mixed together, nonetheless, one thing was very clear that, either he would take up this mission with true faith and love on the line of Comboni or he had better to search for more peaceful places, not for South Sudan at a time when the Addis Ababa Agreement was already crumbling. Indeed, the many challenges he was going to face were not just for beginners.

His acceptance of this responsibility was the beginning of another phase of this *Long Love Story* that, in different ways, was carrying on in South Sudan with the same enthusiasm and love which was there at the beginning with our Holy Founder St Daniel Comboni. I give now the prospectus of how this new Circumscription of South Sudan will unravel along the years to come until the present 2017.

²¹¹ “Bukra, bukra, in shah Allah”: Arabic for “tomorrow, tomorrow, please God”

²¹² The Writings, op. cit., no. 3

The various phases of the South Sudan Circumscription

The past history of South Sudan was always difficult and troublesome and the future would not be much different with its wars and struggles. The Local Church and the Comboni Missionaries always went along with very tough situations and only faithfulness and the love for God and people would give reason enough to go on. In the various vicissitudes the Combonis tried to give various answers to the different situations also by changing logistic reference places so as to continue their missionary service.

Juba was the natural place of action within South Sudan, but when the situation within the country became impossible, the reference point for action became Nairobi, Kenya, until the propitious time came to go back to Juba. Fr Raffaele Cefalo was the one who started the whole process.

The Circumscription with the Headquarters in Juba (1981-1994) comprises the work of Fr Raffaele Cefalo (1981-1984) as the Representative of the Superior General and first Delegation Superior when the Representation became Delegation. He was followed by Fr Cesare Mazzolari (1984-1989) as Delegation Superior and then Provincial when the Delegation became a Province. Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö, the first South Sudanese Provincial, took over from 1990 to 1994.

The Circumscription with the Headquarters in Nairobi (1995-2004) covers the time the *New Sudan Group* became a Delegation, with the suppression of the South Sudan Province in Juba and the new policy adopted for the missionary work done in the *Liberated Areas*, with Fr Francesco Chemello (1995-1998), who was the coordinator of the group from 1992 to 1994 and then the Delegation Superior. He was followed by Fr Ezio Bettini (1999-2004) as the new Delegation Superior and then Provincial.

The Circumscription with its Headquarters again in Juba (2005-2016) came about after the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement), This was the time of the Provincials Fr Luciano Perina (2005-2010), Fr Daniele Moschetti (2011-2016) and finally of Fr Louis Okot Ochermoi Tony (2017-2019), the second South Sudanese Provincial Superior, who also took up his task in a very difficult time of civil war and unrest in the country.

The Arrival of Fr Raffaele Cefalo and the Comboni Centenary, 1981

The date chosen by the Superior General, Fr Salvatore Calvia and his Council, to explore the possibility of opening the new Circumscription of

South Sudan was surely not a random choice. The Centenary celebration of the Death of Comboni was the *Opportune Time*, a **Kairos**, not to be missed. It took place seven years after the *Installation of the Sudanese Hierarchy* when the leadership of the Seat of Khartoum was to pass from a missionary Bishop, Archbishop Agostino Baroni, to Sudanese, Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako on 10 October, 1981. All this was done in Agreement with the SCBC (Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference).

The SCBC had already given directives for the celebration of the Centenary and the Comboni Missionaries of Khartoum, MCCJ and Comboni Missionary Sisters were to take the leadership in organizing it. An *Ad Hoc* committee was formed and Fr Pasquale Boffelli was already busy with the planning. No wonder if, in this context, also the preliminary work of starting a new Circumscription in the South was part and parcel of the whole issue.

Thus, once the whole process of permits in Nairobi and the purchasing of a Toyota Land Cruiser and all the necessary required stuffs were completed, Fr Cefalo started his journey from Nairobi to Juba via Lokichokyo, Kapoeta and Torit together with Fr Cesare Mazzolari and Bro Mario Rossignoli and arrived in Juba on 1 June, 1981.

*"A Toyota Land Cruiser has been purchased in Nairobi. It seems that the Juba Local Government is not authorized by the Khartoum Government to issue these permits... We applied to the Sudan Embassy in Nairobi specifying that the purpose of our application was the project of a Comboni College in Juba. We realized that the mere mention of a 'Comboni College' would make us most welcome and so, miraculously, we got the visas in Nairobi, both for Fr Cefalo and Fr Mazzolari. We were encouraged by this procedure and applied also for Bro Mario Rossignoli, assigned to South Sudan and he also received a visa."*²¹³

"After three days' travel driving the new Toyota Land Cruiser via Lokichokio, Kapoeta, and Torit, Fr C. Mazzolari, Bro Mario Rossignoli, and I finally reached Juba."²¹⁴ We were very warmly welcomed by Archbishop Ireneo Dud, and by some ex-students of the Comboni College of Khartoum like Mr Bona Malual, Mr Joseph Oduho and others. In Juba we found Bro Renato Bastianelli and Bro Augusto Bazzanella."

Indeed, the welcome of H. G. Archbishop Ireneo Dud was not of little importance. It was the continuation of that blessing he had to give with

²¹³ Fr Raffaele Cefalo's personal account.

²¹⁴ Famiglia Comboniana no. 360, June, 1981, pp. 14-15.

tears in his eyes at the expulsion of the Missionaries in March 1964 and now, almost surely, though not reported, more tears, but of a quite different kind, *tears of joy*. The **Comboni Kairos** of 1981 was therefore an opening up of new hopes and expectations, not only on the part of the Comboni Missionaries, but on that of the South Sudanese Local Church, as well. It was a real time of grace.

On 15 June, 1981, these were the numbers in hand of the confreres present and their location immediately after Fr Cefalo's arrival.²¹⁵

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Fr Raffaele Cefalo | Juba | <i>(just arrived)</i> |
| 2. Fr Luigi Cocchi | Juba | |
| 3. Bro Renato Bastianelli | Juba | |
| 4. Bro Mario Rossignoli | Juba | <i>(came with Fr Cefalo)</i> |
| 5. Bro Augusto Bazzanella. | Juba | |
| 6. Fr Tito Giuntoli | Rejaf | |
| 7. Fr Mario Busellato | Rejaf | |
| 8. Fr Giuseppe Farina | Rejaf | |
| 9. Fr Mattia Bizzarro | Rejaf | <i>(with Apostles of Jesus)</i> |
| 10. Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri | Rejaf | |
| 11. Fr Michael Barton | Kwörejik | |
| 12. Fr Hector Ayon | Kwörejik | <i>(Chukudum)</i> |
| 13. Fr Cesare Mazzolari | Juba/Nzara | <i>(came with Fr Cefalo)</i> |
| 14. Fr Luigi Penzo | Wau | <i>(Bussere)</i> |
| 15. Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomà | Wau | <i>(Bussere)</i> |
| 16. Fr Raffaele Tessitore | Kwajok | |
| 17. Fr Giuseppe Pellerino | Kwajok | |
| 18. Fr Joseph Ukelo | Mupoi | |
| 19. Bro Ottorino Gelmini | Mupoi | |
| 20. Fr Pietro Ravasio | Nzara | |
| 21. Fr Peter Magalasi | Rumbek | |
| 22. Fr Ezio Bettini | Rumbek | |
| 23. Fr Elvio Cellana | Tonga | |
| 24. Fr Miguel Isturiz | Tonga | |
| 25. Bro Francesco Ragnoli | Tonga | |
| 26. Fr Guido Bertuzzi | Loa | <i>(Ugandan refugees)</i> |

²¹⁵ Report by Fr Raffaele Cefalo. Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan - from 1 May, 1981 to 1 January, 1990 - (Diary of the Comboni Missionaries of South Sudan) 15 June, 1981. ACR 475/1.

The first steps

As soon as they arrived in Juba, they put up in Hai Jallaba, a house rented by the Region of Khartoum for the confreres in Juba. There, on 4 June they got the nice event of the inauguration of the chapel that gathered together Archbishop Ireneo Dud, Fr Wuni and Fr Constantino Pitya for the Eucharistic celebration. It was a good start for a presence which needed such deep commitment.

On 8 June, with the presence of Fr Raffaele Cefalo and his Councillors, Fr Pietro Ravasio and Fr Joseph Ukelo (*Vice-Representative*),²¹⁶ there was the first meeting of the **Representation Council** (this was the precise name for the time being). In fact, with the arrival of Fr Cefalo as the *Special Representative of the Superior General*, the South was detached from Khartoum *ad experimentum*.

Regarding authority, Fr Cefalo was the Superior, Fr Luigi Cocchi was chosen as Vice Superior and Bro Rossignoli as Procurator. The official language was to be English and a quarterly newsletter was to be started, together with a draft of the *Regional Directory*. A further proposal was to abolish firearms for hunting.²¹⁷ The first priorities to be immediately implemented were the building of Comboni Secondary School and of the Comboni House. Priority was also given renewing requests for personnel.

Actually, a plot for the Comboni House had already been given by the Government, but considered unfit. A new application was made and the Government granted a good plot in town, free of charge, where Comboni House was to be built. As for the Comboni College, the Archdiocese had enough land in 'Kator' and it was possible to build it there.

Both priorities (Comboni House and the Comboni Senior Secondary School) needed to be tackled urgently in order to have the new Circumscription up and running as soon as possible and the necessary fund-raising to be started with the back-up of the General Administration.

A slower pace

From these first paragraphs, it was clear that Fr Cefalo was taking things seriously and not wasting time *beating about the bush*. However, as already noted, there was a certain discrepancy between the instructions of the

²¹⁶ Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan, (from 1 May, 1981 to 1 January, 1990).
- Ibid. Op. Cit., day 8 June, 1981. ACR 475/1.

²¹⁷ Minutes of the Representation: Juba 20 June, 1981, (first meeting). ACR 610/11/1

Superior General and how Fr Cefalo understood them in his eagerness to get the job done. The first instance occurred when the Superior General received the first report with the heading: “**1st Meeting of the Provincial Council of South Sudan**”, and then at no. 1/81 “**Meeting of the New Comboni Delegation of South Sudan.**”

The Superior General felt it important to point out the true name of the new Circumscription in order not to give rise to misleading interpretations and replied with a new letter stating that what was started was neither a Province nor an Independent Delegation but only a **Representation**²¹⁸ of the Superior General for the time being (*ad nutum*).

If this was not enough, what touched even more the most sensitive side of Fr Cefalo’s pride were a couple of letters, especially the second one, from Fr Francesco Pierli,²¹⁹ who did not want to hurt him, but only to make him understand that the approach sought by the General Council was to use simple means and proceed at a pace which would not create difficulties in relationships with the Local Church and the various pastoral agents, especially with regard to the Local Clergy.

In his first letter of 2 July, Fr Pierli pointed out that Comboni House should not be a large structure, but a simple one; that the words used like stores, procure and workshop to be built, the speed and the financial support needed, gave them the idea that it was all a way of showing off power, resources and personnel, as if it was a way of *recovering the lost time*, thus giving an impression that was both false and misleading regarding concrete Comboni possibilities.

The real approach of the General Council was, instead, to foster a spirit of *self-sufficiency* and *self-support* proceeding at the same pace as the people, not in order to quench zeal, but to avoid repeating mistakes made in other Provinces. Hence, the issue was that of giving more priority to the *formation of leaders, to the seminaries and catechetical centres* rather than taking commitments in new Parishes. Finally, to put the cherry on the cake, so to speak, Fr Pierli’s second letter of 11 July on the issue of the land for the Comboni House stated that: “*it was best not to hurry up unnecessarily; that the piece of land was too big; that the Church was not necessary.*”

Having the impression that, in his view, this was a real turnaround of the whole issue, it took no time to ask for clarification on what he was supposed to do: whether he had to look only for the land or also to carry on

²¹⁸ Fr S. Calvia to Fr R. Cefalo, Rome, 27 June, 1981. ACR 610/9/1.

²¹⁹ Fr F. Pierli to Fr R. Cefalo, Rome, 2 July, 1981. ACR 610/9/1.

- Fr F. Pierli to Fr R. Cefalo, Rome, 11 July, 1981. ACR 610/9/1.

with the buildings; if the Comboni House, the Secondary School and Comboni Vocations Promotion were still priorities or not..., then he carried on saying that he had already told them he was not the right person... Finally he concluded: *“Now, I myself must get into gear in Southern Sudan: a rhythm of super slow motion.”*²²⁰

However, the last thing the General administration wanted was to cast doubts on their trust in Fr Cefalo. Fr Calvia himself, one day, would share with Fr Cefalo his deep appreciation and admiration for his dedication and enthusiasm with these words: *“Dear Fr Cefalo, I really thank you for all the good you do with such zeal, with much dedication and with much enthusiasm; I often really wonder at your courage and your constancy! Praise the Lord.”*²²¹

Fr Cefalo ate all his humble pie: how much he could also digest it is another issue, but conscious of his belief in religious obedience, he tried to follow the directives to the best of his capacity, though some confreres of the time said that his character not rarely put them in an uneasy position at a time when the relationship with the Local Church was still a delicate issue. Nonetheless, the General Superior and his Council were supportive of his positive commitment in starting things and getting the new Circumscription going and they confirmed his good work.

Once the issue was clarified, Fr Cefalo made himself busy implementing both priorities, though a complaint was raised with the General Administration on the matter of the slow pace of the promised fundraising and of Comboni Personnel, not so abundant as the needs required. These last two issues, in reality, were also part of the same overall understanding of how to carry on the implementation and how to enter into a mentality of gradual development.

Important events 1981

Year 1981 was a special year because of the extraordinary event of the Centenary Celebration of the death of Comboni, but other events were already planned that were very important at the start of the Representation, that was also a unique event.

On 30 July, 1981, there was the meeting of the *Executive* of the Episcopal Conference in Juba and Fr Cefalo was invited to participate. This was a real introduction to the concrete situation of the Church in Sudan At

²²⁰ Fr R. Cefalo to General Administration, Juba, 29 June, 1981. ACR 610/9/1.

²²¹ Fr S. Calvia to Fr R. Cefalo, Rome, 16 June, 1983. ACR 610/9/3.

its conclusion, the members of the *Executive* were invited to Comboni House for a reception, which was very much appreciated.

Fr Cefalo did not waste time in Juba but tried to move around fast and get better knowledge of the situation in the South. An important occasion was the arrival of Fr Luigi Parisi whom he accompanied to Nzara. Seventeen years had passed since his expulsion: it was a joyful and great event. Bishop Joseph Gasi Abangite was present to welcome them. Fr Luigi Parisi was to take up the post of Parish Priest, while Fr Pietro Ravasio was to be the Superior of the community.

In the month of August, 1981, there was the meeting of *The Assembly of Missionary Animation and Comboni Formation in Africa*, in Nairobi, with the participation of Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomma: South Sudan was beginning to plan for the opening of the Postulancy. Another very meaningful event was the visit of Sr Bianca Garascia, the new Provincial of the Comboni Sisters of Khartoum, on her first visit to the South with a view to accepting commitments there as well.

However, there were two very meaningful events, at level of missionary witness, which cannot go unmentioned: the assignment and arrival in Juba of Fr Ottorino Sina and of Mgr Agostino Baroni to the South.

Fr Ottorino Sina was the former Provincial Superior of Khartoum. However, his deep concern and dedication to the South made his presence very meaningful and his assignment very much welcomed.²²² His former contacts with the various authorities he knew very well in the South were a rare opportunity for Fr Cefalo to visit them together with him. Mr Joseph Oduho was happy to give a meal in honour of Fr Sina at his own house on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, 15 August.²²³

Instead, what was very special, not only as missionary witness, but also involving Fr Cefalo personally, was the request of Archbishop Agostino Baroni to work in the South after handing over of the Archdiocese of Khartoum to the new Archbishop, His Grace Gabriel Zubeir Wako.

What made it very special for Fr Cefalo was that Archbishop Baroni had been his novice master during his novitiate and now, though with the dignity of an Archbishop and the long and much-appreciated experience of leadership in Sudan, he was humbly requesting to be just a simple member

²²² - Khartoum: Provincial Council 31 August-7 September, 1981. Fr Sina appointed to the South. ACR 606/1/1.

- Diary of South Sudan, 4 August, 1981. ACR 475/1.

²²³ Ibid. April-July, 1981. ACR 475/1.

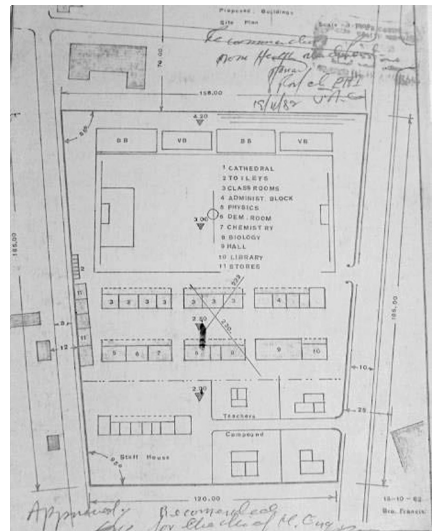
of the new-born *Representation* under the authority of his former novice who had as yet no direct experience of Sudan.²²⁴

Nonetheless, with all the above reservations, Fr Cefalo eagerly accepted his presence with profound admiration. Even more, the great humility and missionary dedication of Archbishop Baroni, later on, made Fr Cefalo ask the General Superior to allow him to join the Archbishop who was asked to take up temporarily the responsibility of Rumbek Diocese.²²⁵ While in Juba, Mgr Baroni put great effort into starting a *Centre for Disabled Children* directed by *Nostra Famiglia* (USRATUNA).

The Centenary of Comboni's Death: 10 October, 1981

Meanwhile, the celebration of the **Centenary of Comboni's Death**, on 10 October, 1981, in Khartoum, took place with all the ceremonial handing over of the responsibilities from H. G. Archbishop Agostino Baroni to the new Archbishop, H. G. Gabriel Zubeir Wako at the presence of the Bishops of the South. The participation Fr Cefalo to that so meaningful event was also very meaningful at the start of his mandate.

Immediately after the celebration, he was invited to Rome to share personally about the first five months experience, the real situation, the expectations and get better personal clarification from the General Administration's side so as to proceed smoothly without misunderstandings.



CSSJ approved on 19 November, 1982.

²²⁴ Fr Cefalo commented: "Immediately after handing over Khartoum, Mgr Baroni asked to come to Juba. I was hesitant, since he was my former novice master and now he would be my subject. He set to work at once to start the USRATUNA (La Nostra famiglia) in Juba. His presence was a true blessing for us. He was appreciated and respected by all the authorities."

²²⁵ Comment of Fr Cefalo: "When the Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr Moretti, asked him on behalf of the Pope to go to Rumbek, it came as a shock to him, but his answer was: 'I can't say no to the Pope'."

The Centenary in Juba and the CSSJ Foundation Stone

The Centenary celebration in Juba Archdiocese took place on 29 November, 1981, as agreed by the committee, with a solemn liturgy at St Theresa's Cathedral in Kator, presided by Archbishop Ireneo Dud. The picture of Daniel Comboni was the same as that used in Khartoum. It was a real discovery of Daniel Comboni as the true founder of the Catholic Church in the Sudan. During this celebration, the foundation stone of the ***Comboni Secondary School of Juba***, to be built in the Cathedral compound in Kator, was laid in the presence of the Minister of Education,²²⁶ to the great joy of all the people, although the final approval for the building was not given until a year later on 19 November, 1982.

Comboni situation on 1 January, 1982

The personnel listed in the *Annuario Comboniano* updated to 1 January, 1982, was the personnel Fr Raffaele Cefalo could count upon for the foreseeable future.²²⁷ The General Administration directed Fr Cefalo to take commitments without over-stretching the limited personnel available and not to think that many other confreres would be added immediately.

Fr Cefalo was acquainted with huge numbers in the Ugandan Province and substantial numbers also in Kenya. Comparing them to the real needs of Southern Sudan, he was feeling very uneasy at having to slow down while the needs were instead calling for a greater number of commitments to be taken up. It appeared as if the General Administration was slowing down the process: *though chafing at the bit*, Fr Cefalo had indeed to slow down as well.

The personnel of the ***Representation of Southern Sudan***²²⁸ was still listed under Khartoum Province, though it had been a different entity since May, 1981. To convey an overall idea of the situation, it may help to see the names and addresses of communities and confreres. with their logistical situation not always well settled and far below the overall real needs.

²²⁶ - Diary of South Sudan, 29 November, 1981. ACR 475/1.

- Celebrations of the Comboni Year -1981- (Italian) MCCJ Bulletin no. 135, pp. 54-56.

- Fr Cefalo to His Exc. Mr Philip Obang, Minister of Education and Guidance, Southern Region, Juba: *Invitation to the commemoration of the death of Bishop Daniel Comboni at 8 a.m., outside Kator Cathedral on 29 November, 1981, and laying of the foundation stone of the proposed Comboni Secondary School, Juba.* FSSPJ.

²²⁷ Minutes of the IV (1/82) meeting of the "Representative of South Sudan", Juba 5-7 January, 1982. ACR 610/11/1.

²²⁸ *Annuario Comboniano*, 1982, p. 77-79 (Updated on 1 January, 1982).

Personnel and communities

Fr Raffaele Cefalo: **Representative of the Sup. Gen.** appointed on 1 May, 1981. The postal addresses followed the location of the confreres and the flights carrying the mail to the various destinations from Nairobi.

Tasks and places of presence:

Councillors: Fr Joseph Ukelo Fr Pietro Ravasio

Procurator: Fr Luigi Cocchi

In charge of the Economy: Bro Mario Rossignoli

In charge of Formation: Fr Luigi Penzo

Comboni personnel: Bishops 1 - Priests 24 - Brothers 6.

Abbreviations:

al = Pupils; **d** = Diocese; **dedic.** = dedicated to; **ch** = Churches/Chapels; **cp** = prayer centres; **cr** Christians; **ct** Catholics; **cat** = Catechists; **ma** = teachers; **ms** = Muslims; **pg** = pagans; **pp** = population; **rf** = Religious Women/Sisters; **sc** = School; **sen. sec.** = Senior Secondary School.

Bussere: St Paul's Major Seminary Bussere, P.O. Box 2, WAU (Sudan)

Inter-Diocesan Seminary of Sudan; d. Wau. Our confreres were called in 1979 for teaching and training.

Comboni Postulancy: started in 1980; 3 Postulants.

Fr Luigi Penzo, Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomma

Juba: Catholic Church, P.O. Box 32, JUBA (Sudan). Residence for our confreres of Juba and hospitality; opened in 1978

Fr Raffaele Cefalo (belonging to the Curia) **Representative of the Superior General;** Mgr Agostino Baroni; *Fr Ottorino Sina* (assigned in September 1981, not yet written); Fr Luigi Cocchi, new Procurator and teacher; Bro Augusto Bazzanella, in charge of the printing press; Bro Mario Rossignoli, works at Comboni House; Fr Guido Bertuzzi (Uganda), assistance to Ugandan Refugees in Loa.

Kwajok: Catholic Church Kwajok, P.O. Box 29, WAU (Sudan), Parish and zone Catechetical Centre founded in May, 1979, d. Wau. Fr Raffaele Tessitore, Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, Director of the Catechetical Centre

Kwörejik: Catholic Church, P.O. Box 32, JUBA (Sudan), Parish; d. Juba. The mission of Kwörejik was founded in 1962; re-opened in 1978. Fr Michael Barton, Parish Priest; Fr Justin Ogen; Fr Hector Ayon (in Chukudum).

Mupoi: Catholic Church, Mupoi TOMBORA, W.E.P. (Sudan), Spiritual Assistance to the Sisters of the B.V.M. founded in 1977; d.

Tombora. Fr Joseph Ukelo, Spiritual Director of the convent; Bro Ottorino Gelmini, in charge of projects.

Nzara: Catholic Church, NZARA - W.E.P. (Sudan), Parish founded on 31.10.1951, re-opened in 1973, dedic.to Mary Queen of Nzara; d. Tombora, area 250 Km²; pp. ch 49; cp 1; rf 3; cat 50; sc; Comboni primary Nzara (Diocesan); (540 al). Dioc. Catechetical Centre. Fr Pietro Ravasio, in charge of the Catechetical Centre; Fr Luigi Parisi, Parish Priest; Fr Cesare Mazzolari.

Rejaf: Catholic Church Rejaf, P.O. Box 32, JUBA (Sudan), Parish, re-opened in 1979; dedic; to Mary SS.; d. Juba; pp. 55.000; ct 45.000; cr 3.000; ms 100; pg 7.000; ch 1; cp 40; cat 42; ma 70. Fr Tito Giuntoli, Sup. of Rejaf and Novice Master of the Brothers of Kit; Fr Mario Busellato, Parish Priest; Fr Giuseppe Farina.

- **Seminary of the Apostles of Jesus**, founded in 1981. (Rector: Fr Thomas Oliha with 6 professors of philosophy AJ. helping him.

Fr Mattia Bizzarro, in charge of the (Administration of the) Seminary of the Apostles of Jesus. (arrived on 21.2.81). Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri

- **Brothers of St Martin de Porres (Kit).**

Rumbek: Catholic Church, RUMBEEK, Lakes Province (Sudan), Parish founded in 1953, re-opened in 1978, dedic. to the Holy Family, d. Rumbek. area 29.000 Km²; pp 333.000; ct 17.474; cr 30.000; ms 700; pg 285.000; ch 4; rf 4, sen. sec. (1,200 pupils). Fr Peter Magalasi, Parish Priest and Superior; Fr Ezio Bettini; Bro Valentino Fabris, in charge of projects.

Tonga: Catholic Church Tonga, P.O. Box 27, MALAKAL, U.P. (Sudan), Parish founded in 1901, given to the Mill Hill Fathers in 1936; returned in 1977; dedic. to Our Lady of Sorrows; d. Malakal. km² ...; pp 25.000; ct 8.000; pg 17.000; ch 5; sem I; cat 9. Fr Elvino Cellana; Fr Miguel Angel Isturiz Agudo; Bro Francesco Ragnoli.

On the move

In his first letter to the confreres, after some few words regarding his appointment as the Representative of the Superior General, Fr



Cefalo felt important to stress that the group of the Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan should really be a family, *a Cenacle of Apostles* as Daniel Comboni wanted them to be. Every confrere had to feel the responsibility of giving witness of unity and communion. First of all communion with the Lord, *without me you can do nothing* (Jn. 15:5) and communion among themselves, *by this they will know that you are my disciples* (Jn. 13:35), in the spirit of the previous General Chapter and the Rule of Life.²²⁹

Fr Cefalo became aware that the reality of Juba was a bit more complicated than what he had foreseen and that the pace of progress could not be kept up as he would have liked. Getting acquainted, he slowly started planning his visits to Authorities and Institutions in Juba and in the whole South Sudan. He went to Chukudum with Fr Pietro Ravasio to meet Fr Hector Ayon, then to Loa to visit Fr Eugenio Calligari, Fr Giovanni Ferrazin and Fr Guido Bertuzzi who had fled there from Moyo (Uganda) with his Madi refugees.

On 16 June, the sad event of the death of Mgr Lino Tiboi, former Apostolic Administrator of Rumbek Diocese, took place in Yei. After the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart in Rejaf, together with Bro Bastianelli, Fr Cefalo went to Maridi to meet Bishop Gabriel Dwatuka. In Juba, a meeting with the Minister of Education was arranged

From Pibor, Jonglei Province, the Acting Commissioner earnestly begged for personnel for the Kachipo, Termak and Murlè tribes, giving the *Representative*, once more, the burden of the urgent need for more personnel. His visit to Khartoum concluded his first three months of direct activity. The more he travelled around, the more conscious he became of the great needs so much beyond the small resources of the Comboni group and the more he had to suffer and put up with all the limitations.

The concern of the Superior General was centred mainly on three points, where Fr Cefalo should take special care:

1. *Community life* for an efficacious witness; a global plan of the communities to be sent to Fr General.
2. A plan for the permits to be applied for through the SCBC (Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference).
3. Following up the cases of Fr Urasi and Fr Longokwo according to the local traditions required by the praxis of the Church.²³⁰

²²⁹ Juba 9 June, 1981, Fr R. Cefalo to all Comboni Missionaries of Southern Sudan. ACR 610/10

²³⁰ Fr S. Calvia to Fr R. Cefalo, Rome, 17 June, 1981. ACR 610/9/1.

He had already started implementing all these points even before the letter of the Superior General and they were really his first concern.

In December 1981, Fr Cefalo undertook his first *safari*²³¹ to Rumbek, Wau and Bussere. The sixth of December was also the date set for the celebration of the centenary of Comboni in Rumbek. On that occasion there was the Priestly Ordination of a Diocesan Priest, Fr Benjamin Madol. The Bishop of Rumbek, Mgr Gabriel Dwatuka, was living in Maridi and usually was going to visit Rumbek from there, but this time he could not make it, so Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako of Khartoum presided at the celebration and the ordination.

In Rumbek there were Fr Ezio Bettini and Fr Peter Magalasi who were trying their best in their commitment. St Paul's Major Seminary, instead, was in Bussere and two of our confreres, Fr Luigi Penzo and Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomma were assigned there. The work was very much appreciated by the whole Episcopal Conference. Fr Raffaele Tessitore and Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, for their part, were working in Kwajok.

With the new year of 1982, Fr Cefalo organized a safari to Malakal and Tonga. Travel to Malakal from Juba was usually either by steamer or by plane. Neither was available and so he took the risk of going there by car. On his way he could see the progress going in the big project of the Jonglei canal where a watershed road was also ready to be used by cars.

However, that huge work was never concluded due to the start, one year later, of the rebel movement of the SPLA/M.²³² In fact, the enormous and unique excavation machine from France was destroyed. When he reached Tonga he found that Bro Francesco Ragnoli had gone to work in Malakal while Fr Elvio Cellana and Fr Miguel Angel Isturiz remained in Tonga.

Fr Cefalo acknowledged the great need for a missionary presence in Malakal Diocese, the biggest diocese in the whole of Southern Sudan. According to the British Mission Spheres it was a Presbyterian and Episcopalian territory, but the Catholics returning to their homelands from Khartoum, after the Addis Ababa Agreement, were spreading Catholicism, opening places for prayers and building their chapels, a phenomenon which matured in the nineties and was already present in the major towns.

Bro Ragnoli had already helped within Malakal itself and in Tonga: but what could be done for other towns like Bor? It was this consideration that

²³¹ Safari = (Arabic): in our context = Pastoral Visit

²³² SPLA/M = Sudan People Liberation Army/Movement.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudan_People%27s_Liberation_Army

moved Fr Cefalo to plan a safari for Holy Week and Easter Sunday in Bor, where he was practically the only Priest in the whole of Jonglei Province

At the beginning of February 1982, one of the events which was really of great help was the retreat and the renewal course organized by the SCBC for Diocesan Priests and Religious held in Mupoi. A Mill Hill Father, Fr Jerry Henthorst, was invited to lead it together with other courses in Wau and Malakal. This was a great opportunity to experience the strength of the renewal coming from the Second Vatican Council, very much needed in South Sudan. Fr Cefalo and Fr Parisi were present.

Another important event in the middle of February was the four-day meeting of the Priests in Juba and the establishment of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council that met a month later for the first time and started sharing on the most important issues concerning the Diocese with its pastoral life and activities in a way which helped communion among the Priests working in the Archdiocese. In March there was also a short three-day visit of the Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr Giovanni Moretti from Khartoum.

Instead, a regrettable incident happened at Maridi where, in March, 1982, Bishop Gabriel Dwatuka created a difficult situation with his very questionable way of dealing with the Salesian Fathers there. The Bishop practically expelled the Salesians in such a way that he created a great scandal for everybody. The Conference of Bishops and the Apostolic Nuncio had to intervene directly in the case.

What was regrettable was that this matter could have been easily resolved, had he followed the Vatican Directives of *Mutuae Relationes*, but he did not do it and so the issue became very serious. The matter was relevant for all the Religious and Missionary Institutes, including the Combonis. This was the reason why Fr Cefalo was prompted to write a serious letter of complaint to the Chairman of the SCBC, H. G. Gabriel Zubeir Wako,²³³ pointing out that such attitudes can truly harm relations with the Institutes that were in Sudan at the service of the Local Church.

Pressure was made for Bishop Dwatuka to resign, and he did. On 17 July, 1982, there was the official news that his resignation was accepted and that Mgr Agostino Baroni, Archbishop Emeritus of Khartoum, was nominated Apostolic Administrator of Rumbek, Yei and Maridi.²³⁴

²³³ Fr Raphael Cefalo to H. Grace Arch. Gabriel Zubeir, Chairman of SCBC. ACR 610/9/2.

²³⁴ Diary of South Sudan, June-July, 1982. ACR 475/1.

The General Assembly held in Juba from 27 April until 6 May, 1982²³⁵ was a great help to the new Circumscription of South Sudan to get into the track. It was preceded by the Spiritual Retreat and Fr Salvatore Calvia, the Superior General, was also present. Fr Francesco Pierli should have been present, as well, to lead the retreat but he could not and Mgr Agostino Baroni replaced him. With the presence of Fr Calvia and Fr Francesco De Bertolis, the new Provincial of Khartoum, many key issues on the relationship of the South with the Khartoum Province were tackled.

In conclusion, some confreres were transferred. Fr Luigi Cocchi and Fr Giuseppe Farina were appointed to the North. It was decided to close the community of Mupoi. Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri was appointed to Nzara, Bro Mario Rossignoli to Rumbek and Bro Francesco Ragnoli and Valentino Fabris to Juba. As for the Comboni SS Juba, the Superior General was proposing Fr Gaetano Gottardi as the most qualified person to become its director and to be in charge of the projects still pending.

On this occasion the new Comboni House of Juba, though unfinished, could eventually host the General Assembly, though meals had still to be taken in the former Hai Jallaba house and accommodation had to be found where available, mostly at the *German Leprosy* Guest House.²³⁶ With joy, the Superior General could see that the South was really moving.

Fr Cefalo and the Episcopal Conference of Mupoi

On 24 June, 1982, Fr Cefalo went on safari to Tombura, Wau and Rumbek. On the 26th there was a meeting of the Episcopal Conference in Mupoi. All the Bishops were present and Fr Cefalo was also invited in order to present the plan of the Comboni Missionaries and to hear the various proposals and requests from the different Dioceses.

When the Bishops heard of the decision to close the community of Mupoi, they all showed their deep disagreement because it meant removing Fr Joseph Ukelo, the Spiritual Director of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Bro Gelmini, in charge of the projects. As a result of this divergence the Bishops did not agree to sign the agreements they were supposed to with the Comboni Institute.

One month later, on 17 July, Fr Ukelo and Bro Gelmini arrived in Juba from Mupoi and the community was definitively closed, as planned at the

²³⁵ Minutes of the IV (1/82) Meeting of the "Representative of South Sudan", Juba 5-7 January, 1982. ACR 610.11/1.

²³⁶ *German Leprosy* (GLRA): the Combonis had a commitment with them.

time of the assembly. Fr Ukelo was assigned for rotation to Italy and Bro Gelmini to Juba. At the end of June, after the visit of the Provincial of the Salesians to Juba, the Salesians agreed that, later on, they would take up the printing press of Juba, thus releasing Bro Bazzanella for other commitments.

Khartoum: Meeting of Men Religious Superiors

For the first time, from 22 to 24 July, 1982, the newly established Association of Men Religious Superiors working in Sudan was held in Khartoum.²³⁷ Fr Raffaele Cefalo was one of the participants together with Fr Thomas Oliha of the Apostles of Jesus (AJ), Fr Ilario Tesfasghi of the Capuchins (OFM Cap), Fr Francis De Bertolis of the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ) North Sudan, Fr William Knipe of the Maryknoll Missionaries (MM), Bro Karlo Farajallah of the St Joseph Brothers (SJB), Bro Samuel Lokibe of the St Martin Brothers (SMB), Fr Armand Garon of the White Fathers (WF), and representatives from the Mill Hill Missionaries (MHM) and the Society of Jesus (SJ).

The agenda of this first meeting included some points related to the setup of the Association and others more related to the Local Church, Congregations and planning: the agreement with the Ordinaries, the Brothers' Congregations, the Comboni plan of action 1982-1985 of Khartoum Province, Communications, Spiritual renewal, distribution of personnel in Sudan, hospitality in Khartoum and Juba, presence of a representative at SCBC Plenary and how to develop the constitutions of the Association.

On that very occasion, Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako, present in the name of the SCBC, delivered to the Delegates a powerful and important speech, entitled: **“Talk given to the Superiors of Religious Congregations working in the Sudan (Men).”** The main theme of the talk was **“What is your role in this Local Church?”** The Archbishop's talk was followed by questions and discussion.

Archbishop Zubeir went straight to the most important point, as he usually did, *without beating about the bush*. His talk gave a glimpse of how the whole issue was seen, evaluated and presented by the Archbishop of Khartoum expressing the view of the SCBC, and therefore of the *Sudanese*

²³⁷ First meeting of the representatives of the Male Missionary Societies working in the Sudan, Khartoum 22-24 July, 1982.ACR 606/3.

- Ibid. Front Page. By this time, the Women's Religious Institutes were not yet organised.

Hierarchy, just at the beginning of the journey together of the Association of the various Religious Institutes present in the Sudan.

Several important points were presented, but two were the main concerns making up the whole background: that ***the prophetic role of the Religious might positively contribute to a growth in communication and spirituality***, very much needed by the Sudanese Church; the fear that their meeting without the presence of Bishops ***may lead to a possible creation of power blocks***, instead of normal collaboration in full respect of Ecclesiastical Authorities and of the Church as a community on a journey together in a spirit of fraternity and collaboration.

The Archbishop expressed his gladness for this meeting which had the approval of the Bishops, who also approved that a representative of the Religious be present at every Plenary Meeting of the Bishops. He also wished that the Women Congregations may in future be present.

Commenting on the possible **“fear of power blocks developing in the Church”**, as the religious Superiors would meet by themselves without Bishops, he put himself this question: **“how can the Religious send their representative if they do not meet beforehand by themselves?”** Thus, he encouraged the Congregations to feel the pulse of the Local Church and evaluate the impact of their presence in it by clarifying ***their role*** within the Local Church itself, working in a spirit of collaboration and responsibility.

He then went on commenting on other issues like the **“We...You”**, **“We...They”** attitude in the Church of Sudan calling the attention that the very ones who ***guarantee fidelity to the religious vocation***, are the same Sudanese Bishops of the Sudanese Church. He challenged the ***we are here only to help*** approach, by pointing out that a helper can be dispensed with, but Religious in the Sudan are indispensable, all the time, ***as co-workers***, with as much responsibility for the work as the Local Priests and Bishops.

On ***collaboration with the Bishops***, he emphasised that the fact of having a representative at every SCBC plenary meeting, it would be a great contribution to collaboration and in the deliberations of the Bishops. He invited everyone to get rid of assumptions and prejudices and open their eyes and hearts to the present reality, concluding that the point was not ***Religious and the Local Church*** but ***Religious as fully part of this Local Church***, therefore, on a journey together.

The “Representation of Southern Sudan” becomes a DELEGATION

At the Intercapitular Assembly in Rome, in the months of August and September, 1982, Fr Cefalo was present as the representative of the

Superior General for South Sudan. All the participants were very eager to acknowledge the new Comboni presence in South Sudan. On 15 October, 1982, the Superior General and his Council elevated the *Representation of Southern Sudan* to the **DELEGATION of SOUTH SUDAN**.²³⁸ This decision was a real milestone for the whole group and a challenge to look forward with renewed strength and vision.

A new consultation among the confreres had to be carried out to give the General Council the opportunity of choosing the future Delegation Superior. Fr Cefalo, conscious of the heavy burden this would possibly constitute for him, let them know he did not want any responsibility for the future.

He proposed they appoint him to Rumbek, in great need of personnel, to stay with Bishop Agostino Baroni, whose example of missionary dedication and humility impressed him deeply. The Superior General, however, while bearing his wishes in mind, asked him to leave the whole issue to the choice of the confreres. He was finally appointed as the new Delegation Superior.

Letter of the Superior General to Archbishop Ireneo Dud

On the occasion of the erection and establishment of the Sudanese Hierarchy, in 1974, the former Superior General, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni,



wrote a very important letter to the Comboni Missionary confreres, on the new attitudes to be adopted in the Local Church. Now, in a different situation and phase along the journey, the Superior General, Fr Salvatore Calvia, felt important to write his own, also of great value, to Archbishop Ireneo Dud, on 24 December, 1982.²³⁹ His purpose was to help to understand progressively the *signs of the times* within the newly created *Delegation of South Sudan* and the *Local Church* so that missionary

service might be carried out with renewed understanding and fervour and promote always better relations. He concluded by stating that the common

²³⁸ 15 October, 1982, (It.) Erection of the Delegation of South Sudan. ACR 610/8.

²³⁹ Fr Salvatore Calvia, MCCJ, Superior General to Most Rev Mgr IRENEO WIEN DUD, Rome, December 24th, 1982. ACR 606/1/2.; The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit., pp. 643-646.

aim of both the *Delegation* and the *Local Church* was ***the growth to full maturity of the Church of God in the Sudan.***

He emphasized that the presence of the Comboni Missionaries showed the ***moral obligation*** towards the Sudan, convinced that the mutual contact and agreement with the Local Hierarchy may help to fulfil it. He felt important to apologise for the misunderstandings of the past due to various reasons, though never with ill will. These difficulties, in his own view, arose because of accepting any invitation whatever to satisfy the desires and the needs of the Local Church, without clear reference to the ***Rule of Life***. After the Holy See approved it definitively in 1980, Fr Calvia thought it would be a real help to make mutual relations easier and better.

He informed the Archbishop that the General Council decided to give the Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan *a more precise and autonomous religious structure*, after the preliminary experience of the ***Representation of Southern Sudan***, with the desire to understand better the plans and wishes of the SCBC, and the desire to hold a proper place among the various pastoral agents working for this Church.

He believed that the most important issue for the future was to establish mutual relations of understanding and help by all sides for the success of the activities involved and the priorities of the SCBC expressed in the meeting of Wau.

He confirmed the full agreement of the Comboni Missionaries to help with the formation of local personnel, the on-going formation of Priests and Religious, the activity of PALICA, the formation of the laity and of projects of human promotion and reconstruction in the various missions.

He stressed that the initiative of inviting the Comboni Missionaries to Sudan is left to the Bishops, though the Institute may not be able to accept every invitation in consideration of the needs of the confreres, their numbers and the requirements of community life. Regarding the request for ***young personnel*** he stressed that it was important to consider also the return of other experienced confreres who had been there in the past.

Regarding community life, he pointed out that the new Rule of Life did not consider it as a mere internal affair for the Combonis. Community life affected relations with the Local Church, with other Institutes and with the International Agencies for development. He also said that all commitments should be taken up by the Superior Delegate and never by an individual confrere.

Finally he agreed that, evidently, the Local Church *had its own needs*, but that *also the Institutes, including the Comboni Missionaries, had theirs.*

The Conventions would then be the official means to balance the needs of both parties and lead to fruitful collaboration for the Kingdom of God.

Fr Calvia maintained that what was emphasised in *Mutuae Relationes*, strongly recommended by the Holy See, in Nos. 58 and 65, concerning better contacts between the Conference of Bishops and the Conference of Religious Superiors, could greatly facilitate mutual understanding and closer cooperation and that, while Nos. 18, 29 and 36 of *Mutuae Relationes* were referring to the needs of the Dioceses, Nos. 8, 11, 46 referred to the needs of the Institutes.

On the whole approach to the South Sudan situation, he confirmed that the General Council's desire was to reach an equal distribution of confreres in the Dioceses of Juba, Wau, Tombora, Malakal and Rumbek, and possibly any newly-erected Diocese.

Fr Calvia sent also a letter to the confreres stressing the other side of the coin and facing directly the *living reality, the perspectives, the Local Church and Comboni service* from an internal Comboni point of view towards the Local Church. The key issue in the letter of Fr Salvatore Calvia to the confreres was an invitation not to take up inaccessible ideals but to view everything with realism while tackling **reality, prospects, Local Church and Comboni service**. He expressed the desire for an improvement in relations with the Local Church so as to make the acceptance of missionaries more trusting, open and safe and clear the ground of suspicion and doubts.

Fr Raffaele Cefalo Superior of the Delegation

In March 1983 Fr Raffaele Cefalo was elected *Superior of the Delegation of South Sudan*,²⁴⁰ but he was quick to answer that he accepted it only out of obedience, having already expressed his opinion that he should not be given any responsibility.²⁴¹ However, taking into account the votes of the confreres and his valuable missionary experience, the General Council confirmed him as the head of the newly-erected Delegation for the sake of continuity.²⁴² He was now a full member of the Delegation whereas he had previously belonged to a "Representation" under the General Curia.

²⁴⁰ -Rome, 10 March, 1983, Appointment of the Superior of the Delegation of South Sudan (Fr Raffaele Cefalo). ACR 610/8.

- Rome 22 July, 1983, confirming election of Fr Ottorino Sina as Vice Superior of the Delegation of South Sudan. ACR 610/8.

²⁴¹ Fr R. Cefalo to Fr S. Calvia, Juba, 19 January, 1983. ACR 610/9/3.

²⁴² Rome, 15 March, 1983, Fr Salvatore Calvia to all the confreres of South Sudan.

The appointment was a clear sign of the trust the General Superior and his Council placed in him at this particular stage of the Comboni group, now a Delegation, though the uneasy relations with the Bishops was a reason that needed to be addressed in due course. This appointment made also the two top priorities, the Comboni House and the Comboni S. S. Juba, more stable and the works continued without wavering.

The Comboni S. S. Juba saw the departure for the North of Fr Cocchi who had worked as a professor since 1977. Fr Gottardi, already in Juba, planned to open the school by 16 August. In June, Bro Ragnoli started building the secondary school in Kator, Juba, while waiting for Bro Valentino Fabris to leave the work with *German Leprosy* in Rumbek and join him.

The plans for the building were approved by the City Council on 19 November, 1982, giving the green light for the building to start. Because of a technical divergence of opinion on how to carry out the building, Bro Ragnoli decided to resign and Bro Fabris took over implementing the project with the help of Bro Domenico Cariolato who arrived in Juba at the end of January, 1983. By 4 July, 1983, the students could already start their second term in the new classrooms.

The Comboni House that had already hosted the Assembly during the visit of the Superior General in May, 1982 was also progressing well, according to the plan approved by the General Council and confirmed again by Fr Calvia during his visit; a four-roomed guesthouse in the Comboni House was financed by the SCC (Sudan Council of Churches).

In July, 1983, Fr Sina was chosen as Superior of the Comboni community of Juba, though the workshop and the extraordinary program of construction was to be the responsibility of the Delegation Superior and the Procurator.²⁴³ The Financial Council was composed of Bro Gelmini, Fr Gottardi and Bro Fabris, with Bro Gelmini as Procurator and Bursar,²⁴⁴ Bro Bazzanella continued to look after the printing press in St Joseph's area. With the handing over of the keys of the four-roomed guesthouse to the Delegation Superior on 15 November, 1983, by the SCC,²⁴⁵ the whole

- (In Italian) "Delegation of South Sudan", Interview of Fr Salvatore Calvia, by Fr Ezio Sorio, MCCJ Bulletin, no. 138, July, 1983, pp. 356-38.

²⁴³ Voice of the Southern Sudan Delegation, Minutes of the Delegation Council Meeting, Juba 28/6-2/7, 1983, p. 7. ACR 610/11/2.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 3.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 6.

- Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan, (from 1.May, 1981 to 1 January, 1990). op. cit., day 15 November, 1983.ACR 475/1.

Comboni House project was to be considered successfully completed, an outstanding achievement of the Brothers and of Fr Cefalo's commitment.

In Juba Archdiocese, Rejaf area, the commitments continued with the Parish of Rejaf, the Bros of Kit (St Martin the Porres Brothers) and the Apostles of Jesus. In **Kwörejik Parish** the pastoral work was quite intense, though more personnel were needed possibly with better means of transportation, lodging and living conditions to answer to the real needs.

In Tombura Diocese the community of Mupoi and the commitment with the Local Sisters was terminated in 1982, while **Nzara Parish** continued its pastoral, catechetical and education journey.

Rumbek Diocese felt the repercussions of the Yei incident involving Bishop Gabriel Dwatuka and the Salesian Fathers. Archbishop Agostino Baroni, who was already in Juba helping the start of the *Centre for Disabled Children* directed by *Nostra Famiglia* (USRATUNA), was appointed Apostolic Administrator of Rumbek Diocese (including Yei and Maridi), on 17 July, 1982, with the resignation of Bishop Dwatuka.

Fr Ezio Bettini was appointed teacher of Religious Education in the huge government-run *Rumbek Secondary School* and was available also for many other most needy practical things. He was entrusted with the financial administration of the Pastoral Region. Finally, Mgr Baroni, who accepted to serve the Diocese only until a new chosen person would be put in charge, was of particular example and inspiration to all.²⁴⁶

Wau Diocese had two ongoing Comboni commitments: Bussere and Kwajok. **In Bussere there was the Major Seminary**, a top priority of both SCBC and Comboni Missionaries because of the formation of future Priests. It was run by the Jesuits but Fr Luigi Penzo had been there as Spiritual Director since 1979, Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomma since the beginning of 1980 and Fr Felice Sciannameo had, in mid-1982, joined as a lecturer of theology. Bro Libero Ribelli, at the beginning of 1983, joined them as the person in charge of provisions and for other services in the Seminary. Fr Penzo was also the person in charge of following up a couple of Major Seminarians who had shown a desire to become Comboni Missionaries. One of these was Albino Adot Oryem.

Kwajok Parish was functioning normally with the commitments of producing liturgical books in Dinka, the work in the catechetical centre and

²⁴⁶ Comment of Fr Cefalo: "When the Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr Moretti, asked him on behalf of the Pope to go to Rumbek, it came as a shock to him, but his answer was: 'I can't say no to the Pope'."

in the Parish. Kwajok and Bussere were not too far from each other so the confreres could easily support each other in their community life.

In Malakal Diocese the only Comboni commitment was **Tonga Parish** with only two confreres. They were working hard but were probably the most isolated community, being the only one in the Diocese and difficult to reach, though Fr Cefalo did not fail to visit them and also to facilitate the visits of the White Fathers (the Missionaries of Africa) who intended to open a presence in the town of Bor, a place he considered a top priority in terms of evangelization.

1983 - Changes in the Political-Military Arena

The abduction of five members of **ACROSS** (African Committee of Rehabilitation of Southern Sudan) by the rebels²⁴⁷ on 23 June, 1983, and kept hostage in Boma National Park, Eastern Equatoria, was the first tangible sign of the deteriorating politico-military situation. The rebels threatened to kill them if their requests were not met. Though the five hostages were released after two weeks of negotiations and many prayers, it brought Church personnel and Comboni Missionaries,²⁴⁸ as well, to the abrupt awareness that the situation had indeed changed in the political and military scenario of Southern Sudan.

There were people who were unhappy with the Addis Ababa agreement, especially those people in favour of the separation of the South. Some others were dissatisfied with the changing policy of President Nimeiri towards the South since 1980, especially for matters linked to religion and to the discovery of oil. Many others were unhappy with the decree issued by Nimeiri on 5 June, 1983, abolishing the Addis Ababa Agreement, the Regional Self-Government Act and all the institutions in the South, and dividing it into three regions. However, the imposition of the Shari'a law (8 September, 1983) was the straw that broke the camel's back, together with the military personnel who were against the transfer of the Southern military units to the North.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ ACROSS hostages: <http://www.upi.com/Archives/1983/06/30/A-Sudanese-official-today-ruled-out-a-military-rescue/7792425793600/>;
<http://www.upi.com/Archives/1983/07/06/Guerrillas-threatening-to-kill-five-Western-hostages-in-Sudan/7177426312000/>

²⁴⁸ Minutes of the Delegation Council Meeting, Juba 28/6-2/7, 1983, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁴⁹ - R. Werner-W. Anderson-A. Wheeler, Day of Devastation Day of Contentment, Paulines Publication Africa, 2nd ed. 2010, pp. 382-394.

It was in this context that the SPLA military campaign started. The spark was the Bor mutiny of Battalion 105, which first erupted in March 1983, due to the failure to pay salaries, with the new date set for August 1983 (though postponed), as the first Torit mutineers chose August 1955.

In order to have the full military and logistic support of President (Chairman) Mengistu Haile Mariam, (of Ethiopia) a document with the objectives of the revolutionary movement had to be presented to him. It was made clear that he would not support any separatist movement.

Colonel John Garang, implored by the elderly and respected Joseph Oduho, accepted to write it under three conditions which became the basic principles inspiring the *Manifesto of the SPLA Movement*:

- To fight for the creation of a New United Sudan that would give the marginalised areas of the Sudan equality and justice.
- To adopt a Socialist system of rule.
- To ensure that the fighting forces scattered all over the South, including Anya-Nya II, be regrouped, trained and then start the war.

These three points were unanimously accepted and Colonel Dr Garang selected members of his team to write the document. The document was issued in July, 1983, with some slight modifications, and it was proclaimed as the manifesto of the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M).²⁵⁰ It was accepted by Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam, as well.²⁵¹ From now on the security situation in all parts of Southern Sudan became more and more precarious, unpredictable and definitely dangerous.

The Delegation within the Archdiocese of Juba

The new juridical set-up of the group as a Delegation gave Fr Cefalo more confidence for the future regarding personnel and commitment from the General Council. However, a reflection within the Delegation Council brought to the awareness of the need of addressing the reasons of the misunderstandings that arose between June 1982 and June 1983 in the Archdiocese of Juba.

- A Concise History of South Sudan, Andres Breidlid ed, Fountain Publisher, Rev Ed. 2014, pp. 261-263.

- Sudan's Painful Road to Peace, Arop Madut-Arop, op. cit., pp. 41-50

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaafar_Nimeiry

²⁵⁰ Ibid. p.70.

²⁵¹ Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

- Arop Madut-Arop- [DOC]SPLM/SPLA - CMIwww.cmi.no/sudan/doc/?id=992;

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudan_People%27s_Liberation_Army

The Delegation Council felt that there was no true dialogue with the local clergy and a definite culture gap between the Local Church and Expatriates. Due to the fact that very few meetings were organized, there was no real possibility of bridging the gap and engaging in a healthy dialogue. This was made worse by the fact that, at that time, there was a real lack of Church leadership and the Priests in charge were inaccessible.

Local Clergy were accusing the Combonis of taking initiatives which were the competence of the Local Church officials, that they were liaising with the Pro-Nuncio and influencing his decisions, that they were obtaining Visa and Permits without consultation with the Local Church, and that they were giving assistance and hospitality to people who should have been assisted and directed by the Local Church officials.

The Council admitted that sometimes the competence of the Church officials was invaded for the sake of efficiency and that, with the coming of the new Bishop of Juba a report needed to be presented of what the Combonis did with the best of intentions, with the openness to follow his directives and to remain within the limits prescribed for those cases where the Combonis overstepped their authority.

This reflection and acknowledgement on the side of the Delegation Council, revealed the serious need for reciprocal encounter in order to build up a healthy relationship during the process.²⁵²

Regarding the AMECEA giving priority to Small Christian Communities, the Comboni Provincial Superiors met in Nairobi from 21 to 25 June, 1983, and dealt with this topic and encouraged to live it personally, with the pastoral agents and with the Seminarians²⁵³ and build up a healthy body of the Church in its three proposed dimensions: *self-supporting, self-ministering and self-propagating*. For South Sudan the question was: *are we really going for it in our context...?*

Newly appointed Ordinaries

On 9 July, 1983, there was the official news of the appointments of new Ordinaries:

- Mgr Paolino Lukudu Loro (New Archbishop of Juba)
- Mgr Paride Taban (First Bishop of Torit)
- Mgr Giuseppe Pellerino (Apost Administrator of Rumbek)

²⁵² Voice of the Southern Sudan Delegation, Minutes of the Delegation Council Meeting, Juba 28/6-2/7, 1983, pp. 6-7. ACR 610/11/2.

²⁵³ Ibid. Voice of the Southern Sudan Delegation.

For the Archdiocese of Juba it was good news promising to fill the gap in authority lamented beforehand; for the Diocese of Torit it would allow better care for the population; for the Diocese of Rumbek, it would end the provisional arrangement made with Archbishop Baroni and open up to a more well-defined future. However, for Fr Giuseppe Pellerino who received the news brought to him by Fr Cefalo on a visit to Bussere, it was a real shock *“He could not possibly believe it. Never, never in his life could he suspect such an appointment.”*²⁵⁴

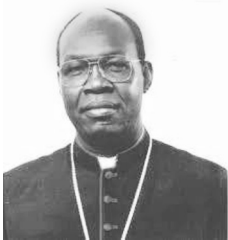
In Juba, His Grace Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro took possession of the Archdiocese on 31 July, 1983, in the presence of all the Bishops; Bishop Paride Taban took possession of Torit Diocese on 7 August; Mgr Giuseppe Pellerino took possession of Rumbek Diocese on 9 October; Fr Erkolano Ladu was nominated Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Juba on 12 November.²⁵⁵

The Religious Superiors’ Association of Sudan, in their meeting of December, 1983,²⁵⁶ decided that their next meeting was to be held at the PALICA National Centre in Juba, from 5 to 10 June, 1984. They agreed that the first point of their Agenda should take up the issue of *Mutuae Relationes*.

Juba: Enthronement of His Grace Paolino Lukudu Loro

The Homily and the Policy Speech

The enthronement of His Grace Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro took place in Juba on Sunday 31 July, 1983, at St Theresa’s Cathedral in Kator.



On this occasion he gave a homily²⁵⁷ reminding the congregation of how God took care of his people, how he guided them along the centuries through the prophets and leaders and how Jesus sent his Apostles to go and make all the nations his disciples with the power of the Holy Spirit.

After mentioning his predecessor, His Grace Archbishop Ireneo Wien Dud, one of the first Priests and first native Bishop and the honour of being his successor, he stressed

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 4; see also Fr Cefalo to Fr General, Juba 11 July, 1983. ACR 610/9

²⁵⁵ Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan. op. cit., on the dates.

²⁵⁶ Khartoum 15 December, 1983, newsletter no. 4, Religious Superiors’ Association of Sudan, op. cit., point 5.

²⁵⁷ Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, Enthronement Day, 31 July, 1983, Homily.

- In “Booklet of the Silver Jubilee July 31 1983 – July 31 2008”, pp. 30-40. FAJSS.

the point that, since Christianity was brought in by Foreign Missionaries, people should not now feel foreigners in their own land, but that Christianity belonged to them.

He then went on to reveal his pastoral motto which was: *Et Verbum Caro Factum Est*, that is to say, *And the Word was made Man (flesh)*. This motto already indicated the path of his pastoral programme he would later on develop accordingly in his *Policy Speech*²⁵⁸ revealing the priorities and the details of the whole pastoral plan for the Archdiocese.

He invited each Priest, Brother, or Sister, Sudanese or Expatriate, to think about his/her own identity in the Archdiocese, how he/she views such identity in it. He then went into the real priority of the entire Archdiocese, the **PASTORAL** or **EVANGELIZATION** of the people, stating that the **SACRAMENTS** were the main instruments of sanctification for the Christians, through the Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Sacrifice offered to the Father during the summit of the liturgical celebration.

He explained that when pastoral evangelization is weak, poor and inactive in a Diocese, it may be a sign of a loss of faith and perseverance in the reception of the Sacraments and their salvific power and that the motto he chose, *Et Verbum Caro Factum est*, (*The Word became Man (flesh)*) was expressing the principle of *Incarnation* and how God “**inculturated**” himself with people through Christ, the *Emmanuel-God-with-us*.

The message was for all, but especially for Africans who find difficult, for their own fault, to incarnate Christ among themselves. He also pointed out that Missionaries should not think that Christ is theirs, *here Jesus is an African* and the Missionaries, themselves, should try to live as Africans.

He called for the *pastoral evangelization* to be implemented immediately and given to people through an efficient training of local personnel, seeking ways and means to assist the Local Church to become self-reliant. Missionaries were to help the Local Church and structures in a spirit of unity, brotherhood, equality and cooperation, at the service of people, with full respect and acceptance of natural differences. The motto “**Et Verbum Caro Factum est**” would help, by the grace of God, to carry out the *pastoral evangelization* priority with the aim of making the Local Church *self-ministering, self-supporting, and self-propagating*.

The policy speech touched the past, the present and the future presence of Missionaries and Expatriate Personnel. For the Comboni Missionaries it

²⁵⁸ Policy Speech (full speech) of Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro to the Priests, Brothers, Sisters and Missionaries of the Archdiocese of Juba, 1 September, 1983. Ref. in: The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit., Appendix, Part Two, p. 647-653.

was call for a clear renewed effort in the understanding of the *Particular Churches / Local Churches* and the new missionary approach within the Local Church itself in need of a continual deeper perception.

In tackling the content of the *policy speech*, it was clear that it could not be just applied unilaterally but implied the mutual understanding and effort on both sides, the one of the Missionaries and the one of the Local Church, both in need to catch-up with the spirit of Vatican renewal.

During the Assembly of the South Sudan Delegation of Juba, from 16 to 21 January 1984, Archbishop Lukudu Loro had the opportunity to go more specifically into the details related to the Comboni Missionary service and enlighten the confreres.²⁵⁹ Surely the issue of *reciprocity* in the relationship, put in evidence by the Superior General in his letter to Archbishop Ireneo Dud in 1982, was a clear point, especially concerning the conventions between the Bishops and Comboni Missionaries.

No doubt, this issue needed to be addressed plainly. In fact, the letter of Fr Calvia pointed out clearly that: ***the Local Church has its needs and that the Comboni Missionaries (as an Institute) also have theirs to be taken into consideration.***²⁶⁰ Actually, this point was felt very much by the whole General Administration as a point to be tackled boldly.

By this time the proposed handing over of Rejaf Parish came to its conclusion and Fr Mario Busellato became available for another *Bari-speaking* commitment.²⁶¹ Archbishop Lukudu Loro had already scheduled the first Archdiocesan Pastoral Council meeting on 5 March, 1984, so all pending Comboni issues were to be dealt with after that.

Moreover, for the Comboni Missionaries of the South Sudan Delegation, the time for new elections had come, as in all the other Comboni Circumscriptions, and Fr Cefalo was already busy organising them. The new ballot indicated Fr Cesare Mazzolari as the future Delegation Superior.

²⁵⁹ South Sudan Delegation, Minutes of the Assembly 16-21 January 1984: From the "Policy speech" of Arch. Paolino Lukudu Loro to the Priests, Brothers, Sisters and Missionaries of Juba Archdiocese, ACR 610/11/2.

- H. G. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro: "Policy speech" delivered to the Assembly of the South Sudan Delegation, Juba 16-21 January 1984, (*Typewritten from manual*), ACR D/475/6/2

²⁶⁰ Fr Salvatore Calvia, MCCJ, Superior General to Most Rev Mgr IRENEO WIEN DUD, Rome, December 24th, 1982. ACR 606/1/2.

²⁶¹ Diario op. cit., in date 7 January, 1984.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION

From 1984 to 1989

Delegate / Provincial Superior

Fr CESARE MAZZOLARI

South Sudan Delegation: New Elections

This time the elections were done together with all the other Comboni Circumscription bringing the South Sudan Delegation into the *routine running* of the Institute. Fr Cesare Mazzolari became the new Delegation Superior and his Council was composed of Fr Ottorino Sina (Vice-Delegate), Fr Salvatore Pacifico, Fr Ezio Bettini and Bro Valentino Fabris.

The new Delegation Superior and his Council were to come into effect on 1 July, 1984.²⁶² Fr Cefalo considered it a useless dragging things out and agreed to carry on only until 1 June, to allow Fr Mazzolari to attend the meeting of RSAS (5-10 June, 1984).²⁶³ It was like telling him: *take up your bed and walk..., it is now your time! No need to wait any longer!*

The Superior General, Fr Salvatore Calvia, expressed his deep gratitude for what Fr Cefalo did in the first three years of the new Circumscription of South Sudan and showed appreciation for his presence, his work and enthusiasm, a great contribution to the Delegation of South Sudan. He also admitted that there had been some difficulties of attitude, different approaches and style, but the achievements were surely due to the enthusiasm and courage with which Fr Cefalo faced the complex situation

²⁶² - Fr A. Dalfovo to Fr R. Cefalo, Rome 3 April, 1984. Appointment Fr C. Mazzolari as Superior of Delegation, proceed with the election of Delegation Council. With effect from 1 July, 1984. ACR 610/8.

- Fr A. Dalfovo, Rome, 3 April, 1984. Letter of "Appointment of the Superior of the Delegation of Southern Sudan", Fr CESARE MAZZOLARI, 2 April, 1984, with effect from 1 July, 1984. ACR 610/8.

- Fr Alois Eder to Fr C. Mazzolari, 6 August, 1984, Appointment of Fr Ottorino Sina as Vice-Delegate, 1 August, 1984. ACR 610/8.

²⁶³ Fr R. Cefalo to Fr C. Mazzolari, Juba 13 April, 1984. ACR 610/10.

of the time. The election of a Delegation Superior, who, possibly, could become the Provincial, was also due to Fr Cefalo's endeavours.²⁶⁴

Words of deep appreciation and thanks came also from the newly-elected Delegation Superior, Fr Cesare Mazzolari who acknowledged the great work done and suffered for the good of the confreres and of the Church of the Sudan and that a possible birth of a future Province of South Sudan was to be considered as the fruit of Fr Cefalo's efforts.²⁶⁵ After due holidays, Fr Cefalo was assigned to Rumbek to help in the schools under Comboni care and Fr Bettini in the administration.²⁶⁶

Fr Mazzolari took up his task at a moment when the security situation was getting worse and worse and the movement by road to visit the commitments in the various Dioceses extremely dangerous. The kidnapping of the ACROSS people in 1983 was just a foretaste of what the general environment would become along his term of office.

SPLA army, with its Marxist ideology, was acting as if they were the enemies of the same people they pretended to liberate, and the military struggle continued to intensify always more. Malakal town was attacked by the Anya-Nya II/SPLA on 22 February, 1984. The diocesan meeting was disrupted and a plane was sent to get Fr Cellana and Fr Isturiz out.

On 3 March, employees of the CCI²⁶⁷ (Compagnie de Construction Internationale) of the Jonglei Canal Company Project were taken hostage in Malakal. The oilfields in Bentiu under Chevron, a US oil company, had to close down as did work on the Jonglei canal. Juba Airport was closed, as well. Along the river Nile all the boats were halted as was the railway Wau. No supplies could reach the big towns any more.²⁶⁸

Another accident which could have ended in a tragedy was the ambush and robbery to Fr Magalasi by rebels, on 5 March, four kilometres from Tonj. They shot at the tyres and the engine of the car. Luckily, Fr Magalasi was not injured.

²⁶⁴ Fr S. Calvia to Fr R. Cefalo, Rome, 4 April, 1984. ACR 610/9/4

²⁶⁵ Fr C. Mazzolari to Fr R. Cefalo, Juba Easter, 1984. ACR 610/9/4.

²⁶⁶ First meeting of the new South Sudan Delegation Council, Juba, 2 June, 1984. ACR 610/11/2.

²⁶⁷ - France's "Compagnie de Construction Internationale" (CCI) for the Jonglei projects.

- <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer135/khartoums-greatest-challenge>

- Robert O. Collins, A History of Modern Sudan, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 143-144.

²⁶⁸ Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan. op. cit., on the dates. ACR 475/1.

- see also: Sudan's Painful Road to Peace, Arop Madut-Arop, op. cit., Ch. 4, Garang de Mabior stated. p. 96, quot. 13.

Fr Cesare Mazzolari took up his task without delay, one month before his juridical mandate, and his first planned commitment was the meeting of the Religious Superiors' Association of Sudan, due to be held at the Palica Centre in Juba from 5 to 10 June, 1984. He then started planning for his visits to the Comboni communities in the various Dioceses and, with God's protection, he was able to keep contact and bring encouragement to confreres sorely tried by this difficult situation.

At the beginning of July 1984, he flew to Rumbek, to visit to Mgr Pellerino, Fr Bettini, Fr Magalasi and the Sisters, staying only for a few hours as he had to go back on the same flight. At that particular time all seemed quite still and well in Rumbek.

The month of September had a very busy programme due to the Eucharistic Congress and was a very troubled month as were the months which followed. On 4 September, Rumbek was bombed, hostages were taken in Bentiu and Mgr Pellerino had problems between Yirol and Rumbek. This unstable situation did not prevent but rather urged Fr Mazzolari to go from Juba to Nzara, Tombura, Kwajok and Raja to visit the confreres and assess personally the situation on the ground.

Due to the deteriorating security, after a meeting in Wau on 25 September, Mgr Pellerino decided to withdraw the Salesian Sisters from Tonj and the Comboni Sisters from Rumbek, while Fr Mazzolari carried on his visit to Kwajok and Raja. Bro Confalonieri arrived in Rumbek, while the Provincial was on his way back to Juba for the celebration of Comboni Day on 10 October. Archbishop Lukudu Loro presided the afternoon Mass with all the Confreres, Clergy and Religious People in Juba.

1 October, 1984, Comboni personnel and Communities²⁶⁹

The existing communities and the personnel upon whom Fr Mazzolari could count at the beginning of his mandate were as follows:

- **Archdiocese of Juba:** Juba, Kwörejik, Rejaf 1 e 2
- **Diocese of Malakal:** Tonga
- **Diocese of Rumbek:** Rumbek, Kajo-Kaji
- **Diocese of Tombura:** Nzara
- **Diocese of Torit:** Loa.
- **Diocese of Wau:** Bussere, Kwajok, Raja

JUBA ARCHDIOCESE

Juba - Comboni House

Fr Cesare Mazzolari, *Provincial Superior*

²⁶⁹ Annuario Comboniano updated 1 October, 1984, pp. 145-148.

Mgr Agostino Baroni
Fr Gaetano Gottardi, *Director of Comboni College*
Fr Alfredo Mattevi, *Teacher*
Fr Ottorino Sina, *Teacher*
Bro Domenico Cariolato, *Workshop Technician*
Bro Valentino Fabris, *Construction*
Bro Giuseppe Redaelli, *Provincial Bursar*

Kwörejik: Parish founded in 1950, re-opened in 1978

Fr Michael Barton, *Parish Priest*
Fr Justin Ogen
Fr Elvio Cellana

Rejaf/Kit:

Fr Tito Giuntoli
Bro Francesco Ragnoli
Bro Mariano Zonta

Rejaf: Apostles of Jesus,

Seminary of the Apostles of Jesus, founded on 14.5.1981, Minor Seminary, 120 Seminarians, 2 Apostles of Jesus' Priests, 1 Maryknoll Father.

Fr Mattia Bizzarro, *Administrator of the Seminary*
Bro Augusto Bazzanella
Fr Dorino Elisire

WAU Diocese

Bussere: Parish founded in 1933, National Major Seminary.

Fr Luigi Penzo
Fr Vittorino Dellagiacoma
Fr Felice Sciannameo

Kwajok: Parish and Catechetical Centre, founded in March 1979.

Fr Raffaele Tessitore
Fr Salvatore Pacifico
Bro Erminio Tanel
Bro Aldo Marangio

Raja: Fr Alfonso Polacchini, *Sup. Parish Priest*

Fr Gino Tosello
Fr Luigi De Giorgi

TORIT DIOCESE

Loa: Parish re-opened 1984, (Assists 80,000 Ugandan Refugees)

Fr Eugenio Caligari, *Sup.*
Fr Guido Bertuzzi
Fr Giovanni Ferrazin (I), *(still to come)*

MALAKAL

Tonga: (Parish closed for security reasons)

Fr Miguel A. Isturiz Agudo

TOMBURA

Nzara: Parish founded on 31 October, 1951; re-opened in 1971.

Fr Pietro Ravasio, *Catechetical Centre*

Fr Luigi Parisi, *Parish Priest*

Fr Feliz Da Costa Martins

Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri (*moved to Rumbek*)

RUMBEEK: Parish founded in 1953, re-opened 1978.

Mgr Giuseppe Pellerino

Fr Peter Magalasi, *Parish Priest and Superior*

Fr Ezio Bettini, *Chaplain Rumbek Sen. Sec. School*

Fr Raffaele Cefalo

Kajo-Kaji:

Fr Mario Busellato

The Parish of Rejaf no longer appears because it was left definitively on 27 May, 1984 and Kajo-Kaji, in Rumbek Diocese, was taken up as a new commitment. Loa Parish, as well, was taken up as a full commitment in the newly created Diocese of Torit with the addition of new personnel. Tonga Parish was still there, but in reality, the Parish was closed for security reasons and Fr Cellana was transferred to Kwörejik.

On 12 July, 1984, it was decided to remain in Kwajok with Fr Tessitore, Fr Pacifico, Bro Tanel and Bro Maranjo and to accept also Raja, in the same Diocese (Wau), as a new commitment, with Fr Alfonso Polacchini, Fr Gino Tosello and Fr Luigi De Giorgi assigned to it. Fr Polacchini was appointed Parish Priest²⁷⁰

Though Rejaf Parish was handed over to the Apostles of Jesus in May 1984, the Comboni Missionaries carried on the commitment with them and their Minor Seminary, founded on 14 May, 1981, with 120 seminarians, 2 Priests from the Apostles of Jesus, 1 Maryknoll Father and Fr Mattia Bizzarro, in charge of the Seminary. The Institute of the Apostles of Jesus had its beginning in Uganda in 1968 and the founders were Mgr Sisto Mazzoldi and Fr Giovanni Marengoni.²⁷¹ It was the first African

²⁷⁰ Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan, op. cit., 12 July, 1984.

²⁷¹ Rejoicing in Sheep with Shepherds: a 40 years history of the African Pioneers, A history of the Apostles of Jesus, 1968-2008, Rev Fr Frederick L. Nkwasiabwe A.J., MBA, pp. 36-37; 241-242

Missionary Institute *Ad Gentes* that was opened for the evangelization of other countries. The time was ripe also for this mission.

The last months of 1984 saw the security situation continued to worsen and were very difficult for the population and for the service of our confreres. On 26 October, Mgr Pellerino and Fr Bettini were stopped by a group of SPLA fighters and risked being taken prisoner, as had happened to the ACROSS people.²⁷²

In Rumbek the situation was steadily worsening. On Christmas day there was also a very violent ambush of a government convoy with more than 120 military people killed. This situation brought many places and initiatives to a standstill especially around Rumbek. Many Volunteers and other organizations chose to withdraw completely or to stay in Wau or Juba. The Comboni confreres preferred to remain with the people.

At Church level, though the situation was very dangerous, the Eucharistic Congress programme for the Sudan was carried out with great care during the year and concluded with great success. On 9 September, there was the closing celebration in Khartoum with the presence of the Superior General. On 25 November, feast of Christ the King, the closing celebration in Juba was preceded by the rite of Reconciliation on Friday 23, a procession through Juba and Adoration on Saturday 24 and the Solemn Mass with ordinations on Sunday 25, followed by a thanksgiving Mass after the closing of the Eucharistic Congress on Monday 26.

The Eucharistic Congress was a real success and, after its conclusion, the Bishops wrote a pastoral letter to the Clergy and the Religious with the title: *Keep the Light of the Eucharistic Congress Burning.*²⁷³

Joint meeting of the SCBC and RSAS in Juba, 22 April, 1985

The joint meeting of the “**Religious Superiors’ Association of Sudan**” (RSAS) with the “**Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Sudan**”²⁷⁴ (SCBC) took place in Juba from 22 to 26 April, 1985, and was a key event in the history of the Church in Sudan. It was the first of such a kind and the topics dealt in it were very significant. The agenda focused on the following points:

²⁷² Ibid. Diario, op. cit., on the dates.

²⁷³ Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Sudan to the Clergy and the Religious “Keep the Light of the Eucharistic Congress Burning.” ACR 606/6.

²⁷⁴ Minutes of the joint meeting of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Sudan (SCBC) and the RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS’ ASSOCIATION OF SUDAN, Juba, April 22-26, 1985.ACR 606/3.

- *Involvement of the Religious and Missionary Congregations in the life of the Local Church.*
- *Interrelation of and apostolic interaction between Religious and Missionary Congregations and Local Church Personnel.*
- *Vocations Promotion.*
- *Agreements or contracts.*
- *Goal and composition of the 'Commission for Religious'.*

The critical events of the time in the country could not be overlooked, hence, the first two days (22-23) were spent on the position the Church should take with the new Government of Sudan and the contribution of the Church towards the country, the role of Christian leaders in their civil and political life, what motivations and attitudes were to be addressed to all the Christians, what expectations there were in the light of the declaration of 'freedom' and 'rights' about religious and civil rights?

After the initial welcome of the participants by Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, Fr Caesar Mazzolari began with words of thanks to the bishop and informed everyone that, in the Sudan, there were 28 active Religious and Missionary Groups.

- 11 African Congregations: 7 of Religious Women, 4 of Religious Men. (Founded on the African Continent).
- 17 Religious Congregations, Missionary Societies and Lay Institutes: 9 Female Congregations and Societies and 8 Male Congregations (Founded outside the African Continent).

He concluded by saying that, looking at such a reality within the Church of Sudan, with its Local Hierarchy and Bishops, it was a reason of rejoicing, of increasingly serious responsibility for the Church of Sudan, a God-sent gift at the service of God's people and a call to join hands and work in unity with the Church personnel.

Opening talk of Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako

The opening talk SCBC-RSAS on 21 April, 1985, in Juba was reserved to Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako. The importance of the talk in such an occasion was very evident for its bearing on different relevant issues of the time and for the insight it could give in dealing with certain matters concerning relationships within the Local Church that involved both the Religious and Missionary Congregations and the Diocesan Priests and people. Archbishop Zubeir's conviction was that



the 1985 meeting of SCBC and Religious had come at the appropriate time in the historical context of the Local Church in Sudan.

He also mentioned the number of congregations of men and women in Sudan by the end of 1985²⁷⁵ and the need for coordination with the Bishops (Dioceses) and the congregations themselves. He said that as such a meeting was the first since the creation of the Hierarchy, (12 December, 1974), it was time that certain norms and directives regarding relationships, collaboration and mutual understanding be formalized.

He pointed out that the Religious and Missionary Personnel constituted the majority of consecrated persons in this Church and that, for the most part, they were Expatriates working under two authorities: their Religious Superiors and the Bishops. However, he went on stressing that this Local Church (of Sudan) was *the common denominator for everybody, because it is the service of this Local Church that has put us into each other's hands*. Recalling the historical background, he admitted that the Sudan, in spite of its Local Hierarchy, was still essentially a Missionary Church.

He added that the transition from the Missionaries to Local Bishops, with the creation of the Hierarchy, came abruptly, in the absence of the Missionary Founders (expelled in 1964) and that it functioned on its own before the Missionaries could come back again to help. Moreover, his impression was that the Hierarchy was functioning as a Protectorate, a time of test, and that the real growth of the Hierarchy started around 1980, but bearing the scars of wounds inflicted from 1975 to 1980.

He remarked that the Church in Sudan shared the vicissitudes of the Sudanese nation: 17 years of paralysis then followed by 12 difficult years of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Then, soon after the creation of the Hierarchy, the Sudanese Church began to appeal for Missionaries, though the Missionary Congregations were slow to respond and that many came in at the invitation of the Bishops just for specific needs and tasks.

Another remark was that the Local Hierarchy took over at a time of strong nationalism, and strong criticism of past missionary methods and attitudes, particularly towards the Local Clergy and Religious. He went on saying that a Missionary in Sudan works with many uncertainties like the possibility of being expelled and doubts about whether their work is

²⁷⁵ Minutes, Ibid. p. 4. Archbishop G. Zubeir Wako gives the following numbers of Religious Congregations: "*By the end of this year (1985) we shall have 11 congregations of men (two of them local) and 17 of women (four of them local) working in the Church of the Sudan.*" However, there is a discrepancy with the numbers given by Fr Cesare Mazzolari of the RSAS. p. 3.

appreciated by the Local Ordinary and Clergy, thus giving way to some sort of communication gap.

He also presented the uncertainties Local Ordinaries have about the presence of Missionary Personnel that may be expelled or withdrawn. Then, the way of dealing with the Religious might give rise to criticism from the Local Clergy on issues of equality, creating resentment for such care.

He cautioned about the desire for quick results and little concern for building up relationships, hence the Missionary's first question may be *what am I supposed to do?* rather than *what kind of person am I?* He also cautioned that materialism taking a strong hold on the Church in Sudan and weakening Faith in Divine Providence, together with the difficulty of those who have and those who have not.

What he thought very debilitating was the assumption that the non-Religious Clergy are an inferior class when compared to the holiness and competence of Religious and unable to guide Religious. He considered it devastating when this assumption is applied to Bishops. The result would be complexes of superiority or inferiority, contempt and arrogance.

Regarding his reflection on diocesan religious congregations, he added that *"Theoretically they have grown out of this particular Church. In practice they have not grown with it, and, it seems, not for it. During the civil war they interrupted their belonging to this Church; their founders practically turned some of them into personal institutions. So, now we can understand the rift between the local clergy and the local religious congregations."*²⁷⁶

Having shared the above reflection he also said that the Local (Diocesan) Religious Congregations were off-shoots of founding Missionary Congregations. In the transition to the Local Hierarchy, they showed unease, mistrust and suspicion, probably inherited from the past.

He questioned the sense of independence of those who say: *"tell me what I have to do and leave me alone"*, especially when one would point out that: *"I have raised the funds myself or provided the materials with my own efforts."* He often sees lack of dialogue within the Diocese. The final word for the Religious or Missionary is not the Local Ordinary but the Religious Superior.

²⁷⁶ OPENING TALK held by H.G. Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako on the occasion of the joint meeting of the SCBC and RSAS at Juba, 21 April, 1985.

The talk of Archbishop Zubeir gave much food for thought and not all the issues could be tackled without the right disposition of heart issuing from a deep Christian sense of openness, understanding, forgiveness and looking forward with renewed hope and love.

What he said was a reflection coming from within the Sudanese Local Church and experience, but surely the Religious and Missionaries would also have a long list on their own side to be listened to. This gives the concrete idea of the amount of work of renewal and growth needed at that time and, above all, the utmost importance of working out conventions based on the Vatican Document *Mutuae Relationes*.

It was against the above background that the work of writing down *guidelines inspiring a bilateral agreement between a Diocese and Religious Missionary Institutes in the Sudan* was undertaken. The aim of the stipulation of Bilateral Agreements, inspired by *Mutuae Relationes*, was a deep desire and longing for a genuine and healthy relationship between the Ordinaries and the Religious Missionary Institutes at the service of the Local Church of South Sudan, so to make life, and in our case Christian life, always more according to the spirit and the standard of the Gospel.

For us Comboni Missionaries working in the Sudan (and Southern Sudan) at this precise time, as I see it, there was a real need to take into consideration this important talk of Archbishop Zubeir Wako, together with the Homily of the Superior General, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, at the erection of the Sudanese Hierarchy and the more recent letter of the Superior General, Fr Salvatore Calvia, to Archbishop Ireneo Wien Dud. The three occurrences together would give a fair understanding of the guidelines and concerns of both sides, Comboni Missionaries and Sudanese Local Church, for a positive good relationship.

The General Chapter of the MCCJ 1985

The elevation of the Delegation to the status of Province in March, 1985, was really a great achievement. In less than four full years. The group had gradually acquired its own features by the time of the erection of the Delegation, in 1982, and the General Council felt encouraged to add more personnel, a most important blessing for the Province.

The Comboni General Chapter of 1985 could perceive from the report of the South Sudan Province how fruitful was the journey done within the Local Church of Southern Sudan at the levels of Hierarchy, evangelization, priestly formation, catechists and leaders. At level of reconciliation,

ecumenism and spirituality, especially with the Eucharistic Congress, there was a great opportunity for renewal and growth in Christian awareness.

The coming to Sudan of new congregations, the White Fathers, the Salesian Fathers and Brothers, the Kiltigans, the Usratuna (Nostra Famiglia), the Lay Volunteer Missionaries, the Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, the Fathers of Foreign Missions, the Theresian Sisters (Wau), and the Salesian Sisters, was so wonderful that probably Comboni from heaven saw his plan being fulfilled, though in a total different way than he thought, in fact, he had put it at the beginning of the whole process of the regeneration of Africa, but Divine Providence worked in her own way and had no problem in fulfilling it more than a hundred years later.

Comboni must have also been happy to see the local Sudanese congregations emerging, though still in need of assistance along their journey, like the revision of the Constitutions and to the General Chapter of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart (1983), MSBVM of Mupoi (1984) and of the Brothers of Saint Martin de Porres (1985). Some doubts, we have seen, did exist, but the Holy Spirit was not away on holidays.

What was instead unpredictable was the social and political future that was deteriorating so quickly that there were more reasons for discouragement than for hope in the future. The clouds were heavy and dark on the horizon of a well-planned and promising evangelization and human promotion at various levels. Still *hope against any hope* was set towards expansion of commitments and requesting new personnel to carry them out, hoping for positive change.²⁷⁷

It was not to be. Fr Mazzolari and the whole group of confreres found themselves entangled in critical and dangerous situations and events that one would have started thinking of how to withdraw from it rather than getting in deeper. Indeed, many others chose the first option.

The two Comboni Provinces (MCCJ and CM Sisters), at the command of their respective General Councils, were asked to reflect on ***the value of our presence in South Sudan***. After deep reflection on 25 August, 1986, they decided that South Sudan and the Sudanese people were their home, come what may. A few days later, the situation got even worse.

In their marriage vows, the spouses promise *to be faithful to each other, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love and to honour (each other) all the days of their life,*²⁷⁸ *(till death do us depart)*. Well,

²⁷⁷ Answers to questionnaire "A": Replies to the questionnaire in preparation for the XIII General Chapter of the Congregation, 1985, Juba South Sudan. p. 171.ACR 616/3.

²⁷⁸ <http://catholicweddinghelp.com/topics/text-rite-of-marriage-mass.htm>

coming back to the initial statement of Comboni: “...*a moment for which I have been yearning for a very long time and with more passion than two ardent lovers longing for the moment of their wedding*”, this **Love Story**, could not just end in divorce for his children.

There was unlimited good will, but the situation was getting more and more restricted and dangerous. While the Province and its Provincial were concentrating on consolidation and expansion, *the way of the cross which Jesus walked* was gradually drawing them into it and they willingly accepted this. What they had to learn more and more was *how to make real common cause with the Sudanese, once again a suffering people, and the recently born Local Church*. Perhaps, in the words of Archbishop Zubeir Wako, they had to *discover who you and I are more than what am I supposed to do*.

The situation in Juba was holding and Daniel Comboni Day on 10 October, 1985 had the honour of celebrating the official opening of the Comboni Secondary School of Juba. It was attended by H.G. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, the Governor Peter Cirillo and several civil and religious authorities, all the Clergy of the Archdiocese, many of the Religious Personnel and many parents of the CSSJ students. The joy of the Comboni Missionaries was great for such an achievement.

In other dioceses, however, there was more concern than joy due to the fast deteriorating security situation, especially in Wau and Rumbek.

Mgr Pellerino and Fr Cefalo hostages of SPLA

On 30 November the Jesuits from Wau had to flee to Juba and to other destinations. In January, 1986, the Provincial Council decided to withdraw Fr Cefalo from Rumbek while the Pro-Nuncio could not go for the ordinations in Yei. The security situation around Rumbek was getting worse and Mgr Pellerino and Fr Cefalo could go out only by air. Fr Mazzolari had told the two missionaries to leave the area, but Mgr Pellerino refused saying “*he would not move without an order of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*”.

Fr Cefalo did not want to leave Mgr Pellerino alone. In the collapsing situation, the Khartoum’s military contingent, police and civilians decided to abandon the city and find their way to Maridi on foot. Mgr Pellerino and Fr Cefalo refused to join them because to flee did not seem less risky than the possibility of falling into the hands of the SPLA forces. What followed the fleeing people was disastrous. The SPLA entered Rumbek meeting no resistance and on the morning of 5 March they looted a bit everywhere. The

Commander of the SPLA tried to put Mgr Pellerino and Fr Cefalo at their ease saying that they were free to leave, but this was clearly impossible.

On 8 April, 1986, an attempt to evacuate them failed. In spite of the insistence of ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), on the grounds that Fr Cefalo was suffering from a kidney condition, neither the government of Khartoum nor the SPLA would allow the flight. The last communication Fr Mazzolari had with Fr Cefalo was on 21 April via radio.

The army of Khartoum was marching to recapture Rumbek with new armaments and so, on Sunday 27th, the guerrillas told the confreres they had to leave with the Land Rover of the mission. They set out for Yirol, where their car was taken, crossed the river Nile at Bor area and, after a short way on foot, the SPLA took them on a track full of SPLA soldiers to Kongor and then to Gebel Boma base camp. They had travelled about 800 Km.

They remained there cut off from all contacts for 113 days and could celebrate the Holy Mass with hosts they baked until the wine ended. They wanted to talk to the Chairman (Colonel John Garang), but the answer was that he had no time to meet them. They were certainly dangerous witnesses who had seen planeloads of weapon supplies from Ethiopia (always denied by Col. Garang). It was on 15 August, the feast of the Assumption, that the news was given them that they would be taken to the Ethiopian border.

They collected whatever few things they had and climbed aboard the vehicle that brought them to the border. They were delivered to the Red Cross and to the Ethiopian soldiers. They were finally free.²⁷⁹ The arrival of Fr Pellerino and Fr Cefalo in Rome from Addis Ababa, on the afternoon of the 22 August, 1986, ended their ordeal but revealed clearly that the presence in those areas of South Sudan was no longer viable. They could see that the guerrilla movement was well organised, with well-equipped soldiers and weapons supplied by Ethiopian aircrafts (Russian Antonovs).

They were fighting hard and were showing great determination in the struggle to liberate the South at all costs, without sparing anybody, not even when entire populations were reduced to starvation because of the widespread insecurity. When questioned their answer was: "This is the price we have to pay for our freedom."

Opening of the Comboni Pre-Postulancy in Munuki

On the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, 2 February, 1987, there was the official opening of the Comboni Pre-Postulancy at Munuki. The

²⁷⁹ 22 August 1986, Interview for the Comboni Press: "Mgr Pellerino and Fr Cefalo freed"

formation team consisted of Fr Jesús Aranda Nava, Fr Ottorino Sina and Fr Todd Riebe. Fr Joseph Ukelo and Fr Abel Mödi were also present while the Provincial, Fr Mazzolari, was the main celebrant.

Vocation Promotion had been dreamt of for years but there were many reasons why it did not take shape for so long. Among these were the issues of where to locate it and where to send the Students for the philosophical course during the time of the Postulancy.

The desire and what the Comboni Missionaries proposed was that the Postulants might possibly be accepted in St Paul Major Seminary in Juba. Bro Ottorino Gelmini and his team built the seminary and, by 1984, it was opened to receive the Major Seminarians from Bussere. The answer of the Bishop representative of the Seminaries in the SCBC was that they would not accept students from religious congregations without religious vows, hence, an alternative had to be found, that of sending them to Nairobi .

After the reopening of Nzara Parish the proposal of caring for the promotion of Comboni Missionary vocation in the South started with the idea of making Nzara the place where applicants would be followed up and then sent to appropriate places, but at the end of the seventies, the choice was Bussere with Fr Hilary Boma in charge of following them up. After him Fr Luigi Penzo carried on with this task. He was taking care of a couple of Major Seminarians who had shown interest in becoming Comboni Missionaries, one of whom was Albino Adot Oryem.

In fact, since the ordination of Fr Longokwo and Fr Ukelo, in 1971/1972, only Albino Adot Oryem, from the Major Seminary of Bussere, was in Comboni formation. In June, 1982, he had started the Novitiate at Tartar and, in 1987, prepared for perpetual vows in the Scholasticate of Kampala (Uganda) and had been ordained priest in Juba Cathedral on 13 December, 1987, by H.G. Paolino Lukudu Loro, assisted by Bishop Paride Taban who gave a very *stirring and joy-filled homily on the Priesthood*.²⁸⁰

The **first attempt** at Comboni formation had produced 21 confreres, as already reported in Part One (those reported were those who had made their first profession and those who were ordained Priests, not the aspirants who left beforehand). Of these, Fr Barnaba Deng and Fr Louis Lotimoi had died in the exercise of their Priesthood, other had left their ministry and, by this time, 1987, only 6 of these confreres remained in their Missionary Priesthood: two Bishops, Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro (Juba), Bishop Max Macram (El Obeid), and the Priests Fr Peter Magalasi, Fr Hector Ayon, Fr Abel Mödi and Fr Joseph Ukelo.

²⁸⁰ Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan. op. cit., 13 December, 1987.

The *second attempt* of Comboni formation (with the return of the Expatriate Combonis) started with scholastic Adot Oryem. The opening of the Pre-Postulancy was therefore not only a great event but also a very important moment for Comboni Vocations and Basic Formation. However, this new attempt could not be made without reflecting on the reasons why so many confreres of the first attempt left, and what the new formation guidelines had to take into serious consideration for the good of the Sudanese Members. Asking these questions to a couple of our older Sudanese confreres the answers given was along this line:

1. Need of a much stronger identification with ***Comboni Vocation***.
2. The issue of ***community life*** was fundamental in order to help one another in the Comboni Missionary vocation and confreres should not have been appointed to this or that place just to fill a pastoral gap. In the long run, this was not helpful.
3. Sometimes the difference between Diocesan Priesthood and the Comboni Priesthood was not clear.
4. ***The life of prayer and spirituality*** was fundamental as it comprised elements without which one would not find sufficient motivation to cope with the challenges of missionary life, since the understanding coming from each one's culture would not help consecrated life as intended by the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience for missionary life.

Another issue to take into consideration was posed by the challenges the new formation team in the Pre-Postulancy were to face in the situation of disarray in Sudan and Southern Sudan, at this precise historical moment of the eighties. The task of *discerning the real motives* leading a young man to apply to join the Combonis in a time of war, insecurity, famine and displacement was another big challenge. However, the way was now open and the challenges had to be faced just as in any other historical time, with faith and trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It goes without saying that the new team was in almost desperate need of this guidance.

The Comboni Postulancy

At the time of Fr Raffaele Cefalo, the issue of the Postulancy was presented to the SCBC before a suitable place for the National Seminary was found, hence, the matter was still pending. Then the place for St Pauls Major Seminary was found and the Major Seminary built, but the students were prevented of attending it because of the issue of religious vows and Nairobi was the only alternative.

Only on 15 December, 1988, the Provincial, Fr Mazzolari, received confirmation from the SCBC that the Comboni students would be accepted for philosophy classes at St Paul's Major Seminary, even without religious vows, starting from March 1989, thus making the journey of the Comboni Basic Formation much easier and within South Sudan itself. From this date onwards, until the suppression of the Province with headquarters in Juba at the end of December 1994, our students were linked to St Paul Major Seminary and its vicissitudes due to insecurity.

When the new Delegation issuing from the *New Sudan Group* took over the responsibility of Basic Formation from the previous Province, it carried on with those students along the Formation journey and worked hard to go on with Vocation Promotion and Formation, as far as possible, in the unsettled time they were living until after the CPA. The Delegation and Provincial Administrations which followed made efforts to strengthen it and give it a better logistic base, though not always with success.

Unfortunately, after the CPA, the situation became difficult, for both the Pre-Postulancy (with Pre-Postulants for the Priesthood and for the Brotherhood) and the Postulancy. The formator in charge left the Comboni Missionaries and in March, 2008, the General Administration asked the Province to stop the Pre-Postulancy and to close the Postulancy.²⁸¹ Thus, the *second attempt at formation* also came to a halt.

In 2010, Fr Louis Okot Ochermoi Tony, coming back to the Province of South Sudan from his missionary ministry in Peru, was given the task of coordinating the activities of Vocation Promotion²⁸² with the intention of reopening the Postulancy soon. However, the real reopening came with the next Provincial Administration. Fr Louis was appointed Secretary of Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation and took particular care to create a sound foundation for a new fresh start.

This was the *third attempt at formation*, with the Pre-Postulancy in Moroyok, Juba and the Postulancy in Nairobi with the Kenya Province and Fr Jesus Aranda Nava as formator followed by Fr Phillip Andrug in 2016.

²⁸¹ Provincial Council 2/2008, 13-15 May, (General Direction on 27 March 2008) no. 4/e. FSSPJ.

²⁸² Provincial Council 2/2010, 23-25 June, no. 7. Formator and reopening the Postulancy. FSSPJ.

The Years 1987 to 1989 as they unfolded

Fr Mazzolari started his second period as Provincial Superior at the beginning of 1987. His new Provincial Council was made up of Fr Abel Mödi, Fr Todd Riebe, Fr Ezio Bettini and Bro Francesco Ragnoli. Their first meeting was from 3 to 7 March, 1987. On 17 March there was the happy occasion of the celebration of the silver jubilee of Fr Mazzolari with the presence of Archbishop Lukudu Loro, the Pro-Nuncio from Khartoum, Mgr Erkolano Ladu Tombe and many of the Church Personnel of Juba.

However, almost as a reminder of the concrete reality they were in, on 5 May, 1987, a Sasco Air Lines, Cessna 404 Titan II ST-AIJ, was shot down in Malakal.²⁸³ This brought a new awareness of how fragile and critical the situation was in Malakal, which remained isolated for security reasons. To sweeten the bitterness of the bad news, there was the opening of the classrooms in Munuki Major Seminary, the perpetual profession of Fr Albino Adot Oryem on 27 May in Kampala and the perpetual profession of Bro Giuseppe Redaelli (Peppo) on 28 May.

Another happy event in Kator, on 28 June, was the ordination to the Priesthood of Fr Darius Akim and to the diaconate of Fr Albino Adot along with the visit of the Superior General, Fr Pierli. However, Western Eutoria again suffered a similar fate: Bro Redaelli and the driver could reach Juba safely just in time before the whole area became dangerous to access.

On 12 July, there was a second attack on Tore, in Yei area. Fr Salvatore Ferrao and Fr Pullicino (Jesuits), were abducted from the mission and taken to Boma SPLA/M headquarters (Eastern Eutoria), just as Fr Pellerino and Cefalo had been, while the third member of their community, Fr Pio Ciampa, was mercifully allowed to cross to Zaire (now Congo) for health reasons.

An attack was also carried out on Kajo-Kaji with the abduction of 5 people from the Sunday service. Nonetheless, Bro Domenico Cariolato, assigned to Kajo-Kaji, left on 23 July for that mission with a lorry load of supplies for the house of the Comboni Sisters under construction there. However, the situation now had reached the final stage and plans of evacuation had to be made and were carried out on 8 August.

All fled to Moyo (Northern Uganda), the road was closed to traffic, Fr Busellato, Fr Ignacio López Toro and Bro Cariolato would remain in the

²⁸³ Malakal, Sudan **Sasco** Air Lines Cessna 404 Titan II ST-AIJ,
<http://www.planecrashinfo.com/1987/1987.htm>

Comboni Community of Moyo to keep in contact with Kajo-Kaji mission, while Fr Bettini and the Sisters went back to Juba by another way. As for Raja, Fr Salvatore Pacifico confirmed in a radio message to Fr Mazzolari that everything was still going well; not in Tombura, though, where Fr Riva declined to go to Juba because of the closing of the Yei-Maridi road.

Another spark of good news came on 15 August, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, with the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Rejaf Parish Church with the presence of Bishop Erkolano Ladu and the Governor. Fr Mödi celebrated his birthday on the same day. On 21 August there was the official dedication of St Kizito School in Munuki with the presence of Archbishop Lukudu Loro, but at the same time there came the bad news of looting and destruction from Kajo-Kaji/Lomin.

The Brothers of St Martin de Porres had also to abandon Kit on 30 August, while the Apostles of Jesus had to transfer much of their belongings from Rejaf to Juba. A positive note at the closing of the month was the departure for the Postulancy of Nairobi, after a long waited permit, of the first two Pre-Postulants, Joseph Sunday and Philip Sebit.

The Jubilee year in St Theresa Cathedral in Kator was opened on 4 October and on the 10th, a well prepared Comboni Day was celebrated in the Comboni Secondary School. Again on the 14th, the convoy from Juba to Torit ran into trouble just a few miles outside Juba and the exploding landmines in the road inflicted casualties among the military personnel. In the middle of the same month Archbishop Lokudu Loro called for a meeting in preparation of the 25th anniversary of St Theresa Cathedral in Kator and the opening of the Marian Year on 1 January, 1988.²⁸⁴

On 22 October, the conclusion of the legal issue of the ownership of the land of the Postulancy, with the handing over of the keys of the residence, opened the way to start the works of restructuring under the direction of Bro Fabris and Fr Bettini. On 28th, at Comboni House, with the MCCJ and CMS who were around Juba attending, Fr Vittorino Dellagiacoma led the celebration of the centenary of the first religious professions in the Comboni Congregation re-born in 1887.

Fr Ananias Ladu, Diocesan Priest and Parish Priest of Lyria, who had been abducted and kept in captivity for three months, was freed and welcomed back with joy. A thanksgiving Holy Mass was celebrated at Comboni House for his endurance and for the help such an example would

²⁸⁴ In 1987 Pope John Paul II also proclaimed a Marian year.
http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/docs/documents/ju_documents_17-feb-1997_history_en.html

give to people. The blessing of the foundation stone of the primary school of USRATUNA was another joyful event.

An extraordinary event for the Comboni Family was the ordination to the Priesthood of Fr Albino Adot Oryem, almost 15 years since the last ordinations of Fr Longokwo and Ukelo. Fr Albino celebrated his first Holy Mass with the Comboni community on 18 December and, on the 20th, in Lulugu displaced people's camp.

The year 1988 started with the opening of the Marian year in Juba and the consecration of the Sudan to Our Lady, but on 24 April 1988, at 9:45 p.m., in Wau, Archbishop Ireneo Dud died after a long illness. He was the first Sudanese Bishop to lead the Sudanese Catholic Church which he did with wisdom, faith and courage in the post-expulsion years, tracing its direction and pointing it towards the future in the Vatican and Post-Vatican Church renewal. He was buried behind the main altar of the Cathedral of Wau.²⁸⁵

The SPLA was advancing towards Juba from the western side and in September, attacked Kwörejik where Fr Mattia Bizzarro and Fr Ignatio López Toro (who was appointed to this new Parish after the evacuation of Kajo-Kaji) were ministering. They fled just metres ahead of the SPLA, who allowed them to go without shooting at them. Then, Fr Bizzarro and Fr López Toro, after a short time in the Comboni House, took up residence with Fr Tosello, at the printing press of St Joseph, closer to their displaced Mundari people, whom they took care of.

Juba town, at this time, was in a truly miserable condition, locked down militarily, suffering famine due to food shortage and getting violent for this same reason and the empty promises of the Governor. Relief activities were complicated by bureaucracy, inefficiency and corruption. In the middle of this depressing situation, a wonderful example of sharing was shown by the university students who, for some days, brought their food to the hospital, the prison and orphanage places.²⁸⁶

From late October until December, food relief planes from Entebbe, (Uganda) were flown into Juba under the sponsorship of the WFP. Also from Khartoum there were 4 to 6 flights per day taking food to merchants and Government, though food continued to be a very critical issue. The Association of Women staged a peaceful demonstration against hunger in St Theresa Cathedral, while both communities of Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Sisters decided to hold weekly prayers for peace.

²⁸⁵ Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan. op. cit., at 24 April, 29 April, 1988.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 21 October, 1988.

In the middle of all these troubles, the year 1988 ended in joy for the Church in South Sudan with the ordination of nine new Priests, one for Juba, four for Torit and four for Tombura/Yambio, on Sunday, 18 December, by Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, assisted by Bishop Erkolano Ladu Tombe.

Year 1989 started with the Juba Zone Assembly (8-11 January), with 23 confreres, preceded by a retreat directed by Fr Joseph Ukelo (2-7 January).

Though the situation of South Sudan was very crucial, soon afterwards, a new community in Lulugu, Juba, was opened to start a Vocational Training Centre with Fr Giuntoli, Bro Rossignoli and Bro Ragnoli.



9-11 January 1989: Juba Zonal Assembly
attendance 23 Confreres

On 20 February there was the first shelling of Juba at 11

am and one bomb fell in the compound of Comboni SS Juba, shattering windows and damaging a lot of iron sheets and the walls of the staff building. Thanks be to God, there was nobody in the school and Fr Gottardi had already left the chemistry building around twenty minutes before the shelling. Nonetheless, as a consequence of this shelling and that of the following days, 27 people died and 52 were wounded.

At Munuki, St Paul's Major Seminary opened the school year on 13 March: Fr Caesar Lukudu was the Rector, Fr James Rondyan the Spiritual Director and among the students from the religious congregations there were seven candidates of the Apostles of Jesus and four Comboni Postulants, admitted as day students to the philosophy classes.

The celebration of Fr Ottorino Sina's 50th anniversary of ordination on 8 April at Comboni House was a big event considering how he really struggled and dedicated himself for the promotion of evangelization in the South and his love for the people and the Local Church.

On the following day there was an archdiocesan celebration with a Holy Mass at 10 a.m. in Kator. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, Bishop Erkolano Ladu Tombe, most of the Clergy and many other people from all parts were present at this remarkable event which showed how well known,

loved and appreciated Fr Philip (as people used to call him) was by all the people of Juba Archdiocese. The celebration was concluded with a reception at Comboni Secondary School.

A small digression on the topic is convenient at this point to understand the attitude of Fr Sina and his immeasurable love for Sudan and South Sudan and why he was so loved by people. At a meeting of the *Representation* in 1982, when the reluctance of the Ordinaries to stipulate bilateral conventions was still strong and sometimes leading to difficulty of relationship and unpleasant misunderstandings, a question of how to tackle the situation was put to the Council.

Confreres like Fr Ottorino Sina (*and Archbishop Agostino Baroni*) maintained that *we Comboni Missionaries, whatever we may have to suffer, will carry on all the same.*²⁸⁷ Other confreres, however, were of the opinion that this stand, though a true and genuine Comboni one, was giving way also to abuses and continuous delays, generally not there in other countries where the Comboni Missionaries were not the *Founding Fathers*.

Indeed, *Fr Phillip*, if he had been a contemporary of Comboni, would have shouted together with him, *Nigrizia or Death!* This was in fact the Comboni Missionary the Local Church knew, but others would have added: “times have changed and due regard is also to be required as in the majority of other new Comboni Provinces for a fair relationship...”

On 1 May, Dr John Garang, leader of the SPLA/M, as an act of good will, declared a unilateral ceasefire calling on the Khartoum Government to fulfil the conditions for eventual peace, but with no follow up on Khartoum’s side. Meanwhile, some cargo planes arrived with relief and fuel for the Archdiocese and the Combonis, sent by the Italian Ambassador. The durra supply was entrusted to CART.²⁸⁸

Situation in the wider South

Malakal town was besieged and the SPLA attacks were affecting the town and the Diocese very much. The SPLA was now in control of all the rural areas paralysing all the pastoral activities of the huge Diocese. With its headquarters in Boma, the SPLA had spread all over to Pochalla,

²⁸⁷ Juba, 15 July, 1982, Notes in preparation for the Intercapitular Assembly. ACR 610/11/1.

²⁸⁸ CART (Combined Agencies Relief Team) was established by international and national NGOs based in Juba and as of 1986 shouldered the main responsibility for receiving and allocating a shared pool of relief supplies for Juba.

Akobo, Gambela, Nassir and northwards; westwards to Kodok, Tonga, Bentiu and southwards to Leer, Adok al Bahr, Bor and Pibor. Our confreres had already left Tonga.

Rumbek was no longer viable and the Diocese had to withdraw all the personnel and be served, when possible, from the town of Wau. For the Comboni Missionaries and for the Apostolic Administrator, Mgr Giuseppe Pellerino, this was a most excruciating experience. Mgr Pellerino was trying to cope with the pastoral situation of the Diocese from Tonj, where he resided almost all the time, and from Wau, not at all safe, even by convoy. The Kajo-Kaji area, still belonging to Rumbek Diocese, was practically in SPLA hands, though the Government was in control of Yei town.

Wau, together with Malakal, Juba and Yei, was under the control of the Khartoum government and, together with Juba, it was a base for its air force to organize military strikes regularly in all the vast surrounding areas of the western part of the South.

Torit, though still under Government control, was more and more under frequent attacks in all the surrounding areas making communication by road between Juba and Torit increasingly difficult. Convoys were regularly targeted by SPLA guerrillas with very high casualties both among the military and civilians. Even Bishop Paride Taban underwent this shocking experience at the beginning of June 1988; he reached Torit alive, but many other people were killed on the way there.

Food relief, medicines and clothes for the displaced people who had escaped to Torit were badly needed and this prompted Bishop Paride, on 4 October, to send messages to the OAU and to the UN and Sudanaid in Juba for immediate help. When on 26 February, 1989, the SPLA captured Torit.²⁸⁹ Bishop Paride, Fr John Baptist Lohitu, Fr Leo Traynor and Fr John Levachier were all there.

For weeks their fate had been unknown and they were kept in captivity by the SPLA. Fr Renato Kizito Sesana, who was already in contact with Dr Lam Akol of the SPLA, tried to help resolve the issue. The release of the prisoners took place on 7 June and Fr Sesana was able to go to meet Bishop Paride himself, while Fr Traynor and Fr Levachier, once released, travelled from Torit to Nairobi the following day.

1989 was also the 25th anniversary of the expulsion of the Expatriate Comboni Missionaries from Southern Sudan. On the feast of the

²⁸⁹ A Concise Chronology of 1989-1999: Ten years of the National Islamic Front, Richard Lobban, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 115-130

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 15 August, 1989, the Provincial Superior, Fr Cesare Mazzolari, wrote a letter to the confreres who had been expelled between 1960-64 making them know that the SCBC (Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference) had decided to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the expulsion of the Expatriate Missionaries. The celebration was to take place between the feast of Mgr Daniel Comboni (10 October) and the World Mission Sunday (20 October 1989).²⁹⁰

The letter was a reminder of what took place at that time and how the Sudanese Local Church had grown since that time, among difficulties, struggles and perseverance with Mgr Ireneo Wien Dud and the new Sudanese Hierarchy. He also made them aware of how many positive developments took place with Local and other Religious and Missionary Congregation that eagerly accepted the invitation of the Bishops to come and work in Sudan at pastoral, health, education and development areas.

He made them aware with joy that the Vice Provincial was a South Sudanese, Fr Abel Mödi, but also about the difficult situation the South was going through because of the war in places where we were working, some of which had to be abandoned, concluding with the positive note about the new interest among the young generations in an active participation in the Christian faith, on the footsteps of the old Christians. All of them were led by the wise spiritual guidance and witness of all the Bishops and the special endeavour of Archbishop Zubeir Wako and Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro.

As for the situation within the SPLA/M guerrilla movement, that was then greatly affecting the evangelization programmes, it was showing a real ability to take and hold the captured positions from the Government. The launching of the *Bright Star Campaign* really shook the Khartoum government.²⁹¹

To confuse the Khartoum army and divert its attention from the main targets on the east bank of the Nile, the SPLA made a well-prepared plan. With the *Infijaar Battalion* the SPLA occupied Jebel Ladu, 15 miles north of Juba and started shelling continually Juba airport and other installations in the town,²⁹² while the remaining forces went to other places like Yirol and Bahr al Naam in the Rumbek area to await a possible attack and to

²⁹⁰ From the "Letter to the expelled confreres in 1960-64", by Fr Cesare Mazzolari, Comboni Provincial of Southern Sudan, Juba, August 15, 1989.

²⁹¹ Arop Madut-Arop, Sudan's painful road to peace, op. cit., pp. 213 & ff.

²⁹² Ibid. pp. 213-214

Shambe to cut off the Shambe river port from any steamers coming from Malakal.

The *Malek* task force overran Mangala and Gemeisa, and linked up with the *Infijaar Brigade* waiting for orders to move to Bor. Kapoeta fell on 26 February, 1989 and a number of places from Kiyala to Magwi were overrun leaving Torit isolated and in March it was captured. Nimule was also captured a short time later with a disguised attack. Within three months the whole of Eastern Equatoria was seized by the SPLA to the great humiliation of Khartoum.²⁹³

Time of elections for a new Provincial

On the above scenario Fr Cesare Mazzolari, started carrying out the duty



Comboni House Chapel: Fr. C. Mazzolari handing Over to Fr. Abel Mödi

of preparing for the new elections as required by the Comboni Rule of Life. Everything went ahead smoothly and Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö, a Sudanese Radical Member, was elected the new Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan. He was the first

African Provincial Superior of the whole African Continent where the Comboni Missionaries were present.

The double term of office of Fr Mazzolari witnessed the gradual growth of the Delegation into a Province, steadily progressing despite innumerable difficulties and concerns for the work of evangelization endangered by war, insecurity and political problems. Confreres had shown a truly selfless dedication to evangelization being themselves under threat. The experience of the protection of God in so many different situations really called for a *Te Deum* (We praise you O God...), as a conclusion, for his guidance through his Holy Spirit, in such a time. It was *miraculous* that all confreres safely reached the close of December, 1989.

²⁹³ Ibid. pp. 214-215

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION

From 1990 to 1994

Provincial Superior:

Fr ABEL MÖDI NYÖRKÖ

South Sudan Province: new elections 1990

In the new elections Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö was elected Provincial Superior. Fr Todd Michael Riebe became his Vice-Superior and Fr Eugenio Caligari, Bro Giuseppe Redaelli and Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomma became his Councillors.²⁹⁴ On the occasion of the change of leadership in the Province, the Superior General, Fr Francesco Pierli, had words of deep gratitude for what Fr Cesare Mazzolari accomplished during his difficult years as Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan.

Handing over to the new Provincial

*“Congratulations and God’s blessings on you, Fr Abel Mödi, for your ministry as ‘THE FIRST AFRICAN’ COMBONI PROVINCIAL in the history of the MCCJ’s! God speed!”*²⁹⁵ These were the wishes written in the diary on 1 January 1990, the day of the handing over of the South Sudan Province by Fr Cesare Mazzolari to Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö. The handing over was done during a prayer service celebrating the important event.

²⁹⁴ Comboni House, Juba, 1 July, 1989, to Fr Alois Eder, (Rome), Results of the Opinion Poll for the election of the Provincial Superior, ACR 635/2.

- Rome, 11 October, 1989, appointment of Fr Francis Abel Mödi as Provincial of South Sudan, ACR 635/2.

- Comboni House, Juba, 6 December, 1989, Provincial Councillors’ votes, ACR 635/2.

- Rome, 10 March, 1990, confirm election of Fr Todd Michael Riebe as Vice Provincial Superior of South Sudan, ACR 635/2.

²⁹⁵ Diario, Missionari Comboniani Sud Sudan, op. cit., day 1 January, 1990.

Surely congratulations were indeed very appropriate since the Sudan, and especially the South, with this choice was once more showing that the dream of the Founder, Mgr Daniel Comboni, had come true, not only in regard to the Local Church Hierarchy, but also in the leadership of the Comboni Missionary Province. One could say that the Founder's dream was now complete. As for the blessings of God on him, given the situation of complete disarray of the country in the South, he really needed *all the blessings of God*, so challenging was the task he was going to face.

During the administration of Fr Cesare Mazzolari one could see the situation and the future of South Sudan as becoming more and more restricted with risks constantly increasing. With Fr Abel Mödi this trend had reached the maximum point. In Juba people were practically all prisoners locked into the Town.

The Provincial could hardly be expected to visit the Comboni communities elsewhere outside Juba because of the enormous difficulty of finding air transport, since by land nothing could move. Even the post office mail could not be used for important communications because it was getting opened and checked by the Security personnel of Khartoum. The experience of isolation reached a climax and was affecting everybody in a negative way.

Nonetheless, the option to remain with the suffering people in Juba and elsewhere in South Sudan was taken and confreres carried on faithfully throughout this excruciating time, sharing fully all the vicissitudes with the Local Church and from within it.

The acts of war carried on increasing and the shelling of Juba by the SPLA was becoming more and more frequent. Moreover, the heavy weight of Khartoum policy in Juba did not spare anybody; especially targeted were the Youth, the students of the schools, because they tried to make their voice heard and, of course, the Church because it was clearly in favour of respect of human rights and dignity.

At this point it is appropriate to have an idea of the personnel on whom Fr Abel Mödy Nyörkö could count in order to carry on with the difficult task of evangelization, not only in Juba town, but elsewhere in the whole Province and how the communities were composed.

1 January, 1990: Comboni personnel and communities ²⁹⁶

- Provincial Superior: **Fr Francis Abel Mödi Nyörkö** (1 January, 1990)

²⁹⁶ Annuario Comboniano, op. cit., updated 1 January 1990.

- Provincial Councillors: **Fr Todd Riebe, Vice-Prov., Fr Eugenio Caligari, Bro Giuseppe Redaelli, Fr Vittorino Dellagiacom**
- Provincial Bursar/Procurator: **Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks**
- Secretary of Formation/ Missionary Animation: **Fr Todd Riebe**
- Secretary of Evangelization: **Fr Vittorino Dellagiacom**
- On-going Formation: **Fr Salvatore Coppo**
- Comboni personnel: **Bishops 3, Priests 35, Brothers 10, Postulants 5**
- Provincial Bulletin: **Comboni Southern Sudan**
- Languages Spoken in the Province: **Arabic, Bari, Dinka, English, Jur, Kresh, Madi, Nuer, Shilluk, and Zande.**
- Dioceses where present:
 1. Juba: Juba 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Terakeka,
 2. Rumbek: Rumbek
 3. Tombura: Nzara, Tombura
 4. Torit: Torit
 5. Wau: Raja, Wau

Juba: Juba (1) Bishop's House

H. G. Paolino Lukudu Loro

Juba (2) Provincial House, opened on 10 October, 1981.

Mgr Agostino Baroni

Fr Francis Abel Mödi Nyörkö

Fr Tito Giuntoli

Fr Gaetano Gottardi

Fr Alfredo Mattevi

Fr Todd M. Riebe

Bro Augusto Bazzanella

Bro Domenico Cariolato

Bro Francesco Ragnoli

Bro Libero Francesco Ribelli

Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks

Bro Mario Rossignoli

Juba (3) Postulancy, opened in 1986.

Fr Jesus Aranda Nava José

Fr Giovanni Ferrazin

Juba (4) St Paul National Seminary,

Fr Mario Cisternino

Fr Salvatore Coppo

Fr Vittorino Dellagiacom

Bro Ottorino Gelmini

Juba (5) St Kizito Parish, opened in 1988.

Fr Felice Sciannameo
Fr Ottorino Filippo Sina

Terakeka Parish, (Kadulè), founded in 1952.

Fr Mattia Bizzarro
Fr Ignacio López Toro

Wau: Wau Parish founded in 1905.

Fr Agostino Bertolotti
Fr Antonio La Braca
Fr Luigi Penzo
Fr Lorenzo Tomasoni
Bro Giuseppe Redaelli

Raja Parish founded in January 1935.

Fr Nicola Lo Polito
Fr Salvatore Pacifico
Fr Alfonso Polacchini
Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri

Tombura /Yambio

Nzara Parish founded on 31 October, 1951; re-opened in 1971.

Fr Iginio Benini
Fr Eugenio Caligari
Fr Luigi Parisi
Bro Valentino Fabris

Tombura Parish founded in July 1950.

Maringindo Parish: founded in 1950, assisted from Tombura.

Fr Raymond Pax
Fr Pietro Ravasio
Fr Mario Riva

Rumbek - Bishop's House, founded in 1953, re-opened in 1978.

Mgr Cesare Mazzolari
Fr Giuseppe Pellerino

Torit: Torit Parish founded in September 1958.

Fr José Oscar López Flores, Fr Joseph Ukelo, Episcopal Vicar

Awaiting assignment: Fr Albino Adot Oryem, Fr Ettore Ayon, Fr Elvio Cellana, Fr Erminio Tanel, Fr Gino Tosello.

Bro Giuseppe Menegotto: first visit to the new administration

The purpose of the visit was primarily a gesture of solidarity with Sudan and Southern Sudan, Provinces so much tested by years of guerrilla warfare

and with frequently isolated communities. For the South three possible zone Assemblies, one in Juba, one in Wau and one in Nzara, were planned.

Bro Giuseppe Menegotto, having started in the North, reached the South, Juba, on 10 January and remained until the 22. It was a quite meaningful visit because it took place at a crucial moment in the situation of South Sudan, especially for Juba town, and one could sense the meaning of a missionary service in such an environment.²⁹⁷

The selected topic was “the community, according to the reflection contained in the letter of the General Council on the *Values of the Kingdom and integral liberation of man.*” This time coincided with the end of the SPLA cease-fire and the resumption of hostilities and only the meeting in Juba was possible since the flights from Juba to Nzara were cancelled after the attack on Yei by the SPLA. The visit to Wau was cancelled because of the overwhelming difficulties in obtaining residence permits and flights.

In Juba, Bro Menegotto managed to pay short visits to the communities and spend a couple of days at the Assembly with all the confreres present in Juba. He also held a brief encounter with the Brothers, attended a meeting with the Comboni Sisters, visited the Postulancy and the Technical School (Vocational School) of Lulugu and, finally, met with Archbishop Paolino Lukudu on 20 January.

Some days after the cease-fire ended, the Government army started carrying out artillery attacks from Juba on the surrounding area at certain times of the day. In reply, the SPLA started shelling Juba with Katiusha rockets for about an hour, causing 6 deaths (15 according to the BBC), many wounded and great panic. Some days before the attack, the SPLA had intensified its appeals on the radio inviting the civilians to leave Juba saying their final attack on the city was imminent.

In his report of January 1990, Bro Menegotto found the confreres were involved in their work of pastoral commitments, refugees, school etc. with serenity, though they knew they were isolated and unable to leave Juba except by air and only after a long wait.

In the rapidly deteriorating situation there was an euphoric climate, on one side, due to the continuous successes of the SPLA (conquest of Kajo Kaji, Frage, Kaya, Morobo, Yei encirclement), but great concern, at the same time, as the SPLA was getting closer and closer to Juba in increasing strength and broadcasting incessant appeals to leave the town. Of course,

²⁹⁷ Rome, 8 March, 1990, Bro G. Menegotto, Report on the visit to South Sudan from 31 December, 1989 to 27 January, 1990, ACR 635/4.

the Government would never allow the people to leave because they were useful as human shields.

As for the commitment in Juba, St Kizito parish was running normally, the difficulty was instead with the *Lulugu project* (Lulugu Vocational School), favoured by all concerned, but made precarious because of the personnel running it, while the Archbishop had already made it very clear that without the presence of the Combonis the project would be closed.

The Comboni Pre-Postulancy and Postulancy with Fr Jesús Aranda (full time formator) and Fr Giovanni Ferrazin helping significantly, was very promising with six candidates for the Priesthood, one of whom was in Ongata Rongai, (Kenya) and five in Juba plus two candidates to the Brotherhood, one of whom was in Ongata Rongai and one in Juba. A candidate for the Priesthood was preparing to enter the Novitiate the same year, 1990.

The increase in requests by young people to enter the Comboni Postulancy prompted the Provincial Council to ask Bro Mario Rossignoli to accompany these young people in their preparation. Unfortunately, for the candidates to the Brotherhood, Juba had no facilities for training in technical subjects and they had to be sent to Kenya for the Postulancy.

Because of the critical situation, several confreres left Juba. This was the situation on 30 January 1990: **In Nairobi:** Bro Gelmini, Fr Gottardi, Fr Dellagiacoma, Bro Libero Ribelli, Bro Bazzanella, Fr Giuntoli, Fr López Toro (for medical treatment). **In Cairo:** Fr Coppo. **In Italy:** Fr Caligari, Bro Cariolato, Fr Ferrazin, Fr Sciannameo, Fr Mattevi and Fr Sina.

In Juba: Fr Mödi, Fr Riebe, Fr Bizzarro, Fr Aranda, Bro Ragnoli, Bro Rossignoli and Bro Ritterbecks who carried on their commitments, together with the Comboni Sisters, in the Comboni Secondary School, in the pastoral, educational, human promotion activity, in Comboni formation and in the Diocesan Seminary as well as in relief work.

Another very sensitive issue was the proposal of the South Sudan Province to have a Procure in Khartoum. The proposal had already been made to the previous Administration and the present one thought it necessary for the Province and for logistic reasons, but the General Council and the Khartoum Province were not in favour of it, though they agreed that the South could make use of the Provincial House of Khartoum for their needs. This was an issue which made Fr Abel Mödi suffer a lot.

The successes of the SPLA

One cannot understand the situation of the Province at this particular time without casting an eye over the general military situation and the new

successes of SPLA in the military field. The SPLA unilateral cease-fire of May 1989, gave the Khartoum Army time to reorganize itself and put together a huge force for a dry season offensive code-named *Al-Jundi al-Wattan al-Wahed* or *The soldier of one nation*. In February, 1990, it became operative and was able to neutralise the previous SPLA victories and hinder other possible achievements.

*“However, although these reverses had apparently weakened the SPLA in a military sense, it did not halt the SPLA from completing the mission of the ‘Bright Star Campaign.’ Instead it made the Government army forget about controlling the whole South and concentrate its efforts in defending strategic towns like Yei, Kurmuk and Geissan, Juba, Wau, Malakal, Bentiu, Kodok, Renk and Aweil on the railway line between Wau and Northern Sudan.”*²⁹⁸

The revitalized Sudan army was posing a real threat to SPLA and the Government decided also to declare a unilateral cease-fire with the invitation to SPLA to seek ways of ending the war.

*However, the SPLA had continued preparing for the next dry season offensive, to liberate Western Equatoria. This was the ‘Bright Star Campaign phase II.’ Throughout the rainy months of June, July, August and September (1989), the SPLA, having held on to Eastern Equatoria, assembled a huge force for the final push to Western Equatoria. The Bright Star final phase was very crucial for the SPLA to occupy the whole of Equatoria in its liberation process because Equatoria borders with the five African countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Congo and Central African Republic.”*²⁹⁹

Keeping control of Equatoria was important in order to frustrate the plans of Khartoum to ferry troops to the neighbouring countries to attack the SPLA positions from the rear. Moreover, Equatoria had also warrior tribes capable of strengthening the forces SPLA needed.

*The Bright Star Campaign final phase went into action in the beginning of 1990. Moving from its rear base in Nimule area, the main SPLA ‘Intisar’ Brigade under the direct command of Colonel John Garang and deputised by commanders Oyai Deng Ajak, James Oath, Bior Ajaang and Obote Mamur Mete, crossed the Nile and stormed Kajo-Kaji. It swiftly moved and took the strategic border of Kaya, where the Sudan, Congo and Uganda join.”*³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Arop Madut-Arop, op. cit. p. 219-220

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

By April 1990 the *Bright Star Campaign* had captured Yambio, without any serious resistance and then Nzara was also captured. The SPLA proceeded on its way up to Ezo and Tombura, as far as the Central African Republic border, then back to Mundri and captured it after a fierce fight. In just four months, the *Bright Star Campaign* took almost the whole of Equatoria, throughout the middle of 1990, strengthening its siege of Juba and giving the Government a strong signal that Juba was the next target.

However, some bad news for the SPLA was coming from Ethiopia since the government of Mengistu Haile Mariam was getting deeper into trouble and in danger of falling and leaving the SPLA with no support. All this state of affairs and war developments deprived the South Sudan Province of another area of commitment, that of Tombura/Yambio Diocese with Nzara and Maringindu, leaving it with only Wau and Raja outside Juba. There was less and less room for manoeuvre.

The New Sudan Group

The issue of the Khartoum Procure made Fr Abel Mödi suffer and a new one added even more: the institution of the *New Sudan Group*. His suffering was not caused by the good intention of helping the South Sudanese people in the so-called *Liberated Areas* under SPLA control, but the fact that the General Council was taking away personnel of the Province in the Government areas and assigning it to the other side.

Moreover, the *New Sudan Group* came up with an autonomous statute linked directly to the General Council through one of his Councillors, Fr Venanzio Milani, so the Provincial and his Council had no real say in the personnel of the *New Sudan Group*, though they were still juridically personnel of the Province. Fr Abel Mödi could see painfully the personnel under his commitments diminishing and the other side increasing.

Objectively speaking, this was the harsh reality of the time of Fr Abel Mödi's term of office. Already with Fr Mazzolari I pointed out that in the report to the General Chapter of 1985, while the situation was already giving strong signs of deterioration, the province was geared for expansion and an increase of personnel. Then the situation continued to deteriorate in the following years, though it was hoped that things would not turn out too badly.

Also in Fr Mödi's time the same trend was going on, the situation had reached its lowest point. Even though the situation was critical, hopes were not dimmed as they looked forward to better times. As praiseworthy as this attitude may have been, the General Council chose a different path, not

giving up the presence in the old Government areas, but developing a promising presence in the *Liberated Areas*, encouraged specifically by the request of Bishop Paride Taban, now freed from SPLA captivity and accepted by the Movement, to have Comboni confreres assigned to his Diocese under SPLA control.

The institution of the “New Sudan Group”³⁰¹ 1 July 1990

The *New Sudan Group*³⁰² was started on 1 July, 1990,³⁰³ by the Superior General, Fr Francesco Pierli and his Council,³⁰⁴ in the General Consulta which took place in Rome from 14 June to 7 July, 1990.³⁰⁵ Fr Abel Mödi, was also in Rome³⁰⁶ and so it was a good opportunity for serious discernment. The Group belonged juridically to the South Sudan Province in everything, from the assignment of personnel to the Provincial elections, with Fr Mödi as the Provincial Superior.

However its juridical set-up had to allow work to be done in the non-government areas under the SPLA/M (army/movement) control, without being hindered by the impossibility of contacts or communications with the Provincial, cut off in the government environment and situations. As a follow-up to this discernment, Fr Francesco Pierli and his Council, with the encouragement of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of

³⁰¹ A missionary experience in a context of war, Fr Francesco Chemello Odiongo Gatwic, mscj, Comboni Missionaries South Sudan Province, Juba, Fondazione Nigrizia Onlus 2016, pp. 11-12.

³⁰² “**NEW SUDAN GROUP**” is the title of the group belonging to the “Province of South Sudan.”

³⁰³ The letter of Fr Milani dated 20 July, 1990 gives the official news of the creation of the “**NEW SUDAN GROUP**.”

³⁰⁴ (*In Italian*) - Rome 20 July, 1990 = Fr Venanzio Milani, Object: Group of Torit Diocese – To the Confreres Fr Caligari,....

"I. With this addressed to each one of you, in the name of the General Council, further to what has already been briefly published in Familia Comboniana, July/August, 1990 (p. 5), I inform you that you have been assigned to the Diocese of Torit for the service of the missions of 8 and Loa." "As a group you depend on the General Council."

³⁰⁵ The group of the “**NEW SUDAN**” was approved in the Consulta which took place in Rome from 14 June to 7 July, 1990. Fr Venanzio Milani was charged with taking the steps necessary for its implementation.

³⁰⁶ (*In Italian*) Rome, 13/07/1990 = Letter of Fr Francesco Pierli, Sup. Gen., to Fr Ignacio Lopez Toro:

"In June, taking advantage of the presence of Fr Abel Mödi, we reflected on the commitment in the Diocese of Torit... We decided to give this presence a degree of stability, appointing as leader of the group Fr Eugenio Caligari."

Peoples, the Nuncio, other Bishops and people,³⁰⁷ considered the presence of the Comboni Missionary personnel in the SPLA/M areas to be of great importance and decided to give *a degree of stability* to the presence of the Comboni group working in Torit Diocese³⁰⁸

They appointed Fr Eugenio Caligari as *Coordinator* and Superior in charge of the **NEW SUDAN GROUP**. The *Coordinator* had to report directly to the General Councillor for Africa, Fr Venanzio Milani. All this was clarified by Fr Milani himself in a letter to Fr Ignacio López Toro,³⁰⁹

LOA – (from left to right) Fr. V. Milani, Fr. M. Riva,
Fr. J Ukelo, Fr. R.K.Sesana, Bro. D. Cariolato,



and Fr Flores, himself, who had not yet understood the nature and the juridical set-up of the group. In this case, they were the first two confreres to undertake this experience, together with Fr Ukelo.

Fr Mödi had to endure this situation willingly or un-

willingly, knowing that the New Sudan Group, though belonging to the South Sudan Province, was already another entity slipping away from his authority. The freedom of movement enjoyed in the *Liberated Areas* would certainly attract more personnel to the detriment of the Comboni group in the Government Areas. In principle, the priority was the care of the Sudanese people in the SPLA rural areas but, since this trend was clearly foreseeable, at the personal level, this was surely causing him a lot of pain.

³⁰⁷ Ref. Fr Venanzio Milani, (Presenza nel New Sudan) “Letter to the confreres appointed to the diocesi of Torit”, Rome, 20/07/1990, MCCJ Bulletin no. 172, October, 1991, pp. 10-11.

³⁰⁸ Rome 21 July, 1990, Fr Venanzio Milani to Rt. Rev Mons. Paride Taban, Bishop of Torit. “I am writing this letter on behalf of the General Council. We have appointed Fr E. Caligari as the leader of the group and he will act as Delegate of the Assistant General for Africa (the undersigned) Since there is now an official group leader, Fr Kizito is no longer in charge of the ‘official’ contacts with your Diocese....”

³⁰⁹ Rome, 13 July, 1990, Letter of Fr Francesco Pierli, Sup. Gen. to Fr Ignacio Lopez Toro: “We decided to give this presence a degree of stability, appointing as leader of the group Fr Eugenio Caligari... You carry on in the Diocese of Torit, assigned to the Group of the ‘Liberated Sudan.’ You and Fr Flores are the initiators of this new presence”

The personnel assigned to Torit Diocese in the SPLA/M *Liberated Areas* on 20 July, 1990 were: Fr Eugenio Caligari, Fr Joseph Yala Ukelo, Fr José Flores, Fr Ignacio López Toro, Fr Giovanni Ferrazin, Fr Mario Riva and Bro Domenico Cariolato. Fr Flores and Fr López Toro had been in **Isoke Parish** since 1 May, 1990 while Fr Ukelo would reach **Torit** a while later. Fr Caligari and Bro Cariolato would go in August to serve **Loa Parish** and the Frs Riva and Ferrazin would join the *New Sudan Group* in October.³¹⁰ Hence, Torit Diocese in Eastern Equatoria, led by Bishop Paride Taban, opened the way for the presence of the Comboni Missionaries and other Religious Missionaries and Church Personnel in the SPLA/M-controlled areas. The Comboni Missionary confreres were seven.

The Province and the ground developments

The successful SPLA military campaign in Western Equatoria was a real set-back for the South Sudan Province. Church personnel and many civilians fled to the Congo or to the Central African Republic. Taken by surprise, the Comboni communities of Nzara and Tombura also fled to the Central African Republic. By remaining as long as possible at their posts they just aggravated their situation and lost all their vehicles and property.

Confreres and Sisters found their way to their respective countries or remained for some time at the service of the refugees from Western Equatoria. The confreres were Fr Iginio Benini, Fr Eugenio Caligari, Fr Luigi Parisi, Bro Valentino Fabris, Fr Raymond Pax, Fr Pietro Ravasio and Fr Mario Riva. All were on standby, waiting patiently for new orders from the Major Superiors in Rome with no real notion of the situation in the field.

At that time Bishop Joseph Gasi Abangite was in Khartoum trying to follow the events from there but without any means of intervening effectively in the situation. Fr Mödi, the Provincial found himself abruptly with two communities less in the geography of the Comboni Province. The communities left out were Wau and Raja with Mgr Cesare Mazzolari (now Apostolic Administrator of Rumbek) and Fr Pellerino for Rumbek itself very much handicapped by the security situation, a big blow to the situation of the Province in the Government Controlled Areas.

Such was the Provincial situation at the end of 1990, with no clear signs of future development in its favour. This was another reason why, at General Council level, the attempt to find ways of strengthening the *New*

³¹⁰ Fr G. Ferrazin had to return to Italy for health reasons.

Sudan Group continued, even more convinced that it was the right strategy to keep the presence of the Comboni Missionaries meaningful in the South, since the *Liberated Areas* appeared to be more promising and free for missionary work.

Strengthening the “New Sudan Group”

During the year 1990 and the first half of 1991, the Comboni commitments in the *Liberated Areas* were limited to Torit Diocese (Loa, Isoke), with Fr Joseph Ukelo residing in Chukudum. In May 1991, Fr Venanzio Milani, the General Councillor for Africa, went to visit the confreres of the *New Sudan Group* in order to become personally aware of the situation and explore other ways of action in the *Liberated Areas* under SPLA/M control.

The dialogue with Bishop Paride Taban, his Vicars and other pastoral agents, and with the leaders of the SPLA/M, was a great help to discernment by the General Council. After this visit, the Superior General Fr Francesco Pierli and his Council decided to strengthen the presence in the *Liberated Areas* and assigned new personnel to the group not only for the Diocese of Torit, but also for the Dioceses of Rumbek and Tombura/Yambio itself.

Fr Milani, recalling the content of his letter dated 20 July, 1990, wrote to the confreres of the *New Sudan Group* pointing out what was to be followed also in the two new locations of YIROL, (Rumbek Diocese) and NZARA (Tombura/Yambio Diocese).³¹¹ He stressed very much the *new spirit* which should inform the members of the Comboni group in the relationship among themselves, with the Dioceses and Church Personnel and with the people in their difficult situations.³¹²

Fr Milani underlined clearly that the most important reason for the presence of the Comboni group in the *New Sudan / Liberated Areas* was to be *witnesses of solidarity* and *signs of hope and trust in a better future* for our Sudanese Brothers and Sisters sorely tried by the sufferings of war.³¹³ For this reason he gave some practical guidelines regarding community and apostolic life.

³¹¹ Ref. Fr Eugenio Caligari, "Cronistoria", MCCJ Bulletin no. 172, October, 1991, p. 14.

³¹² Ref. Fr Venanzio Milani, "Letter of Fr V. Milani after visiting the New Sudan (summary)" Rome, May, 1991" MCCJ Bulletin no. 172, October, 1991, pp. 15-18.

³¹³ Ibid.

The main policy for the life of the community was to *evangelize as a community* and to be witnesses of *brotherly communion in the Spirit* which the Comboni Missionaries are called to proclaim and make present among the people they evangelize. The community was seen as the place where *the apostle is made and made new*.

Regarding *apostolic life*, without losing sight of our specific charism, emphasis is placed on *communion and collaboration* with the *Local Church* as *a real necessity: not working for, but working with*. *We are an intrinsic part of, and in full communion with the Local Church*. Due to the difficult situation, the formation of leaders was a real priority. *Activism and large-scale resources* would not be advisable and working with *limited means* would be the best way to produce good fruits, though it might require more patience.³¹⁴

The visit of Fr Milani had also the specific purpose of meeting the officials of the SPLA/M in order to clarify various matters related to our presence in the areas controlled by them and to ensure respect and protection, when necessary. The mediation of Fr Renato Kizito Sesana (Director of *New People Magazine* in Nairobi) was very important at the time, as was the meeting with Dr Lam Akol Ajawin, a high-ranking official in the SPLA/M, who assured respect, security and freedom of work for the Comboni presence in the SPLA/M controlled areas.

Personnel assigned to the “New Sudan Group” in 1991

In 1991, eight confreres were assigned by the General Council to the *New Sudan Group*, starting from 1 July, 1991:

- Fr José Luis Martínez Azevedo,
- Fr Francesco Chemello,³¹⁵
- Fr Elvio Cellana, (*retroactive appointment*),
- Bro David Enriquez Sanchez
- Fr Giuseppe Caramazza.
- Fr Giuseppe Pellerino
- Fr Iginio Benini,
- Bro Valentino Fabris

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ 27 March, 1991, letter of Fr Pierli to Fr Chemello: appointment to New Sudan starting from 01 July, 1991. (*Fr Francesco Chemello, who had just completed the renewal course in Rome and was coming from the Province of Malawi/Zambia, was appointed to Isoke Parish from 1 July. He reached Isoke via Nairobi in AuguSt*

Together with the confreres already assigned in 1990, the *New Sudan Group* consisted now of a total of 15 people for **Torit Diocese, Rumbek Diocese and Tombura/Yambio Diocese**. Fr Ukelo was assigned *ad personam* to Torit Diocese and Bishop Taban appointed him Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar of Kapoeta, Chukudum and Buoya. He resided at Chukudum with the Diocesan Priests.³¹⁶

Life is always unpredictable and there was a very shocking piece of news on 28 August, 1991³¹⁷, the split of the SPLA. A very bad news for the *Liberated Areas* with an undoubtedly very unpleasant follow-up, certain to be marked with reciprocal military confrontation of the two SPLA groups, **the Torit Group** under the leadership of Dr John Garang de Mabior and **the Nassir Group** under the leadership of Dr Riek Machar Teny Durgon. This was not long in coming.

The communities in the summer 1991

Loa Parish:

Fr Eugenio Caligari, Fr Mario Riva, Fr Giovanni Ferrazin
Bro Domenico Cariolato

Isoke Parish:

Fr José Flores, Fr Ignacio López Toro, Fr Francesco
Chemello

Ad Personam (for Torit in Chukudum)

Fr Joseph Yala Ukelo

Nzara Parish:

Fr Elvio Cellana, (*retroactive appointment*), Fr Igino
Benini, Bro Valentino Fabris

Yirol:

Mgr Cesare Mazzolari (apostolic Administrator), Fr
Giuseppe Pellerino, Fr José Luis Martínez Azevedo, (Fr
Mario Riva) by the end of the year

Waiting for appointment:

Bro David Enriquez Sanchez, Fr Giuseppe Caramazza.

With the return of Fr Caligari from the General Chapter in November, 1991, Loa Parish was handed over to Torit Diocese, Fr Mario Riva was assigned to Yirol, Fr Ferrazin had to go back to Italy for health reasons and

³¹⁶ Ref. Fr Eugenio Caligari, "Cronistoria", MCCJ Bulletin no. 172, October, 1991, p. 13

³¹⁷ Arop Mdut-Arop, op. cit., Chapter 10, pp. 259 ff.

a new Parish, Kimatong, among the Buoya people, was taken up on 30 December, 1991.

Kimatong: Fr Eugenio Caligari, Fr Giuseppe Caramazza, Bro Domenico Cariolato Bro David Enriquez Sanchez

Yirol Parish: with the assignment of Fr Riva, Fr Pellerino, and Fr José Luis Martinez,³¹⁸ Mgr Cesare Mazzolari, started preparing the required material in order to start the presence in Yirol, a location not far from *Holy Cross*, where Daniel Comboni had worked. Fr Pellerino and Fr Riva, together with Mgr Mazzolari, would reach Yirol in November 1991; Fr Martinez, instead, would arrive there in January 1992.

Nzara Parish: on 17 November, 1991, Fr Benini and three Comboni Sisters returned to Nzara while Fr Cellana, Bro Fabris and Bishop Joseph Gasi Abangite arrived on 23 December, 1991.³¹⁹ The community of Nzara was now complete and Tombura/Yambio Diocese, heartened by the presence of their Bishop, could look towards the future with new hope.

South Sudan and the General Chapter 1991

The General Chapter of 1991 came when the towns of Juba, Wau, Raja and Rumbek were firmly besieged and locked in by SPLA. Eastern Equatoria was already under SPLA control since the beginning of 1989 and, on the first half of 1990, three confreres had already been assigned to Torit Diocese, under SPLA rule. By the end of April 1990, Western Equatoria was under SPLA and there was no longer a Comboni Presence there. This was the situation of the South Sudan Province before the General Chapter.

A reflection and sharing on the situation, achievements and perspectives of the South Sudan Province was supposed to be presented. It is interesting

³¹⁸ 29 September, 1991, Letter of Fr Caligari to Fr J. L. Martinez "*Fr Caligari is leaving Rome*"

³¹⁹ (In Italian) NZARA 03 January, 1992, Fr Cellana to Fr Caligari: "*About Fr Benini, Srs Natalia, Milagro and Aurora you already know. After 22 days of waiting, Bro Valentino (Fabris) and I came from Nairobi to Nzara ... Mgr Gasi asked to come. So much awaited by the people, he arrived here in Nzara and then he proceeded with Fr Matthew Samoza to Yambio.*" "*We found everything open: they took away everything... even the nails on which we hung the sacred images and the calendar, and broke whatever they couldn't remove, such as the marvellous drill ... we will try to go ahead, working more closely with the people ...It is feared that there may be air strikes with bombings in retaliation, for this we are preparing shelters.*"

to see how the Provincial Superior, Fr Mödi, his Council and confreres were evaluating the concrete situation from various angles.

Report of the Province to the General Chapter

Reading through the report to the General Chapter one can notice immediately the difficult situation the South Sudan Province was going through and the sense of discouragement for impossibility of movement. At the same time, the desire to drive onwards as if there were real room for improvement and development was giving a hint of hope. There was the need of putting forward proposals as if the situation were normal and open to progress and further expansion, but also the awareness that the country was totally paralyzed and would bring missionary initiatives to a standstill.

This was completely understandable: who would look at the future without hope? Who would not think that something, with time, would not change? If for no other reason than survival itself! In fact, as we have seen, the reality was that the pastoral commitments of the Province were confined within the towns where they were living, towns in the hands of the government. It was a very valuable and hope-giving presence for those people, but with no other possibility of further expansion.

They were *on the cross* with Jesus and the real frustration was that nobody knew when the time would come for the Resurrection. That was the reason why Bro Menegotto, in his report of January, 1990, wrote:

*“On one side there was a euphoric climate for the continuous success of the SPLA, but at the same time there was great concern for the SPLA coming nearer and nearer to Juba with more strength and the continuous and incessant appeals to leave the city. The words were followed by facts with the shelling...”*³²⁰

This was the true reality for Juba city. For Wau and Raja, though totally besieged, the situation was less severe because the aim of the SPLA was to capture Juba city first, which would mean capturing the whole of Equatoria and practically *war zone 1*, Southern Sudan. However, it would take long years of frustrating attacks and withdrawals before reaching a conclusion.

The report to the General Chapter,³²¹ presented the situation of the Province at that particular time, the environment at educational level, the policy of the government, the work of the opposition, the financial crisis,

³²⁰ Bro G. Menegotto, Report, January 1990, op. cit.

³²¹ Short report of the Provincial of Southern Sudan to the General Chapter 1991. (Supplement to the SS Report on questionnaire). ACR 483/15/4/5a.

the difficult living conditions of the people and the famine. They were aware that most of the territory of South Sudan was under SPLA control and that, because of the determination of the government to recapture the lost areas, the war, the atrocities and the loss of lives would continue.

The introductory part of the short report of the Provincial began by presenting an overall view of the political situation, *the Peace Talks that broke down at the end of year 1989 in Nairobi, Kenya, through the mediation of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the Federal System the Fundamentalists declared on 31 December, 1990, something similar to the Libyan Political System with the creation of States in the whole country and new educational policies introduced.*

The stress on Arabic as the only medium for learning. Christian teaching prohibited in schools, except in the primary years, new emphasis on the Koran and Arabic language. With the strong dissatisfaction on the part of Southern Sudanese with the so-called Federal System, Shari'a laws and the new educational policies, opposition is likely to mount as time goes on. Another serious setback was the change of the Sudanese Pound, which added further stress on the famine situation."³²²

From the social point of view, the most serious situation was the famine and related health problems and the Government did practically nothing for a population in Juba near to 500,000 inhabitants. The food that came for these people was donated by foreign donors and partly also due to the efforts of our Comboni Institute. The huge population only surviving. And still Juba town seemed to have been luckier than Wau and Malakal where no relief was going especially Malakal.

The health situation was one which proved difficult for many Southern Sudanese. Drugs were generally not available in civil hospitals unless provided by UNICEF, other organizations and the Church. The hospitals were identifying the diseases, giving prescriptions and asking the patients to buy the drugs, but the majority of people could not afford. In the rural areas health services were either very poor or non-existent. 'La Nostra Famiglia' (Usratuna-Our Family) was a real blessing to Juba, both for foodstuffs and medicines. It was doing a timely service and had also opened a primary school within its premises, very relevant services.

Regarding the pastoral work, the report mentioned especially the Dioceses of Juba, Tombura-Yambio and Wau. In Juba and Wau the pastoral work was mainly carried out in the towns, since the rural areas were inaccessible. Pastoral attention was given to people by the Diocesan

³²² Ibid. Short report, pp. 1-2.

Priests and the Comboni Missionaries and offered especially to the displaced populations and to the civilians in the town. The Church was fully present at the service of the people in their real situation.

The Arabization policies, the Shari'a law and the educational policies seemed to go directly against the Church and perhaps eliminate it. In that situation, the Lay Leadership often appeared to be non-existent. The Church was still believed to be the voice of the South Sudanese people, though in certain situations it should, perhaps, have spoken more openly.

As regards the Comboni Missionaries, there was a total of 26 confreres restricted to working in the centres of Juba, (16 confreres), Wau (6 confreres), and Raja (4 confreres). In the Six-Year Plan they were trying to take other zones into consideration. The Provincial pointed out that he had very little to say about Torit Diocese, with Fr Caligari as Coordinator.

Comboni relationships with the Bishops were generally considered serene and positive, although some difficulties were noticed. Some Bishops had not been able to sign the Conventions, mainly for financial reasons.

The Sudanese Clergy were the majority in all the Dioceses where the Combonis were working, but the number was still insufficient and most of them were young. Apart from the Diocese of Torit, all other Dioceses were lacking adequate numbers of ordinations each year. In 1991 there were no ordinations for Juba, Wau, Rumbek, Yei or Malakal. Due to war, the number of personnel of other Congregations had decreased a lot.

The Comboni Missionaries commitments were in the pastoral and formation fields:

- **Parishes:** St Kizito (Juba), Terakeka-Tali, Raja, Wau;
- **Formation:** Palica Centre and Small Christian Communities, Wau, National Major Seminary in Juba and Khartoum, Comboni Senior Secondary School in Juba, Lulugu Centre and the Comboni Postulancy.
- **The intention** was to carry on the Comboni commitments already agreed in the past with the Bishops and take up the newly proposed commitments after the General Chapter.

As for security in South Sudan at the moment the report was written, it seemed fairly good but unpredictable. The Comboni Missionaries felt very much in union with the other pastoral agents and the Bishops, and were determined to remain as long as it was reasonably possible, sharing the population's discomfort and danger. Likewise, they did not exclude the possibility of a peaceful change for the better.

Regarding the health of our confreres, it was considered generally good; in the most urgent cases, confreres were sent home on holiday or

scheduled holidays were anticipated. This policy was also to be followed later on. It was acknowledged that the situation was a real test for the mental and physical health of all. In Raja, instead, it was much better.

The matter of personnel was very serious because the Province had lost some confreres, while others had been cut off from its control and communion. A reason for anxiety was the assignment of personnel to the areas controlled by the SPLA without consultation with the Province, whether they were previously in the Province or not. It was particularly painful to see that the General Administration did not provide personnel for formation (especially the Postulancy), in spite of its promises. Uncertain was also the future of the personnel who were working in Tombura/Yambio Diocese and had to flee to the Central African Republic.

Peace in South Sudan: it was the Province's first priority (though it did not depend on them) because, without peace, the Comboni missionary activity would not be able to proceed.

The process of Islamization in Southern Sudan was carried out systematically. South Sudan had been constantly rejecting the dictatorial regimes of Khartoum that had simply turned a deaf ear to the political proposal of the South for a federal system of government, and made a mockery of the process of peace with the SPLA/Movement. The Khartoum talk about peace was just lip service for the Fundamentalists to buy time for the Islamization of the country and the setting up of an Islamic Republic.

Isolation of the confreres. With this situation of war, the Provincial report stated that communication by land had become impossible in South Sudan. The only way to travel was by air, but even by air it was not always easy and one might have to wait for long periods of time before finding a seat on a flight. Moreover, the few available flights were not free of danger: some aircraft had been shot down or blown up by land mines.

The report then entered into the issue of the relationship of Christians and Moslems and the fear of becoming *an Islamic state* through political power, grabbing land and expelling people, using food as a weapon to achieve their objectives so as to end up like the Nubian Kingdoms centuries previously. In South Sudan Islam did not tolerate other religions and other peoples with their cultural values. For this reason the people in Juba and elsewhere no longer wanted a united Sudan. The report stated that the Juba elite wrote to John Garang, the UN, OAU and the American Congress stating that their option was now the division of the Sudan into two nations.

The Province of the South presented an appeal to the Chapter Delegates, and through them to the whole Comboni Institute, to maintain solidarity with the people of South Sudan. *“Why should the South Sudanese people*

be sold out to the Moslem fundamentalists because of lack of solidarity of the West with Africans?” was the question. At the end of the General Chapter there was an appeal to the whole of Africa, to European and American Nations, to all peoples of good will stating that the people of South Sudan are African and that the majority are also Christians. What they all wanted was to keep their ancestral values and culture and, for those who were Christian, to be free to live their Christian faith.

The report presented also the importance due to the preparation of Leaders for the Political Sector. Education was not neglected in Church Primary and Junior schools and Senior Secondary Schools. However, preparation for political life did not go far enough. The need to prepare leaders for politics with a Christian formation was deeply felt.

Thus, the report of the Chapter Delegates of the South Sudan Province gave a clear picture of the situation in South Sudan in mid-1991, just when the General Council was considering strengthening the *New Sudan Group* by adding further personnel, having seen that the possibility of expansion of the pastoral and missionary activity was giving way to new possibilities of presence, both in the area of Torit Diocese and, at a later stage, also in Western Equatoria (Nzara) and Rumbek Diocese (Yirol).

However, there were some sad developments within the Church situation in Juba, later on happily solved and reconciled. So, painful though the instance may have been, it cannot be left unmentioned since it is helpful for our reflection. In fact, as the famous saying goes, *those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it.*³²³

The Archdiocese of Juba: report to the General Chapter 1991 *Misunderstandings and Reconciliation*

As already noted, Juba was the biggest town in the South, but it was under siege. All the Church Personnel and Pastoral Agents and much of the Comboni commitments were based there too. The town had a great number of activities and overlapping undertakings with limited space. All Church Personnel, Local and Expatriate, were busy working according to their own duties and responsibilities and in God's name.

Nevertheless, with all the overlapping activities, it came as no surprise that people sometimes trod on each other's toes or bypassed the channels of authority, arousing feelings of misunderstanding and resentment. It may

³²³ *“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”*, George Santayana (16 December, 1863, in Madrid, Spain - 26 September, 1952, in Rome, Italy) was a philosopher, essayist, poet and novelist

have been an excessive zeal in charitable activities or the way charitable activities or prayer meetings were carried out. Infringements may have taken place without any admission on the part of those responsible.

Besides, the Comboni Missionaries, with longer experience and preparation, might have shown a higher degree of efficiency in their works, surely done for the good of the Church and the country. In practical terms, this may have produced a negative effect and feelings of inadequacy on the part of the members of the Local Church who may not have had access to the same resources and preparation. This could also have been another reason for the deterioration of relations within the Church of Juba.

If one adds the facts expressed in the report of the Province concerning the sense of frustration due to the situation of war, not only among the Combonis, but also among Church Personnel and people, we have an ideal recipe for a breakdown in healthy communications, not infrequently bordering on the irrational.

Though not all the reasons were crystal clear or even well known, the fact was that a critical report was sent to the General Chapter by the Archdiocese of Juba in the name of the Diocesan Clergy, who seemed unaware that the report written was for the General Chapter. However, the report was sent and it was read at the General Chapter Assembly of the Comboni Missionaries in Rome, together with the reports coming from all the other Dioceses where the Comboni Missionaries were present.

The report was literally breath-taking for all the Chapter Delegates since, after a positive introduction, it carried on pointing to the Combonis in Juba in a very negative way, as forming a *ghetto* and *not well inserted in the Local Church*. Verse 10 of chapter 10 of the Gospel of John³²⁴ was also quoted where, in the context of Jesus' talk on the Good Shepherd, speaking instead about the *thief*, Jesus said that this one had come *only to steal, and slaughter and destroy*.

Of course, such a report froze everybody in the Chapter hall, especially the South Sudanese representatives. In Juba itself, it froze all the Combonis who, at risk of their lives, remained faithful with their presence among the suffering people of Juba, and suffered themselves because of the shelling,

³²⁴ Gospel of John, 10:10, "*The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, life in all its fullness.*"

- Juba, 4 April, 1991, *By the Diocesan Priests*, The evaluation of the Pastoral Work carried out by the Comboni Missionaries in the Archdiocese of Juba. (*Sent to the General Chapter 1991 in Rome*). ACR 535/15/3/2; FSSPJ.

isolation and all the related risks. The report was really felt as an unfair blow to their presence in Juba.

It did not take long for the Vice-Superior, Fr Todd Riebe (replacing Fr Abel Mödi who was in Rome for the Chapter) to answer with another sharp letter attributing to the same people who wrote that report what was attributed to the Combonis. Moreover, he was also asking why, if there was any discontent with the behaviour of the Combonis (which seems to have been the case), a meeting of reciprocal understanding had not been called for in order to deal with any faulty behaviour involved. His letter asked also for *a forum* for discussion at the return of the Provincial to Juba.³²⁵

With the help of God and through the wise and capable mediation by Fr Ottorino Sina (Fr Philip for the people), the issue was dealt with very charitably. Two meetings were held at the Provincial House in Juba between the Diocesan Clergy and the Comboni Missionaries. In a spirit of dialogue, the issues were dealt with and a renewed understanding of each other side's faults and positive intentions was reached.

Forgiveness was begged by both sides in the persons of Fr Sina and Fr Mödi on behalf of the Comboni Missionaries and H. G. Archbishop Paolino Lokudu Loro on behalf of the Diocesan Clergy. The final reconciliation was sealed with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, with Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro presiding, assisted by Fr Sina and the Provincial Superior Fr Abel Mödi, with the participation of the Combonis, the Diocesan Clergy and all the people present.

It is inevitable that there be difficult moments in the life of the Church and of the Institutes but, as the Second Vatican Council and the Doctrine of the Church teach, reconciliation is at the heart of the Christian human and spiritual experience. This event which could have brought very bad consequences to relations between the Local Church and Comboni Missionary personnel in Juba became a new occasion for a growth in reciprocal understanding. By the grace of God, what was a sinful circumstance became an occasion of renewed salvation.³²⁶

Khartoum's dry season military offensive against the SPLA

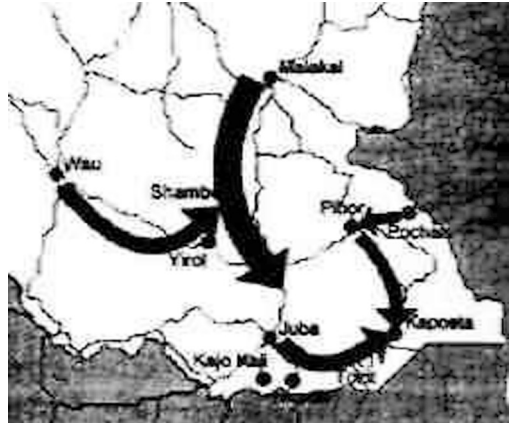
The year 1992 started in the *Liberated Areas* with thorough planning of the pastoral and missionary work and also of the restructuring of former damaged buildings and to build some others in local material. Apparently

³²⁵ Juba, 20/10/91, Fr Todd Riebe mccj, Vice-Provincial, to Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro. FSSPJ; ACR 535/15/3/3.

³²⁶ The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, op. cit., pp. 307-309.

everything seemed to be proceeding well, but in January 1992, the Government of Khartoum launched its most powerful offensive with the aim of eradicating completely the SPLA in the South, the code-name was *Hemlat Seif al-Obuur* (the dry season campaign).

The first phase consisted in a concerted attack to Bor, Pibor, and Pochalla districts. On the 9 March, 1992, with the collaboration of the *Nassir Faction*, Pochalla on the Ethiopian border was captured. On 13 March, Kapoeta,³²⁷ the seat of local administration for the SPLA/Torit, was indiscriminately bombed by the government army with its consequent fall on 28 May. By April of the same year, after a week of bombing, Bor was captured together with Yirol.



The government military campaign was very well planned:

- attack Kapoeta, the SPLA logistics hub, from the east, thus preventing SPLA connections with Ethiopia and Kenya;
- ensure the Bahr el Ghazal connection from Wau to Yirol, clearing the Nile route allowing river supplies from Malakal to Juba;
- Finally, attack TORIT, (it was captured on 13 July, 1992),³²⁸ clearing the way up to Kapoeta and the Kenyan border.

In this situation, the three Comboni missions of Yirol, Kimatong, and Isoke were in a most critical situation. Yirol because of a possible attack from the direction of Wau, Kimatong because it was near to Kapoeta and on the northern side of Torit-Kapoeta road with the risk of getting trapped and Isoke because of its position close to Torit.

The General Council was following closely the developments, especially in regards to Yirol. Fr David Glenday sent a fax to Fr Pellerino asking him and the community to leave Yirol immediately.³²⁹ They were

³²⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/18/world/sudanese-troops-push-into-south.html>

³²⁸ Human Rights Watch: CIVILIAN DEVASTATION.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/sudan/>

³²⁹ *(In Italian)* 18 March, 1992 (Fax) Fr D. Glenday, Sup. Gen. to Fr Pellerino, Superior of Yirol Community: "I am writing to you ... to inform you of a decision made by me today

very surprised, thinking there was no immediate threat, and asked that, at least one or two should remain there. However, having again considered the matter, the Superior General reconfirmed the request to leave the place immediately, hoping this would be only temporary.³³⁰ Later on, Mgr Mazzolari admitted that the evacuation was the right decision.

As for Kimatong and Isoke, this happened after the visit to the two communities by Fr Giuseppe Filippi, General Councillor for Africa, at the end of May 1992. Fr Caligari was in Nairobi to organise the visit of Fr Filippi, Fr López Toro was also in Nairobi for health reason and Fr Flores, after the meeting with Fr Filippi, had just gone back to Ikotos where the children were supposed to receive the Sacraments.

The confreres of Kimatong had just left the new mission and come to Isoke with the idea of proceeding to Uganda and Fr Chemello (who was given the task by Fr Filippi of coordinating the situation in the absence of Fr Caligari), considered going to Torit in order to talk to Bishop Paride about the situation.

While this was being planned, that same evening, 29 May, one of the Episcopal Vicars, Fr John Lohitu, arrived at Isoke with a written radio message from the General Council³³¹ ordering immediate withdrawal. He came on purpose from Torit sent by Bishop Paride Taban who also sent his thanks and appreciation to the Comboni personnel.³³²

There was no real possibility to evaluate independently the gravity of the situation, so everyone just obeyed and followed the order. Fr Lohitu gave one of the Catechists the responsibility of looking after the Parish and, very early in the morning, all left greeting only the Catechists and a few people present.

On the way, the group met Fr Flores who wanted to remain and only reluctantly accepted the injunction to withdraw altogether. The SPLA commander said that there was no permission to go to Uganda through

... we ask that you leave Yirol immediately. ... Please, let Mgr Mazzolari know that we strongly recommend that he may leave together with you."

³³⁰ 23 March, 1992 (Fax) Fr D. Glenday, Sup. Gen, to Fr Pellerino: "*... Fr Filippi did report the telephone conversations he had with you and Mgr Cesare. Having considered the matter very carefully, with the consent of the Assistants, I confirm the decision already taken, namely the exit (hopefully temporary) of the Comboni group of Yirol.*"

³³¹ The radio message arrived to Bishop Paride through SPLA radio. The message contained the order to leave. Bishop Paride sent Fr J. Lohitu to despatch it on 29 May.

³³² 29 May, 1992, Bishop Paride to Comboni Father and Brothers of DOT. "*I wish to express on behalf of all our personnel our sincere thanks and deep appreciation... We wish you God's blessing and a safe journey. We assure you of our prayers.*"

Madi Opei but only through Torit. The same information arrived, just at the same time, from Bishop Taban³³³ confirming everything. Thus, the group with their three Toyota Land Cruisers set out for Torit.

Once in Torit, the commander in charge of its defence, Cmdr. Kuol Manyang Juk, after a tough dispute with Bishop Paride and the whole group, ordered the SPLA soldiers to seize the three Land Cruisers. The group passed the night at the Bishop's house and the following morning they met with him to evaluate the situation. Meanwhile, another radio message from the General Council reached the Bishop saying that, regarding Isoke, *the confreres were free to assess the situation.*³³⁴ Now it was too late; the situation could not be reversed.

In order not to lose the confreres assigned to Torit Diocese, together with Bishop Taban, it was decided to write a letter to the General Council proposing to relocate the personnel in North Uganda to take care of the Sudanese Refugees and the Seminarians who had escaped from Juba. Fr Leo Traynor, the chancellor of Torit Diocese, took all five Combonis to Loa Mission, where they were kept for one week (under house arrest? The SPLA commander said: *no, it is just a formality*).

Sr Giovannina Zucca and Sr Agata Cantone were already there as were two Maryknoll Lay Associates, Dr Susan Nagele and Elizabeth (Liz) Mac. A week later they were all allowed to go to Uganda (Gulu) and then they proceeded to Nairobi.³³⁵ In Nairobi all the confreres who were compelled to leave the liberated areas, except the community of Nzara, assembled with Fr Caligari and the Provincial, Fr Mödi, to exchange views about the latest events and in order to make proposals to the Superior General and his Council for the future.

“We will be with the South Sudanese people”

The most probable scene was that the confreres belonging to the group of Torit and Rumbek would be assigned to Kenya and Uganda to take care

³³³ 30 May, 1992, Letter of Bishop Paride to Comboni Isoke: *“the official road we chose was Nimule Uganda road...through Torit”* (received in Ikotos 30, May, 1992/CF).

³³⁴ In fact, the radio message received on 29 May gave the order to leave with no specification. Bishop Paride thought it was for all Combonis (Kimatong and Isoke). On 31 May, Bishop Paride showed Fr Chemello the last radio message he received specifying that the former one was for Kimatong only. Isoke was free to decide. But this was now too late. The three Land Cruiser pick-ups had already been commandeered. There was now no way of going back on the decision taken.

³³⁵ A missionary experience in a context of war, op. cit., pp. 21-29

of their own refugees and the confreres of Nzara be attached to the Province of Congo. The group worked hard to discuss the pro and cons, seeking inspiration from God and the Founder, Daniel Comboni. It came up with the following unanimous conclusion:

*“Where our South Sudanese people are, there we will be. Where they move, there we will move with them. If we have to go out through one door, we will try to enter through another one. This can only be possible if we remain united and autonomous. Therefore, we must propose to the General Council to continue with our identity as the **New Sudan Group.**”*

Along this line and in this spirit, it was decided to send the proposal to the General Council. This Fr Caligari did and, having assigned each confrere according to the previous Diocesan Assignments, he proceeded to Italy. However, some confreres were assigned elsewhere: Fr Caramazza asked to be assigned to the Kenyan Province for pastoral reasons; Fr López Toro asked to go to Kenya for health reasons; Fr Flores and Bro Sanchez were assigned to Mexico.

Fr Caligari told the remaining confreres to wait for the final answer from Rome and, meanwhile, Fr Chemello was to act as Coordinator.³³⁶ Everyone was to carry on working according to the decisions taken, either joined to the Provinces or within an autonomous *New Sudan Group*.

- The Rumbek Diocese Group in KAKUMA Refugee Camp: *Fr Pellerino, Fr Riva* (Fr Raphael Riel and Fr Benjamin Madol - Diocesan Priests - would be with them). *Mgr Mazzolari* would continue seeking ways to serve Rumbek.
- The Torit Diocese Group in Pakele/Adjumani refugee camps and St Mary’s seminary: *Fr Chemello and Bro Cariolato*. In Chukudum *Fr Ukelo and Fr Ayon*.³³⁷
- The T/Yambio Diocese Group in Nzara: *Fr Benini, Fr Cellana, Bro Fabris and Fr Martinez*.

After the meeting in Nairobi, all the confreres left for their respective destinations, Bro Cariolato went for holidays to Italy and Fr Chemello left for Pakele/Kocoa (Uganda), where the Seminarians of Torit Diocese, and

³³⁶ 07 July, 1992 Letter of Fr Caligari to confreres: *“I write to you to communicate the decisions of the General Council about us, and to tell you that I have finished my service as (incaricato) in charge of our group...During the August Consulta they will choose the new Superior of the group officially. **For the moment Fr Francesco Chemello will act.**”* (as Coordinator).

³³⁷ 15 July, 1992 Fr Caligari to Bishop Paride: *“The Superior General and his Council in the coming August Consulta will appoint officially the new Superior of the group. In the meantime, Fr Francesco Chemello will be acting”* (as Coordinator)

others who fled from Juba, were supposed to continue their Minor Seminary formation. Fr Chemello joined the team of the Seminary and the pastoral team working with the refugees of South Sudan. Fr Mario Busellato, from the community of Moyo (Uganda), was already taking care of the Kuku refugees in Pakele/Adjumani area since Kajo-Kaji was abandoned in 1988.

Reflecting on the Nairobi meeting and the situation of the *New Sudan Group* one really senses that what was happening was something beyond sheer stubbornness or just the desire of keeping the former set-up at any cost. There was much more involved, due to having experienced the severe hardships of the South Sudanese people being scattered everywhere.

What was involved was precisely that burning love issuing from The Heart of Jesus through our founder, Daniel Comboni, together with the dedication of all the confreres throughout the history of the evangelization of Sudan. Comboni would have shouted *either Nigrizia or death*: we surely never considered, even while far away, of making a mockery of this clear-cut motto, but in this precise moment of the meeting the meaning was the same and the fire of love linking us with the past could not be betrayed. Thanks be to God, with the approval of the General Council, it prevailed.

Juba Events

Throughout the year 1990, people were not allowed to leave the town and were kept as human shields by the Khartoum government army. Due to the grave situation of famine, several appeals were made to international agencies and governments by various Church organizations. H.G. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro appealed on behalf of the Catholic Church, and the Comboni Missionaries did their part, as best they could.

At the beginning of 1991, the Procure of the Comboni Missionaries in Juba tried to find ways of helping the situation. Mr. Bob Koepp of the LWF (Lutheran World Federation), who knew the Combonis well and had even visited them at the Comboni House several times, was ready to collaborate and organize the airlift of all the food items donated. This was seen as a great opportunity. In October 1991, 17 flights of Boeing cargo planes full of relief items were taken into Juba in two rounds.

The distribution was organized to include the Parishes, the Minor and Major Seminary, the Religious Congregations, the displaced people's

camps and some others places. The lorry of the Comboni procure was used to distribute the food items to the beneficiaries.³³⁸

Human rights abuses by the government of Khartoum in Juba were almost routine and the critical point came during the 1991-92 school strike and civic struggle: many young people tried to escape from Juba and flee towards Uganda, at the risk of their lives. The arrested students were tortured in many different ways without mercy. Military intelligence was trying to get false statements from them, threatening them and using all kinds of methods, especially on those who refused to collaborate.³³⁹

Many young men and women of that time arrived also in Isoke Parish, in the *Liberated Areas*, where Fr Chemello was the assistant Parish Priest, and were held for further orders in the compound of the SPLA. Bishop Paride Taban interceded for them with Dr John Garang and, except those who agreed to join SPLA, all the others were allowed to go to Uganda. What these youth were disclosing about the hardships they and the people of Juba were submitted to was beyond all telling.

Since the Catholic Church in Juba had a strong hold on the students of school, the Government concluded that all these upheavals and unrest were caused with the support and instigation of the Church Leaders. The Church Personnel, Priests, Religious, Sisters and other leaders decided to convene in the courtyard of St Joseph Parish and agree to take some action not be always targeted because of the wrongdoing of the Government.

The proposal was to organize a peaceful demonstration from St Joseph's Parish compound to the Government Ministries and there to hand over to the Governor a letter clarifying their position. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu, called by the group, was made aware of their plans. Due to the delicate situation he asked if they really wanted a public demonstration or if it were not better to leave the matter private and to hand over the letter to the Governor without a public demonstration.

Once the people confirmed they preferred the demonstration, the Archbishop allowed it. The demonstration was peaceful and prayerful and the letter was handed over to the Governor. A film was also taken by one of the participants as a record of the event. Once the demonstration ended, the Security people went to ask for that film, considered a sensitive item, to be handed over to them. Under strong pressure and threat the film was given

³³⁸ Witness of Bro Hans Ritterbecks, at the time, Provincial Bursar and Procurator.

³³⁹ Human Rights Watch: Civilian Devastation, Government abuses before and during the battle for Juba, 1992. (short summary). <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/sudan/>

them. It would cause the expulsion of those Comboni Missionaries who had participated.

In such a situation, Diocesan Priests covering higher responsibilities were also the target of the Government, especially with regard to Education in schools with the suspicion that behind the students' unrest and the demonstrations there was the instigation of the Catholic Church. This was what happened with the Vicar General Fr Constantino Pitya and the Secretary General Fr Nicholas Kiri.³⁴⁰

Arrested and taken to Khartoum they were put in high security cells, beaten and interrogated many times. Archbishop Paolino Lokudu Loro went to see them in prison and told the Security people that the longer the imprisonment was, the harder would be the reaction of people in Juba, but they did not listen. Their solicitor was Dr Abel Alier.

While in prison in Khartoum, in Juba the demonstrations of people and protests were mounting more and more, also with a lot of violence.

*“Juba civilians demonstrated on March 15, 16, and 17, to protest the arrests of the Priests. On 17 March tear gas was used to disperse the crowds. A fourteen-year-old boy, Francis, who was at the head of the crowd, died when the soldiers shot into the crowd. His body was carried to the church by the demonstrators.”*³⁴¹

The imprisonment went on for almost one month. Finally, they were literally chased out of the prison by the Officer who wanted to get rid of them. They had no money and did not know Khartoum, but they got a taxi and asked the driver to take them to the Catholic Cathedral.

As a consequence of the filming of the peaceful manifestation, the Expatriate Comboni Missionaries, MCCJ and CMS in Juba were ordered to leave for security reason and by 22 July, several Expatriate Missionaries had arrived in Nairobi.³⁴² Fr Mödi was still in Khartoum. Except for Fr

³⁴⁰ Fr Nicholas Kiri was, at the time, called “Adalla” but Arab people were normally writing and calling him “Abdallah”, thus, creating confusion of identity among Arabs and others who thought he was not a Catholic Priest. Tired of this, he asked the Authorities to change his name in the official documents to “Nicholas Kiri.”

³⁴¹ Human Rights Watch: Civilian Devastation, op. cit.

³⁴² *(In Italian)* 23 August, 1992, Nairobi Fr F. Chemello to Fr Filippi: "News from Juba: Bro Gelmini came out with 4 members of 'Nostra Famiglia'. They are here in Nairobi. Sr Eugenia, a Comboni Sister, is still in Kampala. Fr Bizzarro, Fr Riebe, Fr Sina, Fr Aranda, Fr Giuntoli, Bro Rossignoli, Bro Ragnoli and Fr Albino Adot Oryem remained in Juba. The first seven were given the order by the security to leave by August 23. For Fr Oryem no order came. They decided to leave only if forced. In this case Fr Oryem would remain as the person in charge for everything since Fr Mödi is in Khartoum. Also

Albino Adot Oryem, all the other Comboni Expatriates still remaining in Juba were forced to leave Juba within the same year, 1992. The complaint of H. G. Paolino Lukudu Loro to the Military Governor went practically unheard and had no effect.³⁴³

The military at this time were very agitated. While the SPLA was moving out of Torit and the Khartoum Army retaking possession of the city, in June 1992, the SPLA operation *Jungle Storm*, that was supposed to counter the *Seif al-Obuur*, invaded Juba. The SPLA task force moved swiftly into Juba city without alerting the government defences at Lulugu camp (unit) who were disarmed without any resistance and, unaware of the attack, most were killed in their beds.³⁴⁴

However, the capture of Juba failed because of several incidents that prevented the SPLA attackers from gaining full control and the lack of full support from the mechanized unit that went into swampy areas and were held up there. As a result, the operation had to be called off. The SPLA withdrew towards Nimule and the Government forces, backed up by the Mujahideen, tried to deliver the final blow to the SPLA, but their efforts were in vain as the SPLA blew up the bridge on the river Aswa cutting off the attack.

Nimule remained in the hands of SPLA forces which withdrew along the border of South Sudan. In the second half of 1992 and in 1993, the government army made great efforts to eradicate completely the SPLA from the South but, in the final stage, the whole operation failed. The Government held the towns and the SPLA held the countryside. *Seif al-Obuur* left the situation as ambiguous as ever and the campaign practically ended in complete failure.

The Juba attack prompted the Government to carry out cruel reprisals against the population in Juba, suspected to have cooperated in the SPLA attack. Prominent politicians like Major General Peter Cyril, former governor of Equatoria (1986-1988) and public figures like Fr David Tombe, a Catholic Priest of the Archdiocese of Juba were arrested and

5 Comboni Sisters were ordered to leave by August 23. (Sr Giulia, Sr Massima, Sr Azezet, Sr Miriam and Sr Faisa)."

³⁴³ Archdiocese of Juba, 18 August, 1992, Letter of Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro to His Exc. Military Governor of Equatoria State – Juba, Subject Matter: Order for Christian Missionaries to leave Juba, Our Ref. ADJ/ABO/86/AUG/1992. FSSPJ.
- 10 July, 1992 Sudan Council of Churches: attacks of SPLA 6/7 June and 6/7 July. Situation deteriorated. Civilian forced to leave their home, FSSPJ.

³⁴⁴ Arop Madut-Arop, op cit., pp. 305, 307, & ff.

detained. According to Amnesty International, very few of the arrested people came out alive.³⁴⁵

Wau and Raja situation

Wau town was completely locked and the activity was restricted within the town area. At the beginning of 1989, Bro Redaelli was appointed to the community of Wau as Development Coordinator and he also gave some assistance to the Diocesan Financial Administrator. Fr Agostino Bertolotti arrived too in Wau together with Bro Redaelli. He became Parish Priest of the Cathedral of Wau.

When in 1992 Bro Redaelli went to Italy on rotation, Bro Hans Ritterbecks took over but did not remain there long as he got sick. He went to Khartoum and then had to leave the country because he was one of the participants of the Juba demonstration.

Fr Penzo carried on with his routine but very important commitment in the field of formation of Catechists and Leaders at the Palica Centre. Fr Lorenzo Tomasoni, a medical doctor, was carrying on with his very much needed work in the clinics of Wau Diocese and Fr Antonio La Braca was living and working in Loko-Loko, a place where he had started an experience of insertion with the people.

He started promoting small Christian communities according to the AMECEA understanding, communities which would grow little by little in the three dimensions of *self-reliance*, *self-administration* and *self-propagation*. He himself had adopted a very simple life style and lived with the people.

Raja, the pastoral and educational work was proceeding normally, even though the confreres were very much affected by their isolation. The presence was very important and was of great encouragement to the people there and the Catholic schools were of great assistance to young people in their intellectual and religious formation.

By the end of 1992, the Expatriate Comboni Missionaries were present only in Wau and Raja since those in Juba had to move, either abroad or to Khartoum. The Postulancy, as well, was moved to Khartoum because St Paul's Major Seminary had been placed there. Fr Todd Riebe carried on as formator of the Postulancy, but after a few months he went back to the USA and Fr Francesco Debertolis took over the work.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 310

In Juba there remained only Fr Albino Adot Oryem, with the pastoral care of St Kizito Parish, started by Fr Sina in 1987, and the Provincial, Fr Abel Mödi, until the end of December 1992. From this date onwards, Fr Mödi was asked to continue as a Delegate of the Superior General and, with his Council, to be in charge of the confreres belonging to South Sudan Province until further notice.

At the end of 1992, the *New Sudan Group* was composed of 11 confreres (including Mgr Mazzolari, Apostolic Administrator of Rumbek), 9 Priests and 2 Brothers. It was a very unsettled time because of the unforeseen developments of the war, with great concern for all that was taking place. The New Sudan Group was then present in three Dioceses: Torit, Rumbek and Tombura/Yambio. The strategy was: ***Out through one door - in through another one.*** With this strategy, some helpful procedures in the work were: ***communion, adaptation, simplicity of service, safety, mobility.***

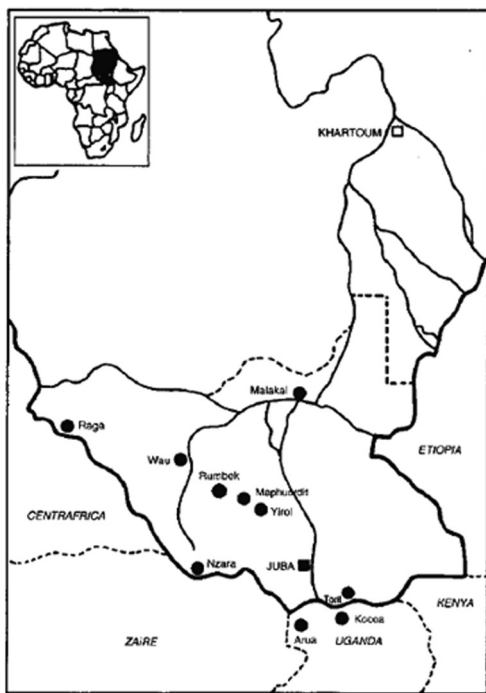
In Torit Diocese, Bishop Paride Taban had to move his seat from Torit to Nimule, then from Nimule to Narus. Yei Diocese experienced the same situation. Rumbek Diocese moved from Rumbek to Yirol, then to Nairobi or Arua (in Uganda), while carrying on exploring other safe locations within and outside the diocesan boundaries. Meanwhile, after the confreres left Yirol they made themselves available for the service of the young refugees coming from Ethiopia who walked to Narus, then to Lokichokio (Kenya) and finally to Kakuma Refugee Camp.

After the meeting in Nairobi in June, 1992, the work was done in the refugee camps of Kakuma, Kenya, (under the responsibility of Rumbek Diocese) and St Mary's Seminary in Kococa (Pakele/Adjumani) Northern Uganda, (under the responsibility of Torit Diocese). In Nzara, in Western Equatoria, Tombura /Yambio Diocese, the situation was holding and the confreres were carrying on normally with their pastoral, educational and catechetical commitments, although sometimes disturbed by the occasional Antonov³⁴⁶ making raids and indiscriminately bombing the population.

At the time, the most affected and unsettled Diocese was that of Rumbek because of its geographical position, with no borders with neighbouring countries. The only way of accessing its territories was by

³⁴⁶ The "Antonov" is a Russian cargo plane used by Khartoum Air Force as a bomber. It was extremely inaccurate and its use was to create panic among the civilian population because it would just kill people indiscriminately. It was carrying and dropping conventional bombs, but frequently also barrels full of explosive and nails to be dropped indiscriminately.

plane from Wilson Airport, Nairobi, or from Uganda by land, war conditions permitting. This required keep up to date with the security situation.



Situation of the missions in South Sudan in 1993

After Yiroi was abandoned, from 19 May to 2 June, 1992, Mgr Mazzolari and Fr Pellerino visited some locations inside the geographical boundaries of Rumbek Diocese,³⁴⁷ but the situation was still too unpredictable to make sound decisions. Another attempt was made from 27 November, to 3 December, 1992, where Fr Chemello joined Mgr Mazzolari from Kocoo, Northern Uganda, during the visit to *Aguran place* with Fr Riva.³⁴⁸ In *Aguran* they found Fr Dominic Matong and Fr Raphael Riel (Diocesans) who had temporarily settled there.

³⁴⁷ 15 June, 1992, Mgr C. Mazzolari: reports of his journey to Aluaklual (*Aguran*) with Fr Pellerino.

³⁴⁸ 06 December, 1992, Report by Mgr Caesar Mazzolari on the journey into Southern Sudan with Fr Francesco Chemello and Fr Mario Riva from 27 November to 03 December, 1992.

Due to the dangerous situation of Aguran on the main road, it was decided to shift the Mission centre to Mapuordit, around 5 km south of Aguran. Fr Pellerino and Fr Riel were assigned there but, unfortunately, Fr Dominic Matong died around that time. This was the first real commitment within the Diocesan boundaries of Rumbek in South Sudan after the aborted one of Yirol, while continuing with further explorations of other safe locations.³⁴⁹ Fr Pellerino ended his work with the refugees in Kakuma at the end of December, 1992, and joined Fr Riel (Diocesan) already in Mapuordit.

Fr Michael Barton, assigned to the New Sudan Group on 10 February, 1993, was also assigned to the community of Mapuordit where he arrived on 17 March, 1993.³⁵⁰ Fr Barton was asked to start immediately with a primary school. He took it to heart and in no time the students could see good results.³⁵¹ Fr Mario Riva and Bro Ottorino Gelmini, based in Arua (West Nile, Uganda) took care of Yondu IDP (*Internally Displaced People*) Camp near to Kaya border place as a new commitment of Rumbek Diocese.

New Sudan group March, 1993: personnel and communities³⁵²

The Comboni personnel and communities in March, 1993, consisted of 12 confreres (including *Mgr Cesare Mazzolari, Apostolic Administrator of Rumbek*), 9 Priests, 3 Brothers, 4 communities and Fr Ukelo, Vicar General of Torit Diocese.

³⁴⁹ (*In Italian*) 06 December, 1992, Fr Chemello to Fr Pellerino: "I returned yesterday from the trip to Aguran with *Mgr Mazzolari* and *Fr Riva*. *Mgr Mazzolari* has already sent to Rome the report of the trip ... Briefly, he thinks of two stations: one in YONDU CAMP (49,000 people with 2,000 children of school age) (15 km from Kaya) mostly from Bor, Kongor and Yirol, - it is in Yei Diocese, (Bishop Ercolano Lado) *Fr Peter Dada* is in favour, and one in Aguran-Mapuordit (5 km south of Aguran)."

³⁵⁰ Rome 21 October, 1992, Fr Filippi: Barton Michael assigned 01 January, 1993 - Group of *Mgr Mazzolari*. (He arrived in Nairobi on 5 March and in Mapuordit on 17 March, 1993).

³⁵¹ In 1993 Fr M. Barton started with the first year of primary and by 1998 he would have students ready to start the first year of secondary school. He really made the students work hard, with purpose and good results. In this way the most intelligent ones were able to advance sooner to the upper stages. In Rumbek Diocese it was the most prominent school of the time.

³⁵² Date 10 March, 1993, Status of Personnel: Report of Fr Chemello to Fr Filippi Gen. Council, Roma.

T/Yambio Diocese

Nzara Community: Fr Elvio Cellana (Superior), Fr Iginio Benini,³⁵³
Fr José Luis Martínez Acevedo, Bro Valentino Fabris.

Torit Diocese

Pakele/Kocoa Community: Fr Francesco Chemello (*Coordinator of the New Sudan Group*) and Bro Domenico Cariolato.³⁵⁴

Rev Fr Joseph Ukelo Yala was the Vicar General of Torit Diocese with residence in Chukudum and Fr Hector Ayon Oyiamute was engaged in an experience outside the community attached to the Diocese of Torit from 1992 to 1996³⁵⁵

Rumbek Diocese (Mgr Cesare Mazzolari)

Aguran Community (Mapuordit): Fr Giuseppe Pellerino and Fr Michael Barton

Yondu Community: Fr Mario Riva and Bro Ottorino Gelmini³⁵⁶

The years 1993 and 1994 were spent in search of possible new locations with improved security and in consolidating the already existing ones: what the *New Sudan Group* needed most was an increase in personnel. Since the General Council was not very sure of how to proceed in that volatile situation, it was of utmost importance to show concretely that the set-up of our commitments allowed *enough normality* in community life and the possibility of intercommunity meetings. New locations had to be sought and set up with this in mind.

The visit of the Superior General in January 1994, after frequent reports about the situation on the ground and the trips of the Coordinator visiting confreres and communities within the *Liberated Areas*, by plane or by car, was concluded with the meeting of Nzara. The fact that he himself could travel within Sudan unhindered gave him personal knowledge and assurance that the situation *was difficult but also manageable*. This was a most important factor for the assignment of new personnel.

For Rumbek Diocese, the 1994 was a year spent searching for new locations, within and outside the boundaries of the Diocese, especially in

³⁵³ 23 November, 1992, Fr Benini was very sick and urgently went back to Italy.

³⁵⁴ Arrived on 17 September, 1992 in Pakele, stayed until December, 1993, then went for a Sabbatical.

³⁵⁵ Fr Hector Ayon: 1992 returned to New Sudan, before the capture of Torit he went to Chukudum for Easter, after Easter, Chukudum Nagichot Ngatuba Lokichokkio on foot and then to Nairobi. In 1993 he was in Loa with Fr Julio Ida, Yohannes Le Vachier and Fr Leo Traynor. Then in Parajok, Lobonne (care of the IDP) up to 1996.

³⁵⁶ (Rome G. Filippi) After March, 1993, Bro Gelmini Ottorino will go with the group of Mgr C. Mazzolari

the important historic missionary centres. Mgr Mazzolari's desire was to reactivate them. Though this was a noble cause, since those places were very well known to Khartoum, they were regularly targeted and bombed by its military planes and highly unsafe. With deep regret, it was clear that a different method had to be followed for safety reasons.

Among the happy events of the two years 1993 and 1994 was the wonderful visit of Pope John Paul II to Uganda, between 5 and 10 February, 1993, including a visit to Gulu on 6 February, enabling the Seminarians of St Mary Seminary of Kocoo and other Sudanese refugees to be present. In 1994, there was the visit by Mgr Mazzolari and Fr Chemello to Marial Lou, (Rumbek Diocese) during the first half of October, and the decision to make it the location of a new Parish. Fr Benjamin Madol (Diocesan) had already been there since September and Comboni personnel would have then joined him later on.

The Eucharistic Congress for the *Liberated Areas*, which took place in Nzara (Tombura/Yambio Diocese) at the end of the same month of October, bringing together all the Dioceses of the *New Sudan*, was the other great and happy event at Church level. The representatives had to fly to Nzara by plane and were not many, but it was an important historical event full of spiritual and human meaning because all the Dioceses of the *Liberated Areas* were present. It was a powerful sign of the encouraging presence of Jesus among his *suffering people* on their journey, a vivid sign of hope and of communion with the passion of Jesus, while waiting in faith for his resurrection.³⁵⁷

The year 1994 ended with the Plenary Assembly of the *New Sudan Group*, which took place at the Carmelite House, Langata, Nairobi, from 12 to 19 December. It was there that the unexpected news arrived that the *New Sudan Group* had been promoted to a Delegation starting from 1 January, 1995. The joy this occasioned at the end of the year does not need to be described.

³⁵⁷ A missionary experience in a context of war, op. cit., pp. 37-50.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION From 1995 to 1998 Delegation Superior: Fr FRANCESCO CHEMELLO

The Circumscription with its headquarters in Nairobi

The new Delegation of South Sudan was the continuation of the *New Sudan Group*, which was juridically under the former Province of South Sudan in Juba (Government areas) and was now suppressed at the same time. It is also the continuation of the same South Sudan Province, but with its headquarters in Nairobi because, as the *New Sudan Group*, its field of work was in the SPLA/M *Liberated Areas*, with a logistic base in Nairobi since 1990.

The New Sudan Group becomes a Delegation

On 1 January, 1995, the New Sudan Group became the *Delegation of South Sudan*³⁵⁸. This new juridical set-up also implied a new understanding of the fields of work within Sudan itself. With this option of the General Superior and his Council all the territories of the South under the control of the Government of Khartoum were entrusted to the care of the Comboni Missionaries of *Khartoum Province*, while the *Delegation of South Sudan* was to take care of the Sudanese people in the *Liberated SPLA/M and*

³⁵⁸ - 15 October, 1994, General Council: Decree of Erection of the Delegation of South Sudan.

- 15 October, 1994, Document Concerning the creation of the Delegation of S. Sudan.

- 14 December, 1994 Fr Alois Weiss to Fr Francesco Chemello. The Superior General: Appoints Fr Francesco Chemello as the Delegate for South Sudan.

- 1 January, 1995. Juridical start of the Delegation.

- From the "Bollettino" no. 186, 1995.

SSIM/A Areas.³⁵⁹ Even the territories in the North of Sudan under SPLA were falling within the jurisdiction of the new *Delegation of South Sudan*, based in Nairobi, like the Nuba Mountains and the refugee camps abroad.

The two *Administrations* of Fr Francesco Chemello and then Fr Ezio Bettini carried on using Nairobi as a logistic base, *in exile*, in order to be able to reach, by air or by land, the various locations in the *Liberated Areas*. The CPA *Comprehensive Peace Agreement* of 9 January, 2005, made possible the return to the original seat of the former Province, the town of Juba, after a couple of years still in Nairobi.

The erection of the new *South Sudan Delegation* was a new phase and a more mature stage of the *New Sudan Group*. Many situations on the ground had changed, the instability of the past years was no longer so critical, the hope of having more confreres assigned to the Delegation was a real possibility and to have a proper juridical status was a positive element for the planning and for decision making in the different areas of commitment.

This does not mean that the journey had just become easy; on the contrary, it was still difficult and with many challenges ahead, though with the experience of the past, it was a bit like a breath of fresh air opening up new opportunities. It was most important to give more time and space to look into *the quality of missionary life* the new Delegation was to assume in the field of evangelization and community life.

Another opportunity was a better sharing of responsibilities through the Secretariats, especially those of Evangelization, On-going formation, Animation and Finance at the service of Integral Evangelization (Evangelization and Human Promotion) and helping confreres to see to their Ongoing Formation, so not to fall into sterile activism.

The search for new strategies

The search for new strategies had four basic concerns: first was the safety of the location chosen; the second that it should be easily accessible by air or land for evacuation without the risk of being trapped; the third was related to Comboni Community requirement; the fourth was to choose, as far as possible, places within the boundaries of the Dioceses.

This policy had its own value especially in view of younger personnel who could not be just thrown into the work without proper care. In fact, that was the reason why, in the previous *New Sudan Group*, Fr Filippi, the

³⁵⁹ SPLA/M (Sudan People Liberation Army/Movement (Mainstream Torit Group).
SSIM/A South Sudan Independence Movement /Army (Nassir Group).

General Councillor for Africa, made it clear that no young confrere would be assigned by the General Council until the logistic situation appeared good enough regarding safety and community life.

This policy became a particular issue of friction with the group of Rumbek Diocese. Mgr Mazzolari was a *big-hearted man* with the tendency to look for places, as one would say, among the *poorest and most abandoned* people. However, these were also the most dangerous and critical areas for safety and evacuation and therefore unsuitable for the development of a manageable strategy for the *South Sudan Delegation*.

This would have hindered the establishment of a viable plan that would encourage the appointment of younger personnel to South Sudan, and also to the Diocese of Rumbek. In a couple of instances our confreres in remote places such as Nyamlel,³⁶⁰ and Pariang³⁶¹ really ran the risk of being cut off by the militia or government army with no hope of being rescued. Moreover, all these places were outside the territory of Rumbek Diocese.

It was clear that this planning, however generous, would have led nowhere. The only way of assisting those places was by *safari* and then returning to safer locations. This was in fact the suggestion made to him concerning carrying out the safe pastoral care of those areas in safety.

Commitments of the Delegation

Commitments with the Dioceses at the beginning of 1995:

Torit Diocese:

Narus Parish among the Toposa people: started in November, 1994.

Pakele/Kocoa, among the refugees in Northern Uganda: started in July, 1992.

Rumbek Diocese:

Mapuordit, among the Dinka people: started in February, 1993.

³⁶⁰ At the end of 1994, Fr J. Pellerino and Bro D. Cariolato came out alive from Nyamlel only because of the firmness with which the local SPLA commander ordered them to follow another road than the usual one. "German Agro-Action", instead, had one person killed because of an ambush by the militia along that road. In case of evacuation, the planes would have had to carry a drum of kerosene and refuel on the ground putting at risk the whole operation.

³⁶¹ Pariang was alternatively held by different military factions and far too insecure for the permanent presence of a community. This is what happened also with CCM Doctors from Turin who were captured by government militia and taken to Khartoum, bringing to an end the work of CCM in the area. see: "THE ARAKIS PERIOD: 1992-98"
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/sudan1103/11.htm>

Marial Lou, among the Dinka people: started in September, 1994.

Tombura/Yambio Diocese:

Nzara Parish, among the Zande people: restarted in December, 1971, and again in November, 1991.

To these commitments inherited from the *New Sudan Group* **Agang Rial** was added in mid-1995 and the **Nuer Project** towards the end of that year. The new house for the Delegation was also a main concern of 1995 and became available at the beginning of September, **Jacaranda House**.

A particular mention goes to the three commitments in Rumbek Diocese, Mapuordit, Marial Lou and Agang Rial, that Fr Filippi and Fr Casillas (General Councillors) had the opportunity to make a visit from the end of December 1995 to 13 January, 1996. These three mission stations were accessible by car (and by air) and could communicate with each other and have meetings among themselves without much difficulty. Having themselves travelled by car together with the Delegate and Fr Bizzarro, and having witnessed the accessibility, it was like an injection of confidence opening up to future assignment of younger personnel.

Agang Rial

The need of a third commitment in Rumbek Diocese was felt and accepted. A couple of places were sought for and surveyed by Mgr Mazzolari and Fr Chemello, one with a very good airstrip but too near to Wau, with the risk that a Government military command might place it in danger, moreover, outside the boundary of Rumbek Diocese. Another, Agang Rial, nearer to Rumbek, more difficult in the rainy season but more secure. The final choice was Agang Rial and Fr Giuseppe Pellerino and Bro Domenico Cariolato were assigned there in May 1995.

The Nuer Project

Of major relevance in the field of Evangelization was the issue of *the Nuer Request*. The Upper Nile Area inhabited by Nuer People was historically known as the place of the Presbyterian Church since the times of the *British Mission Spheres*. Nobody among us was aware of a strong Catholic presence in those areas, since no Missionaries, nor Diocesan Priests were present, except in Bentiu town.

It came to be known when two catechists, a certain Joseph Pal Mut and John Kuok Baluang in 1993 went abruptly to Nairobi, with the backing of Cmdr. Riek Machar Teny Durgon, who facilitated a trip by air for them to

Nairobi to ask for Priests. They were directed to the Comboni New People Media Centre where they met Fr Paul Donohue and Fr Renato Kizito Sesana, who organized a meeting with Bishops and other Priests of other Religious Congregations so that their request could be heard.

Nobody really believed the two envoys saying that in the Nuer land, there were many Catholic converts but they were able to convince the participants of the meeting to send somebody to visit them. In October 1993, Fr Kizito and Fr Donohue made themselves available to organize a trip to Leer to investigate the report. What they saw and experienced was not only beyond what they were told in Nairobi, but beyond all their expectations: indeed, it was true.

Articles were written by Fr Kizito and the situation became known also to the Delegation Superior, Fr Francesco Chemello, who could not do much for lack of personnel. However, in 1995, Bishop Paride Taban of the Torit Diocese, invited Fr Chemello and Sr Giovannina Zucca to visit Leer as well since he had already planned an Apostolic Visit to the Nuer. Fr Chemello was rather reluctant to accept because, having no personnel, the visit would have, perhaps, created illusions among the Nuer People. Finally, with fresh encouragement of Bishop Taban, he accepted.

With Bishop Taban there were: Fr Matthew Hauman, of the Mill Hill Fathers, Fr Chemello, Sr Zucca and Sr Maria Mazzocco (Comboni Sisters), and Sr Rita Scovia of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (MSMMC). A *Trackmark Ltd. Flight* was scheduled for Saturday, but was delayed until Sunday morning for mechanical reasons. That night the travellers had to be put up in the *Operation Lifeline Sudan OLS* camp in Lokichokio.

During the night Fr Chemello suffered a severe attack of gastric malaria with vomiting and diarrhoea. In that condition there was no way of thinking about a trip in a small Cessna Caravan II plane without toilet. He had already given up the idea of going when, searching for other things in the haversack found a big *Uchumi Supermarket* plastic bag. A sudden inspiration came to him. He went to the OLS toilet, took three rolls of toilet paper, unrolled them into the big plastic bag, made two holes for the legs and, lo and behold, a perfect baby nappy!

The trip was now safe and the arrival in Leer was extraordinary. A huge crowd of people was waiting expectantly at the airstrip. They burst into cries of joy with handshakes, songs and dances, the women with their traditional ululations and children running around everywhere. People had travelled from very distant places, like Waat and Akobo, on the border with Ethiopia, and for many days, to be present at this rare event with Bishop

Paride Taban. The gathering of people was so great that Bishop Taban asked Fr Hauman and Fr Chemello to help him in the administration of Confirmation.

After this extraordinary experience, it was clear what had to be done: **“We could not ignore their request”**. The General Council was asked if we could start planning something for the Nuer issue and, after receiving a positive answer, on 14 October, 1995, Bro Ritterbecks was assigned to **the Nuer Project** started by Bishop Paride Taban.

The plan was to start with a series of safaris (visits) of one or two weeks each. For contingent reasons the plan had to be changed and implemented only with the assignment of Fr Antonio La Braca to the Delegation in January 1996 and the opening of Leer Mission on 12 March, 1996.

Regarding the **Delegation House in Jacaranda Avenue**, Nairobi, with the erection of the Delegation it became clear that confreres could no longer stay at the Provincial House of Kenya. A separate house was necessary due to the increasing number of confreres. The proposal went to the General Council and the green light was given to search for it. The house had possibly to be located near to the Kenya Provincial House and Bethany House of Rumbek Diocese. After a long, prayerful search, finally it was found. Incidentally, it happened to be just at the last day of a Novena... A sign from above...?

Consolidation and new missions

During this period of time since the start of the new **South Sudan Delegation** in Nairobi, on 1 January, 1995, priority was given to consolidating the existing missions and starting new ones:

Torit Diocese: two commitments

1. **Kocoa**, *St Mary's Seminary* (Northern Uganda). Commitment in the refugee camps of Pakele-Adjumani, already started since July 1992. Confreres: Bro Mario Rossignoli (October, 1993) and Fr Alfredo Mattevi (Since April, 1994).
2. **Narus**, in the eastern part of Eastern Equatoria. New temporary seat of Torit Diocese and pastoral work among the Toposa People since the arrival of Fr Elia Ciapetti (November, 1994).

Tombura/Yambio Diocese: one commitment

Nzara, since November, 1991. Pastoral work, Palica Centre, Primary and Intermediate schools.

Confreres: Fr Cellana, Bro Fabris, Fr Martinez and Fr Horácio Ribeiro Rossas.³⁶²

Rumbek Diocese: three commitments

- 1 **Mapuordit**, with Fr Pellerino, Fr Barton, (Fr Raphael Riel – Diocesan Priest) and, on a temporary basis, Fr Claudio Lurati from 14 April until August, 1995.³⁶³
1. **Marial Lou**, with (Fr Benjamin Madol – Diocesan Priest as from September, 1994), Fr Riva (as from October, 1994), Fr Bizzarro (as from December, 1994). He was previously assigned to Mapuordit as from 29 October, 1994.
2. **Agang Rial**, with Fr Pellerino (July, 1995), Bro Cariolato (July 1995), Fr Stragapede (August, 1995)³⁶⁴.
 - Fr Kizito Sesana occasionally and for a limited period of time collaborated with Rumbek Diocese³⁶⁵.

Malakal Diocese under the care of Torit Diocese for the *Liberated Areas*: one commitment.

1. **The Nuer Project** - Bro Ritterbecks (14 October, 1995)

Nairobi (Kenya)

1. **The Delegation House** in Jacaranda Avenue.
Confreres: the Delegate Fr Chemello, Fr Polacchini, (Local Superior), Fr Zanardi and Bro Confalonieri (July, 1995).

In Basic Formation (end 1995)

- **Scholastics with temporary vows:**
 - Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi (Nairobi)
 - Aventore Jimmy Milla (Rome)
 - Bosco Anthony Mawa (Lima)
 - Martin Lako Mödi (Elstree).
- **Novitiate of Namugongo:**
 - Francis Okeny, Joseph Taban, Paul Idra

³⁶² Appointed starting from 01 July 1995. In NZARA until 01 July 1998.

³⁶³ Fr C. Lurati, from Mapuordit went to visit by car Agang Rial and Marial Lou. This was very important and it showed that, with good will, the three communities could plan regular meetings among themselves without any great problem.

³⁶⁴ Fr M. Stragapede: 25 August, 1995, appointment to Agang Rial.

³⁶⁵ Fr Renato Kizito Sesana: SS. 1995-1996

- 22 April, 1995, Fr Kizito asks Fr Fernando Colombo (Kenya Province) to work with Mgr C. Mazzolari for one year.

- 01 July, 1995 Fr D. Glenday, Sup. Gen. appoints him to SS. Delegation for Rumbek Diocese. SS. Delegation confirms the request on 20 July, 1995.

The South Sudanese confreres serving the mission in other Provinces at the start of the South Sudan Delegation, in January 1995, were:

- Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö (in Khartoum), Fr Joseph Ukelo Yala (in South Africa), Fr Albino Adot Oryem (in South Africa), Fr Peter Magalasi (in D.R. Congo).
- Fr Hector Ayon Oyiamute was *absent from community*, for an experience attached to the Diocese of Torit from 1992 to 1996.

The total number of confreres in the **South Sudan Delegation** working in the **Liberated Areas** of Sudan at the end of year 1995 was 19, including Mgr Mazzolari: 14 Priests and 5 Brothers.

At Church level we cannot forget the important event of the **Golden Jubilee of Priesthood** in the Sudan. In the **Liberated Areas** the SCBC Mini Conference³⁶⁶ decided that it had to be held together by the three Dioceses in Chukudum on 25 November, 1995, the feast of Christ the King. Celebrating his *Golden Jubilee* was Fr Jerome Bidai Siri, from T/Yambio Diocese, while Fr Hector Ayon was celebrating his *Silver Jubilee*. The Delegate and Bro Ritterbecks were present at the event.

Year 1996: looking ahead with confidence

Year 1995 ended with the first part of the visit of Fr Filippi and Fr Casillas (General Councillors) planned to end the 13 January, 1996, with their presence at the Delegation General Assembly. Regrettably, the death of Fr Filippi's mother ended his visit and only Fr Casillas remained until the end. This visit marked a real stage in the Delegation set-up because they could personally witness the situation, the risks, the attention put on security and the possibility of having the basic elements of a normal community life even for newly assigned younger confreres.

The horizon was now getting brighter and instilling more confidence in the hearts of everyone, both at Delegation and General Council level. Year 1996 had very important events in store, at Delegation and Institute level like the **Plenary Assembly of January, 1996**, the **opening of the community of Leer** among the Nuer, the **Beatification of Daniel**

³⁶⁶ SCBC Mini Conference: During the SCBC Plenary Assembly (The Sudanese Bishops were there for the AMECEA Conference) in Limbe, Malawi, 23 August-4 September, 1995, (*The SCBC Mini-Conference encompasses the three Dioceses of Torit, Tombura/Yambio, Rumbek, partially Yei and El Obeid Diocese in regard to the "Nuba Mountains*), decided that: "***The Golden Jubilee of Priesthood will be celebrated together by the 3 Dioceses in Chukudum on the 25th of November 1995, feast of Christ the King.***"

Comboni in Rome with the **celebration in Nzara** for the *Liberated Areas*, the **assignment of younger confreres**, the **visit of the Pro-Nuncio**, his Grace Archbishop Joseph E. Ender, the visit with Bishop Max Macram to explore the possibility of starting a commitment in **the Nuba Mountains**, possibly in Kauda. Finally, there was the issue of **Bilateral Agreements**.

Other events were more critical like the difficult situation which developed in **Mapuordit community** and the deterioration of the situation in **Congo** with the subsequent displacement of people, our confreres included, in South Sudan, Yambio area.

The Plenary Assembly of 1996 was the first since the erection of the Delegation. The Assembly planned for 1995 had taken place in the month of December 1994. It was a good occasion to give an overall evaluation of the progress made during the previous years of the New Sudan Group and of the first year of the Delegation of South Sudan.

This Assembly set the priorities of the Delegation, for the years to come, in the field of evangelization. Priority was given to areas and people most in need of first evangelization because, for different reasons, historical, political and social, they were the most abandoned as to human and religious care. In the evaluation it was gladly noticed that there was a greater thirst for, and openness to, the Word of God and to the presence of the Church among several ethnic groups which, in the past, had been rather reluctant to accept the Gospel message, like *the Toposa, the Nuer and the Dinka*.

In this context, Dinka, Nuer, Toposa and possibly the Nuba people, were becoming top priorities for the Delegate and his Council, hence, the year 1996 saw the strengthening of the work of evangelization among the Toposa people in the Diocese of Torit, the opening of the community of Leer and the visit to the Nuba people.

The opening of the community of Leer among the Nuer people was the first post-Assembly event. Its relevance is out of question for the reasons already given and the great desire of the Nuer People to have the presence of Missionaries among them. It became viable when the General Superior sent Fr Antonio la Braca (not yet assigned) to the Delegation. After a broad dialogue with the Delegation Superior on evangelization and inculturation approaches, he agreed to work among the Nuer people and was assigned to the Delegation.

Bro Hans D. Ritterbacks, already assigned to the former Nuer Project joined him as did Sr Giovannina Zucca, though the Comboni Sisters needed some more time to set up their community. After a preliminary visit to Leer to share and agree with the Catechists, the leaders and people on the basic

reasons of their evangelizing presence, the final agreement was reached and the community officially started on 12 March 1996.³⁶⁷

Later on, Bro Raniero Iacomella was assigned to the SS. Delegation on 1 July, 1996, and to Leer as from 1 September, 1996. Also Fr Fernando González Galarza was assigned to the SS. Delegation as from 1 July, 1996, and to Leer on 24 October of the same year. The presence in Leer and the Nuer issue was now, happily, a reality.

The Beatification: the most important event at Institute level was the Beatification of our Founder Daniel Comboni. Now, if such an event was so important for the whole Comboni Institute, one can imagine how great its relevance was for Sudan and South Sudan. In the *Liberated Areas*, great efforts were made so that Priests, Religious, Lay People and Youth might have the chance to be present personally in Rome. The great challenges were the cost and the immigration requirements due to the lack of proper documents. Both these difficulties were overcome with the generosity of donors and by closely liaising with the immigration offices.

Regarding the celebration in the *Liberated Areas*, in Nzara, everything was organized properly with the presence of the Superior General, Fr David Glenday and Bro Guillermo Casas (General Councillor), Sr Libanos Ayele CMS (General Councillor), the Delegate of the South Sudan Delegation and the Provincial of the Comboni Sisters in South Sudan. Tombura/Yambio Diocese and the two Comboni communities of Nzara (MCCJ and CMS) worked hard on the logistics.

The Local Church in the *Liberated Areas* was represented by Mgr Joseph Gasi, (Bishop of T/Yambio), Mgr Max Macram (El Obeid Diocese/Nuba) and Mgr Cesare Mazzolari of Rumbek Diocese with Priests and Lay people. It was stressed that the true *Sons and Daughters* of Comboni are the people of the Local Church of the Sudan, although Mgr Comboni is the direct founder of the two missionary Institutes, the *Comboni Missionaries* and the *Comboni Missionary Sisters*.

Historically, however, the two Institutes of the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ) and of the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS), were the

³⁶⁷ **Daniel Kai Liah** H/Catechist of the Catholic Christian community of LEER to the Delegate. "We have already received your letter on 20/02/1996, the Christian community of Leer and Upper Nile as whole very well appreciated what you have done for them, we really give you our thanks (and) to almighty God who answered our great desire. And also to Fr Francesco, because you represented our needs to your people (the) Comboni Missionaries. ...We really appreciate and welcome the visit you promised before the month of May. May God lead you in peace."

instrument of the transmission of the Gospel of Jesus to the Sudan, through their hard work and dedication, so the celebration of the ritual of the *Handing over of the Gospel* from the hands of our Superior General, Fr David Glenday, representing all the dreams of Comboni for Africa, into the hands of Bishop Joseph Gasi Abangite, representing the *beloved Sudanese Children of Comboni*, became a very meaningful occasion.

Also of great significance were the gifts presented by Bishop Joseph Gasi to the General Superior: a pair of *short Zande trousers* made from the bark of a special tree, together with other traditional objects symbolizing the culture of the people who received the Gospel. The gifts, a beautiful sign of the interaction between evangelizers and evangelized people, were a reminder that every culture has something useful, meaningful and important to offer.³⁶⁸

When people saw the gift of the *Zande trousers*, from the bark of a special tree, offered to Fr David Glenday, they all started laughing with delight for different reasons of their own. I was personally present and also joined in the cheerful occasion but with my own reasons linked to inculturation. In fact, I would just have wondered if the Superior General had really worn those rigid trousers how its feeling would have been... itching and chafing the skin, before they became soft and comfortable.

I thought: “*Maybe Bishop Joseph Gasi really meant to make him taste what ‘this challenge between evangelizers and evangelized people meant’ along the years...*” I took it really as a sign of a joyful, but at times also painful, relationship between *evangelizers and evangelized people*, and vice versa. We have seen in these pages how this relationship was always in need of a new reciprocal understanding: the touch of the true love of Jesus making it comfortable.

The assignment of younger confreres was already implied by the erection of the Delegation, but year 1996 witnessed the transition between *hope* and *reality*. New were beginning to be assigned to the Delegation, this meant a good renewal in spirit, ideas and action with great benefit towards new approaches in evangelization and community life and new enthusiasm for the commitments ahead.

The visit of the Pro-Nuncio to the *Liberated Areas* was not less meaningful than the visit of John Paul II to Gulu and Sudan. The courage of His Grace Archbishop Joseph E. Ender to go beyond Khartoum restrictions and visit the *Rebel Areas*, accompanied by Bishop Paride Taban, was truly significant. The people received him with great joy and

³⁶⁸ A missionary experience, op. cit., pp. 69-71.

enthusiasm, as if Pope John Paul II himself had come among them. Catholic and Protestants welcomed him: Fr Chemello was present at his coming to Narus, among the Toposa people.

The Nuba Mountains People were also among the foreseen priorities of the Delegation, for this reason in November, 1996, Fr Chemello joined Bishop Max Macram on the visit to the area to explore the possibility of having a commitment there, possibly in Kauda. However, this desire of the Delegation Council never materialized.

The issue of the **Bilateral Agreements**, between the Ordinaries and the Combonis, was undertaken at the invitation of the General Council who thought it was appropriate to start the whole process. It was a very important but also a delicate issue. Taking into account the difficulties it went through during the former South Sudan Province, it could not be expected to be an easy one at this point in the Delegation history. Nonetheless, for a good and smooth relationship between Delegation and Local Church it was of utmost importance. The Delegate, then, started presenting to the Bishops the topic to be drawn up in dialogue.

Year 1996 had a couple of critical situations to be faced, one in **Mapuordit community** which involved the local SPLA Commander and the Comboni community, creating a rather serious situation of tension. Thanks be to God it was defused with the help and intervention of higher SPLA and Church authorities. Then there was the deterioration of the situation in **Congo** with the result that the confreres from that side had now to take refuge in Southern Sudan, Yambio area.

Assemblies, Evangelization and Formation 1995-1998

The period of time between 1995 and 1998 was much more stable than the previous years and gave the chance to the Delegation's members to better prepare the Annual Assemblies both in their planning and content, improving their quality and tackling very important issues which previously which could not be tackled in the fields of Evangelization and community life. The Plenary Assembly of 1996 was organized by the Delegation Superior together with Fr Martinez, in charge of the Secretariat of Evangelization,³⁶⁹

In this context of evangelization, special relevance was given to the issue of the Catechumenate, the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults), how the pastoral programme was carried out, what type of

³⁶⁹ Questionnaire prepared by Fr Chemello and Fr Maartinez, 8 November, 1995. FSSPJ.

Catechumens there were, their age and gender, its duration, the frequency of meetings, their content and the methods. Co-operation with communities of Sisters, of other Religious and Local Clergy and with the Lay Missionary Personnel and the NGOs, was another important aspect.

Of particular relevance for everybody was the *African Synod* of 1994 and the attention placed on how to evangelize as a community, how to keep our Founder Daniel Comboni's legacy alive in the year of his Beatification.

The year 1997 was marked by the General Chapter in Rome. This event engaged the Delegation to reflect and, for the first time, to send its report following the outline of the Chapter Acts of 1991 focusing on *Mission-Charism-Charism-Mission* and the five paths for the fulfilment of the purpose: Comboni Missionary spirituality, the Comboni Missionary community, Basic and on-going formation, fields of action in the missions and Comboni Missionary methodology.

The report considered: firstly the integration of our specific spirituality which, in spite of the progress made, was still a challenge (CA 25-26 and Report 24, 8); Secondly, that there was a certain resistance to sharing and making the community a place of reciprocal human support (no.130); Thirdly, that there was a huge discrepancy between the formative proposals and practical life (nos. 159, 165); Fourthly, that the priority was still Africa and the peoples not yet evangelized (nos. 6-7) but, in such a context, other areas were considered, as already mentioned in the previous Chapter, such as *the outskirts of metropolises, youth, refugees, emergencies, the world of communication, training of leaders and Islam* (one of the great challenges to missionary activity).

Then, other *Nigritia* situations in other continents were mentioned such as the *African-Americans, indigenous peoples, the inhabitants of the big city suburbs in America; peoples not yet evangelized in Asia and immigrants in Europe and North America* (no. 8, 58). Finally, the fact that the Comboni missionary methodology was constantly challenged by the changing situations in which we were living and that Missionary Animation had a special place in the Comboni method of evangelizing, as a way to open up the Local Church, even in its infancy (no. 99), to *ad gentes*, communion and cooperation with other Churches (no. 100-101).³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ The Comboni Missionaries, an outline history, op. cit., pp. 539-544.

- Fr Mariano Tibaldo, L'evoluzione dei contenuti, delle modalità e del termine 'evangelizzazione ad gentes' nei Capitoli Generali dal 1969 al 2009, the XV General chapter, pp. 59-70; ambiti e orizzonti, p. 65. <http://segretariato-evangelizzazione-mccj.over-blog.com/2013/11/evangelizzazione-ad-gentes-e-i-capitoli-general-mccj-Evangelization-ad-gentes-and-the-general-chapters-mccj.html>

A quite interesting comment from a former General Superior, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni on the report to the XV General Chapter from the *New Sudan* (Delegation) read:

*“Here is the report to the Chapter of the development of the New Sudan. I have chosen to report it as the most interesting development in our missions during these years and the one that recalls Blessed Daniel Comboni in a special way. Moreover, many places now are not much more developed than they were at the time of Blessed Comboni.”*³⁷¹

Year 1998 started with the Plenary Assembly in Nairobi on the main theme of the 15th General Chapter of 1997, **“To start afresh from mission”**. Preceded by the Delegation retreat guided by Fr Thomas Leyden (SVD) at the Dimesse Sisters of Karen, from 5 to 12 January, the Assembly continued from January 14 to 21 at Jacaranda Avenue Delegation House: a lot of adaptation was needed because of lack of proper space and facilities.

A **“Fresh start from mission”** was what was needed in the Delegation, that had now acquired a consistent number of young confreres, around the following topics: community life and spirituality; community style; finances and projects; mission methodology; human promotion in emergency situations; relationships with the Local Church; places of presence; issues of human rights; of justice; of poor means; etc. The presence in the Nuer land and its mission style was also a new challenge.

Fr Guido Oliana MCCJ, from the Uganda Province and a Chapter member, was the facilitator and Fr Nunez Gonzalez J. A. and Bro Umberto Martinuzzo, General Councillors were also present at this Assembly.

Important Events in the Delegation

The year 1997 was especially marked with several joyful events in the Delegation. At world Catholic Church level there was the preparation of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 throughout the year of Jesus Christ (1997) and that of the Holy Spirit (1998). There was the assignment of Bro Armando González Ramos to the South Sudan Delegation on 1 July, 1997 and then to Narus, the first professions of Bro Francis Okeny, Bro Joseph Taban and Sc Paul Idra: at Namugongo, on 10 May, 1997 and the perpetual profession of Fr Michele Stragapede at the same venue together with the other Novices/Scholastics.

³⁷¹ The Comboni Missionaries, an outline history, op. cit., pp. 552-554.

The series of final professions and ordinations of young South Sudanese confreres was truly remarkable: the perpetual profession and the Diaconate of Scholastic Bosco Mawa Anthony and his ordination to the Priesthood and assignment to the Uganda Province; the Priestly ordinations of Fr Louis Okot at Iboni (Lopit) Sudan on 25 May, 1997, of Fr Aventore Jimmy Milla in Robidire Refugee Centre (Adjumani) Northern Uganda, and of Fr Samuel Juma (Khartoum Prov.) at Yambio.

Fr Louis Okot was then assigned to Peru from 1 July, 1997, Fr Aventore Jimmy Milla was assigned to Malawi /Zambia and Fr Samuel Juma was assigned to Mexico. Fr Joseph Ukelo, working in the Province of South Africa since 1995, celebrated his *Silver Jubilee* of ordination in Narus in 1997 (Ordained on 23 April, 1972). In July, 1997, three Comboni Sisters began their presence in Leer: Sr Giovannina Zucca, Sr Maddalena Virgis and Sr Lorena Morales.

At communications level, the Government of Kenya gave permission to set up a radio base station in Jacaranda House, Nairobi, with the name CN (Charlie-November = Comboni Nairobi) and a mobile radio to be installed in the car of the Delegate: frequency 7512.5 L.S.B.³⁷² This assured a radio link with our communities in South Sudan and Kococa (Uganda).

A positive stage was also reached in Vocation Promotion and the search for the location of the Postulancy of the South Sudan Delegation was proceeding well.

The joyful and meaningful events which took place among the Radical Members of the Delegation, Novices, Brothers and Scholastics were all fruits of the former South Sudan Province in Juba. The new Delegation inherited the benefits of the hard work done previously in Basic Formation and worked hard, as well, to accompany them to good conclusion.

Unfortunately, together with gladness there was also sorrow: the very sad event of the death of Scholastic Victor Duku in Nairobi. He was in his last year of Scholasticate, he had spent some time in Nairobi Hospital, but his health continued to deteriorate. In his final months he was looked after in the Delegation House. Bro Raniero Iacomella and a nurse from Nairobi took care of Victor Duku with real love in the last weeks of his life. All the Jacaranda community were united in accompanying him. He died in Jacaranda House, Nairobi, on 24 July, 1997.

³⁷² New Sudan, 25 June, 1997, Fr Chemello to Confreres, permission of Ke.Go. of setting up radio base in Nairobi. FSSPJ.

The issue of the Postulancy

As already stated, the Basic Formation was inherited by the Delegation from the former South Sudan Province in Juba. However, young people applying for Comboni Missionary life were always followed up. Bro Mario Rossignoli, at St Mary's Seminary in Kocoa, was chosen to take care of them in the refugee camps of Pakele/Adjumani and was holding regular meetings with them.

Since the South Sudan Delegation was unable to start its own Postulancy, it had to organize it in collaboration with the Province of Uganda or Kenya, at least for some years to come. The students were mainly coming from the refugee camps in Uganda so the Delegate tried to contact the Vocations Director, Fr Luciano Fulvi, the formators of the Postulancy and the Provincial of Uganda. It became evident that there were several difficulties: one was the level of study: "*A*" level standard and with a high success rate, the other was the different style of accompaniment in Vocations Promotion and also other reasons.

The matter was followed up by the Delegate and put on the agenda to be discussed in the Plenary Assembly of January 1998. The suggestion was to contact the Province of Kenya as well, given the fact that, in their curriculum, they were taking in students with "*O*" Level exams. Both possibilities were kept opened to discussion, but the Kenya Province seemed the more likely choice.

Year 1998 and commitments

Year 1998 started well but the situation became critical, later on for the following reasons: Marial Lou Mission experienced a serious famine aggravated by many displaced Dinka people who had fled from Wau after Cmdr. Kerubino Kwanyin Bol³⁷³ tried to capture the town and the Khartoum Government Army retaliated against all the Dinka population in Wau. Leer had to be evacuated because of the fighting of Cmdr. Paulino Matib against the group of Dr Riak Machar Teny. Finally, Fr Chemello had to go back to Italy for surgery.

³⁷³ Kerubino Kwanyin Bol, after the Bor mutiny of Battalion 105, which erupted in March 1983, went through various vicissitudes and disciplinary sanctions in the SPLA. He was held in a series of SPLA detention centres, in prolonged arbitrary incommunicado detention for alleged coup plotting. He escaped and joined Riek Machar's faction and later created his own force in Gogrial, a garrison town in Bahr El Ghazal. Since 1994 he was also allied with the government of Sudan. See Human Rights Watch, *Famine in Sudan*, pp. 14-15. [Kerubino's Background Leading up to Wau](#)

In the first part of 1998, the Delegate contacted the various Ordinaries in order to find out what could be finalised before the end of his term of office and, after he was discharged from hospital on 7 July, 1998, he continued to visit them to check what stage the topics discussed before his departure had reached and to present those matters to the Delegation Council for final consideration and approval at the last meeting of the Delegation Council. The commitments at the end of the year 1998 were:

Torit Diocese

Toposa area: about a second commitment in the Toposa area, Bishop Paride Taban had suggested a place somewhere near *Fort Loweli*, but he had still to decide how to implement it, so the decision had to be postponed and passed on to the new Delegation Administration. However, a young confrere, Fr Mitiku Habte Cheksa, was assigned on 31 October, 1998. The work with the Kocoa refugees, instead, was to continue as usual.

Rumbek Diocese

The three existing commitments of Mapuordit (pastoral and educational),³⁷⁴ Agang Rial (pastoral and educational), and Marial Lou (Pastoral), were to continue and were to be consolidated with new personnel: Fr Martinez, Bro Mariano Zonta and Fr Ayon.

As stated above, in 1998, in Marial Lou Mission there was a serious famine aggravated by many displaced Dinka people who had fled from Wau. The two communities of Comboni Missionaries, MCCJ and Comboni Missionary Sisters CMS, were deeply concerned and worked very hard to cope with the situation, distributing food delivered mostly by *World Vision*, and providing health care. Many people died. Even Fr Bizzarro suffered a serious infection after he drank infected water from a river in which there were decomposing human bodies.

Tombura/Yambio Diocese

Nzara: the PALICA centre was already handed over to the Diocese with the departure of Fr Martinez, and the handing over of the Parish was also under discussion. The proposal was to take up another Parish more in need of a missionary presence. The issue was under discernment with Bishop Joseph Gasi, who had to finalize the matter and give the Delegate his final proposal. At the Delegate's return from Italy, the Bishop was still

³⁷⁴ Nigrizia, 10/1997, Vita comboniana – Piccole scuole crescono a Mapuordit [SS] di p. Rafael Riel, *G. Bersella*, p. 64.

undecided with no final proposal. The whole matter had to be entrusted to the new Administration for future decisions.

Moreover, divergences between the OLS leadership in Lokichokio and the Governor of Western Equatoria, Mr. Abujon, made the issue even worse regarding evacuation plans since Yambio Diocese did not have any plans for emergency evacuation. Two confreres had to leave Nzara with the last OLS flight, Fr Cellana too had to be evacuated for health reason with an OLS Officials plane, only Fr Jeronimo Perez Caporal and Bro Valentino Fabris remained behind.

Malakal Diocese

The mission of Leer was still under the care of the Bishop of Torit, it was proceeding quite well and the members of the community were busy improving their Nuer language skills. Fr La Braca and Fr González Galarza were expanding pastoral care through visits on foot. Bro Ritterbecks was fully committed to pastoral work while Bro Iacomella was committed in agriculture and in the running of the mission. The three Comboni Sisters, Sr Giovannina Zucca, Sr Maddalena Vergis and Sr Lorena Morales, were also working hard in the pastoral, medical and women's promotion areas.

The pastoral activities were the courses for Catechists, the formation of SCC (Small Christian Communities), prayer groups, committees of elders, teaching in the schools of Leer, caring for the sick, home visiting and long safaris. Fr Antonio was committed to visiting the Christians and Catechumens in both Western and Eastern Upper Nile.

Regarding human promotion, several small agricultural and human promotion projects were undertaken.

The challenges to be faced in the Nuer land were the huge geographical extension of West and East Upper Nile, the large Nuer population of approximately 1,500,000 and strong tribalism among the Nuer themselves, which was provoking violence, destruction and death. The great openness and desire of the Nuer people to come to know Jesus was greatly encouraging. Fr La Braca was given broad responsibility by Bishop Taban as his *Vicar* in the Nuer land: he was *Diocesan Administrator for all the Nuer* and had an extensive plan of visits all over the areas of the *Western Nuer*.

In the *Central and Eastern Nuer* areas the South Sudan Delegation had taken no commitment but, since Fr La Braca received requests on 8 April, 1998, he made a journey of *exploration* in the *Eastern Upper Nile* area to

Juaibor, Fangak, Dhoreak, Ayod, Waat, Langkien and Akobo in order to assess the situation.³⁷⁵ Finally, he came up with the proposal to the South Sudan Delegation to take up a new commitment in the area of the *Central Nuer*, suggesting *Juaibor* for the first start, and to fix the real place later on.

Meanwhile, Leer was in a very critical situation because of the fighting between the army of Gen. Paulino Matiep³⁷⁶ and that of Riek Machar,³⁷⁷ in Unity State, in the middle of 1998. The two communities of Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Sisters were evacuated to Nairobi, Leer was destroyed and new arrangements had to be made on what to do and where.

In Nairobi the meeting of the Delegate, Fr La Braca and the Leer community with the two Bishops, Mgr Taban and Mgr Mojwok Nyiker, who were there for the Episcopal Conference (SCBC), came up with the proposal of asking the Delegation Council for another Comboni community. The proposal was approved and Malakal had now two commitments, one among the Nuer on the western side of the river Nile, at Nyal (since Leer was destroyed), and one on the eastern side, at Juaibor.

The confreres of both locations were assigned in September 1998. This was the last commitment taken by the out-going Delegation Superior and his Council. The composition of the two communities was as follows:

³⁷⁵ Account of Fr Antonio La Braca - Old Fangak mccc Community. *“At Easter time 1998, Fr Antonio went to Juaibor and from Juaibor to Fangak, to Dhoreak and, with some Catechists of Fangak, he proceeded to Ayod, Waat, Lamkien and Akobo. He planned to reach Maiwut, but the authorities stopped him for security reasons. So, he walked back to Lamkien and was taken to Leer by plane.”*

³⁷⁶ 23/07/1998 Letter of Fr A. La Braca to Mr. Paulino Matiep (former governor of W.U.N-Mankien) and Mr. Martin Machot (RASS Secretary Mankien). Fr Antonio pleads and invites them to bring peace and not destruction to their areas.

³⁷⁷ In April 1997 the Sudanese government entered into the Khartoum Peace Agreement with Riek Machar’s forces and several other smaller rebel factions. **Riek Machar** was appointed President of the Southern States Coordinating Council (SSCC), to govern the South, and also headed a new army (SSDF) created from the former rebel armies that signed the Khartoum Peace Agreement. **Paulino Matiep** was promoted to major general in the Sudanese army in 1998 and his militia, directly supplied by the government, was given a name: South Sudan Unity Movement/Army (SSUM/A).

The alliance dating from 1991 between Paulino Matiep and Riek Machar broke down in armed clashes in September 1997, over the campaign for governorship of Unity State. When his candidate lost the December 1997 gubernatorial election, according to one observer, “Paulino declared war” on Riek Machar’s SSDF.

See: “THE ARAKIS PERIOD: 1992-98”

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/sudan1103/11.htm>

- **Nyal**, was chosen as a new residence, instead of Leer. The new community was constituted by Fr Gonzalez as Superior and Parish Priest, Fr Zuñiga (a newcomer) as his assistant and Bro Iacomella as community bursar.
- **Juaibor** with Fr La Braca and Bro Ritterbecks.³⁷⁸ It was agreed that the final location would be confirmed after spending some time in loco.³⁷⁹ Fr La Braca carried on with the visit to Juaibor and Old Fangak Christian communities, while Bro Ritterbecks remained in the centre. Their priorities were to organise well the training of Church Leaders and continuous pastoral visits in the whole area.

Yei Diocese

Kajo-Kaji Parish had a pending issue brought up several times by Fr Mario Busellato, who was taking care of the Kuku refugees in the Pakele/Adjumani area. Since the Comboni Missionaries never officially ended the commitment with Yei Diocese and this Parish, he was asking the Delegation to take it up. His point was true, but the Delegate and his Council never took up the issue since the Bishop was not residing in Yei, but in Juba, and it was awkward to do so in the absence of the Bishop.

However, when the SPLA captured Yei town, and the Bishop could go back, then the former obstacle was removed. The Delegate informed Bishop Erkolano of Fr Busellato's proposal and he gladly agreed with it. The Delegate then went to visit the area of Kajo-Kaji, to the joy of the Catechists and people, and prepared a report to be discussed at the Plenary Assembly of January 1999.

Collaboration with other institutes and entities

During the time of the New Sudan Group, collaboration with other Institutes, NGOs and other entities was remarkable. The most important collaborators in the field of evangelization were the Comboni Missionary

³⁷⁸ 21/09/1998 Fr Chemello to Fr A. La Braca and Hans Ritterbecks: *"New evangelizing care in the East Upper Nile."* *"Following the decision of the Delegation Council expressed in the letter to the Bishops Paride Taban and Vincent Mojwok (22 September, 1998) I confirm the opening of a new commitment in the East Upper Nile / Nuer area."*

³⁷⁹ (Account of Fr A. La Braca – Old Fangak MCCJ. Community) *"Fr Antonio and Bro Hans went to Juaibor (Central Upper Nile) in the area of Fangak. They delivered a one-month course to all the Catechists of Fangak area (Ghezira) and, in the meantime, they had to look for a suitable place to open another 'Comboni Community'. Bro Hans remained in Juaibor and celebrated Christmas there..."*

Sisters in Nzara, in Marial Lou and in Leer, directly involved in the medical, educational and pastoral fields. The process with the Lay Comboni Missionaries was still at an initial stage and only in Rumbek Diocese.

In Mapuordit, there were other congregations like the DOLSH Sisters (the Daughters of Our Lady of Sacred Heart) who had come from Australia in 1995, working in health care, schools³⁸⁰ and pastoral. In Pakele/Adjumani, Kocoo, the MSMMC (the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church from Lira - Uganda) had been serving St Mary's Seminary and doing refugee work since 1992 and were also engaged in Narus with the primary school for girls and pastoral work.

In Kocoo (North Uganda) there was close collaboration with the SHS (Sacred Heart Sisters) from Adjumani Parish, especially with the small, but effective and appreciated, mobile clinic health project in the refugee camps.

There was also regular collaboration with other entities and non-government organizations, mostly because they were involved in aid, education, health, food distribution, water programmes, communication, and flight coordination etc. including OLS, MSF, WV, NPA, NCA, CRS, JRS and, at level of Churches, the NSCC and also with air transport companies such as Trackmark Ltd.³⁸¹

Relations with the local civil and military authorities were routinely normal: of course, they were much easier with the local authorities than the military, who were frequently very coercive, as part of the military policy. The attitude was always respectful and relations were good and, when issues arose, they were dealt through the appropriate Church Authorities, like the Bishop, the Episcopal Vicars or the Superiors of the communities.

The SRRA (Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency) and the corresponding agency of the Nassir Group, RASS (Relief Agency of South Sudan) were the official agencies in charge of permits on the part of the movements. In general there were no problems with permits.

Ecumenical activities with Muslims, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and other Churches depended very much upon the commitment of the

³⁸⁰ Nigrizia, 7-8/1998, Vita comboniana – Progetto solidarietà Mapuordit [SS]: a scuola contro la guerra, *G. Bersella*, p. 65.

³⁸¹ OLS = Operation Lifeline Sudan; MSF = Medicine Sans Frontiers; WV = World Vision; NPA Norwegian People Aid; NCA = Norwegian Church Aid; CRS = Catholic Relief Service; JRS = Jesuit Refugee service; NSCC = New Sudan Council of Churches; Flying Companies e.g. TRACKMARK LTD.

Parish Priests and Church Personnel of the various areas and their counterparts from the different Churches.

NSCC (New Sudan Council of Churches) was a very important Inter-Denominational Institution which greatly helped in uniting the various Churches and giving them a common voice. It took up the very controversial issue of religious and human rights and promoted advocacy in the world for South Sudan matters in order to gain international support on key issues for its people.

It helped to make the Churches become *the voice of the voiceless* concerning the difficult problems of the South, the futile war of destruction, the abuse of human rights, humanitarian tragedies, and the lack of religious freedom; it created, little by little, a wider acceptance of each other's Churches' values and a more open mind.

A final reflection: low profile for the *Glory of God*

The *New Sudan Group* was raised to the status of Delegation on 1 January, 1995. This was a really big event and a credit to the valuable work done at the service of the Sudanese people in the *Liberated Areas* and in *refugee situations*. When started, the first warning given by Fr Venanzio Milani, in charge of its follow up in the name of the General Council, was that the group *had to keep a low profile and not attract too much attention*, fearing possible retaliation by the Government of Khartoum, as did the SCBC and confreres in the Government areas.

This attitude was essential and was always observed. In fact, the Comboni confreres knew very little about Fr Milani's warning. It was even more surprising that even the Conference of Bishops probably knew very little about it and, if they did, they considered the New Sudan Group/Delegation just an appendix of the Combonis in Sudan.

Even more surprising was that, the *Mini-Conference of Bishops*, as it was called in the Liberated Areas, though receiving the benefit of personnel from the New Sudan Group, and then the Delegation working in their Dioceses, never though it was important to invite the Coordinator or the Delegate to share important issues in their meetings. The SCBC met several times in Nairobi and the Bishops were even invited to Jacaranda House, but this concern was not there.

One would say that that strong warning of Fr Milani really worked beyond all expectations. As Coordinator and then Delegate, I was happy to know that the group was doing its valuable work silently, with simple

means but also that it was effectively close to our neglected people, performing a service of hope under the guidance of the Lord.

However, I have to acknowledge that all this reality could not escape the attentive eyes of a former Superior General, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni (already quoted before) who, after reading many other reports, when he read the report of the *New Sudan* to the XV General Chapter, he wrote:

*“Here is the report to the Chapter of the development of the New Sudan. I have chosen to report it as the most interesting development in our missions during these years and the one that recalls Blessed Daniel Comboni in a special way. Moreover, many places now are not much more developed than they were at the time of Blessed Comboni.”*³⁸²

I do feel that these words show a deep understanding of the significance, the dedication and the love with which the whole *New Sudan Group*, then a Delegation, like a hidden stone and outside the normal juridical schemes, offered to the South Sudanese people - something on the lines of that **Long Love Story** I am now writing about.

Looking back at the risks and the difficulties the Delegation and the confreres went through in their work of service, this *Administration in exile*, could only conclude with thanksgiving to God and his Providence for his protection during that dangerous journey at his service and the service of the South Sudanese people.

MCCJ communities, 1 October, 1998

To summarise the history of the *New Sudan Group*: it began in July, 1990, with seven confreres, it reached fifteen by July, 1991 and by the end of 1992, it remained with ten confreres plus Mgr Cesare Mazzolari. It became the new Delegation of South Sudan in January, 1995, with sixteen confreres and ended the year 1998 with thirty-three confreres.

These numbers show the vicissitudes the Comboni group went through, but also the gradual confidence and perseverance along the journey that allowed it to be at the total service of the mission and of the South Sudanese people without reserve in the following communities:

Rumbek Diocese

Agang-Rial (4 confreres): Fr Michele Stragapede (Sup.), Fr Hector Ayon, Fr Mario Riva and Bro Mariano Zonta

³⁸² (Already reported) The Comboni Missionaries, *An Outline History 1867-1997*, Fr Tarcisio Agostoni, Biblioteca Comboniana 14FS, Rome 2003, pp. 552-554.

Mapuordit (4 confreres): Fr Giuseppe Pellerino (V. Deleg. Sup.), Fr Michael Barton, Fr Ignacio López Toro, Fr Alfredo Mattevi

Marial-Lou (4 confreres): Fr Mattia Bizzarro (Sup.), Fr Raymond Pax, Fr José Luis Martínez Acevedo, Fr Jaime Simon Chua Cáceres

Malakal Diocese

Leer (Nyal) (3 confreres): Fr Fernando González Galarza (Sup.), Fr Roy Carlos Zuñiga Paredes, Bro Raniero Iacomella

Juaibor (2 confreres): Fr Antonio La Braca, Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks (Deleg. Councillor)

Torit Diocese

Kocoa (2 confreres): Fr Eugenio Magni (Sup.), Bro Mario Rossignoli

Narus (5 confreres): Fr Elia Ciapetti (Act. Sup.), Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri, Bro Armando Ramos González, Fr Mitiku Habte Cheksa, Fr José Oscar Flores López (Lokichokio)

T/Yambio Diocese

Nzara (4 confreres): Fr Elvio Cellana (Sup.), Fr Alberto Jesús Eisman Torres, Fr Jeronimo Pérez Caporal, Bro Valentino Fabris

Nairobi Archdiocese

Jacaranda House (5 confreres): Fr Alfonso Polacchini (Sup.), Fr Gaetano Gottardi, Bro Domenico Cariolato, Fr Francesco Chemello (Deleg. Sup.), Fr Silvano Gottardi

Newly assigned:

Fr Alberto Jesús Eisman Torres, Fr Silvano Gottardi, Fr Mitiku Habte Cheksa, Fr Roy Carlo Zuñiga.

Fr Ezio Bettini, on 30 October, 1998 was assigned to the South Sudan Delegation as from 1 January, 1999 (New Delegation Superior). These are the communities and the confreres who brought to a conclusion this Administration and continued the missionary service into the following one with a total of 34 confreres, including Mgr Mazzolari, 26 Priests and 8 Brothers.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION From 1999 to 2004 Delegation/Provincial Superior: Fr EZIO BETTINI

The second Administration in exile: headquarters in Nairobi

Fr Ezio Bettini was appointed Delegation Superior of the Delegation of South Sudan and started his official work on 1 January, 1999. His headquarters was in Nairobi. His Councillors were Fr Eugenio Magni (Vice Delegate) and Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks.³⁸³

His first opportunity to discern how to proceed with the Delegation of South Sudan came during the Plenary Assembly of Nairobi (Kenya) from 10 to 17 January, 1999. Since Fr Bettini was not appointed by the Superior General from among the confreres composing the Delegation (he was working in Kosti, Khartoum Province), he introduced himself to the Assembly of confreres putting forward immediately some points he thought to be very relevant for the whole Delegation, at that stage, such as *evangelization, communion, sharing* and *combining theory with praxis*.

The handover took place during the Assembly with a fruitful interaction between the previous Administration and the new one. Even though the Delegation was still managed from Nairobi, it was clear that the situation had undergone changes bringing new challenges and opportunities.

The former Administration had to deal with and endure issues related to precarious situations caused by the war: *instability, uncertainties*,

³⁸³ Rome, 25 October, 1998, Fr Manuel Augusto Lopes Ferreira, Superior General, Appointment of Rev Father Ezio Bettini, Superior of the South Sudan Delegation, to assume office as from 1 January, 1999. ACR 727/1/2.

- South Sudan Delegation, Nairobi 30 November, 1998, Straw Ballot for Councillors. Result: Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks, votes 11..... etc. ACR 727/1/3.

- Rome, 28 January, 1999, The General Superior and his Council confirm the election of Fr Eugenio Magni as Vice-Delegate of the Delegation of Southern Sudan ACR 727/1/5.

displacement of people, the lack of basic facilities, very precarious structures and poor attention to issues like the health of confreres. The new changes in the field of work now required new perspectives in order to respond more adequately to the new challenges and opportunities of the new and more stable situation in all the *Liberated Areas*.

Fr Bettini introduced himself saying:

*“When I was appointed to the Delegation, I realized that there was a need for a ‘stabilization’ of living and missionary service. Everything was set in an emergency way, not caring for the details and welfare of the confreres. Therefore, I took as my main goal the stabilization of the situation, to move from emergency to stability, at the level of the Delegation, the communities and the confreres.”*³⁸⁴

He envisaged a call for a new way of facing the new challenges arising. The presentation of the reality of every community and offices was to give a better idea of the achievements attained beforehand and possible ways forward. The Plenary Assembly was then a great help to assess all of this.

Regarding the set-up and the work of the various communities, the situation was as the previous Administration left it with just a couple of exceptions. One was the issue of Lomin Parish, in Kajo-Kaji, in the Diocese of Yei which was taken up following the report of the previous Delegation Superior. Having listened to the report, taking the commitment was postponed to the next year 2000.

The second issue was that of the Eastern Nuer commitment, Juaibor. The new place proposed by Fr La Braca was Old Fangak. However, due to lack of personnel and the transfer of Bro Ritterbacks to another commitment, the new place could not be developed as desired and Fr Labraca agreed to go back to Old Fangak alone and so he remained for the whole Administration. In Nyal, however, the community was consolidated and the work proceeded well.

The third issue was that of Nzara. Since no specific agreement was reached with the previous administration on the taking a new commitment, due to the indecision of Bishop Joseph Gasi, the only decision handed over to the new Administration was the closing down of Nzara. Whether to take a new commitment depended on the new Delegation Council which was of the opinion that no new commitments were to be taken. As a result, the Diocese of T/Yambio was practically left by the Delegation.

A very happy event for the whole Delegation and especially for **Rumbek Diocese**, at the start of 1999, was the episcopal consecration of

³⁸⁴ Sharing of Fr Ezio Bettini, December, 2015.

Mgr Cesare Mazzolari, by Pope John Paul II on 6 January, the feast of the Epiphany, after ten years of service as Apostolic Administrator. This gave Rumbek Diocese better stability and direction for the future.

The Secretariats

From the erection of the Delegation in 1995, the Secretariat acquired more and more relevance in its administration, especially the Secretariat of Evangelization and Finances. Vocation Ministry needed much more reflection on ways and methods. With the new Administration they became better formalized and the confreres involved could work out their responsibilities with new purpose and efficacy.

Thus, a work around a charter of evangelization was started on the background of the Malawi-Zambia Province. However, the situation of South Sudan was much different and it had to be followed consequently with a completely new reflection.

At the level of the Secretariat of Finance the reflection on the *Total Common Fund* had been developing since the previous year. There was a new awareness which, though it took time, bore fruit the following year, 2000.

As for the Vocation Ministry, six candidates were to be presented in 1999 for the Seminary, but Bro Rossignoli did not feel able to continue any more with the Vocation Ministry because of the construction work of a new dormitory for St Mary's Seminary and other projects, but also for some criticisms regarding his methodology. The issue had to be tackled in a better way.

Handing Over

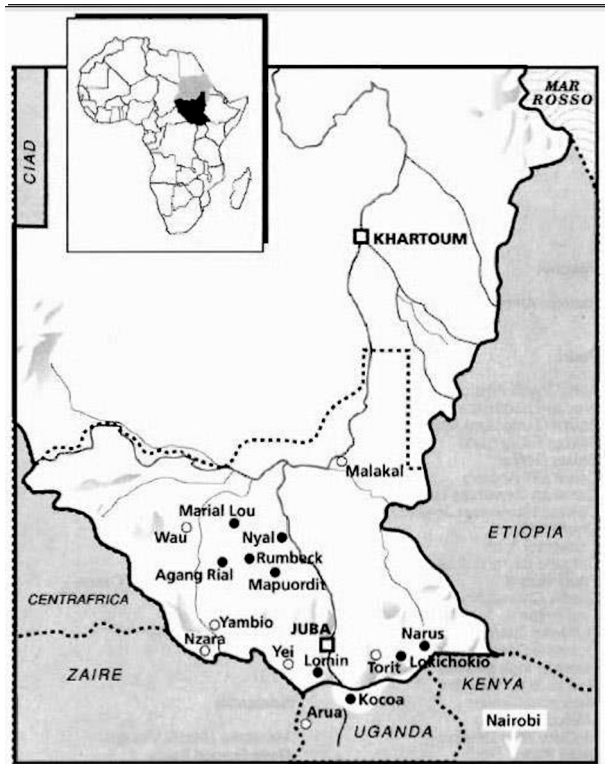
Fr Chemello, still present, was invited to give some reflections and inputs on the previous Administration. He had words of gratitude to God for his protection along the difficult journey and the risks and dangers the confreres of the *New Sudan Group* and of the Delegation went through.

The main encouraging points were in the area of community life, as the most meaningful sign of light and renewed humanity and relationship in the midst of all the ravages of war. He mention the good number of South Sudanese Confreres the Delegation acquired recently and those already in missionary service in other Provinces, together with the Scholastics and Brothers in formation.

He encouraged all to carry on with the issue of the proposed *Total Common Fund* which he considered very important in relationship to **evangelization**, the first priority of the Delegation. Tackling the point of the variety of countries the new confreres assigned to the Delegation were coming from, he suggested an approach to the issue with openness of mind to a new but challenging value.

The Assembly of January, 1999, was a real opportunity for reflection leading to new growth, as well as the expansion of commitments in all the *Liberated Areas*. It was, above all, a time and an opportunity of growing in depth in the various areas of evangelization,

education and human promotion, especially with the consistent number of confreres from different experiences: some were coming from a long experience of work in the Sudan and others were new confreres just out of basic formation, ready to make their enthusiasm and new approaches available for the work of evangelization in the Delegation.



Fr Bettini: taking up the work

The assignment of Fr Bettini to the South Sudan Delegation did not give him time to hand over the previous work in Kosti, so he needed to take some time for it and then he was due to have his holidays, as well. This implied that part of the year would be taken up by this and then he would be available to carry on full-time with his new task as Delegation Superior.

On his return to Nairobi towards the middle of the year, Fr Bettini started going around visiting personally communities and locations to get in touch with the real situation, first, the difficult situation of insecurity for the communities in the Nuerland due to war and fighting among different commanders and clans. Then, there was the community of Narus that had issues to be clarified and the agreement with Torit Diocese to be revised.

The community of Agang Rial also had its doubts about its reason to exist due to the movement of people towards the major towns of Rumbek and Cueibet, after SPLA/M took control of the whole area. Finally, attention was to be given to Lomin Parish (Kajo-Kaji).

Regarding the Postulancy, a speedy solution to the issue was required since the students followed up in Vocation Ministry were in their final year of secondary school and ready for the Postulancy and the philosophical course. In this regard it was decided to collaborate with the Kenya Province by offering one formator for the formation team.

Since the Jubilee year 2000 was very close, the Provincial and his Council were also concerned to prepare for it by proposing activities that would foster conversion, renewal and a new enthusiasm for evangelization in the Christian communities. All these issues needed to be tackled and presented to the Assembly in the year 2000 for final evaluation and implementation.

Fr Bettini visited, at least once, all the communities during the year 1999, with the one exception of Agang Rial, gaining a fairly clear picture of the situation and of the real needs on the ground. As for the Newsletter, it continued with the name *The New Sudan*, South Sudan Delegation Newsletter and, later on, it would change again into *SSCOMBONI@NEWS*, Newsletter of South Sudan Province.

The concrete reality

During his visits Fr Bettini found that, in his own opinion, the conditions in which some communities lived were not suitable, lacking even the minimum living conditions required. Thus, he took up the issue of how to improve the situation making the houses more suitable for the well-being of the confreres themselves: better housing, a well with running water, a solar power system, proper toilets and other facilities.

He realized that community prayer was well organised, while community councils were playing a very minimal role in the discernment of pastoral and missionary matters. This point, then, needed serious consideration and attention. Moreover, he also noticed that communities

had much independence in taking decisions about many pastoral, financial and personal matters, instead of doing so within the framework of the Rule of Life, Diocesan Directives, the Delegation Directory and programs.

Another reflection was about different experiences of missionary activities in apostolic communities that brought together different religious and pastoral agents. Though they were very positive experiences, there was still the need to stress the importance of the community moments for the Comboni confreres themselves. He noticed also that the relationship among collaborating communities MCCJ-CMS needed better clarification of roles to proceed well. A better introduction of newly assigned confreres to the life of the Delegation was also needed.

In the field of Evangelization and Pastoral work he realized the need to attend to the *Adult Catechumenate* in connection with the directives given by SCBC. He also noticed a degree of confusion between *School Catechumenate* and *Adult Catechumenate*, to the detriment of the latter.

Moreover, the pastoral tendency of leaving the mission centre to take care of the out-stations, in his view, was hindering the deepening of faith and the improvement of Christian life of the people, thus lacking a leading example for the whole mission. Finally, the change from Arabic into English was another matter for concern.

The issue of the agreements with the Dioceses, instead, was more positive. The Ordinaries of Rumbek and Yei had already signed them, while with the Bishop of Torit Diocese the question needed follow-up. As to Nyal (Malakal Diocese) the matter was still in a limbo.

Regarding Vocation Ministry, Bro Rossignoli and Fr Aranda were in charge of accompanying the candidates to the Postulancy, but it was felt important that a person from the Council should be added to the team. Then, since the South Sudan Delegation had not yet developed its specific guidelines on Vocation Ministry, the confreres were invited, for the time being, to follow those already set up by the Uganda and Kenya Provinces.

The Delegation in January, 2000

On 1 January, 2000, the Delegation was composed of eight communities: Lomin (3 confreres), Kocoa (2), Agang Rial (3), Marial Lou (3), Mapuordit (5), Narus (3), Nyal (3) and Jacaranda (7). Three confreres were working in Lokichokio, Nyamlel and Old Fangak, one in each place. Two confreres were borrowed from the Italian Province.

List of confreres, offices and communities on 1 January, 2000.³⁸⁵

Delegation Superior, (since 1 January, 1999)

Fr Ezio Bettini,

Councillors:

Fr Eugenio Magni, Vice-Del., Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks

Provincial Bursar and Procurator:

Fr Gaetano Gottardi

Secretary of Formation:

Fr Jesus J. Aranda Nava

Secretary of Evangelization, Animation, Ongoing Formation:

Fr Fernando González Galarza

Vocation Promotion:

Bro Mario Rossignoli

Lay Comboni Missionaries:

Fr Jerónimo Pérez Caporal

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation:

Fr Michele Stragapede

Comboni personnel:

Bishops 1. Fathers 27, Brothers 6, Scholastics 1, Brothers in Basic Formation 1, Postulants 2.

Newsletter: *The New Sudan*

Spoken Languages:

Arabic, Bari, Dinka, English, Ma'di, Nuer, Toposa,

Dioceses where present:

Nairobi: Residence of the Delegation

Rumbek: Mapuordit, Marial Lou, Agang Rial.

Torit: Pakele/Kocoo, Narus.

Yei: Lomin

Malakal: Nyal, Old Fangak

Nairobi - Jacaranda Avenue (Residence of the Delegation) opened on 1 September, 1995, dedicated to Blessed Daniel Comboni Logistics and hospitality house.

Fr Ezio Bettini, Del. Sup., Fr Jesus José Aranda Nava, Fr Hector Ayon, Bro Domenico Cariolato, Fr Giovanni Ferrazin, Fr Gaetano Gottardi, Fr Alfonso Polacchini, Fr Giovanni Battista Zanardi (It. Prov.)

³⁸⁵ Annuario Comboniano, op. cit., 1 January, 2000.

Rumbek Diocese

Bethany house, opened in 1994. Logistics and hospitality house for the Diocese of Rumbek. The confreres assist also the Parish of Yirol.

Mgr Cesare Mazzolari, Fr Giuseppe Farina (It. Prov.), Fr Mario Riva.

Mapourdit, opened in February 1993.

First evangelization and education among the Dinka

Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, sup., Fr Michael Barton, Fr Silvano Gottardi, Fr Ignacio López Toro, Fr Alfredo Mattevi.

Marial Lou, opened in November 1994.

First evangelization among the Dinka

Fr José Luis Martínez Acevedo, Fr Raymond Pax, Fr Jerónimo Pérez Caporal.

Agang-Rial, opened in May 1995.

First evangelization among the Dinka

Fr Michele Stragapede, Sup., Fr Elvio Cellana, Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks.

Torit Diocese

Pakele/Kocoa, opened in July 1992.

- Pastoral work among the refugees (Seminarians of St Mary's Seminary, Torit Diocese and refugee camps of Pakele/Adjumani) and Vocation Ministry.

Fr Bizzarro Mattia, Bro Rossignoli Mario.

Lokichokio, Media Centre

Mass Media Centre of the Diocese of Torit.

The confrere's community is that of Narus.

Fr José Oscar Flores López

Narus, opened in November, 1994.

First evangelization among the Toposa.

Fr Elia Ciapetti, Fr Mitiku Habte Cheksa

Bro Armando Ramos Gonzalez

Yei Diocese,

Lomin (Kajo-Kaji) Parish, community closed on 8 August, 1987, for security reasons and reopened on 1 January, 2000.

Evangelization among the Kuku and Education.

Fr Mario Busellato, Bro Valentino Fabris, Fr Eugenio Magni.

Malakal Diocese

Nyal Parish, opened on 10 October, 1998. (It replaced Leer, founded on 12 March, 1996, and was closed for security reasons in October,

1998). The confreres also assist the region of Eastern Upper Nile (Old Fangak). Evangelization among the Nuer.

Fr Fernando González Galarza (Sup.), Bro Raniero Iacomella,

Fr Roy Carlos Zuñiga Paredes, Fr Antonio La Braca (Old Fangak).

Awaiting assignment

Fr Jessie Dimafilis Ventura

Assemblies from 2000 to 2004 and new opportunities

Year 1999 was a transitional period of time which allowed the new Administration to become aware of the concrete situation of the Delegation and see possible new opportunities for the future. Fr Bettini and his Council took advantage of the improved security situation to give a positive boost to the structures and facilities of every community. However, the most important opportunities came from the sharing in the Plenary Assemblies, especially from 2000 to 2004, where confreres could face the more urgent topics of the Delegation and then of the Province.

The sort of topics dealt in these Assemblies can give an idea of what the most important issues were along the journey. The Plenary Assembly of January, 2000, took up the theme of the letter of the General Council *on Cross-culture in the Comboni Community and about War, Justice and Peace and the Initiative of the Institute*. The theme of January, 2001 was developed through a Justice and Peace workshop.

The Assembly of 2002 took up the theme of *Attention to the person*. Year 2003: *The challenge of different ministries in the MCCJ communities and apostolate*. The theme of the last Assembly of Fr Bettini's Administration of 2004 was: *the report from the XVI General Chapter with the theme The Mission of the Comboni Missionaries at the beginning of the third millennium*. Fr Teresino Serra, (Superior General) and Fr Fabio Baldan (Vicar General) were present at the Assembly.

With joy one can say that, at last, even South Sudan with all its troubles, wars, destruction and displacements had sufficient serenity to deal with themes which would build up something new for the improvement of people's lives and the human and spiritual wellbeing of the missionaries.

Taking up now one by one the Plenary Assemblies from year 2000 to 2004 I will try to give the main points in order to understand better the perceived needs along the journey during that specific period of time.

The plenary Assembly of Nairobi, January, 2000

The plenary Assembly of Nairobi, from 9 to 16 January, 2000, dealt with the theme of the letter of the General Council *On Cross-culture in the Comboni Community*.³⁸⁶ By this time the composition of the Delegation had become much more international, intercultural and younger than ever before with new assignments directly from the Scholasticates and CBC (Comboni Brothers Centre) and the theme was very appropriate.

The presence of the Superior General, Fr Manuel Augusto Lopes Ferreira and of the Assistant General, Fr Juan Antonio González Núñez, was not only a sign of encouragement to all the members of the Delegation, but also an opportunity to give meaningful input on this specific theme, with the acknowledgment that the Comboni Institute had already come a long way, with many positive developments, since the time of the predominant *Italian Verona/Veneto culture*. A great thrust forward was also the re-union of the two Comboni Institutes in 1979 (FSCJ-MFSC).

The Superior General, Fr Manuel Augusto Lopes Ferreira, after sharing about the general situation of the Comboni Institute, tackled the issue of *Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation*, a theme felt more and more as very important in the context of evangelization in the Comboni Institutes, but crucial in the context of Africa and of Sudan and South Sudan.

In this regard, the concern of the three Comboni Institutes (MCCJ, CMS and Secular Combonis) was going beyond Sudan and South Sudan and aiming for justice, peace and reconciliation in three different situations: Congo and the Great Lakes; the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict and the war situation in Sudan, prompting them to write a letter entitled: *Justice as a Life Giving Relationship*.

The Six-Year Plan 1999-2004

The Six-Year Plan, a basic instrument to lead the Delegation/Province, along the journey and allow an evaluation of the progress done along the way, touched all the main areas of life like *Evangelization* with its Directory drawn up and approved in 1999, the *Commitments* with the stress of having at least two communities in the same ethnic group, *Community life*, possibly to be made up of four members and gradually in line with what was stated in the Evangelization Directory.

³⁸⁶ Delegation of South Sudan, General Assembly 2000, 9-16 January, Nairobi, Kenya

Finance had to implement the *Total Common Fund* as chosen by the 1999 Assembly and approved by the Delegation Council. **On-going Formation** had to prioritize the creation of a comprehensive library, introducing the new-comers into the life of the Delegation, also by giving them the opportunity of visiting some communities soon after their arrival; giving them the chance to do courses of African studies available in Kenya, at least 6 months to study the local language and a one-month course in colloquial Arabic every year for any confrere willing to participate.

Vocation Promotion was to be run by a Vocation Ministry Team of two confreres, possibly inserted in pastoral work, and **Basic Formation** was to join the Postulancy of the Kenya Province contributing with a co-formator, while preparing for the Delegation Postulancy.

Human promotion was to pursue the promotion of self-reliant Christian communities by supporting those projects which showed that the local community is seriously committed to their implementation. **Education** was to be given priority in order to enable South Sudanese students to attend higher education and a senior secondary school was to be opened.

Having handed over the commitment of Nzara to T/Yambio Diocese, the challenges ahead were the opening of Lomin/Kajo-Kaji in Yei Diocese, the issue of the community of Narus which had to be tackled and that of Pakele/Kocoa community related to the Vocation Centre. The issue of the Pre-Postulancy and Postulancy needed to be solved together with the one of Raja, captured by SPLA and then abandoned after a short while.

The General Assembly of Nairobi, January, 2001

Justice and Peace workshop.

The General Assembly of Nairobi, 12-18 January, 2001, was presented and facilitated by Fr Anton Mayer and it was based on the booklets: *International Workshop on Non-violence and Conflict Resolution* and on the letter of the General Council *Justice as a life Giving Relationship*. He started with the standpoint that justice was a life giving relationship because our life is related to other human beings, to creation and to God.

Bro Raniero Iacomella and Fr Roy Carlos Zuñiga Paredes had just participated at the International Workshop on *Non-Violence and Conflict Resolution* held in South Africa in November, 2000, and were given the chance of sharing the most relevant points of the workshop on the issue.

At the end of the workshop of the General Assembly of Nairobi, 12-18 January, 2001, the *Justice and Peace Committee* chose to do something tangible with the agreement of the great majority of the participants. The

committee decided to break the silence with an open letter entitled: *A Declaration of the Comboni Missionaries working in Southern Sudan*, inviting all the belligerent parties to stop the war and bring peace to the country. The declaration was signed by the Justice and Peace Committee Coordinator, Fr Michele Stragapede, mcccj.³⁸⁷

The declaration gave rise to controversial opinions, in the SPLA/M and also in the Church which, for different reasons, felt challenged and bypassed in authority, not having been consulted. The emphatic invitation was to *lay down the guns and stop fighting, in the name of God!*

The South Sudan Delegation becomes a Province

On 1 January, 2002, the (second) Delegation of South Sudan was raised up to the status of a Province for the second time since the first one of Juba had been suppressed at the end of 1994 by the General Council. Now, even though in exile, the Province was re-established. What was started with a lot of dedication and commitment by the Comboni Group, the *New Sudan Group*, in the *Liberated Areas*, had born good fruit confirmed by this juridical act of the General Council. The Province of South Sudan was again alive.

Fr Bettini was the Provincial, while his Council was made up of Fr Fernando González Galarza, Vice-Provincial, Fr José Jesus Aranda Nava, Fr Raniero Iacomella and Fr Giampaolo Mortaro.³⁸⁸

The General Assembly of Nairobi, January, 2002

*Attention to the person.*³⁸⁹

Attention to the person was a very relevant theme in order to enhance the perception of the dignity of the human person in the situation in South

³⁸⁷ Declaration of the Comboni Missionaries working in Southern Sudan, Nairobi, 19 January 2001. pp. 6, 217, 230, **393 (Text of the declaration)**. In:

http://www.sudanoslo.no/edc_media/Structure/Item-293/TinyFiles/Searchforpeace.pdf

³⁸⁸ Roma, 15 Aprile, 2001, Curia Generalizia, Decreto di erezione della Provincia del Sud Sudan. (Decree of erection of the Province of South Sudan). ACR 727/1/7.

- Rome, 3 October, 2001, Curia Generalizia, Appointment of Fr Ezio Bettini Provincial Superior for three years, starting his office on 1 January 2002. ACR 727/1/11.

- Rome 2 February, 2002, Curia Generalizia, Appointment of Fr Fernando González Galarza as Vice-Provincial till 31 December 2004. ACR 727/1/13.

³⁸⁹ Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, XV General Chapter, Chapter Acts 1997, A fresh start from Mission with the courage of Blessed Daniel Comboni, *Mission is Attention to the Person*, Part II, Chapter 5, nn. 119-165.

Sudan with a long history of war, the abuse of people and an abusive mentality behaviour. The theme came from the XV General Chapter, but was never enough reflected upon at community and evangelization level.

The Institute is conscious that the missionaries are the greatest gifts entrusted to the Institute and thus has the greatest care for each confrere (RL. 162.1). According to the Rule of Life, it was clear that the person holds a central place in the Institute and is given particular care and attention *in a life of fellowship with his Brothers* (RL. 23). The Assembly, then, reflected how this dialogue between *person* and *communion* was to develop in a harmonic way in the life of the communities, in the Province and in evangelization.

The General Assembly of Nairobi, January, 2003

*The challenge of different Ministries in the MCCJ communities and apostolate.*³⁹⁰

Within the Church at large, the reflection on *Ministry* had already gone a long way forward and the same was true for the MCCJ Institute, in relationship to the other Comboni Institutes like the Comboni Sisters, the Secular Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Lay Missionaries. The topic *the challenge of different ministries in the MCCJ communities and apostolate* was then very appropriate for the Province of South Sudan.

Fr Pierli, who presented the topic of *Ministry*, was convinced that this would be *the core challenge of the XVI General Chapter*. *Ministry* seen in two ways: one as *people-oriented*, with a description of what MCCJ Priests and MCCJ Brothers should be doing to serve the people, and the other as *Congregation-centred*, that is the ministry of authority.

In fact, the MCCJ community unites Brothers and Priests as a *Cenacle of Apostles*, in daily life and in the apostolate, with the *religious consecration* strengthening the bond of fraternity and commitment to a *collaborative ministry*. What is different is *the specificity of the two Ministries*: the Comboni Priests have their ministry marked by Ordination, while the Brothers' ministry is marked by a particular orientation to social apostolate. In the context of the *New Sudan* in its phase of development, this topic was especially relevant for the ministry of Brothers.

³⁹⁰ Fr Francesco Pierli, "The challenge of different ministries in the MCCJ communities and apostolate", Nairobi 9-10 January, 2003.

The General Assembly of Nairobi, January, 2004

The report of the XVI General Chapter: *The Mission of the Comboni Missionaries at the beginning of the third millennium.*

While the Assembly of 2003 was a reflection in preparation for the XVI General Chapter, the Assembly from 18 to 24 January, 2004, dealt with the report of the XVI General Chapter and its main theme: *The Mission of the Comboni Missionaries at the beginning of the third millennium.* Fr Teresino Serra, the new Superior General, and his Vicar Fr Fabio Baldan were present and gave their input.

Fr Serra pointed out that ***the quality of Mission depends on the quality of the missionary***, with the need of being deeply rooted in spiritual life and prayer as essential elements of our mission today. Quoting the Chapter Acts, he went on saying that prayer is mission and that prayer makes us missionaries (Cf. Chapter Acts '03 n. 52.1), and that the conversion of the missionary to Christ (Cf. RL. 46. 1), allowing Christ to evangelize our hearts, first, is the starting point of our missionary activity.

He carried on emphasizing that the quality of our consecrated life is what ensures the authenticity of our evangelization³⁹¹ and presented three examples of prayer: ***Jesus' prayer***, (he is a prayerful person), ***the Apostles' prayer*** and ***Comboni's prayer*** (Writings, 7062, 7063). Then he went into the theme of the General Chapter, ***The Mission of the Comboni Missionaries at the beginning of the third millennium***, emphasizing how ***on-going formation*** had to help ***to improve the quality of the missionaries***.

Fr Fabio Baldan gave an introduction and an outline of the Chapter Acts 2003. He defined the Chapter as a moment of sharing different feelings and excitements and the Chapter Acts as revealing the diversity of what we are. He presented the outline in six parts: ***world, mission, formation, community, methodology*** and ***various*** and mentioned the most used words in the Acts expressing the spirit of the Chapter like ***life, community, mission*** and ***formation***. He also underlined the effort put into rediscovering the Comboni Spirituality, the issue of ***action and contemplation*** with a stress to be put more on ***being than on doing*** and the change of heart needed in regard to ***mission and economics***.

The main feedback of the group's work focused on the *effects of Globalisation in the context where one was living*. Confreres recognised the

³⁹¹ Daniel Comboni, witness of holiness and master of mission. Letter of the three General Councils of the Comboni Institutes on the occasion of the canonization of the Founder Daniel Comboni, n. 39.

presence of communication such as *the radio, television, mobile phones and satellite phones* in Southern Sudan, the desire of people to go abroad, and the assumption of foreign lifestyles while people were becoming only consumers and receivers without contributing anything to Globalisation.

It was acknowledged how much Missionaries can be affected in a positive as well as in a negative way and how Globalization widens the gap existing between those who have and those who do not have access to its benefits. It was noticed how Family Planning was pushed through by all means and how weapons in Sudan are getting more and more sophisticated, also a growing awareness for *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*.

Commitments, Secretariats and Communities

Animation and Vocation Promotion was carried out by Fr Paul Idra together with the vocation promotion team of Moyo. The refugee camps in Pakele/Adjumani were regularly visited together with Comboni Sister Silvia Flores. He was also visiting Kiryandongo and Rhino refugee camps. Visits to other places in the Province within South Sudan were also planned. Fr Idra had to take care also of the orientation courses and the Pre-Postulancy, either in Moyo or in Lomin, helped by the Comboni Sisters and Deacon Alfredo Estrada.

Vocation meetings were organized together also with the Sacred Heart and the Mary Mother of the Church Sisters, according to the place visited, and Diocesan Priests in Uganda were asking Fr Idra to hold vocation meetings in their Parishes. Fr Aranda was helping in the orientation courses. However, Fr Idra was also given the responsibility of running temporarily the Parish of Lomin, thus raising the complaint of putting too much stress on him and hindering the work of Vocation Promotion.

The Pre-Postulancy and Postulancy: since the new Delegation of South Sudan with headquarters in Nairobi inherited the issue of the Basic Formation in 1995, it took care of the South Sudanese students on the way. The present Administration dealt again with the issue of the Pre-postulancy, first in Narus and then, with the transfer of the Vocation Ministry from Pakele/Kocoa to Moyo, on 1 January, 2002, the Pre-Postulancy was in Moyo/Lomin and the Postulancy in Nairobi with the help to the Kenya Province with a co-formator, Fr Jesus Aranda.

In June, 2003, Fr Bosco Anthony Sule Mawa was sent to Rome for a course for formators. He was expected to be ready for August 2004 to take up the work of co-formator in the joint Comboni Postulancy of Nairobi, for

the South Sudan Province, together with Fr Aranda. The issue then went on with a South Sudan Postulancy in Nairobi/Langata but it run into complications during the following Provincial Administration: this will be taken up at proper time.

Secretariat of Finance: after a long time of reflection in the previous Administration and throughout 1999, it was decided that the **Total Common Fund** system would come into effect on 1 January, 2000.³⁹² This was a big change in the financial tradition of Sudan and South Sudan and the confreres found it all very new. It was not only matter of putting all the financial resources together in a common pool, but of acquiring and developing a *community-minded* way of life not just following *personal plans*, but through community discernment with the final approval of the Delegation Council.

This way of dealing with financial matters needed a real change of mind and approach affecting directly the way of evangelizing, as well. Surely, the issue of budgeting, at first, took a lot of patience to get into the new system, but above all how to be in line with the Charter of Evangelization. An **Education Fund** was also instituted as a follow-up of the fundraising program done in Italy with the film “*E poi ho incontrato Madit*” (Then I met Madit), that brought a good amount of money into the Delegation, mainly used for education purposes. A great loss in this secretariat was the death of Fr. Gaetano Gottardi on 9 August, 2001.

Lomin Community: a great new opportunity

The Parish: Lomin (Kajo-Kaji), 29 km from Moyo (West Nile, Uganda), was closed on 8 August, 1987 for security reasons and reopened on 1 January, 2000, with the presence of Fr Mario Busellato, Bro Valentino Fabris and Fr Eugenio Magni. Among the different undertakings, although it was the last to be taken up in the *Liberated Areas*, it was the one that got the greatest assistance and attention of the Delegation and Province at Parish and especially at educational level.

Its purpose was to evangelize the Kuku people and to start an education programme at secondary school level. The mission premises in Lomin were developed in bricks and mortar since the beginning and care was taken to ensure that running water and electricity were provided.

³⁹² Common fund: Delegation Council 1/1999, 19-21 January, no. 10. FSSPJ.
- Minutes of the General Assembly, 2000, 9-16 January, no. 6.5. FSSPJ.

Lomin Comprehensive College: at the time of Fr Mazzolari's Administration, there was already the proposal of another secondary school in the South of Sudan, beside the Comboni Secondary School of Juba. Lomin was the place that got this great opportunity.

A documentary film whose title was *Then I met Madit* by Silvestro Montanaro and diffused by the RAI (The Italian Radio-Television) in 1998³⁹³ had a great impact on the Italian viewers and raised a considerable amount of money for the Province. The Delegation Superior and his Council decided to devote the funds to building a secondary school in Lomin. The project was gradually implemented and the result was the **Lomin Comprehensive College**, with Fr Eugenio Magni as principal and a very good academic performance as the best secondary school in South Sudan at the time.

St Martin Workshop, Lomin: it came up parallel to the college. Bro Erich Fischnaller came to the South Sudan Province on loan from the South African Province, in April 2004. He was supposed to remain only one year for the building of the Comboni Comprehensive College, already under way. Due to the needs of the college construction, he started developing a simple **carpentry workshop**, adding a welding section to it for the required works in metal and brick-making for the same purpose. This was how it came to existence, little by little.

The Pre-Postulancy: with the Vocation Centre located in Moyo, since 1 January 2002, after visiting Lomin, Fr Aranda thought it was a suitable place for the Pre-Postulancy because of the pastoral opportunities in the Parish and the college. Fr Paul Idra was placed in charge of it.

Kapoeta/Lolim Community

The presence of the Comboni community in Narus, made up of Fr Elia Ciapetti. Fr Mitiku Habte and Bro Armando Ramos González went on with the pastoral programmes and presence until March 2001. A proposal of the Delegation Superior, to hand over Narus to the Diocese and the allocation of another Parish among the Toposa people,³⁹⁴ was presented and agreed by Bishop Paride Taban, with Fr Ciapetti remaining in Narus.

Fr Giampaolo Mortaro, with a long experience among the Pokot people of Kenya, was assigned to this new commitment at Lolim, together with Fr

³⁹³ “...e poi ho incontrato Madit” a documentary of Silvestro Montanaro - Rai – 1998.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rd29cnCHVu8>

³⁹⁴ sscomboni@news.com, Newsletter, no. 18, March, 2001. FSSPJ.

Mitiku Habte and Bro Valentino Fabris, in charge of the constructions. The presence started in June, 2001, in a simple permanent building and seemed to develop well, with a more self-reliant approach among the people.

Regrettably, the population, already accustomed to a lot of hand-outs, did not appreciate the new style of the Comboni community. People began to be uncooperative and, in November 2002, a group of people self-named *Toposa Educated Class*, from Narus/Kapoeta, appealed in writing to the Provincial Superior, Fr Bettini, to remove Fr Mortaro from Lolim. Bishop Paride did not intervene in time and the situation became irreversible.

Thus, Lolim was abandoned, the community returned to Narus to carry on the work of Fr Ciapetti while he was in Italy for health reasons, and then the Provincial Council decided to assign Fr Mortaro to Lomin and Fr Habte to Marial Lou. Bro Fabris remained there until the completion of the classroom and then, in March 2003, went to Nairobi.

Fr Ciapetti was allowed to remain in Narus at the Bishop's disposal, but no other Comboni personnel were made available for the Toposa area.³⁹⁵ Sadly, in March 2003, Fr Ciapetti's car was attacked by robbers while driving to Lokichokio and he was shot in the upper right arm. This brought to the conclusion also Fr Chiapetti's presence and, unfortunately, it was also the end of the Comboni presence in Torit Diocese. It was a very sad conclusion for the Diocese that was the very starting point of the presence of the *New Sudan Group* in the *Liberated Areas*.

Mabia Community

Mabia was an IDP (Internally Displaced People's) camp 8 km from Mupoi on the Mupoi-Tombora road in Western Equatoria, in the area of Tombura/Yambio Diocese. The displaced people (approximately 19,000) were coming from the areas of Raja and Deim Zubeir and fled from their homes after an attack of SPLA that then did not hold the area.

They belonged to more than eleven different tribes of the Fertit group (Belanda, Kresh, Ndogo, Aya, Banda, Yulu, Shatt, etc.) and the only medium of communication was Arabic. These tribal groups were renowned for their spirit of diligence, simplicity, their meek character and non-violent way of life. The camp of Mabia was a mirror of the ideal of a *New Sudan* where different ethnical groups and religious creeds were able to live, interact and collaborate in mutual respect and harmony.

³⁹⁵ Nairobi, 24 January, 2003, Fr Bettini to Bishop Paride Taban, Lolim/Narus. FSSPJ.

Since Raja was a Parish that had always been served by the Comboni Missionaries, the Province felt it had a responsibility towards it. The community was opened in May 2002 with the presence of two confreres, Fr Roy Carlos Zúñiga and Fr Alberto Jesus Eisman. Fr Cosmo Spadavecchia went to help them, as well. Grass huts for the community and some other premises were built by the people themselves. The Comboni Sisters joined in July and enriched the missionary work with their presence.

The group of Catechists from Raja Parish continued their work with benefit also to the pastoral structures. The attitude of people (even Muslims) towards the Church and its activities was very positive, people felt very much attached to the Church after a lot of harassment in Raja. There was a good relationship between Muslims and Christians because the most radical elements, like the Feroze Moslems and fundamentalist elements coming from the North, were absent and local Muslims were open and even supportive to the Catholic Church and her activities.

The Christians of Mabia were, for the first time, confronted with different Protestant and Independent Churches present in Western Equatoria. When faced and challenged by them, Mabia Christians answered in a positive way and with a strong identification with the Catholic Church.

The future of Mabia was linked to the destiny of the displaced people of Raja. All of them strongly hoped to return to their place back in Raja and so were the missionaries. By the end of November 2004, it was foreseen that the majority of people would have already left the camp and Fr Zúñiga was meant to hand over everything, but the possibility of the South Sudan Province taking over Raja was out of question.³⁹⁶

Moyo Community (Uganda)

The presence in Moyo started on 1 January, 2002, with the intention of developing a proper *Vocation Centre*. However, it may be helpful to comment briefly on the conclusion of the permanence in Kocoa, since it was a commitment which started since the year 1992 with St Mary Seminary of Torit Diocese and the Sudanese refugees of Pakele Adjumani.

Bro Domenico Cariolato and then Bro Mario Rossignoli were in charge of the restructuring of the buildings and Bro Rossignoli was also asked to take care of students aspiring to know more about Comboni Missionary life and helping them in the vocation journey. In 1999, the confreres in Kocoa

³⁹⁶ SSCOMBONI@NEWS.COM, Newsletter, no. 27, June, 2004. FSSPJ.

were Fr Magni and Bro Rossignoli. When Fr Magni was assigned to Lomin Fr Bizzarro joined Bro Rossignoli.

On 14 July, 2001, Fr Paul Idra was ordained Priest in the Pastoral Centre of Robidire refugee camp by Rt Rev Akio Johnson Mutek, Auxiliary Bishop of Torit Diocese. He was assigned to the community of Pakele/Kocoa for Vocation Ministry with Bro Rossignoli. Sadly, a while later, Fr Bizzarro fell sick and died in Moyo on 3 August, 2001, aged 74.

Since the Delegation Council decided to develop a proper *Vocation Centre*, the first idea was to have it in Kocoa, but the position of the Bishop, for obvious reasons, was that it was not appropriate to have a Comboni Vocation Centre in the premises of the Diocesan Minor Seminary and so Fr Magni and the members of the vocation team were asked to look for a suitable place for the *Vocation Centre*.³⁹⁷

The final decision of the Delegation Council was to have it in Moyo, more central to the area of work and near to Lomin. The community of Kocoa moved to Moyo at the end of December, 2001. The compound of Kocoa was handed over to the Diocese of Torit, with everything in it, and the presence started on 1 January, 2002.

The purpose of the community was Missionary Animation and Vocation Promotion among young Sudanese attending secondary schools in northern Uganda. The community consisted of Fr Ferrazin, Fr Idra and Bro Rossignoli. However, Fr Idra had to go temporarily to stay in Lomin, which later on was considered suitable also for the Pre-Postulancy.³⁹⁸ Fr Ferrazin, instead, after a short time had to go to Italy for health reasons.

The *Vocation Centre* of Moyo carried on with Vocation Ministry throughout the Administration of Fr Bettini, in collaboration with the Province of Uganda.

Mapuordit Community

The Comboni community was made up of Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, Parish Priest, Fr Silvano Gottardi, his assistant and Fr Raymond Pax, the religious education teacher in the school; Bro Alberto Lamana Cónsola was in charge of the maintenance of both hospital and mission and Bro Rosario Iannetti was the surgeon at the mission hospital.

Mapuordit, 24 km south of Akot, on the Rumbek-Yirol road, was a Parish with many chapels and had the largest school in South Sudan with

³⁹⁷ SSCOMBONI@NEWS.COM, Newsletter, no. 19, September, 2001. FSSPJ.

³⁹⁸ Ibid. no. 20, February 2002. FSSPJ.

approximately 1500 students. When Bro Lamana joined the community soon after the Assembly of 2002, Fr Barton left it at the beginning of February, after a very successful experience in Education. The school was then run by the DOLSH (Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart) from Australia and some Volunteers. In 2004, the OLSH Sisters, were running two big primary schools (Mapuordit and Makur Agar) with almost 1900 students and a secondary school. Sr Mary Bachelor was the Principal.

The house and the premises of the Comboni Missionaries consisted of some straw huts, but between December, 2001, and February, 2002, three prefabricated buildings in wood were set up in the Comboni compound, one was used as a refectory and the other had four rooms for the confreres. A well with a solar pump provided water for the Fathers and Sisters. The Sisters and the Volunteers had their own separate accommodation. Two prefabricated buildings in the Volunteers' compound were set up by the DOR (Diocese of Rumbek), while Bro Lamana was very committed in the hospital premises and elsewhere: the surgery theatre was roofed and other facilities were set up as well.

The school was built with local material, but the classrooms were gradually replaced by others in semi-permanent material. The hospital was a mixed set of buildings, some in mud, others in aluminium and others in cement blocks. Mapuordit had a radio transmitter, but it was not working properly, while the airstrip was in Akot, 24 km away.

Activities: the Parish had about 50 Catechists and every 30 to 40 days there were regular visits to all the 25/30 outstations (and small village schools) but also to four larger *government schools*.

Mary Immaculate Hospital: the hospital was linked very much with the personal story of Bro Rosario Iannetti, a young Brother, a medical doctor, born in Naples, Italy, in 1961. He started his first missionary experience in the medical field in Wau, under the Province of Khartoum, during the time of the *New Sudan Delegation*.

Since in Wau the security situation had deteriorated a lot and he could no longer carry out surgical operations as he was doing before, he took in consideration the invitation of Mgr Mazzolari of Rumbek Diocese asking for him. In dialogue with Fr Salvatore Pacifico, Provincial Superior of Khartoum, he decided to leave Wau and work in the *Liberated Areas*.

After preparing for his perpetual vows during the Comboni year of ongoing formation in South Africa, from October 1999 to May 2000, having already been assigned to the Delegation of South Sudan in March 2000, he started his medical work with Rumbek Diocese. Mgr Mazzolari's intention, in fact, was to open a surgical unit with a surgical ward in Mapuordit.

While Bro Iannetti went to Kalongo Hospital (Uganda) in order to refresh and improve his surgical skills from July 2000 to December 2001, a big prefabricated metallic structure with 24 beds was purchased. At the same time, CRS (Catholic Relief Service) sponsored one Ugandan registered nurse to train twelve students of Mapuordit Secondary School to become *Hospital Auxiliary Nurses*. When Bro Iannetti arrived in Mapuordit on 15 December, 2001, he found the twelve *Hospital Auxiliary Nurses* ready and the prefabricated *surgical ward* almost complete.

There was also an *operation tent*, fully equipped for surgical operations, donated by *Trnava University* of Slovakia, with which there was an agreement for medical co-operation with the Diocese of Rumbek. The hospital opened on 1 February, 2002, and in March surgical operations started. Bro Iannetti was the Medical Director of the Diocesan Hospital with the help of three Slovakian doctors on rotation every three months.

In 2004 the O.T. (Operating Theatre) was built as a permanent structure, while the O.P.D. (Outpatient Department) and the Septic Surgical Ward (infective surgery) were semi-permanent buildings.³⁹⁹ By the end of Fr Bettini's Administration, what Mapuordit Hospital achieved under the direction of Bro Iannetti was really remarkable.

Marial Lou Community

The Mission of Marial Lou started in 1994 to replace the important mission of Thiet that was regularly bombed by the military aircraft of Khartoum. It was assisting also the displaced people who came from Aweil and Gogrial and was located about 50 km north of Thiet, on the way to Akop. The language spoken was Dinka, but Arabic was widely used in the market. The area was poor and water, during the dry season, was a real problem. All the organizations present in the area, and the mission itself, were providing water for the people.

In 2003, in Marial Lou there were two Comboni Missionaries, Fr Jeronimo Caporal and Fr Mitiku Habte. Fr Jimmy Aventore was, as well, helping there temporarily. There was also a community of Comboni Sisters who were taking care of the school, of the boarding for girls, of the hospital and helping in pastoral work. The Mission had a primary school with 750 students and a boarding school for girls. There was even a hospital for TB

³⁹⁹ New People, Nov/Dec, 2004, G. Caramazza.

- Nigrizia, 2005, Fratel Rosario Iannetti / *Due mani per salvare*, (two hands to save) a cura di Fr Mo., febbraio, p. 56.

and leprosy patients, the only one in the vast territory. In Marial Lou there was a multitude of NGOs, including Medicines Sans Frontiers.

The former mud houses of the mission were replaced by permanent buildings with running water and an electrical system with solar panels. In 2002, several wells, about 100 meters deep, were dug to provide clean and safe water for all the needs of the mission and the people. The community had two Land Cruisers for pastoral work, but they were in poor condition as was the radio, making good communication difficult. The Province wanted to keep two commitments in Rumbek Diocese and asked the Diocese to choose between Agang Rial and Marial Lou, the Diocese preferred Agang Rial, so Marial Lou was handed over on 31 July, 2004, to the new Parish Priest, Fr John Waweru.

Agang Rial Community

The mission of Agang Rial was founded in 1995 in a place around 12 km south of Rumbek, on the Tonj-Cueibet road. The people are Dinka, but there are also some Bongo and Jur. Fr Luciano Perina (Superior and Parish Priest) and Fr Ignacio Toro were working there. There was also a community of Comboni Sisters, who were taking care of the primary school and of the hospital for TB patients and helping in pastoral work.

In 2003, the buildings were made of straw and mud, but there was an ongoing renewal of the mission with a project of four rooms, a dining hall and a kitchen to be built in bricks and iron sheets and completed by June 2004, with solar panels, running water and electricity, by Bro Lamana.⁴⁰⁰

The mission was equipped with a radio-transmitter that was working well and reaching all the communities. There was also a seasonal airstrip, but during the rainy season the community had to fly from Rumbek: the journey was rather complicated and dangerous because of the large swamps surrounding Agang Rial. As a means of transport, the community had a Toyota Land Cruiser, though in rather bad shape and it often broke down.

Agang Rial had about 27 chapels and 40 Catechists, almost all of them untrained except two who were trained in Kitale. The visits to the Chapels were lasting two or three days and a projector with a small generator was taken along in order to show some biblical films translated into Dinka. There was also CRE (Christian Religious Education) teaching in the Parish school run by the Comboni Sisters.

⁴⁰⁰ SSCOMBONI@NEWS.COM, Newsletter, no. 27, June 2004. FSSPJ.

The Youth group was made up of students and few youth teachers who had finished the secondary school in Uganda. Seminars and workshops were organised by Sr Lorena Morales who was also taking care of the Small Christian Communities and the women's group. The Fathers were involved with specific topics delivered during meetings or on recollection days. The Parish Council was made up of Catechists and representatives of different groups.

Nyamlel

St Theresa's Parish was taken care of by Fr Michael Barton, who was assigned to it in February, 2002, after he left Mapuordit. Though it was in the territory of Wau Diocese, in agreement with the Bishop of Wau, it was served by the Diocese of Rumbek. St Theresa had one Parish centre and eight other centres, each one with ten chapels.

A trained Catechist was leading each one of the centres and each chapel had either a prayer leader or a part-time Catechist. The Catechist coordinating all the head Catechists was trained for two years and was residing in the Parish centre. All the other head Catechists had been trained for one year. Prayer leaders and part time Catechists were locally trained.

The Parish was serving two counties, Aweil West and Aweil North, with a total population of about 450,000 inhabitants. About two per cent of the elderly people and about forty per cent of the youth were Christian; the younger generation was very open to the Gospel and to the Church. The population was mostly Dinka Malual. Saint Theresa's Parish was founded in the thirties, but evangelization had to be started again through Word and Sacrament and the education of the youth and adults.

Nyal Community

Nyal community was opened in October, 1998, after the destruction of Leer on 29 June of that year, and was located in the Western Upper Nile (W.U.N.), among the Nuer people neighbouring with the Dinka. Nyal was a small village in the middle of the Sudd (huge marshes along the Nile) but of great strategic importance because it was at the centre of the activities of the UN/OLS in the whole Nuer area.

At first there were two confreres in the community, Fr Fernando González Galarza and Bro Raniero Iacomella. Fr Roy Carlos Zúñiga Paredes joined them in November of the same year. He stayed only two years and in 2000 he was transferred. Fr Guillermo Aguiñaga Pantoja joined them in February, 2001. All were engaged in pastoral work.

The territory of the mission was very extensive and it was the only mission in the whole W.U.N. The confreres were particularly involved in the training of Catechists, in visits to the chapels and the translation of pastoral materials from English to the Nuer language. Bro Raniero was more dedicated to small development projects, but also in pastoral work.

The houses of the missionaries were in mud and grass, built by the Christians to accommodate their missionaries, towards whom they had much devotion and respect. The confreres lived according to the local style and even their food followed local custom. For lighting they had simple solar lamps and water was brought with buckets.

Security was a real issue, on 19 February, 2001, Fr González Galarza, Fr Aguiñaga Pantoja and Bro Iacomella were evacuated and two days later, on 21, Nyal was attacked and burned down completely.⁴⁰¹ The community set up in Ganyliel until March 2002, after which they returned to Nyal. The Mission had no radio, but occasionally used those of the other NGOs. Confreres had no means of transport because of the life-style they chose to live since the beginning of their presence among the Nuer. The visits to the Christian communities were on foot, even more than 150 km away, accompanied by the Catechists and the youth.

Development projects: of particular importance in human promotion was the work of Bro Iacomella who was involved in development projects. Significantly, he set up a demonstration garden through which he tried to introduce new agriculture skills among the Nuer. He took care to motivate people, especially Catechists, the youth and leaders, on the benefit of tree plantation, particularly fruit trees like mangoes, guavas, gishta, sugar cane and whatever could improve the diet of the Nuer people, where fruit trees were almost non-existent. Ox-ploughing was also introduced.

The Catechetical Centre *James Duol Kai* was the institution most appreciated and respected by the Christians and especially by Catechists and leaders; it took the name from the founder of the Catechists' League, James Duol Kai, and became functional in April, 2004.

The public library *Joseph Pal Mut* was also opened with 435 books, 60 magazines and 90 members. Many people, though not members, were using it. The library was built in semi-permanent material with the cooperation of the youth.

⁴⁰¹ SSCOMBONI@NEWS.COM, Newsletter, no. 18, March, 2001, p.18. FSSPJ.

- Ibid. no. 21, Fire in Western Upper Nile, F. González G., May, 2002, pp.21-22. FSSPJ.

- Leer Community Charter, 2015. FSSPJ.

Old Fangak

The work of Fr Antonio La Braca among the Eastern Nuer people with reference point to Old Fangak, as its centre, was very important for the development of evangelization in that vast Nuer area.

In March 1999, Fr Antonio settled in Old Fangak marking the creation of the new Parish which eventually was named *Holy Trinity*. Fr La Braca found fervent and faithful collaboration among the people of the Parish, especially the Catechists, the men of the church committee and the women of the *Legion of Mary*. He gave a great impulse to the Parish, although he remained alone for several difficult years.

Bishop Vincent Mojwok appointed him Parish Priest of Fangak area and moderator of all the Nuer Land, with residence in Old Fangak. Since 1999, Fr La Braca and his Catechists had been working at building up Christian communities *mature in faith and charity*.⁴⁰²

The methodology of evangelization of Fr La Braca was marked by a strong awareness of the importance of *self-reliance* in the life of the Christian communities, united with the other two aspects of *self-ministry* and *self-propagation*. Nuer people had already been following these principles since the start of the Catholic Church among them, carried out by the convert Nuers, in particular, those coming from Khartoum, who became their Catechists and leaders.

The Comboni House Community in Nairobi

The Comboni House of Nairobi was meant to support the activities of the confreres working in South Sudan and was the residence of the Provincial Superior and of the Provincial Bursar. In this house, the confreres found a welcome when passing through or staying in Nairobi. The house went through a lot of renovation and the addition of rooms at the beginning of Fr Bettini's Administration and it was large enough to accommodate the missionaries coming and going to Sudan, providing a good logistic service to everyone, with a person in charge full-time.

In September, 2003, the community was composed of eight confreres: Fr Bettini, the Provincial Superior, Fr Girardi, the Provincial Bursar, Fr Giarolo, in charge of logistics, Fr Polacchini and Fr Ayon. Fr Aranda Nava, formator of the Postulancy, was a member of the community, but he was living in the Postulancy of Ongata Rongai. Fr Boffelli and Fr Rossi were

⁴⁰² Encyclical Letter "Redemptoris Missio", no 23.

working respectively for Bishop Macram (El-Obeid/Nuba Mountains) and Bishop Mazzolari (Rumbek) and were staying with them. Unfortunately, Fr Polacchini, while in Italy for medical treatment, died in Negrar, on 25 December, 2003, at the age of 76.

Confreres with special commitments

Confreres with special commitments: Fr Aranda Nava was the second formator in the inter-Provincial Postulancy of Ongata Rongai (Nairobi), and, once a week, he would join the community of the Comboni House for the community day. Fr Boffelli was living in Bakhita House, which was the residence in Nairobi of Bishop Max Macram, in charge of the Christians of the Nuba Mountains, part of the Diocese of El Obeid.

Fr Antonio La Braca was working in the Parish of Old Fangak, in Eastern Upper Nile and was taking care of the Nuer communities on the Eastern bank of the White Nile. Fr Rossi was the Personal Secretary of Mgr Mazzolari, Bishop of Rumbek. He was living in Bethany House, the house of Rumbek Diocese, and was referring to the Comboni House for community life. Father Michael Barton was also committed to the Diocese of Rumbek and working in Nyamlel, among the Dinka people.

A Catholic FM Radio for Southern Sudan

On the occasion of the Canonisation of Bishop Daniel Comboni, founder of the Comboni Missionaries and of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, the two Institutes agreed to support an *Opera Significativa* for Southern Sudan to remember its first Bishop. They wrote a letter ⁴⁰³ and asked the missionaries working in the area to make a proposal on what would be most important and necessary for Southern Sudan in the aftermath of war. They unanimously chose a *Catholic Radio* as essential for the implementation of peace and the development of the country

The two Comboni Institutes, MCCJ and CMS, were to carry out the project in collaboration with the Dioceses of South Sudan. It was then clear that the acceptance and the go-ahead for the project depended on and had to be given by the SCBC. In fact, at a later stage, when the Radio Project

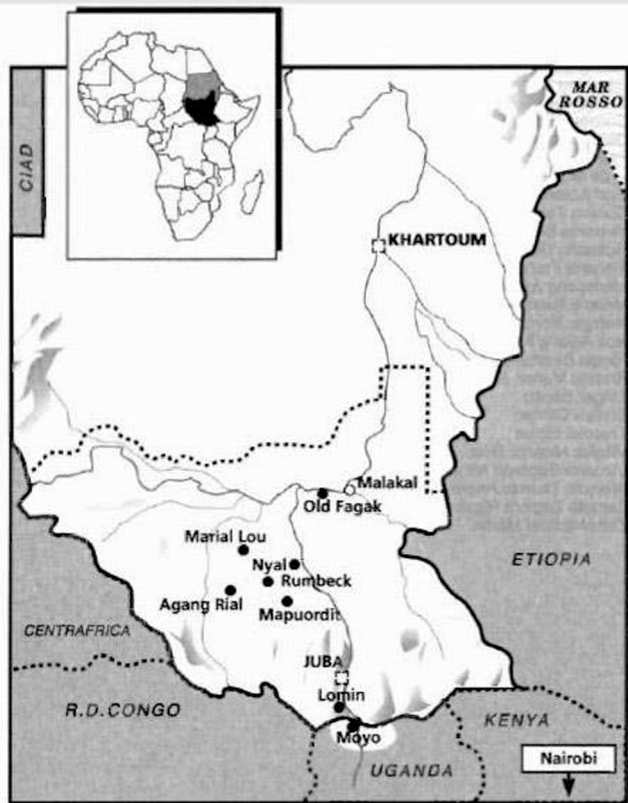
⁴⁰³ The General Councils of the Comboni Missionary Sisters and of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, to the Provincial s and the CMS and MCCJ in Southern Sudan, Rome, 20 June, 2003. FSSPJJ.

would be fully running and the personnel prepared adequately, it would be handed over to the Dioceses to be run by local personnel.

Fr Bettini, as MCCJ Provincial and an expert in the field, was asked to formulate a plan to be then discussed at General and Provincial level and at the level of SCBC. He indeed did so, with the help of experts of *Signis* in Rome, and presented a possibly feasible plan to the two General Councils (Cms-Mccj).

However, since the project came at the end of his mandate, after having done this first and most important job, and presented the second draft,⁴⁰⁴ he left the whole issue to the in-coming Provincial of South Sudan and his Council.

The issue of the radio was practically the last commitment Fr Ezio Bettini offered himself to carry out before the end of his term of office, leaving the open door to others for its implementation.



Map 2004/2005

⁴⁰⁴ Nairobi, 28 August, 2004, Fr Ezio Bettini, Catholic FM Radio for South Sudan, 2nd Draft. FSSPJ.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION from 2005 to 2010 Provincial Superior: Fr LUCIANO PERINA

The Administration with headquarters in Juba

This Administration still kept its headquarters in Nairobi but started the whole process to go back to Juba, which it did with the second mandate of Fr Luciano Perina during the Provincial Assembly of 2008.

The Provincial and his Council

Fr Luciano Perina was elected Provincial Superior of the South Sudan Province,⁴⁰⁵ with his residence still in Nairobi. His four councillors were Fr Bosco Anthony Sule Mawa (Vice-Provincial)⁴⁰⁶, Bro Rosario Iannetti, Fr Joseph Ukelo and Bro Iacomella Raniero.

The shared responsibilities of the new Provincial Council were: Bro Iacomella was to take up the task of Secretary of the Provincial Council, Bro Iannetti and Bro Iacomella the financial matters and the link with the Finance Committee; Fr Joseph Ukelo would follow up Evangelization and Fr Sule Mawa Formation and Vocation Promotion.

Fr Luciano Perina was elected for a second term as Provincial Superior of the South Sudan Province in 2008⁴⁰⁷ and his councillors were Fr Alfredo

⁴⁰⁵ Fr Teresino Serra, Superior General, Rome, 20 October, 2004, Province of South Sudan, Appointment of Fr Luciano Perina as Provincial Superior, from 1 January, 2005. FSSPJ.

⁴⁰⁶ From the Superior General, Rome, 4 February, 2005, Appointment of Fr Bosco Anthony Mawa as Vice Provincial Superior of South Sudan till 31 December, 2007. FSSPJ.

⁴⁰⁷ Fr Teresino Serra, Superior General, Rome, 29 January, 2008, Province of South Sudan, Appointment of Fr Luciano Perina as Provincial Superior, from 29 January, 2008, till 31 December, 2010. FSSPJ.

Estrada Meza Luis,⁴⁰⁸ Vice Provincial, Fr Albino Adot Oryem, Bro Bortoli Nicola and Bro Alberto Lamana Cónsola. After Fr Alfredo Estrada resigned, Fr Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi was elected to the Council as his replacement and also took up the office of Vice Provincial Superior.⁴⁰⁹ The communities and personnel on which Fr Perina could count at the beginning of 2005 are listed here below.

South Sudan Province, Personnel in April, 2005⁴¹⁰

Jacaranda Avenue, NAIROBI (Kenya)

Provincial Superior

Fr Luciano Perina (1 January, 2005)

Provincial Councillors

Fr Bosco Anthony Mawa, Vice Provincial

Fr Joseph Ukelo Yala

Bro Iacomella Raniero

Bro Rosario Ianetti

Provincial Bursar

Bro Jorge Arturo Rodriguez Fayad

Provincial Procurator

Fr Luciano Giarolo

Secretary of Formation and Missionary Animation

Fr Jesus José Aranda Nava

Secretary of Evangelization, Coordinator of JPIC

Fr Fernando González Galarza

Secretary of Vocation Promotion

Bro Mario Rossignoli

Comboni personnel

Bishops 1, Fathers 25, Brothers 9, Scholastics 1, Postulants 8

Bollettino of the Province

SSCOMBONI@NEWS

Languages spoken in the Province

Arabic, Bari, Dinka, English, Ma'di, Nuer, Toposa

Dioceses where present

⁴⁰⁸ From the Superior General, Rome, 19 February, 2008, Appointment of Fr Estrada Meza Luis Alfredo as Vice Provincial Superior from 11 February, 2008, till 31 December, 2010. FSSPJ.

⁴⁰⁹ During the Consulta session on 31.3.2010 the GC appoints the Vice-Provincial s of other Circumscriptions: **Fr Okot Luis** for South Sudan. (Curia mcej Rome).

⁴¹⁰ Annuario Comboniano 2005 (Updated on 1 April, 2005)

KENYA Nairobi: Comboni House, Bakhita House, Bethany House

UGANDA Arua: Moyo

SUDAN

Rumbek: Agang-Rial, Mapuordit.

Yei: Lomin.

Malakal: Nyal, Old Fangak

Nairobi - Comboni House

Fr Luciano Perina, Provincial Superior.

Fr Joseph Ukelo Yala, Superior

Fr Aranda Nava José Jesus (Ongata Rongai – Postulancy)

Fr Michael Barton (Nyamlel, Aweil, West Sudan)

Bro Valentino Fabris

Fr Luciano Giarolo

Fr Bosco Anthony Mawa *

Bro Jorge Arturo Rodriguez Fayad

Nairobi - Bakhita House, Diocese of El Obeid, entrusted to the Comboni Missionaries on 1 October, 2001.

Mgr Max Gassis Macram (KH), Fr Pasquale Boffelli

Nairobi - Bethany House, Diocese of Rumbek

Mgr Cesare Mazzolari, Fr Fernando Colombo (KE)

Rumbek Diocese

Agang-Rial

Fr Mitiku Habte Cheksa, Superior

Fr Luis Alfredo Estrada Meza

Mapuordit - Parish

First evangelization and Hospital among the Dinka.

Fr Giovanni Girardi, Superior

Bro Rosario Iannetti

Bro Alberto Lamana Cónsola

Bro Damiano Mascalzoni

Fr Raymond Pax

Fr Giuseppe Pellerino

Yei Diocese

Lomin (Kajo Kaji) – Parish.

Evangelization, **Pre-Postulancy** and Education

Fr Eugenio Magni, Superior

Fr Hector Ayon Oyiamute

Bro Erich Fischnaller (RSA)

Fr José Manuel Garcia Oviedo

Moyo - Vocation Centre (Arua Diocese)

Community opened on 1.1.2002,
Vocation Ministry, care of Refugees.

Fr Giovanni Ferrazin, Superior

Fr Aventore Jimmy Milla

Bro Mario Rossignoli

Malakal Diocese

Nyal Parish.

First evangelization, assistance to the region of Eastern Upper Nile.

Fr Fernando González Galarza, Sup.

Fr Guillermo Aguiñaga Pantoja

Sch. Jaime Alvarez Nistal (E)

Bro Raniero Iacomella

Fr Antonio La Braca (Old Fangak Parish)

Fr Wellington Alves de Sousa

Catholic Church, Eastern Upper Nile, Southern Sudan

Waiting for appointment

Bro Nicola Bortoli

Fr Alberto Jesus Eisman Torres

Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks

Fr Pawel Skiba

In other Circumscriptions

Fr Christian Carlassare (LP)

Fr Silvano Gottardi (I)

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2005

The new Administration of the South Sudan Province had been in office for just a few days when the **Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)**, (Arabic اتفاقية السلام الشامل, *Ittifāqiyyah al-salām al-šāmīl*), known as the Naivasha Agreement, was signed on 9 January, 2005, by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Government of Sudan.⁴¹¹

The CPA was meant to end the Second Sudanese Civil War, develop democratic governance countrywide and share oil revenues. It also set a timetable for Southern Sudanese independence. The peace process was encouraged by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as IGAD-Partners, a consortium of donor countries.

⁴¹¹ The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comprehensive_Peace_Agreement

During the meeting of 8 February, 2005, on the situation in Sudan, the President of the Security Council, Joel Adechi (Benin), stated that:

*“The signing of this Comprehensive Peace Agreement was a historic moment of great opportunity for the country and one which all its people should strive to seize in order to steer development in the path leading to a solid and long-lasting peace. At the same time, he said that the Council was appalled by the serious crimes under international law that had been committed in Darfur, as described in the report of the International Commission of Inquiry, and was determined to tackle impunity and to bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice.”*⁴¹²

At any rate, the signing of the CPA was received with mixed reactions by the public, both in the South and in the North. Most observers welcomed the prospect of a significant decline in the violence that had occasioned the loss of over two million lives and the displacement of over four million Southern Sudanese people since 1983.

However, given its history of prevarication, obstruction and obfuscation, many remained wary of the depth of the commitment of the ruling National Islamic Front (NIF) to peace. Nevertheless, the tiredness of war and the involvement of the international community brought some optimism that the CPA would really bring peace together with justice.⁴¹³

An upset to the whole matter at the start of the *interim period of time* of the CPA was the death of the newly sworn-in *First Vice-President of Sudan* and Chairman of the SPLA/M movement, Dr John Garang de Mabior, in a helicopter crash on 30 July, 2005.⁴¹⁴

The Government of National Unity (GoNU) came into being on 20 September, 2005, but, since the death of Dr John Garang there had been worrying indications that the NIF (or National Congress Party (NCP) may already have begun to take advantage of any structural weaknesses within the CPA in order to ensure its domination of the GoNU and to hinder, and ultimately undermine, the CPA itself.

The implementation was not smooth. On 11 October, 2007, the SPLM withdrew from the government of national unity (GoNU), accusing the central government of violating the terms of the CPA, but they re-joined

⁴¹² Sudan Peace Agreement Signed 9 January, Historic Opportunity, Security Council Told, 8 February, 2005. <http://www.un.org/press/en/2005/sc8306.doc.htm>

⁴¹³ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Briefing Sudan, for public use, December 2005, <http://www.cswusa.org/filerequest/2852.pdf>

⁴¹⁴ Arop Madut-Arop, Sudan's painful road to peace, op. cit., pp. 417-422.

the government on 13 December, 2007, following an agreement. Finally, on 8 January, 2008, the Northern Sudanese troops left Southern Sudan.

Arop Madut-Arop, in his book *Sudan's painful road to peace* quoting the *public reactions to the peace agreement*, of some Sudanese politicians and academics like Dr Francis Mading Deng, still show apprehension about its implementation, especially if the Northerners do not prove to the Southerners that life in a United Sudan would be safe and, if not, *secession* would probably remain the only option.

The quotation says: *“The bitter history of broken promises and dishonoured agreements, the elusiveness of peace suggest that no option can be ruled out”* But, he continues, the best guarantee for unity is for the leadership, especially at the national level, to rise above factionalism and to offer a vision that would inspire a cross-sectional majority of Sudanese people irrespective of race, ethnicity, region or religion, to identify with the nation and to stand together in collective pursuit of their common destiny. *“Only through mutual recognition, respect and harmonious interaction among African and Arab populations throughout the country, can the Sudan achieve and ensure a just and lasting peace and live up to its role as a true microcosm of Africa and a dynamic link between the Continent and the Middle East”*⁴¹⁵

The above vision was also what led the Comboni Missionaries to follow through the different commitments at church, school, and public health, civic and religious levels and help building up a country from the ruins and traumas of a long war.

Year 2005: “Going Home”

The reason why the Comboni Missionaries chose to work in the *Liberated Areas* was precisely in order to carry on being “at home” with the suffering people of South Sudan and to stay with them the whole way through. Now *Going Home* really meant to be *fully at home* in the very country whose people and missionaries were displaced.

Fr Perina was the one on whom this wonderful, delicate and difficult task fell upon. He was a Missionary of the “North” assigned to the “South” only a short time before, but with the great advantage of being the person entrusted with the Orientation Course for all the Sudanese Diocesan Clergy. Hence, he accompanied and helped many students aspiring to the

⁴¹⁵ Arop Madut-Arop, *ibid.* ref. Dr Francis Mading Deng, p 408.-

- Southern Sudan: Too Many Agreements Dishonoured (Sudan Studies), Hardcover, Abel Alier, 1 January, 1999.

Priesthood, knew them and prepared them to enter the Major Seminary in Khartoum.

This was not a small matter if we consider the difficult relations between some Comboni Missionaries and some Diocesan Priests in Juba at the beginning of the nineties. The positive experience of relations with the Diocesan Church was of great importance to start with a positive outlook and a spirit of true collaboration the task of *Going back Home*.

The General Assembly, 2005

After the two Provincial Councils met on 10 January, 2005, for the handover, just a day after the signing of the CPA, the Province entered straight into the General Assembly in Nairobi from 16 to 21 January, 2005.

Primary importance was given to the CPA with the first day totally dedicated to this issue. Three SPLM/A representatives were invited to talk on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement: Mr. Samson Kwaje, *Commissioner of Information and Official Spokesman of SPLM/A*, Secretary and Spokesman for SPLA/M delegation to the IGAD peace talks since 1994, from Lany place, some kilometres outside Juba; Dr David Mayo, a *PhD in Political Economy, was part of the Wealth Sharing Committee of the SPLM delegation*, from Chukudum; Professor Cirino Iteng, *an expert in International Public Relations and member of the SPLM*. Their inputs were followed by many questions and clarifications.

After the above topic the Assembly entered into the following topics that would affect the progress of the Circumscription on the very same issues: the *ratio missionis*, the *code of conduct*, the issue of *peace, reconciliation and civic education*, the *collaboration with Khartoum Province* and the *revision and approval of the Six-Year Plan*.

The work on the “Ratio Missionis” was presented to the Assembly by Fr Fernando González Galarza with the *Message of the General Council* on the elaboration of a *Ratio Missionis* for the Comboni Institute, giving reasons for the initiative and outlines to implement it. Each confrere was called upon to reflect and contribute to the work and was given a copy of the documents *Towards a Ratio Missionis* and the *Message of the General Council* upon which to work.

The “Code of Conduct”: Fr Fernando Domingues introduced this topic explaining how it came about and the positive attitude to be used in its approach. He pointed out that *we are not called to avoid sin, but to live in holiness*. The code of conduct would help by giving norms and guidelines for the pastoral care of persons in special situations. He also said that the

call to religious and missionary life is, first of all, *a call to holiness* of the person called and of the people to whom the missionary is sent. Hence, the *code of conduct* would help to deal properly in case of grave abuses.

Commitment to Peace, Reconciliation and Civic Education: the Six-Year Plan stated that *the top priority will be to join efforts with the Local Church and other institutions to promote peace, reconciliation and civic education*. This implied that, throughout the six years, the primary effort in the evangelizing activity was to foster peace, reconciliation and civic education to help the people and the country to make progress in the integration of different ethnic groups where the Combonis are present.

Peace and Reconciliation input: the topic of peace and reconciliation was covered by Fr Mariano Tibaldo who underlined the biblical roots of *Peace and Reconciliation* and put a couple of questions to be reflected by the whole Assembly in relationship to the concrete reality of South Sudan. Fr Tibaldo pointed out that *we cannot be ministers of reconciliation unless we are reconciled among ourselves* and continued by asking to identify *the evils preventing us from being fully reconciled in our communities, in the Province and in the Diocese where we are working, and to name some of those evils*.

The Assembly did find that what was playing a negative role: **at Community Level** was jealousy, individualism and lack of communication, prejudices, fear of others, of those different from us, of what is new, of the unknown, refusal of others' advice or correction; **at Provincial Level**, gossiping, fear of change, fear of new ways of being missionary, prejudices against groups (e.g. the elderly, the young, nationalities...), using influence for individualistic purposes; **at Diocesan Level**, a sense of superiority, lack of the feeling of belonging to the Local Church or having too much money.

Having been asked *to name some situations/structures of sin in our people which need to be addressed as ministers of reconciliation*, the answer went along this way: **in Cultural Structures**, revenge, tribalism, pride, refusal of correction, forced marriages, the oppressed condition of women and children, corruption of the traditional judicial system, greed and nepotism; **in Social and Ecclesial Structures**, a lack of cultural identification, the fragile condition of the youth, injustices due to the war and the counter-witness of Church personnel.

The Assembly tried to identify also moments and events which brought reconciliation among people and ethnic groups and other traditional ways of reconciliation already existing among different ethnic groups and among Churches and Religious Groups which could be promoted and improved through this ministry.

Collaboration with Khartoum Province: with the CPA the collaboration with Khartoum Province was a very urgent matter since the communities of Juba, Wau, Raja and Malakal, under the care of Khartoum Province since 1995, would now return to South Sudan Province. Fr Perina and the Provincial of Khartoum, Fr Luigi Cignolini and the respective Councils needed to tackle the matters. The General Administration felt that collaboration had to improve including Egypt and Chad ⁴¹⁶ for possible sharing of personnel with knowledge of Arabic. In the field of formation the Provincial Council agreed to send their three new Postulants to Khartoum and contribute for repairs or extensions of the premises.

General Administration and the two Provinces of Khartoum and South Sudan, in doing so, they were just following their *common sense and understanding* that the South, in the future, would develop in collaboration with the North of Sudan in a *United Sudan*, as the SPLA/M of Dr John Garang was upholding. This did not happen in the country or in the South Sudan Province. With the independence of South Sudan, the Province preferred the link with Kenya and East Africa to that with Khartoum. Hence, all these praiseworthy undertakings did not get any follow-up.

Finalizing the Six-Year Plan

The **Six-Year Plan** was basic for the future journey of the Province in the new situation created by the signing of the CPA. All the former relationship and agreements with the Province of Khartoum made at the time of the erection of the Delegation in the *Liberated Areas* had to be revised. The commitments in the Southern areas under the Government of Khartoum like Wau, Raja, Malakal and Juba were to go back to the South Sudan Circumscription with all that was undertaken in the meantime.

The issues of Formation, Mission Promotion, Logistics, the return of the Provincial seat to Juba and the whole matter of the implementation of the *Sudan Catholic Radio Project*, were all issues in need of reflection and planning. In all these matters the collaboration with Khartoum Province was very important.

On Evangelization: the Assembly tackled the Six-Year Plan with this spirit: *our top priority in this field, due to the signing of the peace agreement in Sudan, will be to join our efforts with those of the Local Church and other institutions to promote peace, reconciliation and civic education.* The main priorities were the implementation of the

⁴¹⁶ Provincial Council 2/2005, 25-31 May, 2005. FSSPJ.

Evangelization Charter of the Provincial Directory and, when appointing confreres in the field of evangelization, to give attention to qualifications, personal charisms *and continuity*, promoting sharing and planning together *also with Sisters and co-operators*.

On Finance: the Total Common Fund (TCF) was confirmed and needed to be implemented *according to the Directory of Finance*. There was the need of a more stable and experienced financial committee, a better preparation of Local Bursars and to foster projects that do not create dependency from abroad, but self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

On Communities and Commitments: put in order and strengthen the present communities *paying special attention to those that are most in need of personnel (e.g. Old Fangak)*; have communities *with no less than three members, four would be the optimum*; aim at establishing two communities each among the Nuer, the Bari-speaking people and Dinka; *if personnel increases, open another community among the most needy of the people mentioned above*. In the Diocese of Torit accept a possible involvement in training leaders and Catechists, or for on-going formation of Diocesan and Religious people; to move the Provincial House from Nairobi to Southern Sudan; to ask the Province of Kenya or Uganda for logistical support; take over from Khartoum Province the communities of Raga, Wau and Malakal providing confreres with knowledge of Arabic and sending others to Khartoum, Cairo, Juba or elsewhere to learn colloquial Arabic.

On-Going Formation: *the six years to be focused on On-Going Formation, reflecting upon and elaborating the Ratio Missionis*; to establish a permanent office for on-going formation and appoint a confrere in charge of it; to merge the library of Nairobi with the Provincial library of Juba with a part time librarian; to take care of the existing on-going formation groups of the young and the experienced confreres with *an appropriate programme to be drawn up*; to prepare confreres for qualified commitments in the Province and in evangelization.

Vocation Ministry: the community of Moyo was confirmed and needed to be strengthened with more personnel; with the new peace, to start thinking of moving the community inside Southern Sudan to a suitable place with two confreres full-time in charge of Vocation Ministry, vocation discernment and guidance of the candidates and responsible for them until they entered the Postulancy; to provide vocation material like books, videos, pamphlets, etc. for the vocation team and for the communities.

Basic Formation: the Postulancy to be taken back to Juba, while continuing the collaboration with the Kenya Province; to prepare formators

for the Postulancy and consider ways of collaborating with the Postulancy of Khartoum Province.

Meaningful Initiative for SS (CA 136): the choice went for the setting up of a *radio station* covering the whole of Southern Sudan to form a strong leadership. A feasibility study was to be done and then set up the radio stations. The SCBC was to be contacted for approval while the project had to include the formation of lay people *with the intention of handing over* the running of the radio station to them.

The General Assemblies (2006-2010)

I now present briefly the content, without going into details, of all the remaining five Annual Assemblies which will give us an idea of the important topics dealt with, the historical moment the Province was getting through and the wider reflection within the whole Comboni Institute. The Six-Year Plan finalized after the Assembly of 2005 was then accompanying the journey.

The General Assembly of Nairobi, from 8 to 14 January, 2006, carried on with the issue of the *Ratio Missionis* and *reinforcing the consolidation of communities*, of former and new undertakings like hospitals, schools, VTC and Secretariats.

The General Assembly of Nairobi, from 14 to 20 January, 2007, took up the topics of *Prophecy and Prophets in the Mission Field* and of the *revision of the Provincial Directory* where Evangelization, Vocation Ministry, Community, Province and Economy were dealt with in depth in relation to the situation of South Sudan. Moreover there was also the update of the journey done on the *Ratio Missionis*.

The General Assembly of Juba, from 13 to 17 January, 2008, marked the joyful event of the long-awaited physical return of the Comboni Missionaries and of the Provincial House to Juba with its first Assembly. H. G. Paolino Lokudu Loro, Archbishop of Juba, was invited to address the confreres during a half day of on-going formation. Fr Teresino Serra, Superior General, and Fr Fabio Baldan, Vicar General, were also present.

The topics chosen were again the *Ratio Missionis*, prepared and guided by the Secretariat of Evangelization; *the Total Common Fund*, a reflection animated by Fr Giuseppe Giannini, with experience of Malawi/Zambia, the first Province which started with the TCF and, finally, *The Directory of the Province*. The presence of a confrere from Khartoum Province and of the CMS of South Sudan Province underlined the importance of collaboration.

The General Assembly of Juba, from 15 to 21 January, 2009, was the second one done in Juba. Its main topic was the issue of *The Total Common Fund*. In this case, however, the matter was a re-evaluation of it after nine years of experience and the unease of many confreres with its running. The rest of the time of the Assembly was taken up by community and Secretariat reports. An outing was organised to Gondokoro meant to underline the link with the historical background of the past.

The General Assembly of Juba from 14 to 20 January, 2010, the third in Juba, took up the topic of “*The Evaluation of the Six-Year Plan*” started in 2004 and the second “*Synod of Africa*” which had just been concluded in Rome on 25 October, 2009 with the topic “*The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*”. The rest of the time was devoted to the community and Secretariats reports.

During these years the main concern was the *Ratio Missionis* (statutes /guidelines/paradigms of mission) as a reflection of direct experience of life in order to find new paradigms for the future. The reflection and evaluation on *Mission* was a help to all confreres to evaluate how *Mission* was carried out in each community and in the Province and the way it could develop.

Moving back home

After the General Assembly, 2005, the first Provincial Council tackled the matter of the return to Juba. Bro Jorge Rodriguez Fayat, Fr Joseph Ukelo and Fr Perina and the Provincial were entrusted with the process of *moving back home* to the provincial house of Juba. H. G. Paolino Lukudu Loro, Archbishop of Juba, needed to be contacted and so the Brothers of St Martin de Porres and the Sacred Hearts Sisters who, during the Comboni absence from Juba, had been taking care of the residences and who had not yet returned to their own properties damaged or destroyed by the war.

In the first months of year 2005, Fr Perina visited H. G. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro and presented him the issue of the Comboni desire to return to Juba. The Archbishop welcomed the request and, at the same time, also put forward a proposal for a possible future pastoral commitment to be taken up at a later stage. The way was now opened and planning could start. For the pastoral commitment, Archbishop Lokudu Loro proposed Tali or Wonduruba, in Terakeka County, and after proper assessment, the Province opted for Tali.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁷ Minutes of the Provincial Council, 2/2005, 25-31 May, 2005; Minutes of the Provincial Council, 3/2006, 27-30 August, 2006. FSSPJ.

The issue of the Brothers of St Martin de Porres and of the Sacred Heart Sisters was positively settled by facilitating their return to their residencies. The matter was now the refurbishing of the Comboni premises. This was not as easy as they thought, and the committee of Fr Perina, Bro Rodriguez Fayat and Fr Ukelo took quite some time to see how to go about it. It was not until early beginning of 2008 that the South Sudan Province could indeed set foot in the Provincial House and hold the first Assembly.

Between 2005 and 2008 all the works of refurbishing, renovating, restructuring, redecorating, adding a number of rooms and more bathrooms, had to be undertaken and Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks was sent to Juba in January 2006 to organise the works. Meanwhile, the Comboni Sisters had already visited Juba in December for to assess the issue of the Radio Project, already under way, and of the house and the two realities were practically unfolding together.

General Administration invited other provinces to help South Sudan temporarily with personnel, both for the restructuring of the house and the radio project. Bro Roberto Misas, an expert in informatics equipment and Bro Roberto Bertolo, for the construction of its premises, were assigned to the Radio Project, but both only for a couple of months, in collaboration with the Comboni Sisters. They travelled to Juba on 4 May, 2006, together with Sr Aloisia Cerlini in charge of getting the Sisters' house put in order.

Bro Fernando Acedo, on loan from the Ethiopian Province and in charge of the works of rehabilitating Comboni House, also arrived. He remained in Juba until 4 October, 2006, and then went back to his Province. A big challenge to him was that he had to do everything with unqualified workers, but he and all of them did well. On 7 July Bro Alberto Lamana arrived, as well. He started to put in order the electrical system of the compound and also see to his commitment with the Radio Project.

Before the Provincial Council of August Fr Perina visited Juba happy to see the work going on well. They hoped to see the works completed by the end of 2006 or the beginning of 2007, but this was not to be. By the end of January 2007, the Provincial and his Council appointed Fr José da Silva Vieira as acting Superior of Juba till the community could be merged with that of Jacaranda.

Bro Ritterbecks was appointed Local Bursar, while continuing as the person responsible for the renovation of the house and Bro Lamana was appointed to Juba community to work on the Radio Project. Instead, Fr José Luis Martinez Acevedo and Fr Mitiku Habte were invited to study the Bari language in view of opening Tali mission, among the Mundari people, but there was no follow-up.

Meanwhile, Radio Bakhita station in Juba was progressing with speed and it was launched on Christmas Eve, 24 December, 2006, with the live broadcast of the Midnight Christmas Mass celebrated by H. G. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, in St Theresa's Cathedral, Kator, and was on test.

Year 2007 was taken up by the implementation of the Six-Year Plan. With the third meeting of the Provincial Council of 2007 taking place in Juba Comboni House itself, the final instructions on the whole matter of the transfer, according to the requirements of the General Council, were given. The requirements were that communications (telephone/internet, flights and WFP connection, etc.) and administrative facilities (for banking, etc.) should be finalized and be manageable from Juba before moving there.

The closure of Jacaranda community, planned for September 2007, was postponed to December when the Comboni compound was finally ready, with all the necessary facilities, to allow the immediate running of the Province within South Sudan and with the final green light of the General Council to move in. The long "*journey home*" took up the whole first term of office of Fr Perina and his Council, 2005-2007, but at last it was completed and the first Assembly could take place in Juba from 13 to 17 January, 2008: it was also the *first General Assembly of the third millennium* in Juba.

Bridging time

The journey of the Province during the two terms of office of Fr Luciano Perina and his Councils marked the span of the *interim period of time* allotted by the CPA to prepare for the national referendum which was to take place on 9 January, 2011. All the communities and their undertakings were contributing to raising the level of awareness in the effort of building up the country of Sudan with a new perspective, promoting integration and acceptance of variety among ethnicities and the capacity to evaluate situations and finding adequate solutions.

The effort put into education at different levels of society, church, schools, health, youth, women and communities at grass-roots level was an empowerment of people of different walks of life and ages to reach a higher freedom of judgement of what was best for the country - not through manipulation and exploitation of people, but through a better capacity of reasoning gained by a positive practical experience of living values in concrete daily life and caring for each person in an environment of peace. In this regard, the role played by the SCRNL, the *Sudan Catholic Radio Network* offered a great opportunity of formation, education and awareness.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION

from 2011 to 2016

Provincial Superior:

Fr DANIELE MOSCHETTI

Administration with headquarters in Juba

This Administration had its headquarters in Juba and witnessed the *Referendum for Self-Determination* and the *Independence* of South Sudan becoming the 54th state in Africa: the **Republic of South Sudan**.

The Provincial and his Council

Fr Daniele Moschetti was elected Provincial Superior of the South Sudan Province on 1 January, 2011, until 31 December, 2013.⁴¹⁸ His councillors were Fr José da Silva Vieira, Vice Provincial, Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi, Fr Titus Henry Makokha, substituted by Fr Christian Carlassare by the end of the year 2012, and Bro Damiano Mascalzoni.

He was re-elected for a second term starting from 1 January, 2014, to 31 December, 2016.⁴¹⁹ His councillors were: Fr Kondo Komivi Antoine (Vice

⁴¹⁸ Fr Enrique Sánchez G., Superior General, Rome, 26 October, 2010, Appointment of Fr Daniele Moschetti as Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan, as from 1 January, 2011. FSSPJ.

- From the Superior General, Rome, 15 February, 2011, Appointment of Fr José da Silva Vieira as vice Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan till 31 December, 2013. FSSPJ.

⁴¹⁹ Fr Enrique Sánchez G., Superior General, Rome, 15 October, 2013, Appointment of Fr Daniele Moschetti as Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan, as from 1 January, 2014. FSSPJ.

- From the Superior General, Rome, 25 January, 2014, Appointment of Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi as vice Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan till 31 December, 2016. FSSPJ.

- From the Superior General, Rome, 24 July, 2015, Appointment of Fr Kouande Adekoun Victor as vice Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan till 31 December, 2016. FSSPJ.

Provincial), Fr Christian Carlassare, Fr Victor Kouande Adekoun, and Bro Nicola Bortoli. When Fr Kondo Komivi went for the Comboni Year and Bro Bortoli resigned, Bro Yohann (Hans) Eigner and Bro Jacek Pomycacz were elected and Fr Kouande Adekoun became Vice Provincial.

The Administration of Fr Moschetti started in Juba and witnessed the independence of the South, after the referendum of 9 January, 2011, that became the “*Republic of South Sudan*” on 11 July of the same year.

Those six years in office were full of crucial events, good and bad. This was a difficult time at church, political and social levels in the country and in the South Sudan Province. Fr Moschetti threw himself wholeheartedly into the concrete situation of the country, its needs of evangelization and human promotion, without sparing himself in proposing and organizing events which brought positive results in the life of the Province, of the Church and of Society, though one had the impression that it was difficult to keep pace with his rhythm of life.

In order not to interfere with the *Referendum for Self-Determination*, on 9 January, the Provincial Assembly of Juba was postponed to 6 April, 2011, instead of the month of January.

The Referendum for Self-Determination

The press in general was always presenting the long conflict between Northern and Southern Sudan as a religious struggle between Moslems and Christians. In the imminence of the referendum, Al Jazeera English, 22 December, 2010, aired an enlightening interview of what the real truth was: *Racism is what undermines Sudanese unity and is the main source of the country’s inability to remain unified in a state of peace.*⁴²⁰

The *referendum on self-determination* was getting near and all the monitoring bodies were working hard to ensure it could be carried out in a climate of *freedom, transparency and credibility*. In different ways, this was also what the term of office of Fr Perina contributed to through the Provincial and community undertakings, creating a new environment of trust among people in a country marked by war, prejudices and division.

Its Administration ended at the imminence of the Referendum, which revealed itself to be a lesson in excellent civil performance. It took place from 9 to 15 January, 2011, and sealed the will of the Southerners who voted for *secession*. The six years that had gone after the CPA proved the

⁴²⁰ Al Jazeera, 22 December, 2010, Racism undermines Sudanese unity, <http://www.aljazeera.com/video/africa/2010/12/2010122218520433724.html>

incapacity of the North to make *unity* attractive to the Southerners. Khartoum's continuous tricks and its use of all means to maintain top power positions, confirmed what had already happened in the past: *too many agreements had been dishonoured*.⁴²¹

On 7 February, 2011, the referendum commission published the final results, with 98.83% voting in favour of independence. The predetermined date for the creation of an independent state was set for 9 July, 2011. The SPLM proposed naming the country *South Sudan*, with *Nile Republic*, *Jubian Republic*, *Kush Republic* and others also proposed. The country was then officially named ***The Republic of South Sudan***.⁴²² Abyei, South Kordofan (the Nuba Mountains) and the Blue Nile remained issues for future agreements.

On 30 January, 2011, BBC Africa, announced that, according to the first complete results of the region's independence referendum, 99% voted for independence, to secede from the North.⁴²³ The final report of *the Carter Centre* on the 2011 *Referendum on the Self-Determination* of Southern Sudan reported that several million Southern Sudanese cast ballots in all 25 states of Sudan and eight other countries and voted nearly unanimously for separation. *Despite ongoing violence in many parts of Sudan and South Sudan, the referendum process was largely peaceful*.

9 July, 2011, Independence Day

The follow up of the Referendum was the setting of the date for the declaration of independence; it was to be on 9 July, 2011. South Sudan became the newest country in the world. The birth of the *Republic of South Sudan* was the culmination of a six-year peace process opening a complete new chapter in a region that had seen little peace in the last 50 years.⁴²⁴



RoSS Coat of Arms

⁴²¹ Abel Alier, Southern Sudan: Too Many Agreements Dishonoured, op. cit.

⁴²² South Sudanese independence referendum, 2011, op. cit.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Sudanese_independence_referendum_2011

⁴²³ South Sudan referendum: 99% vote for independence, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12317927>

⁴²⁴ UNMIS, United Nations Mission in the Sudan,

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmis/referendum.shtml>

“Mabrook Janoob Sudan!” people yelled. “Congratulations South Sudan!” The ninth of July, 2011, was the dawn of Africa's 54th State, a new nation after so many years of struggle. “Freedom!” people shouted! The celebrations erupted at midnight with thousands of revellers pouring into Juba's steamy streets in the predawn hours of Saturday, hoisting enormous flags, singing, dancing and leaping onto the backs of cars.⁴²⁵ The two Provincial Superiors, Sr Giovanna Sguazza and Fr Daniele Moschetti wrote:

To all our Sisters and Brothers in the Comboni Family and all the friends of Sudan! Peace be with you!

Last 9th January 2011, feast of the Baptism of the Lord, on the occasion of the historical event of the Referendum for Southern Sudan, we exchanged prayers and words of encouragement among us. We reminded ourselves of Comboni's legacy: “Courage! Have courage in this tough hour and even more for the future! Never give up!”

Six months later, on 9 July, 2011, we will witness the declaration of Independence of South Sudan. We are here again to share with you some few thoughts on what we are going to celebrate.

In his Plan for the Regeneration of Africa, Comboni wrote in lapidary terms: “The Catholic, who is used to judging things in a supernatural light, looked upon Africa not through the pitiable lens of human interest, but in the pure light of faith”. (Writings 2742)]

It is with the lens of “pure faith” that we look at the present reality of the people of Sudan. Comboni asked his followers to be women and men who can perceive the potential of those who are belittled, and encouraged the full realization of their reality...⁴²⁶

In this occasion, the people who by far followed up closely the issue of the election in 2010, the referendum in January, 2011, and the celebration of Independence in July 2011, were the teams of the SCRN (Sudan Catholic Radio Network) and its nine radio stations. They really worked hard in creating a positive awareness among people of all the Catholic Dioceses of South Sudan and Nuba Mountains.

⁴²⁵ The New York Times, Jeffrey Gettleman, *After Years of Struggle, South Sudan Becomes a New Nation*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/10/world/africa/10sudan.html>

⁴²⁶ Sr Giovanna Sguazza, Provincial Superior and Council of the Comboni Sisters and Fr Daniele Moschetti, Provincial Superior and Council of the Comboni Missionaries, South Sudan, Juba 9 July, 2011, Independence South Sudan, New Wind, Spirit and Hope. <http://www.comboni.org/en/contenuti/105524-request-of-prayer-for-the-independence-of-south-sudan>

President Salva Kiir Mayardit appealed to citizens of the new republic to focus on unity based on cultural and ethnic diversity, which he said was a source of pride. ***“You may be a Zande, Kakwa, Lutuko, Nuer, Dinka or Shilluk, but first remember yourself as a South Sudanese”***, Kiir told thousands of joyful citizens.

Invitation of the Superior General

The Superior General of the Comboni Missionaries, Fr Enrique Sánchez González, shared in these independence celebrations after having received a personal letter of invitation from the President of the Republic of South Sudan, Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit, first Vice-President of the Republic of Sudan and President of the Government of Southern Sudan.

Interviewed by Fr José Vieira about what he had felt in his heart when, looking at all that manifestation of joy from the guests’ stand, the speaker said: “I declare South Sudan independent”; Fr Enrique Sánchez González said: *I felt wonderful and, at the same time, grateful, to see that for this people a new page of their history was opening and it will certainly be a history marked by great and beautiful things but also by many challenges, especially at the beginning.*

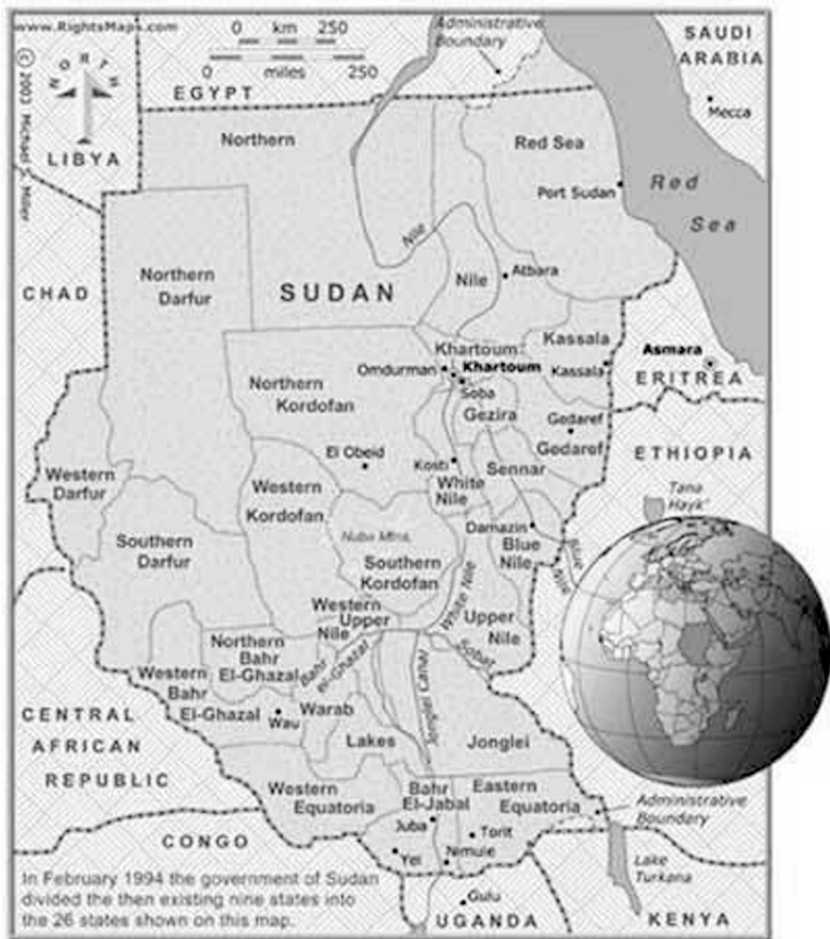
Regarding how he saw the future of South Sudan, he said: *I see South Sudan as a country that is still to determine and build itself. However, it is encouraging to see how much people want this, desire and expect it. I believe this is a factor that will surely help to achieve these goals.*

About the role of the Church in South Sudan, he answered that *the Local Church has to go through this moment not as a break with the past but as a continuation. As part of the Local Church we have accompanied these people in their long journey towards their freedom and independence. We have to continue with our policy of being close to the people, opting for the poorest and responding in solidarity to those in greatest need at this moment.*⁴²⁷

Thinking of the ***Long Love Story*** started with Daniel Comboni and followed by all the Confreres and Sisters who gave their lives for the Good News of Jesus and for love of the people, surely for the Superior General and for all the Comboni Missionaries, this was a real living experience in the depth of their hearts. Some of these prominent confreres Priests,

⁴²⁷ Fr José Vieira, mccj, ‘to be a Comboni is to be Sudanese’, interviewing Fr Enrique Sánchez González, Superior General of the MCCJ, SSCOMBONI@NEWS, South Sudan Province Newsletter, September 2011, pp. 25-28.

Brothers and Sisters were mentioned in a special way in the book produced by Fr Salvatore Pacifico with the title *Servants of the Gospel, Witnesses in the Footsteps of Saint Daniel Comboni in Sudan and South Sudan*,⁴²⁸ but what about all the other thousands?



Sudan: Map until 8 July, 2011

⁴²⁸ *Servants of the Gospel, witnesses in the footsteps of Saint Daniel Comboni in Sudan and South Sudan*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 2014.



Republic of South Sudan: Map of the States on 9 July, 2011

Situation of the Province: Personnel (Easter, 2011)⁴²⁹

At the starting of this Administration it is worth acknowledging the situation of the South Sudan Province and its personnel, communities and commitments that are the basis for this work of evangelization.

SOUTH SUDAN

Provincial House, JUBA (Southern Sudan)

Provincial Superior: Fr Daniele Moschetti (1 January, 2011)

Provincial Councillors:

Fr José da Silva Vieira, Vice Provincial, Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi, Fr Titus Henry Makokha, Bro Damiano Mascalzoni

Provincial Bursar and Procurator

Bro Antonio Manuel Nunes Ferreira

⁴²⁹ Annuario Comboniano, op. cit., Easter, 2011.

Secretary of Finance

Bro Antônio Manuel Nunes Ferreira

Secretary of Vocation Promotion and Formation

Fr Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi

Secretary of Missionary Animation

Fr Gregor Schmidt Bog-Dong

Secretary of Evangelization

Fr Markus Lorenz Körber

Coordinator of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos

Coordinator of On-Going Formation

Fr Daniele Moschetti

Coordinator of Comboni Lay Missionaries

Fr José da Silva Vieira

Probi Viri

Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, Fr Antonio La Braca

Comboni personnel

Bishops 2, Fathers 28, Brothers 11, Scholastics 1.

Provincial Bulletin

"SSCOMBONI@NEWS"

Languages Spoken in the Province

Arabic, Bari, Dinka, English, Nuer.

Dioceses Where Present

KENYA, Nairobi: Bakhita House, Bethany House.

SUDAN, Juba: Juba, Tali. **Malakal:** Leer, Old Fangak, Ayod.

Rumbek: Mapuordit, Yirol, Barghel. **Wau:** Nyamlel, *Wau, Raja.*
(*re-assumed*). **Yei:** Lomin.

Juba Archdiocese - Archbishop's House, from 12 December, 1974

H. G. Archbishop Paulino Lukudu Loro

Juba - Provincial House opened on 10 October, 1981; closed due to war on 31 December, 1994; re-opened on 1 January, 2006; on 1 January, 2008, residence of the Provincial House. Location: Hay Hamarat.

Fr Daniele Moschetti, Prov. Superior, Bro Jorge Arturo Rodriguez Fayad, Superior, Bro Antonio Manuel Nunes Ferreira, Fr Hector Ayon Oyiamute, Bro Valentino Fabris, Fr José da Silva Vieira, Bro Alberto Lamana Cónsola, Fr Joseph Ukelo Yala (in Torit)

Tali, Christ the King Parish, community opened on 1 January, 2008, first evangelization, education, dispensary, among the Mundari People

Fr Markus Lorenz Körber, Superior, Bro Damiano Mascalzoni, Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, Fr Gregor Schmidt Bog-Dong

Malakal Diocese

Leer Parish, St Joseph the Worker, community opened on 12 March, 1996, transferred to Nyal in 1998 due to war, returned to Leer on 1 January, 2008. First evangelization, education.

Fr Francesco Chemello, Superior, Bro Nicola Bortoli, Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos, Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks

Old Fangak, Holy Trinity Parish, Fr Antonio La Braca, present since 10 October, 1998, community opened on 1 January, 2006, first evangelization, education among the Nuer.

Bro Raniero Iacomella, Superior, Fr Christian Carlassare, Fr Wellington Alves de Sousa, Fr Antonio La Braca (Ayod, June 2009)

Yei Diocese

Lomin (Kajo Kaji) Parish, Sacred Heart of Jesus, community closed on 8 August, 1987, due to war, re-opened on 1 January, 2000. Evangelization among the Kuku, Comboni Comprehensive College, Carpentry Workshop, among the Kuku.

Fr Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi, Superior, Fr Albino Adot Oryem, Sc Phillip Kenyi Andruga, Fr Ezio Bettini, Bro Erich Fischnaller, Fr Victor Kouande Adekoun, Fr Jimmy Milla Aventure

Rumbek Diocese

Mapuordit Parish, St Josephine Bakhita, community opened in February, 1993, first evangelization among the Dinka, education, hospital. Bro Rosario Iannetti, Superior, Bro Andrés Gaspar Abarca, Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi

Yirol, Holy Cross Parish, community opened on 1 June, 2008, Rumbek. first evangelization and education among the Dinka.

Fr Fernando Colombo, Superior (Rumbek), Fr David Octavio Aguilar Guzman, Fr Titus Henry Makokha, Fr José Javier Parladé.

Barghel (Rumbek)

Fr Giovanni Girardi, Fr Mario Riva

Wau Diocese

Wau, St Daniel Comboni Parish, founded on 27 June 1999. (re-assumed in 2011, after independence)

Fr Isaac Martin Arnanz, Superior, Sc Peter Alphonse Ladu Loro
Bro Giuseppe Redaelli, Fr Lorenzo Tomasoni

Nyamlel, St Teresa of the Child Jesus, Wau Diocese, founded in 1934, closed during expulsion on 3 March, 1964, re-opened on 1 February, 2001, commitment *ad personam*.

Fr Michael Donald Barton, Superior

Raja, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, closed on 17 July, 2000, due to war, reopened on 4 April, 2006. (resumed in 2011, after independence)
Fr Caligari Eugenio, Bro Soardi Tarcisio

Nairobi

Bakhita House, guests' and logistic house for the Nuba of the Diocese of El Obeid, entrusted to the Comboni Missionaries on 1 October, 2001.

Mgr Macram Max Gassis (KH), Fr Pasquale Boffelli

Bethany House, Diocese of Rumbek, opened in 1994, guests' and logistic house for the Diocese of Rumbek.

Mgr Cesare Mazzolari

Waiting for assignment

Fr Mario Benedetti (CN) (refugees), Fr Luciano Perina, Sc Jacek Andrzej Pomykacz (PO), Sc Yakob Solomon Shole (ET)

In another Circumscription

Fr Luis Alfredo Estrada Meza (M-out of community)

With the independence of South Sudan, 2011, the two communities of Wau and Raja, which were taken care by the Province of Khartoum, were automatically resumed by the Province of South Sudan. The issue of the Arabic speaking personnel was dealt with and solved in dialogue with the Province of Khartoum and the communities themselves. Nyamlel, instead, was started under the care of Rumbek Diocese before the CPA agreement, though in Wau Diocese territory, and continued under Wau after the CPA.

The Assembly of 2011: Sudan will never be the same again

"Give the reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pt. 3:15)

The Provincial Assembly of Juba, 2011, at the Comboni House, was postponed to 31 March, 2011, in order not to interfere with the *Referendum for Self-Determination*. In just another three months *South Sudan* would celebrate *Independence Day*, on 9 July, 2011. These two most important events in the history of South Sudan were creating a joyful atmosphere in the Assembly, as well.

The theme chosen was the message of the Catholic Bishops of Sudan (SCBC) in their *Extraordinary Plenary Session* of Juba, from 15 to 22 July, 2010, whose motto was *Sudan will never be the same again*, addressed to the people, the leaders, and all people of good will in Sudan during that time. It was a message of hope and a call to action during that historic moment of change in Sudan. The message emphasized that:

*After centuries of oppression and exploitation, after decades of war and violence which have marked and marred the lives of so many Sudanese in South and North with no respect for human life and dignity, now, after 5 years of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), we have reached a time to move on and prepare for change... The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is at the core of a moral vision for society... we bring a message of hope and encouragement to our people and all people of good will... The Church is a teacher of truth for humanity and has the right and duty to speak on political and social issues that affect the people.*⁴³⁰

The Bishops had described these events which had to take place as a dramatic change affecting life in both countries, Sudan and South Sudan and the Province of South Sudan could not ignore these strong words in its reflection and planning.

On the above topic Mr. John Ashworth, an adviser of the SCBC and of the Episcopal Church and a member of the JPIC commission, was invited to give an input on the theme of the Assembly. He underlined two factors that were the reason of the conflict, the *Identity factor*, with the dominion of the *Arab identity* and the *centre-periphery factor*. Some few tribes had concentrated power and dominated, while all the rest had been marginalized. The third was the *Oil factor*, though, this was not one of the first root causes since it was discovered in the 1970s, but it had become, though, a decisive factor in the conflicts.

Regarding the Role of the Church Mr. Ashworth's view was that the Church could play an important role in education and in teaching people to become good citizens. The Church could assist in trauma-healing and reconciliation and also help public figures to act according to Gospel values.

Regarding the Challenges the Church needed to address he saw the emptying of churches in the North, and in the South how to find enough time for nation-building issues and for a dynamic that could really make Sudan (both North and South) *never be the same again*.

The input of Fr Antonio La Braca was more on the line of a reflection coming from within the Comboni Missionaries. He started off by affirming that, *if Sudan would never be the same again*, after the mentioned events,

⁴³⁰ SCBC, Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference, *Extraordinary Plenary Session* in Juba, from 15 to 22 July, 2010, "Sudan will never be the same again", a **message of hope and call to action.**; posted on 10 September, 2010, in: CRS Voices Catholic Relief Service, <http://www.crs-blog.org/sudanese-Bishops-sudan-will-never-be-the-same-again/>

the Church in Sudan was also expected never to be the same again, and the same would also be true for the Comboni Missionaries. To enlighten the confreres in this regard he referred to the letter written by the General Superior entitled *back to the essential*⁴³¹ and the XVII General Chapter.

The Six-Year Plan, 2011-2016⁴³²

The Six-Year Plan took into consideration the reflection of the Assembly and the most important input brought from Church and Civil Institutions. It had to lay down the priorities to be implemented during the next six-year period of the Province in the various fields of work, evangelization/pastoral, educational, civic/political, health and all the rest.

The Priorities for the next six years remained *first evangelization*. Time and energy had already been spent to create a better future and there was the true belief that, after July 9, 2011, *South Sudan would never be the same again*, and neither would the Church or the Comboni Missionaries.

Besides the *first evangelization* priority, the areas where the Province needed to place more attention and effort were the restarting of *Vocation Promotion* and *Basic Formation, Urban Ministry, Justice, Peace, Reconciliation and Integrity of Creation, Ongoing Formation* for local clergy, religious and lay people.

At the basis of everything there was the matter of the identity of the Comboni Missionary as a *man of God, a man of communion* (symbolized in *the cenacle of Apostles*), *a man of mission* journeying together with the confreres in the continent. Regarding *Mission*, the priority was given to *the mission among the pastoralists and urban ministry*.

Regarding JPIC (Justice, Peace, Reconciliation and Integrity of Creation) the attention was for the cries of people suffering from poverty, conflicts, tribalism, violence, bad governance, structural and social injustices, land grabbing, political and ethnic manipulation, mismanagement of natural resources, other issues that threatening human dignity and faith, be heard according to Holy Scripture and Catholic Social Doctrine. It was felt a pressing duty to have a *full-time person in charge of JPIC* and a JPIC contact persons within the communities.

Formation and Vocation Ministry had to be taken up with a renewed effort in order to prepare adequately future disciples of Jesus following the missionary spirit of St Daniel Comboni: the matter needed coordination

⁴³¹ Fr Enrique Sánchez González, Torniamo all'essenziale/pensando ad alta voce, "Going back to the essential/thinking in a loud voice", MCCJ Bulletin, no. 243, 2010, pp. 1-10.

⁴³² Comboni Province of South Sudan, from the: Six-Year Plan, 2011-2016. FSSPJ.

with the Dioceses. Our communities were to assume new responsibilities in this field and Basic Formation and the reopening of a Pre-Postulancy in Juba needed to be pursued. Postulants for brotherhood would then be sent to Gulu (Uganda) and for priesthood to Nairobi (Kenya).

In the field of **Missionary Animation** a website was to be opened with the name *combonisouthsudan.org* and the provincial newsletter SSCOMBONI@NEWS was to be resumed, together with a renewed commitment for *New People Magazine*. In collaboration with the symposium committee, 2011, an historical and vocational exhibition was to be prepared, as well. Renewed attention was also to be paid to the issue of the **Comboni Lay Missionaries**, even at local level, seeking ways of animation among former Comboni seminarians.

At the Financial level, the Province was committed to the *Total Common Fund system*. The choice for the TCF was confirmed with the commitment to improve ways of implementing it, to take care of the *Formation of Local Bursars, of income-generating projects, of evaluating the real estate of properties, land law and fund-raising*.

The specific attention to **Persons and Communities** was showing the need for an introductory course for newly assigned confreres, organized at Provincial or local level, to facilitate their introduction into the culture of the place with a proper study of the local language or Arabic. Moreover, every two years, the Secretariat of Evangelization was to organize, at Provincial level, a seminar of *Introduction to the Province of South Sudan*. The meetings of confreres **under 45** and **over 45** had to continue and **elderly and sick confreres** were to be assisted according to their particular situations. Special attention was to be given to required **specializations** at the service of the Province.

The new reality brought about by the Independence of South Sudan needed **Reorganization** at community level with the inclusion of Wau and Raga communities in the South Sudan Province and also a plan of **Handing over**. Foreseen for handing over were the Comboni Comprehensive College at the end of 2012 and *Wau Parish* in December 2013 after building a house of the Local Priests within the premises or in a nearby area of the Parish and the Parish of Lomin to Yei Diocese in 2014.

The hand-over of the **Catholic Radio Network (CRN)** was expected by December, 2013. Regarding the issue of **Merging/Clustering of Provinces**, the reflection needed to be started, in particular with Kenya. The present *Six-Year Plan* was to be evaluated during the Provincial Assemblies of 2013 and 2016.

Annual Provincial Assemblies 2012-2016

The Provincial Assembly of 2011, as we have already seen, was held at the Comboni House in Juba, from 31 March to 6 April, 2011. The theme was taken from the letter of the Bishops (SCBC) of 2010; *Sudan will never be the same again!* And a Biblical reference helped the reflection: *give reason for the hope that is in you (1 Pt. 3:15)*. **The Provincial Assembly of 2012**, also at Comboni House, Juba, from 16 to 21 January, dealt with the topic of *Africae Munus*:⁴³³ ***the commitment of Africa!*** It was taken from the Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI to the Bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful, on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace. The exhortation started with a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew, *you are the salt of the earth ... you are the light of the world (Mt.5:13-14)*.

The Apostolic Exhortation put *authentic conversion* at the base of everything. It recalls the need for an in-depth study of African traditions and cultures, aware that *the Holy Spirit is the true agent of inculturation* and advocates the need of having a positive approach and appreciation for cultures, safeguarding African cultures while *separating the good seed from the weeds* (AM 32-41). Fr Manuel Ginete, a Vincentian Missionary working with Solidarity with South Sudan (SSS) in Juba, presented the Apostolic Exhortation. His Grace Paolino Lukudu Loro updated the Assembly on the situation of South Sudan and concluded affirming that the Comboni Missionaries would be the best people to carry on the mission of reconciliation, since *they belong to all the tribes*.

The Provincial Assembly of 2013, in Juba from 15 to 19 January, chose the topic of *Human development in the context of evangelization in South Sudan today*. It entered deeply into the issue of *human development/promotion* as an integral part of evangelization and in need of a different approach than that of other NGOs and philanthropic entities.

The presence of the Superior General, Fr Enrique Sánchez González and Bro Daniele Giusti, a General Councillor, was very important for the reflection. Fr Sánchez González gave his input on the topic of *Cherishing the gift of our vocation* with reference to 1 Timothy 6:1-14 and 2 Timothy 1:3-14 and made his comments on **four priorities**: *Spirituality, Mission,*

⁴³³ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI to the Bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful, on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace. *Ouidah, Benin, 19 November, 2011, the seventh of Pope Benedict XVI Pontificate*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011.

Attention to Person (e.g. elderly confreres and those in difficult situations) and *Governance* (e.g. clustering / merging of Provinces).

Bro Giusti and Bro Paolo Rizzetto tackled the issue of *Human Development/Promotion* in the context of evangelization and that of the *Mission of the Comboni Brother*. Bro Giusti faced the broader issue of *Brotherhood as a journey of reconciliation*, the conversion of heart as an indispensable means for continual growth towards fraternity, while Bro Rizzetto entered into the vocation and role of the Brother in *human development/promotion*.

He emphasized the importance of avoiding any kind of dichotomy, like the false dichotomy between *evangelization and human promotion*. He maintained that *the place of work* remains the first and privileged platform of Evangelization, considered in a *holistic way*, as the sharing with people, who are in contact with the missionaries, of the experience of their belonging to Jesus, in their main fields of action.

He concluded by saying that Brothers are *mainly defined by their work*; in his view the difference between Priests and Brothers is not great, they can and do share all services except the Sacraments. However, in his view, not all credibility lies in what is done, but in the fact that people recognize Brothers and Priests as people of God.

The Provincial Assembly of 2014, due to the serious events of December 2013 that brought the country into civil war, took place in Juba, from 17 to 22 March. The chosen theme was *South Sudan today and tomorrow* and the facilitator was Mr. John Ashworth.

Mr. John Ashworth put the emphasis on how important *Religion* is for Africa and recalled the role played by missionaries, religious communities and institutions in the history of South Sudan. He mentioned how, in the difficult times of war, the Church was the only working institution that played a big role in bringing peace, through involvement in dialogue, peace-making and advocacy.

He then tackled the recent events that brought the country into a deep crisis that exploded when the fighting started on the 15 December, 2013, and continued with the massacre of thousands of Nuer civilians in Juba town and the following retaliation which caused other large massacres of civilians in other towns like Malakal, Bor and Bentiu. He presented the kind of prophetic role the Church in South Sudan could play at present, together with the other Churches, and focused on the pastoral exhortation

of the South Sudan Bishop's conference on 30 January, 2014, *Let us Refound our Nation on a New Covenant*⁴³⁴

Mr. Alfred Lokuji, tackling the same theme of *South Sudan today and tomorrow*, dealt with the topic *South Sudan: the Unborn "Nation"*. He went into the complex pieces of the (nationalism) puzzle and the need for truth, justice and reconciliation.

The Provincial Assembly of 2015, in Juba, from 19 to 24 January took up the theme of *Comboni Missionary disciples, called to live the joy of the Gospel in today's world*. This was the theme chosen by the incoming XVIII General Chapter and taken up by the Province as a preparation for it. The facilitator was Bro Alberto Parise, a Comboni Brother working in Kenya.

He started with his input in the form of a reflection with reference to the *Plan of Comboni* for the regeneration of Africa as *a mystical experience* that started with an experience of failure by all the missionaries who attempted the work of evangelization.

He showed how Comboni, after a journey of trials, found in the *Pierced Heart of Jesus* a love which led him to a conversion of attitude and perspective expressed in a full trust in God, in a relationship with Jesus Christ transcending failure and death, in assuming the experience of God and coming up with a plan with a simple idea: *The Regeneration of Africa by means of Africa*.

He tackled the issue of missionary methodology from the *missionary manual* of Fr Vignato to the new approaches of the Chapter of 1969 and the present approaches after a long theological and anthropological journey accomplished in between and the implied challenges of *communion, continuity* and the tension between *self-preservation* and *evangelization necessities* and envisaged in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (the Joy of the Gospel) of Pope Francis, a call to *a pastoral and missionary conversion, a renewal of attitudes and structures, a rethinking of goals, structures, styles, and methods of evangelization*.

He recalled the sharing during the meeting/workshop on the 150th anniversary of the *Plan of Comboni* and the widespread interest in developing evangelizing communities in a constant nurturing encounter

⁴³⁴ Pastoral exhortation from the Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan (SCBC) *Let us Refound our Nation on a New Covenant*, Juba, South Sudan, 30 January, 2014. <http://laboursouthsudan.org/blog/Bishops-sudan-south-sudan-let-us-refound-our-nation-new-covenant>

with Christ as *A Cenacle of Apostles*. He concluded recalling how much Pope Francis emphasized the mission of the evangelizing communities.⁴³⁵

The Provincial Assembly of 2016, from 25 to 29 January, 2016, in Juba, just a few months after the XVIII General Chapter of 2015, set to work on the same theme as that of the Assembly, 2015, *Comboni Missionary Disciples, Called to Live the Joy of the Gospel in Today's World*. However, as a follow up of the General Chapter, the stress was on the implementation of its resolutions. Fr Daniele Moschetti, the Provincial and Fr Louis Okot, a Chapter Delegate, guided the presentation of the *power point programme* on the *Chapter Acts*.

Fr Antonio La Braca opened the Assembly with a day of recollection on two topics: the first referred to the theme of the XVIII General Chapter of 2015, *CA nos. 21, 23 and 25*, and the second as his personal sharing on the 50th anniversary of his ordination as his lived experience of discipleship and the meaning it had for him and his family in following Jesus. Special gratitude went to his formators for the close relationship he developed with Jesus Christ, helped also by the biographies of saints, spiritual reading and the Blessed Virgin Mary experienced as the protector of his vocation. He encouraged everyone to reach *mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, Eph. 4, 13*.

Fr Daniele Moschetti and Fr Louis Okot shared about the experience of the XVIII General Chapter, presenting a *power point programme* on the *Chapter Acts*, with a specific input from both of them. Fr Moschetti focused on the situation of the Institute before the Chapter using a document of the General Administration. He picked out some of the key, sensitive points like the *social context* looking for development in different fields of our society, the *context of the Institute* and *change*, confreres leaving the Institute, others coming in, those dying and the *Basic Formation*, together with statistics.

Fr Louis Okot said he experienced the Chapter as a moment of fraternal sharing where the brotherly environment could be seen and felt in each member of the Chapter, with no tension regarding inputs and point of views presented by confreres from different Provinces. The limits of the Chapter pointed out by the members were challenges to be faced. Another emerging challenge of our daily reality was to leave our comfort zone and be closer to the poor by sharing their concrete life.

⁴³⁵ Pope Francis I, *Evangelii Gaudium*, apostolic exhortation on the proclamation of the Gospel, no. 24, 24 November, 2013, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

The merging/clustering of structures/Provinces, a decision of the General Chapter of 2009, was that a process of reflection be started. The South Sudan Province was asked to express its opinion on the merging. Many were thinking the choice would be with Khartoum and Egypt, but instead, the trend went for Kenya. The long history of cooperation and easier communication led to this choice, while the Khartoum government, by closing the border between the two countries, increased the problem.

The Symposium: *One Church from every Tribe, Tongue and People*

The role of the Church in the independence of South Sudan was a reality which could not be hidden and the chance of enlightening the various aspects came at the time of the *Symposium* held in *Nyakuron Cultural Centre*, Juba, from 13 to 16 October 2011. It was agreed upon and promoted by the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) and the hard work of organisation done by Fr Daniele Moschetti, the Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries, in collaboration with the German Province.

The Symposium took inspiration from the pastoral letter of the SCBC, "**One Nation**", one *nation from every tribe, tongue and people*. So the Symposium took up the title of *One Church from every Tribe, Tongue and People*⁴³⁶ and dealt with *the role of the Church in the independence of South Sudan*. While the motto of the pastoral letter of 2010 was *Sudan will Never be the Same Again*, the *Extraordinary Plenary Session* of the SCBC in Juba, from 6 to 8 September, 2011, instead, aimed at motivating all the citizens towards nation-building, emphasising unity and integration.

A very valuable exhibition prepared by Bro Yohann (Hans) Eigner, a contribution of the German Province, was to be displayed during that time, but it could not because the parcels did not come in time. It was then put on display in the Provincial House and the smaller version was used for Animation and Vocation Ministry.⁴³⁷

The various speakers shared their inputs about the role of the Church in the past and present and tried to project this role into a possible future. John Ashworth recorded this great event in his book published in 2012 by the *Paulines Publications Africa*, with the title *One Church from every Tribe*,

⁴³⁶ Ref. Sudan Catholic Bishop conference (SCBC) meeting in plenary session in Juba from 6 to 8 September, 2011, **One Nation**, op. cit.

⁴³⁷ Provincial Assembly, Juba 16-21 January, 2012, Appendix 3, Word of the Provincial . FSSPJ.

*Tongue, and People, Symposium on the Role of the Church in the Independence of South Sudan.*⁴³⁸

About the past, Øysten H. Rolandsen, of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), took up the theme *from a colonial backwater to an independent state*; Fr Joaquim José Valente da Cruz, MCCJ, developed his topic under the title *a new era of mercy and peace* on St Daniel Comboni's dream; Sr Adele Brambilla, the Superior General of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, went into the *prophetic ministry of the Comboni Missionary Sisters* in the history of evangelization in Sudan and Bishop Eduardo Hiboro Kussala, of Tombura/Yambio, developed the topic of *witness to Christian values in the footsteps of Filiberto Giorgetti*.

Bro Valentino Fabris, a 90 year-old Comboni Brother, gave a very moving emotional and personal testimony of his time spent mainly in technical schools, in Wau, Juba, Khartoum, and Nzara. His witness brought a flavour of joy and happiness to the Assembly: it was a testimony of *happiness* and *gratitude* experienced during the many years of his work in Sudan.

Dr Anne Itto, SPLM Deputy Secretary General, concluded with the Church in the past presenting the main events affecting the history of South Sudan and its suffering people through her personal testimony of life, the hard experience of all the discriminated and marginalised Southerners. She witnessed the Church as *the conscience in the struggle*. Recognising that the first phase of liberation was now over, she concluded stating that *our unity is our strength* and warning that discrimination and marginalisation concerned not only the Arabs, but everyone who was selfish.

About the present, Fr Philip Pitya spoke about the status of the Church during the present time with *the role of the Local Church towards the independence of South Sudan*. He went through all the phases of evangelization of the past with a quick outline of the first missionaries to the South, the political events with the British and the development of the Church, the Prefectures and Apostolic Vicariates, with the Comboni Missionaries and the opening of the various mission stations.

He put in evidence the liberating work of education in schools, especially in Okaru and Bussere, the training of Leaders, men, women, Catechists, Local Clergy and Religious. He also gave an account of the progress and endeavours of the Christian Protestant Churches,

⁴³⁸ Ref. Sudan Catholic Bishop conference (SCBC), *One Church from every Tribe, Tongue, and People*, Symposium on the Role of the Church in the Independence of South Sudan, John Ashworth (ed), Paulines Publications Africa, 2012.

contemporaries of the Catholic Church. He considered the fidelity and perseverance of the Churches all throughout, especially during times of war, as the most valid contribution to gaining independence.

From among the local Women's Religious Societies there was the testimony of Sr Mary Daniel Abut, Superior General of the *Sacred Heart Sisters*, who presented the history of her Congregation from its beginning, throughout its growth, as well as its achievements and the service the society had given and was giving to the people of South Sudan. She also presented the challenges they were facing and their hopes in their evangelizing ministry as Sudanese Religious Women.

On the side of the Local Men's Religious Societies, Bro Bruno Dada, Superior General of the *St Martin de Porres Brothers*, gave also his witness presenting the history, the achievements, the set-backs and the gradual growth of his Congregation.

At the beginning, he said, their name was *Sudanese Teaching Brothers*, but with Ugandan candidates desiring to join the Congregation and the revision of the constitution, the aims of the society was expanded beyond teaching to include pastoral work and social and technical activities, and the new given name was *The Brothers of St Martin the Porres*. Bro Bruno Dada recalled also the other Congregation of Brothers of Wau, *the Brothers of St Joseph*, who had a similar vocation.

Longing for peace: the ***Holy Trinity Village*** founded by Bishop Paride Taban in Kuron was also mentioned as a present dream of peace. The village was born out of the experience of Bishop Emeritus Paride Taban, after a great deal of time spent *searching for peace* in South Sudan. In his understanding, *development is peace*, and therefore the first tool was to *empower the people to produce enough food*, the second was to *make formal education accessible and acceptable for the girls, boys and adults in the pastoral communities*, the third tool was to *promote peaceful coexistence among the neighbouring tribes*, as a proof that tribes can work together without mistrust, and laying the foundation for a lasting peace.

The final contribution to this section came from Rt. Rev. Enock Tombe Stephen, ECS, Bishop of Rejaf Diocese, with the topic *the Episcopal Church of the Sudan (ECS) in the history of a divided Sudan*. He went through the various phases of the planting and growth of the Anglican Communion under the leadership of the different Archbishops up to the present one, Archbishop Dr Daniel Deng Bul.

About the future, a window was opened by John Ashworth with a *reflection on the new Sudanese Countries and Churches*. His most important finding was that *during nearly five decades of war, the*

institutional Church stayed with the people through its Bishops, Clergy, Religious, Catechists and other personnel, alongside our Brothers and Sisters from other Churches. Since the Church was the people of God, wherever there were people, the Church was there.

He put emphasis on the fact that two nations were born, but with very different trends: One, South Sudan, moving towards an open democratic nation with a rich cultural diversity, where the Church would be free to play a role in public life; the other, Sudan, continuing with its Islamic military dictatorship, where ethnic and cultural diversity would be suppressed and the Church marginalised and likely persecuted.

He then went into the clarification of the various issues affecting the SPLA in relationship to SPLA-North, not controllable from Juba. Particularly sensitive, in Ashworth's view, was how the transition from an armed liberation movement to a democratic government would come about; *that may prove a delicate balancing act for the Church.*

Bishop Daniel Adwok Marko Kur, Auxiliary Bishop of Khartoum, developed his theme on the *Pastoral Challenges for the Church in the new divided Sudan* and deemed that *a new era of evangelization had dawned.* He envisaged the great role of the *Laity*, with the *secular nature of their discipleship*, in the Church and society. The *social involvement of the Church, as the salt of the earth*, could, in his opinion, be another great opportunity. *Unity in diversity* was another point the Bishop dealt with.

Dr Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Information of the Republic of South Sudan, tackled the theme of *the Church from a Government Perspective*, according to Dr Marial, it was important to know that both Church and Government were moving into the future, so *both Church and Government must move together in a harmonious manner, with a strong symbiotic relationship.* He went on recalling important points to be upheld, the freedom of worship and religion, the separation of religion and state with tolerance of all diversities, peace and respect of new Church structures.⁴³⁹

A new way of being in mission: this was the theme presented by Sr Katherine O'Flynn, FCJ, of Solidarity South Sudan Board (SSS), a collaborative project which involves over 170 religious congregations of men and women with the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference. Fr Manuel Ginete, CM, continued the instruction about SSS with *a theological*

⁴³⁹ Dr Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Information of the Republic of South Sudan, *The Church from a Government Perspective*, Symposium on the Role of the Church, 2011, op. cit., p.180.

reflection on Solidarity with Southern Sudan, with the topic *Prophets in Solidarity with God's People/Family of South Sudan: Religious or Consecrated Life as Prophecy* issuing from a *Passion for Christ and Passion for Humanity*.⁴⁴⁰

The launching of the Church into the new horizons of the future was given to Rev. Prof. Dr Caesar Lukudu Jömbi, of the Archdiocese of Juba, with the topic, *the future of Church in the Sudan: how shall the Church in the Sudan be in 2020 or 2030?* Prof. Dr Lukudu went into the issue of the *vision and mission* of the Church and the urgency of a *new evangelization*, considered as a *duty* that calls for a *new discernment* in front of new possible choices in need of previous moments of *listening, understanding and interpreting*.

The conclusive topic of the Symposium was finally given to Angelo Lokoyome who presented the *People's expectations of Being Church*. He acknowledged that, in all the adverse situations of the past and of the present, *the Church remains a beacon of hope in the two countries*.

A pre-Symposium survey revealed that *People*, as well, confirmed that without the Church *erring politicians and self-appointed leaders* would have burned the old Sudan or the two countries to ashes.

Reorganization of the Province

The Administration of Fr Daniele Moschetti and his Council found themselves in the new reality of the post-referendum and independence of South Sudan that required a deep re-organization in order to keep up with the needs of the time. The Six-Year Plan provided guidelines for this and the top priority given to *first evangelization* was outlining the journey.

Wau and Raja were *de-facto* part of the Province and the imminent handing over of CCCL (Comboni Comprehensive College of Lomin) and of SCRNL, then called CRN (Catholic Radio Network) after independence, were issues to be tackled swiftly. The Secretariats, as well, needed reorganization in order to deliver a better service to the Province. These themes will be tackled under ***Communities, Commitments with special arrangements, Communities assumed after independence, Provincial Institutions, The Opera Significativa - the Catholic Radio Network***

⁴⁴⁰ Manuel Ginete, CM, *Prophets in Solidarity with God's People/Family of South Sudan, a theological reflection on Solidarity with Southern Sudan*, Symposium on the Role of the Church, 2011, op. cit., p.188, 198-201.

Personnel and Communities on 1 January, 2014⁴⁴¹

At the beginning of the second term of office of Fr Daniele Moschetti, as Provincial Superior, these were the communities and their composition

Juba Comboni House

Fr Daniele Moschetti	Provincial Superior
Bro Jorge Arturo Rodriguez Fayad	Superior
Bro Bernhard Hengl	SCBC
Fr Guido Oliana	Seminary
Bro Giuseppe Redaelli	Provincial Bursar

Juba Bishop's House

H. G. Paulino Lukudu Loro	Archbishop of Juba
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Leer Parish

Fr Francesco Chemello	Superior
Bro Pierre Ayih Teko Fafa D.J. VTC	
Bro Nicola Bortoli	VTC
Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos	Parish Priest
Fr Yacob Solomon Shole	Pastoral

Lomin (Kajo Kaji) - Parish

Fr Victor Kouande Adekoun	Superior - Parish Priest
Fr Phillip Kenyi Andrugá	Pastoral
Bro Erich Fischnaller	Workshop

Lomin (Kajo Kaji) - Pre-Postulancy

Fr Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi	Superior - Formator
Fr Salvatore Pacifico	Assist. Formator

Mapuordit - Parish

Bro Rosario Iannetti	Superior / Hospital
Bro Andrés Gaspar Abarca	Hospital
Fr Boris Ketemepi Komivi Dodzi	Pastoral
Fr Giuseppe Pellerino	Parish Priest
Sc Placide Petit Majambo Lutumba	Pastoral experience

Old Fangak - Parish

Fr Schmidt Gregor Bog-Dong	Superior
Fr Christian Carlassare	Parish Priest
Fr Alfred Mawadri	Pastoral
Sc Ketema Dage Tadesse	Pastoral Experience

Raga Parish

⁴⁴¹ Report of the Provincial Superior Fr Daniele Moschetti to the Provincial Assembly, Juba, 17-22 March, 2014. FSSPJ.

Fr Jervas Mawut Mayik Nyok	Parish Priest
Fr Luigi Sergio Chesini	Pastoral
Bro Giuseppe. Manara	Bursar
Tali' Parish	
Fr Markus Lorenz Körber	Parish Priest-Superior
Fr Albino Adot Oryem	Pastoral
Fr Martin Loku	Pastoral
Wau Parish	
Fr Isaac Martin Amanz	Superior - Parish Priest
Fr Ezio Bettini	Pastoral
Fr Luciano Perina	Pastoral
Bro Paolo Rizzetto	Solidarity - CHTI
Fr Lorenzo Tomasoni	Medical
Yirol Parish	
Fr David Octavio Aguilar Guzman	Superior
Fr Hector Ayon Oyiamute	Pastoral
Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi	Pastoral
Fr José Javier Parladé Escobar	Parish Priest
Sc Lwanga Gilingere Limingere KRT	Pastoral Experience
In particular ministry or experience	
Fr Femardo Colombo	Rumbek
Fr Giovanni Girardi	Barghel
Fr Antonio La Braca	Ayod
Fr Peter Magalasi	Yambio
Fr Jimmy Milla Aventore	Absent with permission
Fr Joseph Okello Yala	Torit
Waiting for destination	
Fr José Jesus Aranda Nava	
Fr Michael Donald Barton	
Fr Emmanuel Denima Darama	
Bro Johann Eigner	
Fr Femardo González Galarza	
Fr Marcello Romano Monyo	
Bro Heman Romero Arias	
Fr Pedro Tacuri Samaniego Secundino	
In other Provinces	
Bro Antonio Manuel Nunes Ferreira	Portugal-course
Bro Damiano Mascalzoni Rome	C/CYOF
Fr Fernando González Galarza	(M)
Fr Monyo Marcello Romano	(U)

South Sudan Province: Personnel on 1 November, 2016

Bishops

1. Paulino Lukudu Loro (Archbishop) South Sudanese

Fathers

2. Ghislain Amoussou Comlan Beninese
3. Phillip Kenyi Andruga South Sudanese
4. José Jesus Aranda Nava Mexican
5. Salomon Badatana Apéléké Agnata Togolese
6. Michael Donald Barton American/USA
7. Christian Carlassare Italian
8. Francesco Chemello Italian
9. Emmanuel Denima Darama Congolese
10. Giovanni Girardi Italian
11. Fernando González Galarza Mexican
12. Paul Idra South Sudanese
13. Boris Ketemepi Komivi Dodzi Togolese
14. Markus Lorenz Körber German
15. Victor Kouande Adekoun Togolese
16. Antonio La Braca Italian
17. Martin Loku Mödi South Sudanese
18. Peter Magalasi South Sudanese
19. Placide Petit Majambo Lutumba Congolese
20. Isaac Martin Arnanz Spanish
21. Alfred Mawadri Ugandan
22. Daniele Moschetti Italian
23. Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi South Sudanese
24. Guido Oliana Italian
25. Salvatore Pacifico Italian
26. Paolino Tipo Deng Amayldh South Sudanese
27. José Javier Parladé Escohar Spanish
28. Giuseppe Pellerino Italian
29. Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos Brazilian
30. Gregor Schmidt Bog-Dong German
31. Pedro Secundino Tacuri Samaniego Ecuadorian
32. Joseph Ukelo Yala South Sudanese
33. Yacob Solomon Shole Ethiopian
34. Krzysztof Adam Zębik Polish

Brothers

35. Antonio Manuel Nunes Ferreira	Portuguese
36. Pierre Ayih Teko Fafa D.J.	Togolese
37. Claudio Bozza	Italian
38. Johann Eigner	German
39. Erich Fischnaller	Italian
40. Andrés Gaspar Abarca	Mexican
41. Rosario Iannetti	Italian
42. Patrick Lumami Mwanza	Congolese
43. Jacek Andrej Pomykacz	Polish
44. Giuseppe Redaelli	Italian
45. Paolo Rizzetto	Italian
46. Hernan Romero Arias	Peruvian

Transferred to other Provinces during the year

Fr Ezio Bettini	Italian
Fr Fernando Colombo	Italian
Bro Bernhard Hengl	German
Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi	Togolese
Fr Jervas Mawut Mayik Nyok	South Sudanese
Fr Luciano Perina	Italian

CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMITMENTS AND COMMUNITIES

A Catholic FM Radio for Southern Sudan

The Radio Bakhita station in Juba was progressing with all speed; it had already been launched and was being tested. It was on the air on Christmas Eve, 24 December, 2006, with the live broadcast of the Midnight Christmas Mass celebrated by H. G. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, in St Theresa's Cathedral, Kator, followed by Carols and Christmas messages from Catholic and Anglican Church leaders. Indeed, the whole radio project was taking shape starting from Juba.

The two main concerns of the community of Juba were the completion of the works in the Comboni House in order to move the Provincial House from Jacaranda/Nairobi, to Juba and the Radio Project in need of other premises. For this last matter the Province was asked for permission, that was granted, to use temporarily the old Postulancy building as a training centre for the work, but the premises had to be cleared of unauthorised people who had settled there, thus adding more extra work.

In 2005, the Province of the Comboni Sisters and the new Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ), Fr Luciano Perina and his Council, had taken up the Radio Project as an important priority due to its importance and value. The previous Administration had prepared some technical outlines and assessments, now new updates were needed, and the General Administration had to show practically their support in matters of personnel. A list of people fit to run it had already been sent to the General Administration by the provinces. The two Provincial Councils asked the two General Administrations for the definitive approval of the project.⁴⁴²

A meeting was fixed from 30 May to 1 June, 2005, in Nairobi⁴⁴³ with the presence of Fr Baldan, Fr Perina, Fr Luigi Cignolini, (Provincial Superior of Khartoum Province) representing the Comboni Missionaries and Sr Adele Brambilla, Mother General and her Vicar General, Sr

⁴⁴² Provincial Council 1/2005, 30 January-4 February, 2005. FSSPJ.

⁴⁴³ Provincial Council 2/2005, 25-31 May, 2005. FSSPJ.

Gianfranca Silvestri, Sr Fulgida Gasparini, the newly elected Provincial Superior of the South Sudan Province and Sr Annalisa Pansini, Provincial Superior of Khartoum Province, representing the Comboni Sisters,⁴⁴⁴

The meeting got the project going and Fr Baldan carried out further research in Rome with “*Signis*”. A letter of the SCBC on 18 June, 2005 to the two Superior Generals of the Comboni Missionaries, MCCJ/CMS, through Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, thanked them for the great opportunity offered with the Radio Communication Network. Archbishop Lukudu informed them that Mgr Macram Max Gassis, and Mgr Cesare Mazzolari were appointed to the management board and that Mgr Macram Max Gassis, was appointed to the executive board:

“In keeping with your suggestions we have allotted tasks as follows:

*- **On the Management Board** there will be two Bishops to cooperate with the MCCJ Provincials, namely H. L. Bp. Macram Max Gassis and H. L. Bp. Caesar Mazzolari.*

*- **On the Executive Board**, the Director will be H. L. Bp. Macram Max Gassis who will take charge of obtaining the licenses for the operation of the Radio from the two governments (Sudan and Kenya) and will inform you of the outcome as soon as possible.*

Your generosity is a cause for much joy among the Bishops, their Secretariats and our people everywhere. We will work hard to make this golden opportunity fruitful for our people.”⁴⁴⁵

Meanwhile, licenses for the operation of the Radio were sought and applied for to the SPLM Commission of External Relations, Information and Humanitarian Affairs, Secretariat for Information and Culture. A permit was granted for Radio and TV.⁴⁴⁶ It has to be said that, initially, the radio was expected to broadcast from Kenya to Sudan, but with the CPA, this idea was abandoned in favour of the broadcasting from within Sudan.

The FM frequencies for the Dioceses of Juba, Rumbek, T/Yambio, Torit, were given by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Postal Services on 10 July, 2006, while Malakal, Yei and Wau had to wait. The project of the radio network, which involved the starting itself and the setting up of the substations in the various Dioceses concerned, was showing itself to be far from easy.

⁴⁴⁴ Meeting MCCJ-CMS, Nairobi, 30 May-1 June, 2005. FSSPJ.

⁴⁴⁵ Kampala, 18 June, 2005, Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro to Comboni Fathers and Sisters in Rome and Provinces of Sudan. FSSPJ.

⁴⁴⁶ Dr Samson L. Kwaje, Commissioner for Information and Official Spokesman SPLM/SPLA, to Bishop Macram Max Gassis, Nairobi, 4 July 2005, Ref. SPLM/SCBRC/1-05, Subj. Permit for Radio and TV. FSSPJ.

The final composition of the team implementing the Radio Project given in September 2005 were Maria de Graça Gomes de Almeida, Sr Paola Moggi, Sr Carla Rova, Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks and Fr Alberto Jesus Eisman Torres,⁴⁴⁷ expert in the fields required by the project and with good ability to work in a team and collaborate with other Religious Bodies and Societies. However, Fr Eisman and Bro Ritterbecks did not accept.

The Comboni Sisters were much better off regarding personnel and, between 16 and 28 December, 2005, they had already visited Juba to assess the situation⁴⁴⁸ and thought that the only viable solution was to establish the radio temporarily in the former Diocesan Communications Office of Juba. The tower of the cathedral could serve to erect the antennas. As for the testing period it could take place between April 2006 and June 2007 and the building of the Radio Station Block could be completed by June 2007. However, in reality, much longer time was needed.

Appropriate personnel asked from other Provinces could help only part-time. By May, 2006, two Comboni Brothers, Misas and Bertolo, were in Juba working hard in their own field. Sr Cecilia Sierra Salcido (from Mexico) arrived in Nairobi on 19 April, 2006, and on the 24th she started her radio training at Don Bosco Media Centre and then at Radio Waumini, both in Nairobi. Two Italian engineers, Mr. Marco Camozzi and Mr. Bruno Ghisellini, agreed to offer technical support to set up Bakhita Radio.

Bro Alberto Lamana was asked to join the team in charge of the project.⁴⁴⁹ He had worked for Spanish Television and was an expert in electronic technology and computers, but he was still in Khartoum for a course of Arabic and available only in a couple of months. Bro Misas was asked to remain at least until the basic informatics equipment was installed.

On 24 December, 2006, the happy event took place and **“91 FM Bakhita Radio”, “The Voice of the Church”**, went on air. It began its live broadcast at midnight with the Christmas Mass celebrated by H. G. Paulino Lukudu Loro, Archbishop of Juba, from St Theresa's Cathedral, in Kator. Carols and Christmas messages from Catholic and Anglican Church leaders followed. The Archbishop welcomed with enthusiasm the beginning of

⁴⁴⁷ Rome, 21 August, 2005, Fr Teresino Serra and Sr Adele Brambilla to Sr Fulgida Gasparini and Fr Luciano Perina, Letter of appointment for the Comboni Team of Radio Sudan. FSSPJ.

⁴⁴⁸ Brief report on the visit to Juba Presented by the Executive Committee for the Catholic Radio Station.

⁴⁴⁹ Provincial Council 2/2006, Nairobi 2-4 May 2006. FSSPJ.

Bakhita Radio and thanked the Comboni Institutes for “*the Christmas present to the Catholic Church in South Sudan.*”⁴⁵⁰

The event brought joy in Rome, as well, and the two General Superiors of the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ), Fr Teresino Serra, and Mother Adele Brambilla of the Comboni Sisters, issued a joint message full of happiness on the occasion of the launching of Bakhita Radio in Juba with: “*I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. today a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord*” (Lk 2:10-11)” and carried on with their message of joy for the importance of the event, thanking all who worked hard to make it become a reality.⁴⁵¹

On 27 December, 2006 there was a meeting in Juba of the Executive Committee, the Provincial Superiors of South Sudan and Fr Fabio Baldan, the MCCJ Vicar General.⁴⁵² The people present were: Sr Fulgida Gasparini, Sr Cecilia Sierra, Sr Elena Balatti, Sr Paola Moggi, Fr Fabio Baldan, Fr Luciano Perina, Bro Alberto Lamana and Fr José Vieira. Bro Lamana was proposed as Administrator of the Network and also of the station of Juba. However, since he was in charge of the technical set-up of the main station, Sr Balatti would continue handling the project.

Fr José Vieira, who had joined the EXCOM (Executive Committee) in December 2006, was welcomed to the station of Juba. For his specific competence, Fr Vieira was appointed to the News Desk of the Network, which required reliable and objective information, especially in the transitional period of time. He had to assist also the news desk of the main station and was proposed to be the Coordinator of the Editorial Board. The testing period, was done during the evening hours while the official launching and inauguration of the station were to take place in Juba on 8 February, 2007, feast of St Josephine Bakhita.⁴⁵³

Fr Baldan, on behalf of the two General Administrations, expressed his gratitude for the great work accomplished. Radio Bakhita was on the air;

⁴⁵⁰ Sr Cecilia Sierra Salcido, History of the Bakhita Radio, 2005-2007. FSSPJ.

- 22 January, 2007, Bishop Caesar Mazzolari to Fr Teresino Serra and Mother Adele Brambilla: Thanks in the name of the SCBC. FSSPJ.

⁴⁵¹ Rome, Fr Teresino Serra, Superior General mccj, Sr Adele Brambilla, Superior General CMS, on the occasion of the first broadcast of Radio Bakhita, Juba. FSSPJ.

⁴⁵² Juba, 27 December, 2006, Sudan Catholic Radio Network. Minutes of the meeting of the EXCOM and the Provincial Superiors of CMS and mccj in South Sudan and the mccj Vicar General, Fr Fabio Baldan. FSSPJ.

⁴⁵³ - Bakhita Radio: official inauguration, 8 February, 2007,

<http://www.comboni.org/en/contenuti/101490-bakhita-radio-official-opening>

- Radio Bakhita, the Voice of the Church, <http://www.comboniane.org/africa-sudan-91-fm-bakhita-radio-the-voice-of-the-church.html>

the other radio stations of the SCRN (after independence it would become **CRN** (Catholic Radio Network) would follow.

1. **Bakhita Radio**, Juba, foundation: 24 December, 2006.
2. **Voice of Peace Radio, Gidel**, foundation: 22 April, 2009
3. **Emmanuel Radio**, Torit, foundation: 16 June, 2009.
4. **Sout al Mahaba Radio, (Voice of Love) Malakal**, 5 August 2009
5. **Easter Radio**, Yei, founded: 21 January, 2010.
6. **Good News Radio**, Rumbek, foundation: 25 January, 2010
7. **Don Bosco Radio, Tonj**, foundation: 5 February, 2010.
8. **Anisa Radio, Yambio**, foundation: 5 July, 2011.
- *Centenary FM 100, the Voice of Bishop Gasi*, 12 April, 2016.
9. **Voice of Hope Radio, Wau**, foundation: 11 October, 2011.

Along the way, all the other issues of the sustainability of the radios, of training personnel, of production and programmes etc., had to be tackled and worked out in such a way that all of them might become self-reliant regarding personnel and finances in order to allow a proper hand-over to the SCBC/Dioceses as it was intended at the initial stage of the project.⁴⁵⁴

Bro Alberto Lamana, an untiring and fully committed confrere who really believed in the important mission of the radio network and the positive effect radio would exercise on the building up of the country at religious, human, social and political level, was called back to his own country of origin, Spain, and ended his commitment just few weeks before South Sudan could celebrate its independence.

With independence, the SCRN was renamed CRN and Sr Paola Moggi carried on as the chairperson. Sr Cecilia was in charge of Radio Bakhita and Fr José Vieira in charge of the News Desk and, while the time of the foreseen handover was getting near, the Board of Governors and the Dioceses had to appoint personnel for their radios, while the SCBC had to do so for the whole CR Network according to its vision, mission and values.⁴⁵⁵ The suggestion of the SCBC was that the handing over should be postponed until 2015, however, since 2011 was the original deadline, 2013 was chosen as the revised date.

Sr Paola Moggi, directress since August, 2007, left for Italy in November 2013, while Ms Enrica Valentini, a volunteer from Caritas Como (Italy) and directress of *Voice of Hope* (Wau), was asked by the SCBC to be the new CRN coordinator. Fr José Vieira, in 2012, started

⁴⁵⁴ Bro Alberto Lamana, Radio Bakhita, Narrative to the General administration, 2011. FSSPJ.

⁴⁵⁵ Ref. CRN (Catholic Radio Network) <http://catholicradionetwork.org/?q=node/10515>

working with Mr. Alfred Soka, a Catholic journalist, to prepare him for the job of CRN News Editor. In June 2013, Fr Vieira became his assistant and when the team working with him was formed he left in December, 2013.

Sr Elena Balatti ended her commitment in April 2015, when *Sout al Mahaba Radio*, of CRN Malakal, went off air for the second time due to fighting in Malakal town and never resumed again. By 2015, except for *Voice of Peace*, Nuba Mountains and *Sout al-Mahaba*, Malakal, all stations were managed by local staff. Sr Mary Carmen Galicia Alfaro, directress of the *Voice of Peace*, Nuba Mountains since 2006, ended in June 2016.

Another very important achievement was the presence of CRN on the internet with its web page, with the news produced by the news-desk with an account in Twitter, as well. Bakhita Radio got a page and posts audio news through its social media page on Facebook.

One of the challenges encountered along the journey was the difficult relationship the radios sometimes encountered between the political authorities and the stations. At the start, the radio station was welcomed by the same authorities as a great opportunity to tell the truth and denounce what was wrong. Later, however, certain broadcast topics or programmes were looked upon as an interference with politics, so it happened that those stations were ordered to close down for a certain period of time and the persons responsible questioned on those issues.

To end with, some comments by Sr Sierra Salcido, who left on 1 December, 2011, on her the experience with Radio Bakhita, are worth mentioning:

“At the farewell party I saw Bakhita coming to life in all the people who have been prepared to carry on the work. What a different picture from the first years in Juba. Bakhita Radio was not only an institution but people, South Sudanese, young, happy, prepared and committed to continue and be true to a dream. I saw it and I smiled with satisfaction and gratitude. It was very good!”⁴⁵⁶

Another note worth mentioning is the one Fr José Vieira left about the great number of journalists and presenters CRN trained and who now work with the Government and private TV stations and in some radios, because more economically advantageous, including Eye Radio and Radio Miraya:

This was a frustrating experience, knowing the difficulty involved in training journalists who would then just leave for another station,

⁴⁵⁶ Sr Cecilia Sierra Salcido, History of the Bakhita Radio, 2011. FSSPJ.

*however, it is my joy to see them leading the field of information in the country.*⁴⁵⁷

At present, all the CRN radio stations are run by trained local personnel from the various Dioceses. The two Comboni Provincial Superiors, Sr Giovanna Sguazza and Fr Daniele Moschetti, remained members of the Board of governors and now Sr Evette Ann Seib and Fr Louis Okot, the new Provincial Superiors, have taken over from them.

Already settled communities

Among the already settled communities during this Provincial Administration were *Moyo Vocation Centre, Lomin Community, Mapuordit Community and Agang-Rial community*. Their work and commitments were in the process of consolidation and therefore in a more solid position.

The Communities from 2005 to 2017

The environment created by the independence and the new sense of freedom were realities deeply affecting everybody, everywhere. The pride and deep feeling, of being, at last, *a first class citizen in one's own country* expressed in the Symposium, of 2011 were evident everywhere. The Comboni communities were part of this reality and walking along this path, with a future opening up to all the opportunities it offered. The endeavour of the six post-CPA years had born conspicuous fruit and now it was evident to look for a promising future. The previous stress put on the *first evangelization factor* gave the communities more reasons to proceed on the line they had already started.

Moyo Vocation Centre

Since January, 2002, Moyo *Vocation Centre* relied on the following confreres, Fr Giovanni Ferrazin, Fr Paul Idra, Fr Aventore Jimmy Milla, and Bro Mario Rossignoli, carrying out Vocation Ministry in the Province. In 2005, Fr Jimmy Aventore, who substituted Fr Paul Idra, and Bro Rossignoli, continued with the Vocation Ministry. One of its members, Fr Giovanni Ferrazin died on 1 June, 2006, after he moved to Lomin.

In 2006 the community was following a new experiment: the *Pre-Postulancy for Brotherhood* in Entebbe, started two years before, with three

⁴⁵⁷ Written note from Fr José Vieira to the writer.

students who were followed up from Moyo once a month by Bro Rossignoli, Fr Aventore and Fr Bosco Sule Mawa. This experiment, however, gave rise to some perplexities because the offer of further studies was linked with vocation promotion and the methodology was not clear.

Though the students were given good *spiritual inputs*, the too evident *paternalistic approach* prevented the applicants from understanding the full implications of a *missionary commitment for life* and taking responsibility for their vocation with its practical implications of having to cope with their poverty of means. This *mistaken methodology* may have given rise to false expectations, even of good students, with bad long-term results.

Finally, the Vocation Ministry had to be moved to Lomin and done in connection with Comboni College. Thus, the community of Moyo was closed down on 28 December, 2006.

Lomin Community

The confreres who carried out their missionary service in the community of Lomin were Fr Eugenio Magni, Fr Hector Ayon Oyiamute, Bro Erich Fischnaller (RSA/SS), Fr José Manuel Garcia Oviedo, Fr Albino Adot Oryem, Fr José Jesús Aranda Nava, Fr Jimmy Aventore Milla, Fr Louis Okot Ochermoi Tony, Sc/Fr Phillip Kenyi Andrugá, Fr Ezio Bettini, Fr Salvatore Pacifico, Fr Victor Kouande Adekoun, Bro Pierre Ayih Teko Fafa D.J.C. and Fr Isaac Martin Arnanz. Unfortunately, on 1 June, 2006, Fr Ferrazin died leaving the community very much affected. He was very much dedicated to liturgical translations.

The main activities of the community were evangelization, the accompaniment of the candidates to the Postulancy, the Comboni Comprehensive College and St Martin Carpentry Workshop. The parish is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is divided into eight zones and little by little 38 chapels were built, taken care by 35 Catechists, two trained and two prepared in the Lumko course for Catechists.

Chapels in the form of multipurpose centres were built in Kiri, Mogiri, Kokonye and Jale and are used as nursery schools for children during the week. In Lomin there is a Parish cemetery where three Comboni Missionaries are buried. In some chapels there are nursery schools for children supported and sponsored by the Parish. The Parish started and completed the construction of the main church centre in Lomin and in Mondikolok outstation, which is supposed to become a new Parish and both were inaugurated in 2015.

Since the beginning, the presence of the Comboni Sisters committed in the pastoral, educational and medical fields was very important and

complemented the Comboni Presence. Sr Maria Silvia Flores was in charge of the youth, and Sr Maria Adela González of the health unit and women, Sr Massima Dessi was helping with the altar servers, home visits and other activities. Sr Caterina Cirimelli was teaching in the Comboni comprehensive college and helping in the pastoral activities. In August 2006 Bishop Erkolano asked that the Minor Seminary be located in Lomin to give Seminarians the opportunity to attend the Comboni comprehensive college. The proposal was accepted to start in 2007.

The active groups in the parish are the **Missionary Children's group** that meets weekly to pray the Rosary for peace and to do mission appeals on *World Mission Sunday* collecting aid to assist people in need. **The Women's Groups** in the outside chapels have monthly meetings with one of the Sisters or among themselves. **The Catholic Action and the Catholic Women Association** have Bible sharing on the readings of the coming Sundays in families with the participation of the Parish Priest, Sr Dorinda Lopes de Cunha and other collaborators. Formation workshops on topics mainly based on the Church theme of the year are given, as well.

The training of Catechists is carried out through formation workshops three times a year, with a follow-up in their respective chapels through visits of the Parish Priest and the head Catechists. **The formation of youths** is carried out in schools with the teaching of catechism and the administration of Sacraments. The YCS (Young Christian Students) have weekly and monthly meetings in five different schools. At Parish level there have been some workshops open to all the youth.

Justice and peace workshops have been held in the Parish centre and also in the zone centres. Facilitators and experienced collaborators have been well prepared. **Missionary animation of the Local Church** has been done especially during the feast of the Parish, the Comboni feast, the *World Vocation Sunday* and *World Mission Sunday*. Unfortunately, in 2017, due to fighting, all the people were displaced and fled to Uganda as refugees. The mission was abandoned and all the other structures looted.

The Comboni Comprehensive College included three departments: the nursery school for children (kindergarten), the primary and the secondary school. In 2006, the building of an "A" level block allowed senior five to be opened officially in the same year. By the beginning of 2007, one dormitory for the boys, one block with four classrooms for the primary school and the administration block were ready for use.

The nursery school for children (kindergarten) had 210 pupils and 10 teachers; the primary school had 750 pupils and 35 teachers and the secondary school, 500 students and 40 teachers and the Seminarians of Yei

Diocese. The good standard of the Comboni Comprehensive College of Lomin and its continuous progress was attracting many students of our Parishes seeking a good education.

On 27 February, 2013, the Comboni Comprehensive College was handed over by the Comboni Missionaries to the Diocese of Yei and it was going on well with its service to education of youth. In 2017, as already said above, the Comboni Comprehensive College had also to be shut down together with St Martin Workshop with no clear future.

Mapuordit Community

From 2005 to 2017 the confreres of Mapuordit community were quite numerous and some of them rotated to other parishes and then went back.

They were Bro Rosario Iannetti, Fr Giovanni Girardi, Bro Alberto Lamana Cónsola, Bro Damiano Mascalzoni, Fr Raymond Pax, Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, Fr Estrada Meza Luis Alfredo, Bro António Manuel Nunes Ferreira, Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi, Fr Parladé Escobar José Javier (for Yirol), Bro Andrés Gaspar Abarca, Fr Titus Henry Makokha, Sc Jacek Andrzej Pomykacz, Fr Fernando Colombo, Fr Mario Riva, Fr Juan Martin Torres Alferez, Fr Boris Ketemepi Komivi Dodzi, Sc/Fr Placide Petit Majambo Lutumba, Bro Paolo Rizzetto and Bro Hernan Romero Arias.

Mapuordit parish, dedicated to Saint Josephine Bakhita, is considered the place of the restart of the Diocese of Rumbek during the time of war and *carrying on with its mission of evangelization, education and health care*. Along its journey, Mapuordit apostolic community was formed by the communities of the Comboni Missionaries, the OLSH Sisters committed in the fields of Women's promotion, Youth Ministry and other active groups in the Parish, and the Apostles of Jesus, with Fr Mark Ofuho, Rector of the Seminary transferred by the Diocese from Kitale (Kenya) to Mapuordit in 2007, and Fr Victor also helping in the pastoral running of the Parish. Mapuordit was also the reference point of other confreres engaged in other parishes and commitments.

The confreres continued their journey building upon the achievements of the former confreres. On 9 July, 2011, Independence Day, the new Parish church was inaugurated. The Parish hall, the dormitories for Catechists and the Parish office were completed, as well.

After the CPA the main challenges were the violence present in the area due to tribalism, matters of dowry distribution, adultery, grazing land, cattle rustling; the periodical clashes between Atuot, Agar, Jang and Jur groups were causing deaths and migration of families from their villages.

Polygamy is still predominant and illiteracy, especially outside Mapuordit and among girls. Poor health care, low participation of women in the social field and the returnees coming back into the area together with famine present especially between April and July,.

The more widespread challenges faced at Diocesan and Parish level were the inculturation of the liturgy and Sacraments, Marriage in the Dinka culture, the scarcity of Local Clergy and Religious, no full commitment of the Catechists, poor commitment of the people to the Church (poor link between faith and life), belief in witchcraft, few people attending Sunday mass in the chapels, poor participation of adults in the Church.

In 2012, Mapuordit had 11 chapels and 30 full-time and part-time Catechists. The stress continued to be put on a self-reliant Church, according to the directives of the Diocese, the Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortations of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* and the Second African Synod with the Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortations of Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*. On Justice and Peace the community was following the Six-Year Plan of the South Sudan Province and the same African Synods through various workshops.

Dialogue and collaboration with other Church entities like the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS) was also going on by organizing together some ecumenical celebrations during the year and encouraging a brotherly dialogue with its leaders and members. Dialogue and collaboration was there also with the local authorities and chiefs of the area and with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), avoiding competition and duplication of work. Health Ministry was carried out by the *Mary Immaculate Hospital* with several outreach health and social programs.

The schools: the Comboni Schools in Mapuordit consisted of two primary schools, Mapuordit with about 1600 students and Makur Agar with 600 students. The secondary school counted around 150 students. The schools were run by the OLSH Sisters with Sr Mary Bachelor as the Principal, and were going on well. In 2007, Mapuordit also had 26 satellite schools with 150 teachers and almost 4000 students. The huge effort put into education was continually growing. In 2010 and 2011 Mapuordit and Makur Agar completed the construction of their various classrooms, libraries, stores, toilets, etc. in permanent materials. However, due to the insecurity at that time, the Comboni Primary in Mapuordit had 1,120 students, while some years previously it had nearly 2,000; Makur Agar, which had up to 600 students, had become very small, evacuated from the buildings and arranged under the trees near Akot out of fear.

The Comboni Secondary School started with more than 300 students, but only 260 remained for the same reason; the Principal was Mr Daniel Marial. Instead, the Headmaster of the primary school was the very experienced and revered Mr Lino Deng Dut, the one who started the primary as head teacher with Fr Michael Barton in 1993. The Financial Director and Administrator, at the time, was Sr Rita Grunke, OLSH.

In November, 2016, Bro Iannetti left also Mapuordit assigned to Wau. Now, in 2017, the community is made up of Fr Placide Petit Majamba Lutumba, Superior, Bro Gaspar Abarca Andres, Fr Giuseppe Pellerino and Bro Paolo Rizzetto.

Agang-Rial community

Since Fr Luciano Perina had been elected Provincial Superior of South Sudan in 2005, the confreres who gave their service were Fr Mitiku Habte Cheksa, Fr Luis Alfredo Estrada Meza, Fr Clement Orango, Fr Giuseppe Pellerino, Fr Giovanni Girardi, Fr Mario Riva, and Bro Mario Rossignoli.

The Parish of Agang-Rial was dedicated to Mary Mother of God and was also taking care of the pastoral areas of Cueibet and Barghel. In the same year, Fr Estrada Meza was moved to Mapuordit in exchange for Fr Pellerino, then Fr Clement Orango joined the community as well but left in 2006, hence, the remaining confreres were Fr Giuseppe Pellerino and Fr Mitiku Habte later assigned elsewhere.

Fr Giovanni Girardi was in Agang-Rial for Barghel project, at 30 Km from Agang-Rial, but he was also helping in pastoral work almost all weekends since November, 2006.⁴⁵⁸ The Parish was in a situation of pre-evangelization, with poor commitment on the side of Catechists and other pastoral agents. There were periodical conflicts among tribes, provoking fear and internal displacement, the disarmament done in the area was a step forward towards peace. The semi-nomadic life of the people was also a real challenge to following up the Christian communities. There were 25-30 prayer centres run by their respective Catechists with workshops of formation twice per year.

Confreres and Sisters were visiting the outside chapels on Sundays and carrying out the pastoral activities by car, bicycle and on foot. They were also helping in teaching some subjects in school, an opportunity to get in contact with the youth. Youth Ministry was carried out in a catechumenal style with moments of prayer, sports, etc. Parish and church committees,

⁴⁵⁸ Provincial Assembly 2007, Nairobi, 14-20 January, pp.22-23. FSSPJ.

Justice and Peace Reconciliation groups, YCS (Young Christian Students), St Vincent de Paul's groups, women's groups were also present.

The community took care of the construction of the new church in 2006 and Bro Valentino Fabris directed the works. Finally, the Province decided to hand over the Parish to the Diocese and take up that of Yirol where Fr José Parladé had already prepared the way. It was handed over in 2007.

Communities given priority

According to the Six-Year Plan of 2005, the communities to be given priority because they were considered *most in need of personnel* or were working in ethnic groups *where our presence was particularly needed*, like *the Nuer, the Bari speaking people and the Dinka*, were Old Fangak, Nyal/Leer, Yirol and Tali. Juba was also included because it was the Provincial House and needed refurbishing and reconstruction in order to provide proper service to the Province. This priority was kept also with the next Six-Year Plan of 2011.

Old Fangak Community

The following confreres gave their missionary service in Old Fangak, Fr Antonio La Braca, (then in Ayod since June 2009), Bro Raniero Iacomella, Fr Christian Carlassare, Fr Alberto Modonesi, Fr Wellington Alves de Sousa, Fr Gregor Schmidt Bog-Dong, Fr Alfred Mawadri, Sc Ketema Dage Tadesse and Fr Krzysztof Adam Zębik.

Fr Antonio La Braca was working alone since 1999 in Old Fangak Parish, in Jonglei State, taking care of, but also being taken care of by the Nuer communities living along the Zeraf River. He was living as an *itinerant Father*, welcomed and hosted by the people of the communities he was visiting. He had no communication facilities like a satellite phone or a radio-transmitter, except when NGOs offered him the opportunity.

Fr Perina and his council tried immediately to take action in order to meet the needs involved, both of personnel and also of a simple, but better residence. In November of the year 2005, Bro Raniero Iacomella was assigned to Old Fangak from Nyal, to set up the structures of the mission and form the community with Fr Antonio La Braca. Fr Alberto Modonesi and Fr Christian Carlassare followed in April 2006.

The prefabricated iron structures were brought there by plane and Fr La Braca felt the whole thing as something piercing his heart compared to the original style of life which could not be followed any more in a “radical

way” but, for the sake of a better and more solid presence among the Nuer people, he accepted it sincerely.

In the Parish there were four Lay Parish Animators (LPA) in the four regions who worked as *Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist*. Each centre had a head Catechist who coordinated the work with his co-Catechists, a committee administering its goods and planning the manual work, a women’s group and a youth group. A Centre Council had four representatives of these four groups: Catechists, Committee, Women, and Youth with regular meetings.

There was a Parish Council which was composed of a core committee of close collaborators of Fr La Braca and some representatives from the four regions. During the Sunday celebrations and festivities each Catechist led the prayers at his chapel with one priest staying in Old Fangak and the others visiting chapels. He personally followed four prayer centres in Old Fangak and the weekly Rosary. He also introduced perpetual adoration on Saturdays from morning to evening.

Pastoral visits were regularly carried out to the chapels, visits to families were made on special occasions and events and visits to the hospital and to the prison were regularly made. Collaboration with the Diocese, NGOs and other stakeholders in Old Fangak was promoted and Human Promotion was carried out through income-generating projects.⁴⁵⁹

On 1 October, 2007, Fr La Braca left Old Fangak for a Sabbatical Year, while Fr Wellington Alves joined the community on 3 March, 2008. Fr Modonesi, instead, was assigned to the community of Juba by the end of the same year. In June 2009, Fr La Braca re-joined the community, but residing in Ayod, to start living a contemplative missionary life.⁴⁶⁰

In 2011, the community of Old Fangak underwent a big change and Fr Christian Carlassare remained alone for almost five months, then Fr Gregor Schmidt and Fr Alfred Mawadri were assigned together with Scholastic Ketema Dagne Tadesse, in 2012, sent to Old Fangak for a two-year pastoral experience before his perpetual vows.

In 2013, Mgr Roko Taban Mousa, the Apostolic Administrator of Malakal Diocese, asked the Comboni Community to offer pastoral attention to the whole area making the Parish reach the original boundaries with seven regions and a total number of 21 centres. Fr Michael Barton joined Fr

⁴⁵⁹ Comboni Missionaries, Old Fangak, Community charter, 2013. FSSPJ.

⁴⁶⁰ Missionary presence in Fangak, edited by Fr Christian Carlassare, (files of Old Fangak Parish mcej community).

La Braca in Ayod on 12 April, 2014, while the whole area of Ayod was entrusted to the pastoral care of the two Fathers there.

During those years priority was given to setting up the Centre Councils and Parish Council, the formation of the Church Leaders and a strong pastoral programme for the youth. Several publications and a teaching book (catechism) were provided to Catechists for the preparation of neophytes for the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion and for Catechumens. Regular Bible sharing was encouraged; pastoral formation was carried out for Catechists with two formation courses throughout the year.

The women's programme, prayer with the group of *Koam Maria* (Legion of Mary), training on administrative skills, education programs with *Solidarity with South Sudan* and topics like the Social Teaching of the Church, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Civic Education and others were organised, as well.

Finally, on 21 September, 2016, Fr Krzysztof Adam Zębik joined the community of Old Fangak, while Fr Carlassare left it on 19 October of the same year, transferred to another commitment in the Province. The confreres carrying on with the work in Old Fangak in 2017 are Fr Gregor Schmidt, Fr Alfred Mawadri and Fr Krzysztof Adam Zębik.⁴⁶¹

Transition of Nyal/Leer Community

From 2005 to 2008, the confreres who were serving the Nuer people in Nyal were Fr Antonio La Braca (in Old Fangak Parish), Fr Fernando González Galarza, Bro Raniero Iacomella, Fr Guillermo Aguiñaga Pantoja, Fr Wellington Alves de Souza, Sc Jaime Nistal, Fr José Manuel García Oviedo, Bro Nicola Bortoli, Fr Christian Carlassare, Fr Francesco Chemello and Fr Celestino Seabra Invaha Namaneque.

The newcomers were busy with the study of the Nuer language, some pastoral work, some visits to the Christian Communities and running the *Joseph Pal Mut* public library, while the others confreres were fully committed in the planned pastoral work, the translation of Nuer liturgical and Catechetical material, and teaching in the *James Duol Kai* Catechetical Centre. Bro Iacomella was occupied with his work of human promotion.

In February 2005 the Comboni Sisters arrived in Nyal and were collaborating according to their specialisations, teaching in the catechetical centre, in the local primary school and involved in pastoral activities. In

⁴⁶¹ From Old Fangak community charter 2013 and new updates until 2016. FSSPJ.

October 2005, Fr Gonzales Galarza left for Mexico for the Comboni Year and in November Bro Iacomella was assigned to the community of Old Fangak and left Nyal.

Fr Christian Carlassare and Fr Francesco Chemello arrived in Nyal at the end of the same month to study Nuer, with the help of Scholastic Jaime Nistal. At the beginning of 2006, after the scholastic Jaime Nistal left, Fr García Oviedo decided to withdraw and Fr Carlassare was assigned to Old Fangak, the community of Nyal was left with Fr Pantoja, Fr Alves, Bro Bortoli, and Fr Chemello.

Since the time of the CPA, in 2005, the community of Nyal began reflecting on the issue of returning to Leer, the initial place of presence in, 1996, but the decision matured only in January, 2007. Hence, Fr Chemello and Bro Bortoli were to go to Leer while the other confreres, now three with the arrival of Fr Celestino Seabra Invaha Namaneque, would go on with the missionary work and the catechetical centre in Nyal for the whole of 2007. The Comboni Sisters, instead, had already left for Leer in the middle of 2006.

The proposal presented by the community of Nyal, and confirmed by the Provincial Council, was that a church compound had to be prepared in Leer for all the personnel and church activities and a compound for a Vocational Training Centre for young people. For this purpose and also for the pastoral care of the people, Fr Chemello went to Leer at the beginning of February, 2007, and Bro Bortoli arrived in May.

With the help of the Catechists and Church Leaders of Leer, the application to the Commissioner of Leer for the two plots of land was made, but the matter was not an easy one. Only with the coming of Fr Jeremiah Manyang Kon, a Priest sent by Mgr Vincent Mojwok Nyikier, Bishop of Malakal, to deal with the matter, was the plot officially approved and given on 30 June, 2007.⁴⁶² Then, a second piece of land was assigned to the Comboni Missionaries, for a Vocational Training Centre, to train youth (boys and girls) in agriculture, metalwork, carpentry and other skills according to new evaluations and needs.

Once all the documentation was ready, Fr Chemello and Bro Bortoli started planning for permanent buildings, sharing in each other's given task. Fr Chemello was to oversee the building of the Comboni Missionaries' house and church compound and Bro Bortoli, chosen as Principal of the VTC, was to plan and build the required premises of the

⁴⁶² 30 June, 2007, approved Church plot, Franco Duoth Diew, Commissioner of Leer County, Unity State, South Sudan. FSSPJ.

VTC. Since the building site was on cotton soil ground, after proper investigation, it was decided to build with a new technology called M2 imported from Egypt, but later on available also in Khartoum.

Leer Community

Fr Francesco Chemello, Bro Nicola Bortoli, Fr Guillermo Aguiñaga Pantoja, Fr Alberto Modonesi, Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos, Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks, Fr Yacob Solomon Shole, Bro Pierre Ayih Teko Fafa D.J., Fr Gonzalez Galarza Fernando and Sc. Mario Vincenzo Pellegrino.

After the first Assembly of Juba of January, 2008, Nyal was closed, Fr Alves was assigned to Old Fangak and all the other confreres went to Leer. Fr Francesco Chemello was appointed Superior and in charge of overseeing the building of all the structures in the church compound, except for the Comboni Sisters' house which they did, while helping with pastoral work.

Fr Celestino Seabra was the Vice-Superior, in charge of the Catechetical centre and also did pastoral work; Fr Guillermo Aguiñaga Pantoja was the Parish Priest full-time for pastoral activities; Bro Nicola Bortoli was the Bursar, the Principal of the VTC and in charge of developing the structures in the VTC school compound.

The Community of the Comboni Sisters had different tasks: Sr Lorena Morales was collaborating with Fr Seabra in the catechetical centre; Sr Lily Grace Akumu and Sr Adriana Tovar were teaching in the government schools and collaborating in pastoral work, Sr Agata Cantone was taking care of women, but then took up the pre-school (nursery school) leaving the responsibility of the women to Sr Miriam Parra who was also a school teacher. Finally, Sr Laura Perin was put in charge of the women's desk.

The members of the MCCJ community were living in four huts in local material while the community house and the nursery school were being built. By the middle of 2010, the house was completed and the community moved in. In April 2009, the VTC started with agriculture lessons in an iron sheet classroom, while the first classroom block in M2 was completed in 2010. The nursery school was completed the same year and the lessons could start under the direction of Sr Agata Cantone and her team of staff members.

The building of the Catechetical centre in local material was carried out by the Catechists and the Church leaders together with the Parish church also in local material. With a substantial offering received by Fr Aguiñaga Pantoja, Fr Chemello prepared a plan for a prefabricated, iron-framed

church⁴⁶³ with a sacristy and an office to be completed with M2 technology material for the walls.

Fr Chemello planned that all the iron structures of the church be set up by Nuer labourers themselves, not by non-Nuer companies, as a sign of their own ability. He managed to find a Nuer welder, and together with him and another young Nuer helper, he assembled the iron framework and set it up with the help of a Ugandan builder already working for the community. The good collaboration of the church personnel and of the County Commissioner, who provided heavy machinery from a road construction company, brought the iron structure to completion.

In the summer 2009, the sudden illness of Fr Celestino Seabra obliged Sr Lorena Morales to take over the Catechetical Centre until the close of the course in the month of December, while Fr Seabra had to go for medical treatment to Italy. By this time Fr Aguiñaga Pantoja was assigned to Mexico leaving only Fr Chemello and Bro Bortoli in Leer.

Sr Morales was due for a course in Biblical studies and Sr Anna Gastaldello replaced her and took up the direction of the catechetical centre for the next two years, in collaboration with Fr Chemello. In April 2010 Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks went to Leer to work in the VTC programme. Fr Alberto Modonesi was also assigned to Leer, but had to leave on 27 July, 2010, for health reasons. Thanks be to God, on the same plane he was boarding, Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos arrived and started to study the Nuer language, to the great relief of Fr Chemello.

In 2011, Scholastic Yacob Solomon Shole was assigned to the community of Leer for his three-year pastoral experience. In August, 2011, the metal structures and the roof in iron sheets of the church were completed and, joyfully, on 15 August, 2011, the feast of the Assumption, the Christian community of Leer prayed under the roof of the new church. Bamboo was temporarily put around the metallic structure, while waiting for the church financial committee to organise consistent fund-raising to complete the church with permanent walls.

In February, 2012, a hall for the catechetical centre, in iron structure, was built with the work of two young Nuer welders prepared for the purpose. The course could start in the new premises; it was a bit warm, but much better for teaching than before, with a water system fixed in both the Catechists' hall and Youth's hall, with toilets and shower rooms. On 10 February, Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha was appointed Parish Priest.

⁴⁶³ Fr Chemello, before joining the Comboni Missionaries, was a mechanical designer, and took the initiative of planning the church iron structure.

Leer is a very extensive Parish covering four counties which could well be divided into four Parishes, if there were personnel available. The main county centres were: **Leer**, with five other main centres, with two or three sub-centres each and each sub-centre two or three chapels each one; **Koch**, with two other main centres, with two or three sub-centres each and each sub-centre two or three chapels each one. **Mayendit** with two other main centres, with two or three sub-centres each and each sub-centre two or three chapels each one, **Payinjar** with two other main centres, with two or three sub-centres each and each sub-centre two or three chapels each one.

The total was 4 county centres, 11 main centres, 45 sub-centres and more than 100 chapels. It was practically impossible for the Priests to reach the chapels. Priests could barely manage to visit each centre and sub-centre, sometimes twice, sometimes three, rarely four or five times per year. People would come from the other chapels to pray or receive the Sacraments in the main centres or sub-centres.

The catechetical centre of St Joseph the Worker Parish was serving the whole Parish and each year around 16 Catechists (4 per county) were going to Leer for a 5 months course. Women's groups like the *Koam Maria* (Legion of Mary) and the *Man Luka* (the Women of Luke) plus all the other women not belonging to these two groups were followed up. There was a *Youth group*, the *altar servers* and the *alleluia dancers*: justice and peace and trauma healing workshops were organised with them.

The educational programme in the Parish included the VTC and the Pre-Schools (Nursery Schools). Pre-Schools were opened also in two other main centres. During his Scholastic experience, Yacob Solomon was teaching in the VTC and taking care of youth activities until he was ordained Priest in his home village in Ethiopia and assigned to Leer. Bro Ritterbecks, instead, was called back for rotation in Germany in the middle of 2013 while Bro Pierre Fafa Ayih was assigned to the VTC with Bro Bortoli.

Unfortunately, the massacre of thousands of Nuer civilians in Juba affected the whole of Nuer-land and in particular Unity State and Leer. The members of the two Comboni Communities, MCCJ and CMS, had to run to the bush and be evacuated from Leer. Leer was attacked and completely destroyed by the JEM Darfurian guerrillas supporting the government army. People fled to the marsh bordering Leer County: an excruciating piece of history started again for the innocent Nuer civilians.

At the time of the destruction of Leer, Fr Chemello was in Payinjar visiting the Christians. After the Assembly he was temporarily sent to Old Fangak. Bro Fafa and Fr Nonato Rocha, instead, were assigned respectively

to St Martin Workshop in Lomin and the Justice and Peace office in Juba. After the withdrawal of the Government army, Fr Daniele Moschetti, the Provincial Superior, and Bro Bortoli visited Leer for an assessment in June, 2014, and then confreres could go back there.

Bro Bortoli and Fr Yacob Shole were the first ones to go back on 28 July followed by Fr Chemello on 17 September. On 1 October, Fr Fernando González Galarza returned to Leer from Mexico as Parish Priest to replace Fr Nonato Rocha who organized the handing over of the Parish on 11 October, 2014. Of the Comboni Sisters, only Sr Lorena Morales could go back for short periods of time waiting for other Sisters to join her.

The presence of the Comboni Missionaries in this crucial time was of great support for the people and the Catholic Christian Community everywhere. This went on normally until May, 2015, when, again, the confreres had to evacuate. Koch, Mayendit and Leer were attacked and destroyed and the civilian population was utterly harassed even more than in 2014. The behaviour of the Government army and the militia siding with it was disgraceful. Never had such atrocities been witnessed since the CPA.

Bro Bortoli decided to go back to Italy and the Fathers and Sisters decided to transfer to the area of Payinjiar County, staying in Nyal, the old mission residence which had sheltered the Comboni community in 1998, when Leer was also destroyed. Nyal was the only safe place that could be reached also by other NGOs and WFP flights and for relief activities.

In February, 2016, the Apostolic Administrator of Malakal Diocese, Mgr Roko Taban Mousa, paid an apostolic visit to the people in Nyal, who were overwhelmed with joy. In September, there was also the visit of the Vicar General of the Comboni Missionaries, Fr Jeremias dos Santos Martins, accompanied by the Provincial Superior, Fr Daniele Moschetti.

Year 2016 passed in this way and the two Comboni Communities, MCCJ and CMS, were just there as a sign of hope to people with their own presence. At present, 2017, the Combonis in Nyal are Fr González Galarza, Fr Yacob Solomon, Scholastic Mario Vincenzo Pellegrino, Sr Lorena Morales, Sr Araceli Avila Flores and Sr Florence Gado Gjoua. Fr Chemello, instead, was assigned to Tali Parish since 1 June, 2016.

Juba Community

Juba community was one of those given priority because of the key role it was playing in the South Sudan Province, starting with the whole process of transferring the Provincial House from Nairobi back to Juba and the responsibility placed on the confreres making up this community. Together

with the Comboni Missionary Sisters, it was associated from its initial stage, with the issue of the SCRN (Sudan Catholic Radio Network) in all its planning and implementation in relationship with the Conference of Bishops (SCBC) through a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding).

Juba community served as a Provincial House and had also to look after logistics. After the whole process of ***Moving back home***, which we have already seen, it had to enter into the framework of those two essential services. Several confreres referred to it temporarily, while waiting for their final assignment, others for specific works of assistance, and others had definite duties to carry out in the province, like the Provincial and the Provincial Bursar, or with SCRN.

On 1 December, 2007, the confreres in Jacaranda community, Fr Perina, Fr Hector Ayon, Fr Ukelo, Bro Rodriguez Fayad and Bro Fabris moved to Juba permanently. Bro Jorge Rodríguez Fayad was appointed Superior from 2008 to 2014, in charge of shopping and of dealing with the workers. Bro Fabris was in Juba from December, 2007, until December, 2013 when he left for Italy. Fr Ukelo belonged to this community but resided in Torit. Fr Ayon, though assigned elsewhere, was often in Juba for health reasons. Fr Alberto Modonesi, who arrived at the end of 2008, was the Provincial Bursar until Bro Nunes took over in January, 2010.

From 2011 to 2016 the community continued with the presence of **Fr Daniele Moschetti** - Provincial Superior⁴⁶⁴, and chairperson of the Religious Superior's Association (RSASS). **Bro Jorge Rodríguez Fayad** - Superior of the community and lecturer and Administrator at the Catholic University of Juba was assigned to Uganda in January, 2014.

Fr José da Silva Vieira – was the Vice Superior, in charge of mail, CRN news editor and collaborator with St Joseph Parish. He left in December 2013; Fr Fernando Colombo, Diocesan Administrator of Rumbek Diocese; Fr Joseph Ukelo Yala, serving in Torit Diocese, Mission and Vocation Animation, Consultant and Spiritual Director in the Minor Seminary. **Bro António Manuel Nunes Ferreira**, Provincial Bursar and Procurator, and Community Bursar, also assisted in hospitality, the kitchen and animal farm and left at the end of 2013.

Bro Bernhard Hengl – arrived in April, 2012, with the task of SCBC fundraiser, project manager; building supervisor of St Pauls' Major Seminary, of the hostel for Girls in Rejaf (Sisters of Charity) and of the South Sudan Catholic University and was assigned to the German-speaking Province in June 2016. **Fr Guido Oliana** – from July, 2012, lecturer and

⁴⁶⁴ From the Minutes of the Assembly, 2016. FSSPJ.

spiritual director at St Paul's Major Seminary, coordinator of the community liturgy, secretary of the community council, librarian and collaborator with St Joseph Parish.

Bro Giuseppe Redaelli – joined the community in December, 2013: in January, 2014, he took up the task of Provincial Bursar and Procurator, Community Bursar, logistics, hospitality, shopping, workers, care of the compound and other needed realities. **Bro Hans Eigner** – from January, 2014, in charge of buildings and at service of the Province and of the Religious in South Sudan (RSASS), supervision and maintenance of the Comboni facilities and the workshop, also helped in the kitchen and hospitality until the end of 2016.

The major undertakings of Bro Eigner were the construction of the Comboni Pre-Postulancy *Barnaba Deng Formation House* of Moroyok and of the *Good Shepherd Peace Centre* for human, pastoral, and spiritual formation, peace-building and trauma healing sponsored by the RSASS in Kit/Rejaf area.

Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos – from 1 August, 2014, coordinator of Justice and Peace, coordinator of trauma healing for the Religious Association (RSASS), webmaster of the Provincial website and pastoral work among Internally Displaced People (IDPs), from 6 December, 2014, Superior of the community. **Fr Paolino Tipo** – joined the community in July, 2016. He was appointed for the office of JPIC of the Province and director of the *Good Shepherd Peace Centre* of the RSASS in Kit/Rejaf area. **Fr Paul Idra** – assigned to South Sudan in March, 2016, went to Uganda for studies and is waiting for an appointment.

Activities of the Community: Juba community does not run a Parish and has no specific pastoral plan; however, it offers pastoral and various other services. The Provincial House and the Procure are merged together. On Sundays and weekdays there are prayer services and it is a reference point for the Eritrean community in Juba. It offers the venue to the Juba Archdiocese Vocation Promotion Team organising meetings and retreats for young people on a monthly basis;

The community hosts the monthly recollection day for Religious, Clergy and Laity of the Archdiocese, collaborates with St Joseph Parish (for prayers), with the Justice and Peace Office of the Archdiocese, with RSASS and offers prayer service for the IDPs. The community offers support to education and provides space for the Lady Lomin Shop that has been set up to promote women crafts from our mission of Kajo-Kaji.

Yirol Community

After handing over Agang-Rial, in 2008 the Province took up Yirol as the second commitment in Rumbek Diocese. Between 1991 and 1992, the Comboni Missionaries were in Yirol as part of the *New Sudan Group* for a short time but the military campaign of Khartoum in March of the same year compelled the confreres to abandon the place.

When the SPLA regained control of Yirol, the Diocese of Rumbek and Comboni confreres were assisting it from Bethany House, Nairobi. Fr Silvano Gottardi, assigned to the South Sudan Delegation on 1 July, 1998, was appointed Parish Priest of *Holy Cross Parish* in Yirol and restarted the pastoral care, being a member of Mapuordit community. For health reasons he had to leave and Fr Benjamin Madol, a Diocesan Priest, was assigned as Parish Priest. Since 2001, a community of the MSMMC (Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church), was also present and sharing in education and pastoral activities.

In 2002, Fr José Javier Parladé Escobar, belonging to the community of Mapuordit, started working together with Fr Madol and, at his departure in 2004, became the Parish Priest. Education was a priority and Holy Cross Primary School was the only school in town so, in agreement with the elders, 27 rural primary schools were opened with about 260 volunteer teachers. With the CPA they were all handed over to the government.

Fr Parladé was very active in education and evangelization areas and started already preparing the way for a future permanent residence for a Comboni community which became a reality in 2008, after the handing over of Agang-Rial. The confreres assigned at different times to Yirol were Bro Mario Rossignoli, Fr Fernando Colombo and Fr Titus Henry Makokha.⁴⁶⁵ The formation and renewal of the Catechists at zone level was a priority in order to have active and consistent pastoral agents in a parish with 58 chapels, ten pastoral zones and 110 Catechists.

The presence of the CUAMM doctors was very important in order to assist a hospital under government management. The new Parish church, whose construction had already been going on previously, was completed in 2009. Yirol was an area of first evangelization and there were also many Protestants, with whom there was a good relationship. By 2010, Yirol community was composed of Fr Colombo, Superior, Fr David Octavio Aguilar Guzman, Fr Makokha, and Fr Parladé, with a community of the MSMMC and the CUAMM doctors for the hospital.

⁴⁶⁵ Provincial Assembly 2009, Juba 14-19 January. FSSPJ.

In 2011, when the first three Fathers were assigned to other destinations, only Fr Parladé remained and was joined by Fr Hector Ayon Oyiamute, Sc Lwanga Gilingere Limingere (KRT) on community experience and Fr Antoine Kondo Komivi, who then left for the Comboni Year. At the moment (2017), the Comboni community of Yirol is made up of five members, Fr Pedro Secundino Tacuri Samaniego, from Ecuador, Fr Joseph Parladé, from Spain, Fr Giovanni Girardi, from Italy, Bro Jacek Andrzej Pomykacz, from Poland and Fr Boris Ketemepi Komivi Dodzi, from Togo.

The community of MSMMC Sisters (Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church), present since 2001, are dedicating their service in the school, pastoral initiatives of the Parish, youth, women ministry and visiting out-churches. Youth ministry was taken care by Fr David Aguilar Guzman and Fr Kondo Komivi and now is under the care of Fr Boris Ketemepi with workshops of formation, sport activities and seminars.

In the field of education, the Parish is running three primary schools: Holy Cross Primary School with around 1,800 pupils, St Daniel Comboni Primary School with around 1,200 pupils and a school implementing a program for adult education (ALP) with 300 students this year. Bro Jacek Pomykacz is responsible for them. Since last year there is a nursery school for children run by Sr Fidelis Kyomugisha, one of the MSMMC Sisters.

The Parish also helps many satellite schools by supporting them with scholastic material. Some classrooms have been built with Parish support. The adult education is concerned with the illiteracy of many men and women. There are many challenges ahead, but the good work done in the past years is an encouragement also for the future.

Tali Community⁴⁶⁶

Tali Community was taken up at the request of Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro during the dialogue on the Comboni Missionaries coming back to Juba Archdiocese. The Combonis had opened it in 1954, but were forced to leave a few years later by order of the government of Khartoum.

The reopening and the implementation of the commitment took some time. Fr Mitiku Habte, Mr. Hassan (builder) and Bro Hans Ritterbecks visited Tali from 8 to 12 March, 2007, for an assessment arranged by Fr Santo Loku Pio, the Parish Priest of Terakeka. The Christian community,

⁴⁶⁶ Tali Mission, Community Charter 2014. FSSPJ

- Provincial Council, 1/2008, Markus to celebrate Easter in Tali and prepare soon temporary huts/provisional residence. FSSPJ.

the Catechists and the Local Chief warmly welcomed them. Fr Perina, Fr Mitiku Habte and Bro Lamana Consola also visited Tali and the old mission place from Holy Thursday, 5 April, 2007, until Easter Sunday.⁴⁶⁷

Fr Markus Körber visited Tali the following Christmas and on 23 March, 2008, celebrated Easter there. Fr Santo Loku Pio, the Parish Priest of Terakeka (Tali was then an outstation of Terakeka Parish), handed over Tali Parish, with its 30 chapels, to the Comboni Missionaries.⁴⁶⁸ At the arrival of Fr Körber in 2008 three huts for the Fathers were already prepared and three more were added before the end of the year, while the youth were involved in fencing the compound. The arrival of Fr Joseph Pellerino one month later⁴⁶⁹ and of Bro Damiano Mascalzoni the week before Christmas completed the community.

Fr Pellerino was very committed in teaching catechism and in giving lessons in the local government-run Primary School. Efforts were made to prepare liturgical books and to organise catechists' courses in collaboration with Terakeka Parish. The first pastoral visit of the Archbishop Paulino Lokudu Loro to Tali Parish, at the end of January, was of great help and encouragement. It was also an opportunity to tackle the issue of land demarcation and boundaries of the Catholic Church compound in the presence of a government representative from Juba, opening the way for the construction of the premises in permanent buildings for the community and other church buildings.

In 1954, when the Parish was opened some kilometres from Tali centre, it was dedicated to *Our Lady of Fatima*, but now with the choice of the new Church compound in a more central place in Tali, this title is used for the "Old Mission" as an outstation of the Parish. After a process of discernment done together with Archbishop Paulino Lukudu Loro and the Local Christian Community, in 2014, the name chosen as the new patron for Tali Parish was "*Christ the King*".

The Challenges: one was *geographical* since Tali Parish included Tali and Tindilu Payam bordering with Yei and Rumbek Diocese. It measured around 60 km, north to south and around 100 km. east to west. The roads were rough and communications very difficult due to flooded areas and the

⁴⁶⁷ sscomboni@new.com, newsletter of South Sudan Province, pp. 26-27. FSSPJ.

⁴⁶⁸ Tali Mission, Community Charter 2014. FSSPJ

- Provincial Council, 1/2008, Markus to celebrate Easter in Tali and prepare soon temporary huts/provisional residence. FSSPJ.

⁴⁶⁹ Provincial Council, 2/2009-May, Fr Pellerino presented to Archbishop, Fr Markus Körber, Superior, Bro Damiano Bursar; Building in progress... FSSPJ.

distances between the chapels. Even the Old Mission, just seven kilometres from Tali, was not reachable during the rainy season.

The *social challenges* were related to a very low general standard of living: poor education in the few existing schools, few opportunities and little encouragement for progress and development. The need to help with integral development and human formation was pretty clear. The presence of the Comboni Missionaries was a positive sign, after so many years of absence, and the return to Tali Parish was received with joy by the people.

The *pastoral challenges* were the visits to the outstations on a regular basis by car, motorbike, bicycle or on foot, according to the road conditions and the paths in the forest. Visits were opportunities to witness Jesus Christ concretely and of walking in the footsteps of Saint Daniel Comboni, on a journey of faith, together with people who were surely amongst the poorest and most neglected within the Archdiocese of Juba.

Tali Parish started with the presence of Fr Markus Körber in 2008, Fr Joseph Pellerino (2008 - 2012), Bro Damiano Mascalzoni (2008 - 2013), Fr Gregor Schmidt (2009 - 2012), Fr Salvatore Pacifico (2012 - 2013), Fr Albino Adot Oryem (2011 - he died on 11 February, 2016), Fr Martin Loku Mödi (since 2013). Fr Markus Körber was on sick leave since November, 2015, until 2017. At present, the community of Tali is made up of Fr Martin Loku, Superior, Fr Francesco Chemello, Parish Priest and Bro Claudio Bozza, Local Bursar and collaborating with the clinic / PHCU (Primary Health Centre Unit).

Since May, 2014, the MCCJ community shared the house with four Franciscan Elizabethan Sisters (Sr Anastasia Maina from Kenya, Sr Chiara Ahlam Latif, from Egypt, Sr Mary from Ecuador and Sr Vittoria Faliva from Italy), who entered into their own house in August 2016. Their commitment is in the school (nursery and primary), in the clinic, and in pastoral.

The parish now has 38 chapels and is divided into eight zones with two volunteer Catechists, each chapel responsible for the Sunday Prayer, the preparation of the candidates for the reception of Sacraments, visiting the families and sick people and the animation of the Christian communities. They are helped by a group of church councillors and each zone has a coordinator supervising the chapels in his area.

Tali Parish centre and the majority of the outstations have a women's group, *the Legion of Mary*, the youth group, the altar servers (mostly boys), the dancers called *Crusaders* (mostly girls) and the choir group. These different groups, in various ways, contribute to the spread of the Good News in their areas. The 38 outstations are visited regularly. Emphasis is

put on unity among the different chapels of each zone, to strengthen them and offer formation, to celebrate the Eucharist and administer the Sacraments. Distances and difficult road conditions, especially in the rainy season, make pastoral journeys take several days.

In collaboration with representatives of the archdiocesan administration, various activities and a strong effort of interaction with the Local Church were undertaken, especially since 2017 with the newly constituted **Terakeka Pastoral Region** of the “Diocesan Vicariate of Terakeka”. In the past, several workshops were planned for the various groups with a special focus on the preparation and formation of the Catechists.

In the field of education the community runs **St Daniel Comboni** Primary School with 400 students and a **Nursery school** with more than 100 children and other **Satellite Schools**, aware that education is one of the greatest deficiencies in South Sudan and even worse in Tali area, especially for girls. Most girls are never enrolled and hardly any of them will complete primary education because of early marriages. Fr Martin Loku Mödi, a South Sudanese, is the Principal of the school, Sr Anastasia Maina is a teacher in the same Comboni Primary together with Sr Rita Andrew, a newly arrived South Sudanese, and Sr Vittoria Faliva is in charge of the Comboni Nursery School for children.

Workshop and Agriculture: a workshop and agricultural activities have developed gradually along with the re-opening of the Mission in Tali with a *people’s participation approach* to develop the Mission together. The small garage and workshop are equipped with simple structures to provide various needed services. The space for agriculture, inside the Mission compound, has an orchard with fruit trees and vegetables and some domestic animals. At present, due to lack of personnel, is on stand by.

Health Activity: a small dispensary/clinic for health promotion is run in collaboration with the Franciscan Elizabethan Sisters. It is registered under the Ministry of Health as a PHCU (Primary Health Centre Unit). The clinic is now running the activity in a new building which was opened in August 2016, with a proper set-up. Sr Chiara Ahlam Latif is running the PHCU with the help of Bro Claudio Bozza. The clinic treats more than 1,000 patients per month, with over 100 patients on Mondays and an average of 50 per day on the other days of the week.

In Tindilo Payam (Rejaf and Ngalek/Kubiri) there are other two units where around 200-300 patients per month are treated, as well. The PHCU has a *Leprosy Outreach Program* extended to the whole area of the Parish, in Tali County and Tindilo County. The villages are regularly visited by a trained leprosy team. This service is coordinated with the local Health

Department and the State Ministry of Health. At present, the personnel of the PHCU are taking care of 195 leprosy patients.

Commitments with special arrangements

The special arrangements of these commitments were that the confrere given by the Province of South Sudan to the Dioceses was *ad personam*, that is, with no replacement in case the confrere, for various reasons, should no longer be available for that service. Under this heading were Nyamlel and Barghel projects to be handed over to the respective Dioceses within the Six-Year Plan (2011-2017). Ayod, instead, was expected to become a new regular Comboni commitment but the war situation complicated everything. However, despite everything, the commitment is not in doubt.

Nyamlel pastoral commitment was served by Fr Michael Barton, Superior and Parish Priest, and Fr Raymond Pax, who joined him in March 2006. The mission centre, St Theresa Parish, had a church ten metres wide and around forty metres long with a high roof composed of timber and iron sheets. The mission was over one hundred kilometres in diameter, from Wedweil and Uthum, with mission chapels bordering with the areas served by Gordeim and Raja, about eighty-five chapels and places of prayer, divided up into twelve centres.

Nyamlel had eighty-five Catechists, some prayer leaders and some helpers. There was also a community of Sisters from Indonesia who arrived on Holy Thursday 2006: Sr Jeanne, Sr Jevianna and Sr Ernestin, with a commitment in school education and women's development. They were also visiting the out-churches on Sundays as Eucharist Ministers. The Parish Catechist was a young man from the school and a carpenter was helping in the Parish as a handyman and builder.

The Sisters' house had been restored together with another house of six rooms for women's development. Adjacent to the Sisters' compound four classrooms had been restored for the secondary school and other buildings also needed restoration. The mission complex was about three kilometres from the market and from the airstrip and given to the DOR hospital staff and to Cordaid, a Dutch NGO. Conconn and WFP were also present.

Fr Barton was the headmaster of the school which had a very good performance; it had three hundred pupils and several times it came first in the external exams set by the Diocese of Rumbek. Fr Barton attempted to open the secondary section but failed because of a strike of the secondary

school teachers, one week after they had signed their contracts. Many of the Catechists and all the teachers trained at Bakhita formation centre, Kitale, had deserted the school because they had better offers from the government and the NGOs, instead, many of the returnees from the North were ready to take an active interest in the church.

Fr Pax was mainly taking care of the centre but, once acquainted with the place, he started visiting the chapels outside. Sadly, Fr Pax died suddenly on 31 March, 2008, leaving Fr. Barton alone. It is worth mentioning that many of the people in the civic administration were students at Nyamlel before Fr Barton's time. With the building of a new road to Nyamlel, the Parish became accessible during the rainy season and even Aweil and Wau all the year round.

Nyamlel Parish continued its journey and Fr Barton carried on alone with the school and the pastoral work until, according to the Six-Year Plan, the Parish was to be handed over to the Diocese of Wau on 31 January, 2013, and the MMI (Missionaries of Mary Immaculate) took it over.

Barghel Project *Ireneo Dud Vocational Training Centre*, in Cueibet District, was under the care of Fr Giovanni Girardi. Started in 2007, the aim of the project was to train young people from the Diocese of Rumbek in various skills: bricklaying, carpentry, mechanics, plumbing, electricity, metalwork and farming, with the idea of helping the rebuilding of the country through the preparation of qualified personnel.

The plan was supposed to run on a three-year programme: in year one, every student would receive education in all disciplines; in year two and three, the students would specialise in one discipline, according to their abilities and interests; agriculture would always be a compulsory subject.

The South Sudan Province made Fr Girardi available as the project leader, supported by the Diocese, while the training programme was to be developed in collaboration with ESMEA, and SUDIN, an Italian NGO from Udine. The long-term aim was that it should become a secondary technical school within ten years.⁴⁷⁰

Fr Giovanni Girardi carried on with the project at the *Ireneo Dud Vocational Training Centre* until AVSI, a Christian organization, very much interested in projects of education in South Sudan, showed interest for it. In collaboration with the Diocese of Rumbek and the Onlus SUDIN, AVSI took over the Barghel project in May, 2014. Fr Giovanni Girardi was always open for this move and strongly supported it. The issue was

⁴⁷⁰ Provincial Assembly 2007, Nairobi, 14-20 January, op. cit., p. 23. FSSPJ.

concluded with a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations and Rumbek Diocese.⁴⁷¹

Ayod pastoral commitment started in June, 2009, when Fr La Braca returned from Italy and received permission from the Provincial to withdraw from his usual pastoral work and go to Ayod to begin his *eremital life*,⁴⁷² leaving the *active pastoral work* to the care of the confreres of Old Fangak.

Ayod became well known in 1983, when the Nuer military leader of Ayod, Cmdr. William Nyuon, joined the SPLA guerrilla movement against the Khartoum Government. The Catholic background of Ayod started with a certain Peter Gatkuoth David, baptized in 1987 in the Presbyterian Church and the right arm of the Rev Pastor Peter Rit, in Longor.

At Christmas, 1988, the same Rev Peter Rit, gave a warning to them about the danger of **a big Church** called **Catholic**. Peter Gatkuoth was very much impressed by such words about this *big Church*, since he did not know anything about it and, by instinct, (these are his own words) he prayed that this *big Church* may arrive also in Ayod. His religious journey was quite adventurous, but finally he succeeded in being received into the Catholic Church by Catechist, *Joseph Pal Mut*.

Joseph Pal Mut was the founder of many Catholic Churches in Gambela and Itang Sudanese refugee camps (on the borders of Ethiopia), and Eastern Nuer areas (and, later on, the leader of the Nuer Catechists League). In 1993, having heard that in Ayod the Catholics had built a church, he went to visit them. Peter Gatkuoth went to greet him and asked to be officially received into the Catholic Church, and he was.

In 1995, Peter Gatkuoth went to Leer with all the other Catechists while Bishop Paride Taban (of Torit Diocese) was there on a pastoral visit, and received from him the Sacrament of Confirmation. In 1996 in Leer he met Fr Antonio La Braca and invited him to visit Ayod. He did it only in 1998, but when assigned to Juaibor he kept on with regular visits until he decided to choose Ayod for his *eremital experience* on 6 June, 2009.

⁴⁷¹ Report of the Provincial Superior Fr Daniele Moschetti” to the Provincial Assembly, Juba, 17-22 March, 2014. FSSPJ.

⁴⁷² A *hermit*, especially one who lives alone for religious reasons.

- Missionary presence in Fangak, edited by Fr Christian Carlassare, (files of Old Fangak Parish mcej community).

- Provincial Assembly, 2010, Juba, 14-20 January. FSSPJ.

- Catholic Church Ayod, Fr Antonio La Braca, mcej, personal notes, in Italian, (files of Old Fangak Parish mcej community).

Thereafter, Fr Antonio La Braca started his *eremitical life* and permanent presence in Ayod. His difficulty was how to reconcile *eremitical life* with the *active pastoral care*, so much needed in the area. In agreement with Fr Carlassare, the Parish Priest under whose care Ayod area belonged, and with the community of Old Fangak, the way became viable.

During the Provincial Assembly of 2012, Fr Antonio made an appeal to all confreres, pleading for pastoral help among the NUER GAWAR and LOU. Fr Moschetti, the Provincial, met with Fr Carlassare and La Braca and agreed that Ayod, though part of the Parish of Old Fangak, would be considered as a different pastoral area, with the hope it would soon become a Parish. Fr La Braca continued with his usual services, while waiting for the right time. Fr Michael Barton, after the handing over of Nyamlel, volunteered and was assigned to Ayod.

Fr Barton went to Leer to learn the Nuer Language in January, 2014, just a few weeks after the massacre of the Nuer People in Juba. Leer was attacked and destroyed. All confreres had to abandon the place and Fr Barton fled to Old Fangak where he remained for a couple of months until, on 12 April, 2014, he joined Fr La Braca and celebrated Easter in Ayod.

A few weeks later, Ayod was attacked and captured by the government army. The population fled and Fr La Braca and Fr Barton also moved with the people, first to Jiuny and then to Mogok. Fr Barton was appointed Acting Parish Priest of the new Christian community, acting Superior of the Comboni community and Director of the school. With the permission of the Authorities of Mogok he started a primary school from P.1 to P.5. The school started with 126 pupils in 2014 and reached 179 in 2016. In 2014 almost two thirds of students dropped out; in 2016 only a quarter.

At the end of 2014, Fr Barton visited Jiech and Haat on foot. He went to Wuror, Nyirol and Akobo counties twice during the dry seasons of the years 2015 and 2016 (Akobo is far away on the border with Ethiopia). Again in 2017 they had to abandon the place due to fighting and the unsettled situation, but the community of Ayod/Mogok is still fulfilling the agreed plan of having both *active pastoral work* and *eremitical life* in an *active missionary and contemplative life* blended together.

Communities inherited after the CPA

The communities of Malakal, Wau, Raja (and Juba included) were geographically belonging to the South Sudan Province, but the General Council entrusted them to Khartoum Province because of the arrangement made at the time of the *Group of the New Sudan*, with the institution of the

new Delegation, on 1 January, 1995. With the CPA of 9 January, 2005, all this was to be reversed to the former status, though the procedure had to be studied properly. The issue of Malakal town was concluded fast, while Wau and Raja were *de facto* re-assumed with their previous commitments. According to the Six-Year Plan, both Parishes were supposed to be handed over to the Diocese of Wau: Raja was handed over, Wau, instead, was postponed indefinitely.

Malakal Community: Fr Alberto Modonesi and Bro Abele Redaelli asked to leave Malakal town and go to exercise their missionary activity in Ayod, Jongley State, in the same Diocese of Malakal. The Province had no commitment in Ayod and no personnel to take up a new mission permanently so the issue was not easy. Since Old Fangak was taking care of that area, they were temporarily assigned to Old Fangak, but the issue of their belonging had to be solved, either to remain under Khartoum Province or pass to South Sudan. Bro Redaelli chose the first option and Fr Modonesi chose South Sudan Province and was assigned to Old Fangak.

Wau and Raja Communities: the issue of Wau and Raja was similar to that of Malakal, but more complex because of the commitments the Khartoum Province had already taken before the CPA of 2005. The matter of personnel was the same: either Khartoum would agree to give the South Sudan Province personnel who knew Arabic, or it would be impossible for the Province to provide Arabic-speaking personnel for them. The issue was left pending until the time of the referendum in 2011 and its result. With the independence of the South the decision still stood.

Wau community

For sake of continuity, before tackling the new post-independence situation I would like to comment briefly on its background. From 1980 to 2004, the confreres in Bussere/Wau were, Fr Luigi Penzo, Fr Vittorino Dellagiacomina. Bro Libero Duino Francesco Ribelli, Fr Felice Sciannameo, in Bussere; in Wau, Fr Luigi De Giorgi, Bro Aldo Marangio, Fr Agostino Bertolotti, Fr Antonio La Braca, Fr Lorenzo Tomasoni, Bro Giuseppe Redaelli, Hans Dieter Ritterbecks, Fr Dr Lorenzo Tomasoni, Fr Eugenio Caligari, Bro Rosario Iannetti, Fr Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie and Fr Salvatore Pacifico.

The Parish of St Daniel Comboni was founded on 27 June, 1999. Previous to that date, the community of Wau had been formed by Bro Rosario, who handed over Agok hospital to a Sudanese doctor before leaving Wau in August, 1999, for South Africa in order to prepare for his

final vows. The other member of the community was Fr Eugenio Caligari who, at the end of June, 1999, left Wau for Italy for health reasons. He was the Parish Priest of St Joseph Parish, in Wau for many years.

By June, 1999, the community of Wau was formed by Fr John Peter Alenyo and Fr Isaac Martin Aranz. The only activity was pastoral and the starting of the new Parish of St Daniel Comboni. Fr Salvatore Pacifico joined the community in 2002. Fr Peter Alenyo left Wau in 2002 and Fr Pacifico in 2004 when Fr Elia Juma Androgo Morsal joined the community. The pastoral activity continued in the Comboni Parish.

From 2005-2010, the Comboni community continued its service with Fr Isaac Martin Aranz, Fr Elia Juma Androgo Morsal, Fr Dr Lorenzo Tomasoni, Bro Giuseppe Manara, Fr Pietro Coronella and, in 2009, Bro Giuseppe Redaelli, as diocesan Administrator and Sc Peter Alphonse Ladu Loro. When Fr Tomasoni returned to Wau he worked in the clinic of the Salesian Sisters in Wau and also helped Sr Bianca Benatelli in the temporary premises of the clinic of Solidarity with South Sudan (SSS). At week-ends he was going to Agok for pastoral work.

From 2011 to 2016 the confreres composing the community of Wau were Fr Isaac Martin Aranz, Sc Peter Alphonse Ladu Loro, Bro Giuseppe Redaelli, Fr Dr Lorenzo Tomasoni, Fr Luciano Perina and the medical doctor Bro Paolo Rizzetto since 2012; from 2014, Fr Ezio Bettini joined the community as advisor of the Diocesan Administrator and then left for Italy in 2016, while Bro Patrick Lumami Mwanza arrived from Mapuordit in 2015. Bro Dr Rizzetto left for Mapuordit, where he took over the administration of the hospital on 1 July, 2016, Fr Isaac Martin Aranz was transferred to Lomin on 27 September, and Bro Rosario Iannetti arrived at the end of 2016, as well.

From 1 July, 2016, the community consisted of Fr Ghislain Amoussou Comlan, Superior and Parish Priest, Bro Patrick Lumami Mwanza, Bro Antonio Manuel Nunes Ferreira, Fr Salomon Badatana Apéléte Agnata, from September, 2016 and Bro Dr Rosario Iannetti. A lay person, Mr. Matteo Perotti, has also been part of the community since April, 2011.

Bro Antonio Nunes Ferreira was working with Solidarity South Sudan (SSS) since April, 2016, while Bro Lumami Mwanza, a nurse, was already working in the diocesan hospital of Wau since January, 2015. Bro Iannetti joined him in the diocesan hospital, a structure built in the fifties and then confiscated by the government of Khartoum to become a military hospital until 2008 and re-habilitated under the care of Bro Giuseppe Redaelli and Sr Dr Maria Martinelli, a Comboni Sister medical doctor, with the support of CEI (Conferenza Episcopale Italiana) between 2008 and 2011.

The hospital was re-built in different phases and became operational in 2010. The first renovated buildings of the Diocesan Catholic Hospital of Wau were blessed, with the official name of *Saint Daniel Comboni Catholic Hospital (SDCCH)*, on 30 November, 2010, in the presence of His Grace Archbishop Josef Erwin Ender and Mons. Rudolf Deng Majak. The OPD was opened to the public on 18 January, 2011. The Comboni Sisters working there were Dr Maria Martinelli, Director of the hospital, Dr Marianna Santin, Sr Bianca Benatelli and Sr Joyce Ajio (in charge of the OPD).

Fr Ghislain Amoussou Comlan and Fr Salomon Badatana Apéléte Agnata are fully involved in pastoral work. Their main activity and priorities are the promotion of unity among the different tribes of the Parish, the improvement of spiritual life through training and workshops, the care of people affected by the present crisis and living in IDP camps or church premises and the pastoral concern for a proper teaching of the Church regarding Sacraments to assure good foundations are laid.

The present crisis led thousands of people and Christians to flee their homes, with huge challenges ahead due to the uncertain future: anything can happen in no time at all because of the atmosphere of fear within certain ethnic groups of the Parish. People seek refuge in churches and feel protected as IDP parishioners: this implies supplying them with material goods and food. This crisis created a loss of hope within people, while the general economic situation of the country makes everything harder.

There is an effort to get the Parish into a journey of self-reliance, but in such a situation the effort is practically obstructed. Once more, we need to put more trust in the Lord and in his Word.

Raja community

The Parish of Raja was taken back by the South Sudan Province on 1 July, 2011. Until December, 1994, it was part of the South Sudan Province, but being in a *government area*, the Province of Khartoum took care of it.

The community of Raja was opened in January, 1935, a product of the community of Deim Zubeir opened in 1926. It was first opened in Ringhi, in 1932, about thirty miles west, on the road to Boro Medina but then it moved to Raja because in Ringhi water was scarce. It was meant for first evangelization like all the other missions of South Sudan. The presence of Islam made the opening even more urgent.

Islam and the Arabs, in their attempt to penetrate the South, found it difficult to do it in areas inhabited by Dinkas and Nuer. They found it was

easier through the small tribes of the west. Actually, they had already penetrated the area, first with Zubeir, a slaves trader, who in Deim Zubeir had a centre of recruitment of slaves, and in Raja itself, where there was the tribe of Ferughe', that had come from Dar Fur and had settled in Raja.

Their Islamic stand was very strong. They did not accept a Christian school in their villages as in the other areas: in 1946 a school was opened by the missionaries in Khor Shamam, the centre of the Ferughe', but Christian Religion could not be taught. Arabic and Islamic presence remained always strong. It was particularly felt during the time of NCP (of El Bashir). One of the people who made the revolution with Bashir was a Ferughe' from Raja. He was behind the policy of the NCP in the South, especially in Bahr el Ghazal. His family controlled Raja till the CPA.

They tried by all means to weaken the presence and influence of the Church. Twice the MCCJ were sent away, even if only for a short time. The MCCJ and the CMS were expelled from Raja in 1964, together with all the other missionaries of South Sudan. The MCCJ returned in 1985.

From this date onwards, the confreres who served in Raja were Fr Alfonso Polacchini, Bro Ambrogio Confalonieri, Fr Gino Tosello, Fr Nicola Lo Polito, Fr Salvatore Pacifico, Fr José Javier Parladé Escobar, Fr John Peter Alenyo, Fr Luigi Cignolini and Fr Alberto Jesus Eisman Torres. Raja was closed on 17 July, 2000, due to the war, and reopened on 4 April, 2006, under the Province of Khartoum. The confreres who served between 2006 and 2010 were Fr George Duku, Fr Eugenio Caligari, Bro Tarcisio Soardi, Fr Paul Annis, and Bro Ramirez Falcón Nicolás Martin. The CMS never returned to Raja. On 1 July, 2011, it became part of the Province of South Sudan.

Evangelization went hand in hand with education. A school was opened in Raja (up to class 4) and village schools (only the first two classes) were opened in the villages which were under its control: Mangayat in the East and Deim Jalab, Menamba (Ges Boro), Kata, and Boro on the West. To complete the primary, pupils had to go to Deim Zubeir (till class five). For the intermediate they had to go to Bussere and for the technical school to Tonj.

Until 2010, there were Fr Eugenio Caligari and Bro Tarcisio Soardi. Fr Martin Ramirez Falcón came back to Raja after his ordination in November, 2010, and was the headmaster of the Comboni Basic School. Fr Salvatore Pacifico went to Raja in December, 2010, due to an emergency situation, as Fr Caligari and Bro Soardi had left for holidays. With the independence of South Sudan, the confreres in Raja were Fr Salvatore Pacifico, Fr Martin Ramirez Falcón and Bro Tarcisio Soardi, (belonging to

the Khartoum Province). In 2012, Fr Jervas Mawut Mayik Nyok joined the community and, in 2013, Fr Ezio Bettini and Fr Luigi Sergio Chesini.

From 2014 until the handing over of Raja to the Diocese of Wau, Fr Jervas Mawut Mayik Nyok remained as the Superior of the community and Parish Priest, together with Fr Luigi Sergio Chesini. Raja was handed over on 6 January, 2015.

Activities: beside the Parish of Raja there were communities with Catechist leaders in Mangayat, Beluko, Khor Abuna, Deim Jalab, Ges Boro, Kurvaya, Kata, Boro and Medina. In five of these centres there were kindergartens maintained by the Parish. On Sundays, the Eucharist was celebrated in the main church, and in Khor Abuna. Sometimes one of the Fathers celebrated Mass in one of the centres outside. Once a week there was Mass in the UNMISS camp for the Kenyan catholic soldiers, who also attended the mass on Sunday in the Parish.

The School: in the 90s, the Parish managed to open a boys' basic school, a girls' basic school and a senior secondary. The secondary was closed in 2011 as it was difficult to get proper staff; the girls' school was unified with that of the boys, for the same reason. A nursery school for children was integrated into the basic school. All together there were about 600 students, roughly half girls, half boys. To get good stable teachers remained a problem. As P. 7 and P. 8 were still following the Arabic pattern, there were few teachers seconded to the school by the Government. People were speaking Arabic, but English was coming up and the teaching in schools was already English up to and including class six.

Dispensary: the Parish was running a dispensary until the town was recaptured from the SPLA in 2002. In recent years some medicines were given out by the confreres, especially for epilepsy and asthma. Epilepsy was very common and more than 500 cases were treated with drugs. The idea was to stop this service at the end of 2011 and give full responsibility to the government, which had already been contacted for this.

Priorities: the first priority was the family: the fact that people were taking the *status quo* as the norm indicated the need for formation at all levels. The Catechists were few, there were no candidates, and leaders in general were also in need of a more solid formation. The youth, as well, were in need of deeper formation, while the Christian communities needed to be strengthened with mature committed members. Beside all this, some income-generating projects were also to be followed up.

CHAPTER NINE

INSTITUTIONS - SECRETARIATS

Provincial Institutions

“Opere”⁴⁷³ of the South Sudan Province

In the Province there were three initiatives/undertakings which started gradually and then became big commitments and the Provincial Council had to decide what to do with them and how to assure continuity, both in finance and personnel. These undertakings were *Mary Immaculate Hospital* of Mapuordit, *St Martin Workshop* of Lomin and the *Comboni Vocational Training Centre (VTC)* of Leer. After much discernment in the Provincial Assemblies and in the Provincial Councils, they were taken up as *Provincial Institutions* to be supported by the Province.

In 2013, Bro Daniele Giusti,⁴⁷⁴ from the General Administration, was sent to make a proper assessment and report. He called these commitments *Opere* because of their particular status.

Mary Immaculate Hospital, Mapuordit: Mapuordit hospital was founded through the hard work and commitment of Bro Dr Iannetti, Surgeon and Director, Bro Alberto Lamana Cónsola, at technical, logistical and administrative level, and of Bro Damiano Mascalzoni who arrived at the end of 2004. It developed with the assignment of other Brothers like Bro António Manuel Nunes Ferreira and Bro Andrés Gaspar Abarca.

In 2005 the Paediatric Ward, the Medical Ward, the Maternity Ward and the Laboratory were built in permanent structures with the help of *Italian Cooperation*, for a total of 80 beds. Between 2007 and 2010, a boarding school with two dormitories for a total of 48 nurses was built and in 2008

⁴⁷³ The word “opera” in the Italian language and in this context seems to be more suitable than other words to define the idea of a permanently established institution delivering services to the human person out of the concern for integral human development stemming from Christian anthropology. Equivalents, but not so synthetically valuable, would be definition such as “social work” or “social endeavour/enterprise”.... For this reason this assessment will use the Italian word “opera” when referring indistinctly to any of the three endeavours assessed.

⁴⁷⁴ Bro Daniele Giusti, assessment of 3 mcej “Opere” Namely: Bro Rosario Iannetti for MI Hospital – Mapuordit, Bro Erich Fischnaller for St Martin Workshop – Lomin and Bro Nicola Bortoli for St Daniel Comboni VTC – Leer.

an Eye Clinic with one permanent clinical officer. Periodically, doctors from abroad were performing cataract operations. An HIV/AIDS clinic was sponsored by WHO (World Health Organization) for HIV patients in 2010.

From 2010 until 2015 the hospital expanded, adding a Pharmacy, an X-Ray Unit, an Isolation Ward, a Permanent Surgical Ward and a Septic Surgical Ward, it enlarged the *Medical Ward* and the *Maternity Ward*, bringing the total number of beds to the present capacity of 115.⁴⁷⁵

The confreres involved in Mary Immaculate Hospital from 2011 to 2016 were Bro Dr Rosario Iannetti, surgeon and director, and Bro Andres Gaspar Abarca, anaesthetist; in 2014, Bro Dr Romero Arias Hernan, doctor/surgeon, joined them together with Bro Patrick Lumami Mwanza, a qualified nurse; lastly, in 2016, Bro Dr Paolo Rizzetto arrived and took over the hospital from Bro Dr Iannetti as director.

Since 2009 Mary Immaculate Hospital of Mapuordit was run by the Comboni Missionaries with a *Memorandum of Understanding* with the Diocese of Rumbek from February 2009 to January 2014. In 2013, Bro Daniele Giusti was sent by the General Administration for an overall assessment of the three MCCJ “Opere” in South Sudan, which included Mapuordit hospital, as well. An evaluation and suggestions were given on the issue. The above-mentioned memorandum with the Diocese of Rumbek regarding the Mary Immaculate Hospital of Mapuordit was renewed again from 2015 to 2020, with the institution of the Board of Governors (BoG).

On 24 November, 2016, Bro Dr Iannetti was transferred to Wau, while Bro Dr Paolo Rizzetto had already taken it over as doctor and director on 1 July, 2016.

St Martin Workshop, Lomin started with the assignment to South Sudan of Bro Erich Fischnaller in 2005 for the construction of the College and other requested buildings in the Parish. While doing so, Bro Fischnaller conceived a multifunctional workshop which he would call “St Martin Workshop”. After discernment by the Province⁴⁷⁶ and the local community, he obtained the permission to acquire the land for its construction in the name of the Comboni Missionaries.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ Nigrizia, 2013, vocazione e l’impegno di un medico missionario / **La corsia di Rosario**, *Efrem Tresoldi*, dicembre, p. 62

⁴⁷⁶ Provincial Council 1/2005, Nairobi, 30 Jan.-4 Feb., approval of the project of building a carpentry workshop. FSSPJ.

⁴⁷⁷ 29 June 2005, Land agreement, between the Comboni Missionaries of South Sudan Province (leaseholder) and Kajo-Kaji County Administrator (land owner), signed 27 July, 2005. FSSPJ.

In 2005, the workshop developed welding and brick making, a necessary complement to the mainstream activity, and then a carpentry. Since the activity and the production increased beyond internal needs, they became three separate units: Carpentry, Welding and Brick-making.

With the visit to Lomin of a lady volunteer from Austria, Mrs. Eva Hoenle, in 2006, the idea of introducing the weaving component, aimed at the development of women's skills, came about. At the start, she did it in one of the rooms of the workshop but, later on, a building was added to the existing St Martin Workshop. The Women's Workshop was called *Lady Lomin* and started in October 2008.⁴⁷⁸

In 2008, with extra land available, an agriculture section was added and besides gardening, a small bakery was also established. Since the workshop was attracting many visitors and becoming a burden to the Comboni community, a visitors' house was constructed.

All this was aimed at increasing people's skills and the development of the place and Bro Fischnaller placed his skills at the service of the environment (people, community, institutions...). When Bro Daniele Giusti carried out his assessment of the "Opera", St Martin Workshop continued expanding its activity. After Bro Giusti's assessment, Bro Pierre Fafa Ayih Teko was assigned to "St Martin Workshop" to collaborate with Bro Fischnaller. They carried on implementing the directives given by the assessment and those coming from the Directory of the South Sudan Province, until the present year 2017.

All the initiatives in the field of human promotion and social development were considered an integral part of evangelization. In fact, this specific field, in the context of evangelization, is carried out by the ministry of the Comboni Brothers. Unfortunately, as already mentioned before, the present situation of insecurity in the area affected deeply also the normal running of St Martin Workshop and, finally, it had to be abandoned when people fled to Uganda, a great loss for the professional preparation of skilful workers so needed in South Sudan.

St Daniel Comboni Vocation Training Centre, Leer: the beginning of Leer VTC dates to early 2006 when the community of Nyal conceived the idea of establishing a Vocational Training School in the new seat of the community (i.e. Leer, where the PC had decided the new community should be established). Having presented the idea to the Provincial Council

⁴⁷⁸ Lady Lomin, waving workshop, <http://www.ladylomin.org/en/welcome>

and obtained permission to proceed, two plots of land were purchased in Leer in July, 2007, in the name of the Comboni Missionaries.⁴⁷⁹

The purpose of vocational training was to provide the most needed skills like agriculture, metalwork, carpentry and others as required. Agricultural skills, however, appeared to be the most necessary according to the local community's understanding. In early 2009 the plot of land for the VTC was fenced off and one semi-permanent building was built.

In April 2009, Bro Nicola Bortoli started the school with a first intake of 10 students, with the support of teachers drawn from VSF Swiss (Kenyans, on a temporary basis), one local teacher from Leer, two Ugandan teachers already present in Leer (on a part time basis) and one Comboni Sister. Of the 10 original students, 7 left as soon as they realized that the school was not considered a secondary level institution.

In November 2009 Bro Hans Dieter Ritterbecks joined the community as Administrator of the VTC. In the meantime, Bro Bortoli was appointed a member of a Ministerial Committee for the harmonization of Vocational Training Curricula and Entry Requirements at the Ministry of Labour, to which the VTC was subject.

In 2010, the syllabus prepared by the team of Leer VTC for agriculture became the national curriculum. The entry level was fixed at P8. The training provided by Leer VTC received certification from the Ministry of Labour. In the same year the second group of 9 self-sponsored students, aware that they were joining a VTC, entered, while the first group of 3 students completed their training and received a Ministry-endorsed Certificate. It was a small number but to receive the certificates from the Ministry of Labour was a great event that encouraged other students to join.

Since its initial proposal and approval in 2006 by the Provincial and his Council, the community of Leer never considered the VTC to be just a *community affair* because of the matter of personnel and continuity but, due to several unclear reasons and understandings, the matter dragged on until it had to be presented to the discernment of the Provincial Assembly in 2010 and discussed.

At the Provincial Assembly, 2011, the issue of the VTC was presented again to the entire Assembly for a final evaluation and the Provincial Council of April, 2011, adopted Leer VTC as a *Provincial Institution*.

⁴⁷⁹ 3 July, 2007, Polytechnic School and Agriculture School Field, Comboni Missionaries Leer, Diocese of Malakal, Guttuong place, Franco Duoth Diew, Commissioner of Leer County, Unity State, South Sudan. FSSPJ.

UNICEF (DDR Program)⁴⁸⁰ jointly with VSF Swiss, in 2011, had already financed the school fees of students, boosting attendance, but not the motivations. Courses became cohorts of 15-20 people, almost all VSF sponsored students, continuing in 2012 and then stopped for lack of funds.

In January 2012 the Provincial Council approved a document referred to as "A Six-year year Business Plan" submitted by the Leer VTC Team with a first evaluation at the end of 2013. It appears that also the School Charter, drafted by the Leer Team, at the request of the PC, was seen and approved at the Provincial Council meeting of April.⁴⁸¹ In 2012, twenty more sponsored students entered the school under VSF Swiss sponsorship. The construction of additional buildings to extend the capacity of the school and introduce metalwork (welding and mechanic engineering) training went ahead.

It was decided to add also a computer training to the existing agricultural course and the computers were acquired with the sponsorship of benefactors and arrived soon in Leer. At the same time, also Bro Pierre Fafa Ayih Teko, newly assigned to the community of Leer for the VTC, and an expert in computers, arrived. Within December 2013 the computers were already operational. The computers were to give complementary computer training to the existing streams and be available for the addition of a secretarial training stream for girls,⁴⁸² to get under way in 2014.

In 2013, seven new students joined the VTC for the agriculture stream and the construction of an extension to host a metalwork stream was completed with intake to be started in 2014. In 2013, Bro Daniele Giusti completed also the assessment of the VTC,⁴⁸³ to be of help for an immediate better planning for 2014 and for the future. Unfortunately, the country was plunged into a bitter civil war triggered by the Nuer massacre of civilians in Juba in December 2013, Leer was attacked and destroyed, the members of the community of Leer had to evacuate and the VTC remained closed ever since: it was a terrible education loss for the Nuer young people.

⁴⁸⁰ DDR: Child Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program in South Sudan. <http://www.ssddrc.org/ddr-in-south-sudan/child-ddr.html>

⁴⁸¹ PC Meeting January 2012 - min 7.7 and PC Meeting April 2012 - min 10.6. FSSPJ

⁴⁸² It would appear that this was an already made decision reached in 2012. It was not clear, though, if this decision had received the approval of the PC.

⁴⁸³ Ref. Rome, October 2013, Bro Daniele Giusti, mcej. Report: St Daniel Comboni Vocational Training Centre Leer, Towards an improved organizational sustainability, assessment of selected MCCJ related social organizations in the MCCJ South Sudan Province, pp. 15-24. FSSPJ.

The Provincial Secretariats

The Secretariats have always been very important instruments in the life of the Province but, in the situation of South Sudan with its emergencies and obstacles to systematic planning, their effectiveness was sometimes lacking. Frequently they were overruled by higher decisions without proper consultation. However, they have been always an important point of reference for reflection and implementation of decisions taken and the confreres making up each Secretariat always tried their best to achieve the purpose for which they were assigned.

During the time of office of Fr Daniele Moschetti a deeper reorganisation of the Secretariats was carried out in order to allow them to deliver their service in a better way and be of real help to the Provincial Council in their specific fields of action of *Evangelization*, *Vocation Ministry* and *Basic Formation*, *On-Going Formation* and *Finance*.

The Secretariat of Evangelization and Animation, at the time of Fr Perina, was the leading Secretariat because it had to serve the very purpose of Mission in the context of South Sudan. The office of Missionary Animation and the office of On-Going Formation were joined together.

The Secretariat of Evangelization had to work hard to prepare the content of the Annual Assemblies, prioritise the topics, find the people capable of giving valuable inputs and have an overall view of the evolving situation within the country and the needs of evangelization, taking into account the reflections and the proposals of the confreres during the previous Assemblies, as well.

The *ratio missionis* was the most important topic during Fr Perina's term of office and helped the reflection on issues directly connected to the pastoral and missionary work in the communities. The Secretariat was relevant for the inputs to the Six-Year Plan and other themes aimed at raising awareness on *Mission*. On-going formation was also linked to it since it had to serve the evangelization purpose.

JPIC, too, was under the umbrella of this Secretariat, though dealt with by its specific sector, but no full-time confrere was appointed to this office yet. The *World Social Forum* (WSF), which is the largest gathering of civil society to find solutions to the problems of our time and that started in Brazil in 2001, was getting new interest. Starting with *the WSF in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2007*, a couple of confreres were sent every year to attend in it, wherever in the world it was held.

The Secretariat of Evangelization during Fr. Moschetti's time carried out a very intense work. The confreres in charge during those six years were Fr Markus Lorenz Körber (2011-2015) and Fr Gregor Schmidt Bog-Dong (since 2016). The Secretariat produced good results in the various sectors of evangelization through several workshops in the sectors of *family, culture, pastoralists, and education*, within the Province of South Sudan and also at APDESAN level.

In 2011, *the Charter of Evangelization* was elaborated and approved, the *Symposium* entitled *one Church from every tribe, tongue and people*, was organised, a workshop *on Pastoralists* in 2012, another on *Reconciliation* (South Sudan) in Comboni House in 2013, in the same year another initiative was the starting for January 2014 of a *Nuer-English-Nuer dictionary* involving Nuer people (dropped because of war). Again at APDESAM level a workshop *on pastoralists (Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan)*, another *on Family Life and Human Growth in South Sudan* in 2015 and one on *Education and Evangelization* were held in April, 2016.

The Comboni Lay Missionaries' issue was very important and also a very difficult one throughout the time of the South Sudan Province. The matter was followed up especially by Bro Rosario Iannetti, both for the Province but also in relation to Mary Immaculate Hospital. However, plans were never really implemented, except with Paul and Agnes (a Polish couple) who got involved in Juba with SCRNs and USRATUNA in the years 2009-2010. There was Matteo Perotti, who had served in Wau since April, 2011, but was considered a *lay volunteer* rather than *CLM*, and so all the other people who came to give a service for a period of time. It seems the South Sudan Province still needs more time to resolve this issue.

The Office of On-Going formation, during Fr. Moschetti's time, was put under the Secretariat of Evangelization and had the important task of helping the confreres to continue fulfilling their vocation as missionaries in need of support in their spiritual and practical difficulties while carrying out the missionary ministry in the different situations.

Pertinent to this Secretariat were the themes of the Assemblies, the Retreats (at personal/Provincial level), the meeting of young and experienced confreres, and others according to the context of mission and the particular situations the Church, the Dioceses and the country were going through. Regarding the meetings of young confreres, after the negative comments which followed *Entebbe 2007*, some uneasiness was felt because of some excesses and the participation was poor.

The Office of On-Going Formation took care to revitalize the meeting of *young confreres* and *experienced confreres* with good fruits of reflection at missionary and spiritual level. On-Going Formation (OGF) at Province level did a lot but, at personal level, it remained questionable even though the invitation was to take personal on-going formation seriously. A good effort was put into fostering a better preparation of confreres in key sectors through specific specialization.

All the communities carried on updating their community charter and, in his visits, the Provincial confirmed that confreres were faithful to their community commitments, the annual retreat, the recollection day, weekly and daily schedule. The material proposed by the General Administration and OGF Office in Rome was regularly circulated by email. Newcomers were given the opportunity of learning the local language in the mission where they were serving. There was great collaboration between ongoing formation service and the Secretary of Evangelization, especially in organizing the important yearly workshop.

Fr Moschetti was taking care of the OGF in the Province in collaboration with Fr Salvatore Pacifico who was regularly emailing reflections, articles and other interesting documents and informs about retreats available for the confreres. He was sending to the communities, books, magazines, reflections and other material. The Provincial newsletter SSCOMBONI@NEWS is regularly produced every three months with relevant contributions of confreres for OGF.

Further studies and specializations were carried out during the six years and several confreres benefited from them. **Bro Antonio Nunes** with a Masters in community health for the duration of one year and a half in Viseu (Portugal). **Fr Phillip Andrug**a with a licence in spirituality for formators for two years at the Gregorian University, Rome. **Fr Salomon Badatana Agnata** with a course of two years in Arabic language in Dar Comboni of Cairo in Egypt. **Bro Jacek Andrzej Pomykacz** with a short course in Rome, at the General Administration, and other planned short courses in Nairobi or where possible in the area of finance. **Fr Paul Idra, having returned** in July, 2016 from the Comboni Year in Rome, was now in Kampala for a *Master's* to prepare for Mission Animation and Vocation Promotion.

From 2011 to 2017 the South Sudan Province took care of quite a number of **Comboni Publications** on the previously mentioned topics related to evangelization, history, culture and spirituality, as follow ups of the workshops, a valuable heritage to confreres and mission.

The Secretariat of Finance holds a necessary and very important place in the life of the Province and in the daily life of our mission and confreres. During this Administration, the most important work was to get the *Total Common Fund* working properly by tackling its overall implications in the *mission approach* and in its administration.

The training of Provincial Treasurers was a big issue. Without mentioning Fr Girardi of the previous administration, in the present six years period, there were four different Provincial Treasurers: Bro Fayad, Bro Ritterbecks, Fr Modonesi and Bro Nunes. Besides the problem of competence, there was also that of how to *integrate the model of the Total Common Fund* in the concrete reality of the mission, so that its community spirit could become *a new way of doing mission*, also in the financial field, bringing confreres to a deeper responsibility in this regard.

Finally, knowing that not all confreres were born professional accountants, a very important issue was the preparation and competence of the community treasurers to work out their responsibilities properly.

The Six-Year Plan stated that *the Province was committed to the Total Common Fund system*, and that the choice for the TCF *was confirmed with the commitment to improve the ways of implementing it*, and the taking care of the *Formation of Local Bursars, of income-generating projects, of evaluating the real estate of properties, land law and fund-raising*.

A final document for implementing the TCF was sent by the General Bursar as a working guideline. It was approved in November, 2012, and signed in December with the hope that it may help in implementing the TCF in the Province. There were annual meetings of bursars which were basically intended for presenting reports of the community accounts and budgets, but there were also moments of on-going formation for the Local Bursars. The constant fluctuation or change of community bursars affected the implementation of their formation.

Some *income-generating projects* were among the actual properties of the Province and, regarding the issue of *fundraising*, it was observed that it is necessary to do more to support the TCF.⁴⁸⁴ Furthermore, the intense work of the Procure, run by Bro Giuseppe Redaelli, was offering logistic support and keeping the link with the confreres and their needs in the different places of the Comboni presence. It had to follow up all the administrative and immigration issues of permits and other matters. The work is remarkable, considering the difficulties which the country has encountered in the past three years.

⁴⁸⁴ Minutes of the Provincial Assembly, Juba 15-19 January, 2013, Finances, p. 16. FSSPJ.

The Secretariat of Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation was the one that had to work much more in the practical field since the confreres in charge had to deal directly with Church institutions, Parishes, Schools and Youth. It was their work that assured continuity in the area of Basic Formation. The Aspirants interested in the Comboni missionary life were in direct contact with the confreres of this Secretariat.

It has to be said, as well, that *Vocation Ministry* and *Basic Formation* were dealing with very *sensitive issues* like *the methodology* used in carrying out their task in a very poor and needy environment caused by war and displacement. The outcome of this work depended very much on the character of the persons and the approaches they were using.

In this area, there was a lot of work done at the individual level by the Vocation Promoters, but what was possibly lacking were a Secretariat of Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation able to formulate a proper journey of preparation for the Aspirants before the Postulancy. Then, there was the unease concerning joint formation with the Province of Kenya and the subsequent weakness of the new Postulancy of *Bomas* (Nairobi) and the matter of the formation of the Brother candidates in Entebbe (Uganda).

The free access to further education given to the students for Brotherhood resulted in their seeing this as their first priority; their claimed vocation was just a means to this end. The impossibility of managing all these issues, then, led to the suspension of the Vocation Promotion activities in 2007. In 2008, the Provincial Council, at the invitation of the General Assembly, resumed the Ministry of Vocation Promotion.⁴⁸⁵ The communities were invited to take up the issue but it was not enough to assure an adequate vocational journey for possible candidates.

After the forced break of 2008, Vocation Ministry was restarted in 2011 with Fr Louis Okot Ochermoi Tony its secretary. Fr Louis Okot was appointed as a full time person in charge of Vocation Ministry and responsible for the students entering the Pre-Postulancy.

The Revival of the Vocation promotion team in the Archdiocese of Juba started at the beginning of the year 2012. Sixteen Religious Congregations, together with Diocesan Representative, revived the Vocation Promotion Team of the Archdiocese of Juba. As a result of these combined vocations meetings, four young men applied to join the Comboni Institute. The progress of Vocation Ministry could be seen every year with the dedication

⁴⁸⁵ Provincial Council, 1/2008, 13-16 February, no. 5, Resuming the ministry of vocation promotion. FSSPJ.

of the Vocation Promoter, Fr Luis Okot and Fr Salvatore Pacifico, helped by the confreres and Sisters of the Lomin communities.

Finally, the Provincial Council decided to merge the *Secretariat of Mission Animation* with that of *Vocation Promotion/Formation*. Fr Paul Idrá was asked to be full-time in charge of Missionary Animation and Vocation Promotion after a *Master's Degree* in Uganda to prepare for that. Meanwhile, a piece of land was purchased in Moroyok area, in the outskirts of Juba, for the new Pre-Postulancy and Bro Yohann (Hans) Eigner was asked to oversee its construction.

The Pre-Postulancy and Postulancy: in 2005, during the time of Fr Bosco Sule Mawa, the South Sudan Province decided to have its own Postulancy in Nairobi. A house was purchased for it in Bomás, Kenya in Kemisa Road, Nairobi⁴⁸⁶ though the students were going to the same "Consolata Philosophical Seminary" for their studies. Bro Fabris and Bro Ritterbecks were given the task of adapting it to the purpose.

During this time the Province had also taken steps with the Province of Khartoum to improve collaboration between the two Provinces and one of the agreements was to send some new Postulants to the Postulancy of Khartoum.⁴⁸⁷ In this way the South Sudan Province had a newly-opened Postulancy in Nairobi with its students divided between Nairobi and Khartoum. Moreover, the candidates for Brotherhood, who needed a different curriculum of studies and a profession, were gathered in a rented structure in Entebbe, Uganda, where they could attend the university or other third-level studies, before joining the Postulancy.

The situation became difficult, for both the Pre-Postulancy (with Pre-Postulants for the Priesthood and for the Brotherhood) and the Postulancy. Fr Mawa decided to leave the Comboni Missionaries and in March, 2008, the General Administration asked the Province to end the experiment of the Pre-Postulancy and to close the Postulancy.⁴⁸⁸

In 2010, Fr Luis Okot Tony Ochermoi was given the task of coordinating the activities of Vocation Promotion⁴⁸⁹ with the intention of reopening the Postulancy soon. However, the real reopening came with the next Provincial Administration with Fr Luis who, when appointed

⁴⁸⁶ Provincial Council 2/2005, 25-31 May, 2005. FSSPJ.

⁴⁸⁷ Provincial Council 3/2005, 16-20 September. FSSPJ.

⁴⁸⁸ Provincial Council 2/2008, 13-15 May, (General Direction on 27 March 2008) no. 4/e. FSSPJ.

⁴⁸⁹ Provincial Council 2/2010, 23-25 June, no. 7. Formator and reopening the Postulancy. FSSPJ.

Secretary of Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation, took particular care to create a sound foundation for a fresh start.

The Pre-Postulancy was opened in Lomin, Kajo-Kaji, on a temporary basis, in April, 2013, waiting for a permanent solution. The formative community was composed of two Priests, Fr Salvatore Pacifico and Fr Louis Okot.⁴⁹⁰ Fr Phillip Andruga and Fr Victor Kouande were, as well, helping with catechesis.

Fr Barnaba Deng Formation House, Moroyok and the Postulancy

The Pre-Postulancy *Fr Barnaba Deng Formation House, Moroyok*, was inaugurated on Saturday 2 May, 2015, by the Archbishop of Juba, H. G. Paolino Lukudu Loro,⁴⁹¹ in the presence of Fr Tesfaye Tadesse from the General Council and Fr Moschetti, the Provincial Superior.

Fr Okot carried on as the person in charge of formation, together with Fr Emmanuel Denima Darama and Fr Salvatore Pacifico. Fr Hector Ayon was also assigned to the Moroyok community, but his health had deteriorated and he died beforehand. Fr Fernando Colombo was assigned there, as well, and remained until 2015. Fr Joseph Ukelo, at a later stage, joined the community of the Pre-Postulancy in Moroyok bringing his contribution as one of the *South Sudanese Comboni elders*.

At the election of Fr Louis Okot as Provincial Superior to start on 1 January, 2017, Fr Christian Carlassare was asked to replace him and moved to Moroyok on 22 October, 2016. Once Fr Louis Okot left, he became the person in charge of the Pre-Postulancy and, for the time being, of Vocation Promotion as well. Out of the great efforts made in Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation from 1999 to 2011, Fr Phillip Kenyi Andruga who was the only ordained Priest on 20 November, 2011, now became the new co-formator in Nairobi Postulancy.

Now, in October, 2017, there are 12 Pre-Postulants, 11 Postulants (9 for Priesthood and 2 for Brotherhood) and 1 Novice in Lusaka (Zambia).

⁴⁹⁰ Minutes of the Provincial Assembly, Juba 15-19 January, 2013, Formation and Vocation Promotion, p. 15-16. FSSPJ.

- Ibid. Secretariat of Vocation Promotion, January, 2013, p. 44-47.

⁴⁹¹ CNR, Fri, 1 May, 2015. Archbishop Lukudu inaugurates Comboni Postulants' House in Juba. <http://catholicradionetwork.org/?q=node/17566>

- Comboni Missionaries mark the 50th anniversary of Fr Barnaba Deng's martyrdom. <http://www.combonisouthsudan.org/index.php/1389-comboni-missionaries-mark-the-50th-anniversary-of-fr-barnaba-dengs-martyrdom>

The joint Postulancy (2013-2017): after the short experience of collaboration with the Province of Khartoum, at the independence of South Sudan, the Postulancy continued in collaboration with Kenya. Fr Aranda Nava was appointed as co-formator for the South Sudan Province and continued until 2016, when Fr Phillip Kenyi Andruga, after a two year course for formators in Rome, was appointed as a new co-formator of the Postulancy in Nairobi, thus leaving Fr Aranda Nava free.

On 10 October, 2015, the newly constructed joint Kenya-South Sudan Postulancy of Ongata Rongai, in Kenya, was inaugurated by Mgr Dominic Kimengich, Bishop of Lodwar Diocese. Fr Victor Kouande, Vice Provincial, attended the good and colourful celebration with many guests. The Province participated financially in its construction mostly with the proceeds of the sale of the house of *Mary Stella* of Mombasa.

The RSASS Association:

***Religious Superiors Association of South Sudan*⁴⁹²**

It is a relatively young association since it was started officially in 2013. At the beginning of the 80s, as we have already seen previously, the RSAS, *Religious Superiors Association of Sudan (only men)*,⁴⁹³ started in Khartoum for the whole Sudan and met for the first time on 22 July, 1982. Towards the end of the 80s, the war in the South intensified and RSAS could continue only in the North.

In 2013, a request to register RSASS was presented and the statutes were sent to the Vatican through the former Apostolic Nuncio of Sudan, Archbishop Leo Boccardi, but there was no answer. The issue was referred again to the present Nuncio of Kenya and South Sudan, Archbishop Charles Daniel Balvo, to retrieve the request of RSASS from the Vatican for the official registration of the Association, which was done.

At present, the total Number of Religious Congregations in South Sudan are 46, the *International Congregations* 39, the *Local Congregations* 7, Men Religious Congregations 13, Women Religious Congregations 32. *Solidarity with South Sudan* is counted as one group but includes members from 18 different Religious Congregations, mainly not present with their

⁴⁹² Juba, 30 April 2016, report of the chairperson and executive of “Religious Superiors Association of South Sudan” (RSASS), to the 4th General Assembly, 2016. FSSPJ.

⁴⁹³ First meeting of the representatives of the male missionary societies (RSAS) working in the Sudan, Khartoum 22-24 July, 1982. ACR 606/3.

- Ibid. Front Page. By this time, the Women’s Religious Institutes were not yet organised.

personnel and communities in South Sudan; they total 32 members, 12 men and 20 women.

A huge initiative of the RSASS was the *Good Shepherd Peace Centre* in Kit, for *human, pastoral, and spiritual formation, peace-building and trauma healing*. It was built by the Comboni Brother, Yohann (Hans) Eigner and inaugurated on 15 October, 2016.

The Catholic University of South Sudan

It was started in Juba by Fr Michael Schultheis SJ. Not having proper premises, the South Sudan Province was asked to lend the premises of the former Postulancy for this purpose. It was accepted and, from 2011, the University programme began. Bernhard Hengl, who arrived in April, 2012, with the task of fundraiser of the SCBC and project manager, was taking care of the whole building plan.

Bro Jorge Arturo Rodríguez Fayad was a lecturer and its Administrator until his assignment to Uganda in 2014. Fr Guido Oliana was also teaching there as an occasional lecturer. At present, the Catholic University is in its own premises carrying on with the important service of third level education under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Fr Dr Matthew Pagan.

Good and sad events: among the good events of Fr. Moschetti's Administration there was the birth of the New Republic of South Sudan on 9 July, 2011, the 54th African State, the ordination to the Priesthood of Fr Phillip Kenyi Andruga on 20 November, 2011, and now co-formator in Nairobi Postulancy. The sad events, instead, were the death of Fr Hector Ayon Oyamute, Juba, 28 June, 2015, (age 71) and of Fr Albino Adot Oryem in Lacor/Uganda on 11 February, 2016, (age 59).

CHAPTER TEN

THE SOUTH SUDAN CIRCUMSCRIPTION From 2017 to 2019 Provincial Superior: Fr LOUIS OKOT OCHEMOY TONY

2017, the Provincial and his Council

In the session of the General Consulta of 10 October, 2016, Fr Louis Okot Ochermoi Tony ⁴⁹⁴ was appointed Provincial Superior of the Province of South Sudan for three years, starting on 1 January, 2017.

The Councillors⁴⁹⁵ making up the Provincial Council were duly elected and the result of the vote, dated 5 November, 2016, was: Fr Christian Carlassare, who was elected Vice-Provincial,⁴⁹⁶ Fr Paolino Tipo Deng, Bro Jacek Andrzej Pomykacz, and Fr Fernando González Galarza.



⁴⁹⁴ Fr Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, Mccj, Superior General, Rome, 15 October, 2016, appointment of Fr Louis Okot Tony Ochermoi Provincial Superior of South Sudan, to start his term of office as from 1 January, 2017. FSSPJ.

⁴⁹⁵ South Sudan Province, Nairobi, 5 November, 2016, result of the vote for Councillors, Bro Jacek Andrzej Pomykacz, Fr Paolino Tipo Deng, Fr Christian Carlassare, Fr Fernando González Galarza.

⁴⁹⁶ Fr Umberto Pescantini, Secretary Gen., Rome, 5 February, 2017, "*The Superior General (Fr Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie) confirms Fr Christian Carlassare as Vice-Provincial of South Sudan till 31 December, 2019.*"

Fr Louis Okot and his four Councillors are leading the Province of South Sudan during these three years. He is the second South Sudanese Provincial Superior after Fr Abel Francis Mödi Nyörkö, who led the Province from 1990 to 1994, in what probably was the most difficult time in the history of the Circumscription from 1980 onwards. Fr Louis Okot is also taking up this post at a difficult time when the Republic of South Sudan is in turmoil after the shocking events of Juba in December, 2013.

Having gone through so many difficult historical events in the history of Sudan and South Sudan, we can only wish that Fr Okot and his Council and their leadership, may contribute through a message of mercy, love and reconciliation to reach *every tribe and tongue and people* in the Republic of South Sudan and also to build up together the *nation* in peace as the Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) affirmed while addressing the people of the new Republic soon after independence was achieved, so that all people may be *One Nation*.⁴⁹⁷ However, this present time may have another harder connotation expressed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) in their Pastoral Message as Pastors who are like *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*.

In this situation where people experience the harsh reality of being let down and abandoned by the political leaders and the Government, the message of encouragement of the Bishops is: *"We wish to give you (people) hope that you are not abandoned and that we are working to resolve the situation at many different levels."*⁴⁹⁸ Fr Louis Okot and his Council surely have the same path to follow in order to encourage the confreres and the people of God with a message of hope.

This Provincial Administration is taking up its task on the 150th anniversary of the birth of the "Comboni Institute" founded by St Daniel Comboni in Verona, Italy, on 1 June, 1867, with the name of *College of the African Missions*.⁴⁹⁹ This is another good reason to wish Fr Okot and his Council a *fresh start* with the same spirit of the Founder.

⁴⁹⁷ Ref. Sudan Catholic Bishop conference (SCBC) meeting in plenary session in Juba from 6 to 8 September, 2011, **One Nation**, Statement addressed to the people of South Sudan. One Church from every Tribe, Tongue, and People. Juba, 8 September, 2011, op. cit.

⁴⁹⁸ **"A voice cries in the wilderness"** pastoral message of the Catholic Bishops of South Sudan to the faithful and people of South Sudan. 24/02/2017. (Full text of the Message see Appendix, Part Two, Section Three, Chapter Three, point no. 1). http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/24/catholic_bishops_in_south_sudan_issue_pastoral_statement/1294691

⁴⁹⁹ - Writings, 1416, To CARDINAL ALESSANDRO BARNABÒ, N. 205 (193), *AP SC AFr C.*, 7, ff. 1118 and 1121, Verona, 11 June, 1867. "Eminent Prince, I have the

St. Daniel Comboni's belief that *Africa was to be saved by the African people themselves* is a very good reason for Fr Okot and the whole Province to call to mind all the beautiful examples of dedication of thousands of Comboni Confreres and Sisters. Their selfless dedication, in the furrow of this **Long Love Story** I am talking about, have offered their lives to Jesus Christ, **to proclaim his Good News** to many generations of Africans, especially in Sudan and South Sudan, to make Christ welcomed and followed even at the cost of martyrdom.

The election of a South Sudanese Provincial during this 150th anniversary celebration is certainly a sign of God which Fr Louis Okot should not forget, since it is the fulfilment of the very purpose of the Holy Founder, St Daniel Comboni and, at the same time, the continuation of that **Long Love Story** in a new way, all African and all South Sudanese.

The Provincial Assembly of 2017

Year 2017 started with the Provincial Assembly that took place in the Provincial House of Juba from Monday 16 to Friday 20 January. It was opened with the welcome of the Provincial Superior, Fr Louis Okot, followed by a half day of spiritual recollection led by Fr Pedro Tacuri.

The particular occasion of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Comboni Institute was clearly remembered and was the leitmotif behind the whole Assembly, so that the *spirit of our ancestors* in the missionary life should not be forgotten. Of course, the Province of South Sudan has good reason, more than any other Province, to celebrate this occasion in depth and enthusiastically since it was the very ground our Holy Founder walked upon (Holy Cross) and for whose people the Institute was founded.

The reports of Secretariats and Communities

The reports of Secretariats and Communities showed the intense work carried out and also displayed the difficulties they were encountering in

pleasure to announce to Your Most Reverend Eminence that the distinguished Mgr Canossa has opened a Seminary in Verona for our dear African missions, which in better times will be called the *Institute of the Good Shepherd for the Regeneration of Africa.*"

- Writings, 2331, To CARDINAL ALESSANDRO BARNABO, N. 366 (344)-*AP SC Afr C.*, v. 7 f. 1409v, W.J.M., The Seminary of Verona, 12 October, 1870. "Eminent Prince, following your wise counsel and your wishes, I have managed to establish the **College of the African Missions** in Verona in agreement with Mgr Canossa."

- Writings, 2575, 2576, 2609.

their different tasks in such a difficult time of insecurity and war in the country.

The Secretariat of Evangelization underlined its strong commitment throughout the year 2016. Particular attention was given to the positive results achieved, especially with the workshop on *Education and Mission* which saw the participation of a large number of participants from different Religious Congregations, Diocesan representatives and Government Education Authorities.

At the level of APDESAM (Assembly of the Provinces and Delegations of English-Speaking Africa and Mozambique) a workshop was organised on *Urban Ministry* in South Africa with a report and a request to take it up in the Six-Year Plan of the Province.

The Secretariat also included *Missionary Animation, JPIC and Ongoing Formation*. All gave their reports. For the Office of JPIC, Fr Raimundo Nonato Rocha made the Assembly aware of its growing importance in the mission field. A note of concern, however, indicated that the issue of *methodology* needed to be tackled in order not to adopt an NGO style of commitment, but truly foster evangelization as *the proclamation of the Gospel*.

A *Justice and Peace Manual* - in English and in various South Sudanese languages - was printed, presented and made available to all the Comboni Communities. The office of JPIC works in collaboration with the Archdiocesan JPIC Office and the manual was also made available to all the Parishes and the JPIC committees.

Within the undertakings of the JPIC Office there was the annual commitment to be present at the WSF (World Social Forum) as Comboni Missionaries and as the South Sudan Province in order to share in the worldwide social concern.

The reports of the communities pointed out the particularly difficult situation in which they find themselves working due to insecurity, fighting and the abuse of human rights of civilians and the exponential increase in the loss of life. The past year, 2015, witnessed a very grave situation of human rights' abuses all over the country but especially in the area of Unity State, in particular in the area from the southern part of the town of Bentiu up to Leer town, by government military forces and their militias who made all the civilians flee to swampy areas and to Payinjiar County.

The July 2016 events, with the fighting between government forces and the opposition, created a very grave situation in Juba town and spread to other towns to the west and south of Juba, greatly increasing the level of insecurity. In the town of Wau the same situation became quite acute to the

detriment of normal activities. In such conditions all activities, pastoral, educational and social, were disrupted and many people from the Equatorial States fled to the neighbouring countries of Uganda and Congo.

The deterioration of the rule of law and the persistence of impunity gave rise also to many indiscriminate actions of robbery and killing along the roads by criminals who did not hesitate to behave as if life had no value. Ethnic clashes were also on the rise together with clashes between clans destabilising the situation among ethnic groups and also within the same ethnic groups themselves. As a conclusion, the Communities found themselves working continually under this state of threat for themselves and their personnel, especially when in need of travelling to purchase what was necessary for their missionary, school and medical activities, thus hindering their commitments.

The visit of His Grace Paolino Lukudu Loro was planned for the first day of the Provincial Assembly with his shared speech and the celebration of the Eucharist and a social meal afterwards. However, due to a persistent attack of malaria, he conserved his strength so as to be present and share his thoughts on the last day. His sharing was informal and genuine, as Archbishop of Juba and as a Comboni Confrere: he welcomed all in the Assembly *as Confreres and Brothers*.

He congratulated the whole Assembly with many new Confreres and the new Provincial Council where Fr Louis Okot Ochermoi was the ***new South Sudanese Superior***. Of course, he could not fail to mention that the challenges in front of him would be many and that he should hold firm in carrying out his appointed task. In relation to the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Comboni Institute, the ***College of the African Missions***, by St Daniel Comboni in 1867, he affirmed that it is the task of the Comboni Missionaries, here and now, to continue the work of ***regeneration*** that Comboni, the Confreres and Sisters started and carried out in the past.

He emphasized the words of St Daniel Comboni: ***Save Africa through Africa***. He observed that this is a big challenge because of culture, tribalism and ethnic differences which are creating trouble today and that our human failures, our weaknesses, our health and age become challenges for our missions today. Nonetheless, ***while thanking all those who came before***, he continued by saying that, ***the mission is now in your hands***.

He mentioned the huge number of Sudanese refugees in Uganda complicating their lives, creating traumas and giving rise to discrimination and fear. He confirmed the difficulty the Church (including also other Churches) found to be heard and to create a situation conducive to stable

reconciliation and peace in the country and the Pope's strong desire to find a way leading to real peace in South Sudan for the good of all its citizens.

He mentioned the challenges related to the life of the Archdiocese and of the Catholic Church in South Sudan, especially the difficult situation created by the lack of Bishops at the head of several Dioceses and the fact that South Sudan depends on the Kenyan Apostolic Nunciature, too far from the concrete situation of the Church in the country.

Finally, the Archbishop called for the presence of more Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan because of their special *religious and missionary vocation*, two aspects which are much needed in the South Sudanese Church, because the *missionary element* of the religious vocation makes them open to face challenges which a normal religious society does not feel ready to face. However, he invited the whole assembly to be united and that the communities themselves be a sign of unity.

In relation to the Local Church, especially with Juba Archdiocese, Archbishop Paolino said: **“We shall go on together.”** Together we shall continue to pray for peace in South Sudan and disclosed how he first thought of becoming a Comboni Missionary, at the time of Mgr Silvestro Laharanya, and how by God's Providence he was accepted by the Institute to go to Italy in 1965 to start his Comboni formation, until he became a Comboni Missionary Priest.

The Six-Year Plan, 2017-2022

The most important issue dealt by the Provincial Assembly 2017 was the formulation of the Six-Year Plan in line with the Chapter Acts of the 2015 XVIII General Chapter entitled *Comboni Missionary Disciples called to live the joy of the Gospel in today's world*.

The reflection centred on four main topics: the **Mission**, the **Person**, the **Reorganization** and **Finances**. The topics were following the four operational indications of the Chapter Acts, from which the inspiration was taken, as the Chapter heading goes that *the Spirit calls us to dream and to be converted*⁵⁰⁰ in order to apply them to the reality of the South Sudan Mission planning for the coming six years.

Mission was the main topic that focused all the other realities of the Person (the confreres devoted to the mission), the Reorganization of commitments and the Finances, which are supposed to be at the service of

⁵⁰⁰ Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, XVIII General Chapter, Chapter Acts 2015, content, pp. 5; 17-21; 22-43.

the same Mission according to the Institute and the South Sudan Province directives for the present time and situation.

A team was set up to get a better text of the Six-Year Plan, while the Communities were given an opportunity to suggest revisions or make additions that may have been overlooked. The approval of the Provincial Council and finally of the General Council, possibly within other six or eight months before getting the approved final text to be implemented in the whole South Sudan Province.

The Mission:

“We dream of an Institute ‘that goes forth’ (EG, No. 20), being missionary pilgrims who walk with the poorest and most abandoned (RL, No. 5), who evangelize and are evangelized through personal and community sharing of joy and compassion, working together for a humanity which is reconciled with God, with creation and with others (EG, No. 74).⁵⁰¹”

The main point about Mission was to be aware that our presence in South Sudan as Comboni Missionaries finds its purpose in Evangelization, in places where the Church has not been founded or near to people that are marginalized in society. This is what inspires the Six-Year Plan and its priorities. It implies taking the former Evangelization Charter and revising it according to the new needs and priorities, keeping in mind the present trends of evangelization in Africa, and for South Sudan, in the area of APDESAM.⁵⁰²

Among the most widely considered priorities was the formation of Catechists, the strengthening of Small Christian Communities the need of to improve the teaching of the Church (e.g. Bible, catechism, etc.). In the area of human promotion in general, Education and Health Care are fields of evangelization to be fostered in all our missions. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) activities are to be considered as an integral part of our evangelizing work through creating communion, proposing reconciliation, offering trauma healing and being a voice for the voiceless.

The option was for a simple life-style so as to be close to the people we evangelize. The approach to be promoted in our Parishes and Christian Communities is that of helping them to become more self-reliant so as to

⁵⁰¹ Ibid no. 21, Mission.

⁵⁰² Ref. Report on the English Speaking Africa and Mozambique Circumscriptions (APDESAM) for the XVIII General Chapter, 2015.

create an Indigenous Church with the capacity to build itself up. The involvement of Lay People in the Mission was considered very important. One proposed starting point was the *Comboni Friends*. An important point which was brought up during the Assembly was *Urban Ministry*.

In reference to this issue, in the former Provincial Administration and Six-Year Plan, the community of Moroyok was started, together with the Formation Ministry. In Wau, also, Urban Ministry will certainly be needed, especially in tackling the challenge of tribalism and ethnic division since towns are meeting places for all South Sudanese People. Finally, the priority of *Youth* could not be ignored since the majority of the population of South Sudan is made up of young people of school age and beyond.

The Person: the first topic dealt by the Assembly was *Mission*. Mission, however, is not something abstract but a specific mandate from God: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? Here I am, send me!”⁵⁰³ It is a specific mandate of Jesus to “Go to into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”⁵⁰⁴

It is a specific person who is called by God, called and sent by Jesus and who is entrusted with the mission of proclaiming his Word, therefore, the Person is the most valuable entity in the process of proclamation, a person from within the Christian Community, the Church, called and sent for the Mission to the world.

It is clear that, without taking care of the Evangelizers, as Jesus took care of the Apostles,⁵⁰⁵ Mission would have no good result. In our present reality of Comboni Missionaries there are three aspects which are basic and cannot be left aside: Interculturality, Spirituality and Reading and Revisiting the Rule of Life.

In the process of the Six-Year Plan for the Province of South Sudan, what has been seen as very important was the introduction of new confreres to the concrete reality of Mission so that they may learn the local language and Colloquial Arabic if needed and be helped to get familiar with the culture and history of the country through the bi-annual introductory course organized by the Religious Societies, RSASS.

The Secretariat of Formation, and in particular the person in charge of On-Going Formation, will have to set programs for different interest groups, such as under 45, over 45 and Local Superiors, so that they may exercise their ministries to the best of their abilities. Year 2017 is to be

⁵⁰³ Isaia: 6:8

⁵⁰⁴ Gospel of Mk. 16:15. See also Mt. 28:19; Lk. 24:45-48; Jn. 20:21-23.

⁵⁰⁵ Mk. 3:13-19

dedicated to the reading of the Rule of Life together in each community, as a tool of on-going formation and the update of each Community Charter to be done in 2017 and every time the community members change. For specializations the Provincial Council is in charge of preparing a plan.

Great importance was given to collaboration with other Institutions, starting with the Comboni Missionary Sisters, other Religious and Diocesan Pastoral Agents and to having the Comboni Lay Missionaries working together with the MCCJ in South Sudan.

Reorganization compels people to look at the immense areas of South Sudan with no evangelizing presence of any Church institution, whether Diocesan, Religious or Missionary, to think of a reorganization which implies a reduction of personnel and commitments would really be an unforgivable resolution at missionary level.

Until now, the General Administration has maintained an attitude of understanding of the importance of giving priority of personnel for South Sudan and there is a real hope that it may not just fall under the **general rule** without a true and deep discernment. However, also in the South Sudan Province, the scale of priorities needs reorganization and to focus in the situations most in need without a dispersion of energy.

Another possibility is to carry on sharing provincial services with other APDESAM provinces and improving the service to the people by economizing structures in the areas of JPIC, Finance, Formation, Mission Animation and Mass Media.

Finances are a necessary factor in evangelization and the way they are administered and used can become a positive way of fostering evangelisation. The reflection of the Provincial Assembly went along these programmatic lines: to evangelize by living a simple and sober life-style; trusting in Providence and sharing resources with the people we evangelize, sensitizing them to participate actively with their own resources; to start all mission activity by building up the local community, and from this community's concern, to build structures to answer their needs. Solidarity within the Universal Church would then be a sign of unity and brotherhood.

In order to reach the above goal, it is the task of the Provincial Council to form a Financial Secretariat whose members are competent and qualified in different fields of administration to allow a proper evaluation of proposals in this area and advise the PC to take good decisions. The Provincial Bursar is to be responsible for animating the members of the Province in the spirit of the TCF and help them to raise funds for their projects approved by the PC.

The budget of each project should foresee a certain amount for administration which goes into the TCF for the support of the community where the project is implemented. Regarding the pending issues like the Provincial Properties, the Provincial Council and the administration office will settle them in order to make use of or generate income with them. The structures of the Provincial House also need to undergo a proper assessment in order to meet current needs.

Hope should prevail

Nonetheless, while expressing all the above wishes to the present Administration, the sad news of the grave security situation in Wau and Lomin Parish, Kajo-Kaji area, came to the frontline news. Fighting in Lomin obliged people and confreres to abandon the place and to flee to North Uganda. Everything of the previously mentioned realities and projects, the Parish, the Comprehensive College, St Martin workshop, the *Lady Lomin* workshop and everything else, long years of hard work and hopes, were destroyed in a moment, everything looted and pillaged.

In Wau the displacement of people and the security situation is very difficult. Mogok and other places are in a similar situation. While celebrating the 150th anniversary, Fr Louis Okot and his Council are still walking along the way of the Cross Comboni and the confreres walked during all those years that traced the *Long Love Story*.

Looking ahead with confidence

A LONG LOVE STORY found incidentally its convergent point in the present year 2017 marking the 160th anniversary of the first trip of our Founder St Daniel Comboni into the reality of Africa, a dream much stronger than the desire of *two fervent lovers for their wedding day*, and the 150th anniversary of the foundation of our Institute for Africa.

They are two dates of the same *LOVE STORY* that will not end this year but will continue unabated, in good and adverse situations of life, for the future generations of Comboni Missionaries who share in the dream of the *regeneration of Africa* through the Gospel of Jesus by preparing an immeasurable number of African People now ready to continue this challenging dream of *regeneration* within the African Continent and in the world. They themselves will then write the continuation of this *LONG LOVE STORY* always new as *Comboni Missionary Disciples called to live the joy of the Gospel in today's world*.

Conclusion

My work in writing ends here, but **A LONG LOVE STORY**, the *Comboni Mission in South Sudan from the start 1857 to 2017* will continue, since love can never be stopped. It has been a real pleasure for me to write this popular edition to *The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan, An Outline History*, and hope that many young people be drawn into this long line of love which starts from the love of Jesus and explodes, shining its rays everywhere in the world where there is need.

What St Daniel Comboni started by allowing himself to be led by such a love is what will attract another great throng of people, especially youth, to dedicate all their life in the same way, knowing that love has no rules except to love and carry on loving and feeling fulfilled in renewing it over and over again, in an endless chain of love and celebrations.

I hope that my well acknowledged limitations in writing and expressing properly the unravelling of this *Long Love Story* may not hinder the reader from reaching the focus of the magnet which has the power to attract irresistibly the heart of every person. May St Daniel Comboni and all his followers, who wonderfully witnessed this great love, and are now united with the Heart of Jesus beating for Africa, help all of us on our way.

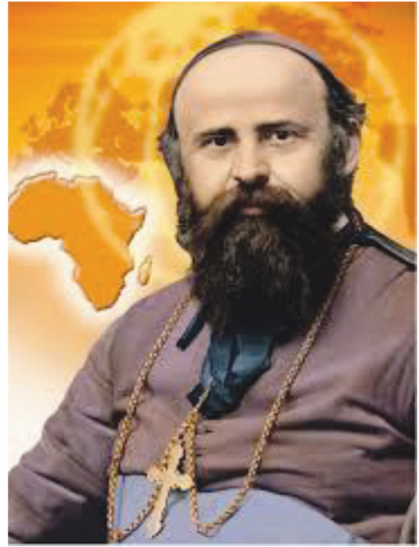
I have nothing else left to wish you, but that you, too, may reach that Heart and carry on singing about this *Long Love Story*!

However, along all these years, the Comboni Missionaries came in contact with and received a lot of assistance from many people not mentioned and not belonging to any religious institution. They contributed to make the Comboni mission viable: for this reason my heartfelt gratitude and prayer go for all of them who are part of this *Long Love Story*, as well.

Fr Francesco Chemello mcccj.



**The Sacred Heart of Jesus
in the
Mazza Institute.**



**St Daniel Comboni
1831-1881**

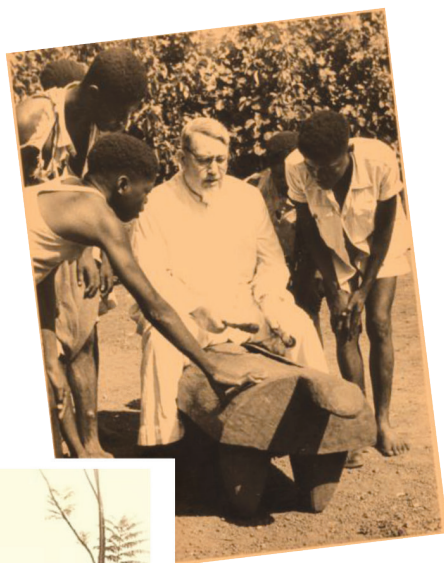


**St Josephine Bakhita
1869 (?) - 1947**



**Mboro
1932
Fr Crazzolaro**

**Fr Giorgetti
and
the Zande
Gugu**



**Mupo
Parish
1938**

Juba 1981, Archbishop Ireneo Dud: Centenary of Mgr D. Comboni



Juba 1990: handing-over to Fr Abel Mödi Nyörkö



**Juba 1990
January Assembly**



**Chukudum Parish
Church 1992**



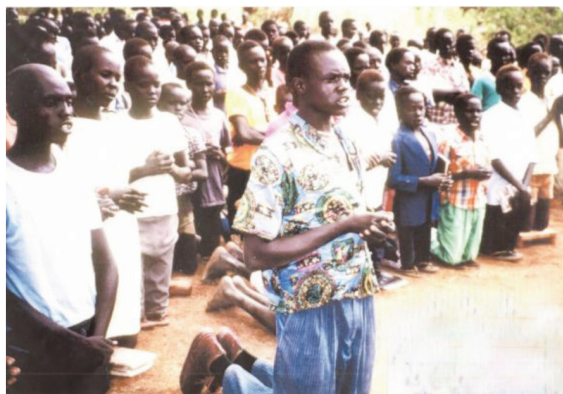
**Loa
Parish
Church
1992**



**Isoke Parish
1992**

**Fr Chemello,
Leaders
And
Youth**

**Kakuma
Refugee Camp
1992
Youth**



**Gulu (Uganda)
1993**

**Pope
John Paul II
and
refugee
Seminarians
of Kocoo**





**Mapuordit Parish
Mgr Mazzolari
Fr Riel
Fr Pellerino**

**Leer 1996
Fr Chemello,
Sr Zucca,
Sr Cerlini,
Women group**



**Nyal Mccj
Community
Compound**

**Catechist
Jerome
Yoak
Nor**



09/07/2011: Independence Day, Looking towards the Future



Leer Parish Assembly: Church under construction

**Leer 2012
James
Duol Kai
Catechetical
Centre
Graduation**



**Leer
Nursery
School**



**Tali Parish
Fr Markus Körber
Catechists
And
Leaders**

**Tali Parish
Visit of
Archbishop Paolino
Lukudu Loro**



**Tali Parish
2017
Formation
of
Youth**



**Leer
St Daniel
Comboni
Vocational
Centre**

**Old
Fangak
Parish**



**Old Fangak
2014
P. 8 Class**

**Ayod
Fr La Braca
an experience
of
hermitage**



**Ayod
2011
Church
Assembly**



**St Theresa
Cathedral
Juba**



**St Pauls'
Major
Seminary
Celebration**

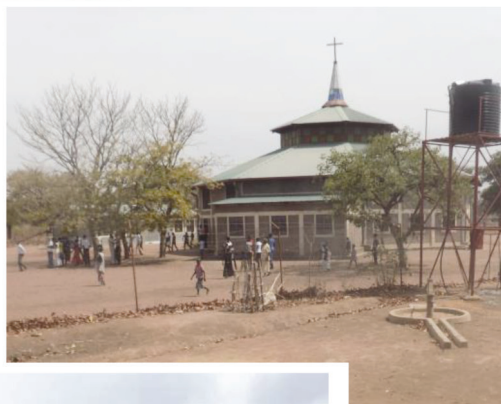
**Juba
Comboni
House
2017**



**Wau
Parish**



**Yirol
Parish
Church**



**Mapuordit
Parish
Church**



**Lomin
Parish
Church
Kajo-Kaji**



**Mary
Immaculate
Hospital
Mapuordit**



**Lady Lomin
St
Martin Workshop**

**Comboni
Comprehensive
College**





**Fr
Barnaba Deng
Formation
House**

**Pre-Postulants
And
Fathers**



Good Shepherd Peace Centre - Kit



**SCBC
Inauguration
of the Good Shepherd
Peace Centre – Kit with
the Apostolic Nuncio to
South Sudan,
Archbishop
Charles D. Balvo,**

**Juba, December
2016, hand-over
of
Administration:
joint Provincial
Councils**



**Juba
Assembly
2017
with
H. G.
Archb.
Paolino
Lukudu
Loro**

