

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

826

February 2024

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Notes from the 23rd General Consulta (January 2024)

Appointments

Considering the results of the electoral consultation held in the Congo for the replacement of the provincial, the General Council has appointed Fr. Kakule Muvawa Emery-Justin Provincial Superior of Congo from 16.1.2024 until the end of the mandate of the current triennium period, 31.12.2025. The GC thanks him for the task he carried out as vice-provincial in recent months and assures him of their prayers for his service to the province and the Institute.

Six-Year Plans

The General Council and the general secretaries have viewed the six-year plans of the circumscriptions received in Rome, except those of Egypt/Sudan and the Congo which have not yet been drawn up: for EGSD, there are still problems linked to the internal conflict in Sudan and it is not easy to make predictions and/or plans; as regards the Congo, the provincial election concluded on January 15 and, consequently, the province will need some time to organise the work of drafting the plan.

The review work was conducted in synergy between the various sector secretariats and the GC. The evaluation is positive and the effort made by the circumscriptions to follow the "dreams" of the Chapter, putting the person at the centre, was underlined, an effort that allowed the selection of intervention priorities to be implemented. The methodology followed to arrive at provincial syntheses capable of involving and valorising each confrere and community was also appreciated, to arrive at the elaboration of the plan, without forgetting the importance of the cooperation that must exist with other local actors – *in primis*, the Comboni Family –, so that the chosen objectives can be adequately achieved.

In general, some actions were suggested to all the constituencies to be undertaken immediately and which were not clearly explained in the plans: first of all, a review of commitments and personnel since it is imperative to achieve a greater balance; a review of the structures since it is no longer sustainable to have properties used only minimally when increasingly efficient use of the assets and resources at the service of the mission is needed; the resumption of reflection at provincial and continental level on the need to unite the circumscriptions and on an integrated mission style. The General Council wishes all the circumscriptions fruitful work.

Revision of Provincial Directories

In parallel with the verification of the Six-Year Plans, the GC has reviewed two provincial directories; it invites the other circumscriptions, whose directories have become outdated due to the development of situations, to update them and send them to the GC for approval.

Meeting with the Secretary of the Disciplinary Section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith

To clarify some particular situations and canonical situations of confreres, the GC invited and met, on 18.1.2024, Msgr. John Joseph Kennedy, Secretary of the Disciplinary Section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, addressing with him the most complex cases and procedures. The Council thanks Msgr. Kennedy for his fraternal availability and the usefulness of the suggestions and indications received.

Meeting with the Holy Father

On Saturday 20.1.2024, the Holy Father welcomed the General Council in a private audience together with some confreres. The meeting was very cordial and the Holy Father encouraged us in our missionary service and in the difficult contexts in which we find ourselves.

Launch of the RL Commission and the Code of Conduct Team

The respective reference Assistants met electronically with the members of the Commission for the Rule of Life and the Central Team of the Code of Conduct, established and appointed in the December 2024 Consulta. During the meeting, the respective terms of reference were clarified with the objectives to be pursued and the respective coordinators and secretaries were chosen. The first in-person meeting will take place in Rome: The Commission for the Rule of Life will meet from 4th to 10th March 2024 and the Code of Conduct Team from 4th to 9th March.

Comboni Annuario

Reconsidering what was already decided in the last consultation, the GC resumed its discussion on what action is appropriate regarding the publication of the Comboni Yearbook, in compliance with privacy legislation, and the need to have a printed version. The printed version now concerns a limited number of confreres and increasingly takes on the value of historical documentation rather than having a practical/ operational value, which is now ensured by the quarterly digital versions (complete and 'reduced').

For this reason, the General Council establishes that, according to what was already decided in December, two digital versions of the Yearbook be prepared, one complete and one 'reduced' (that is, without information regarding family contacts). The GC also confirms that the complete digital version is reserved for the Superiors, bursars, secretaries and archivists of each circumscription and also for formators of scholasticates/CIF and novitiates, as well as members of the General Administration; it cannot be given to others and must be kept by the recipients, who will receive it directly from the Secretary General. Obviously, these recipients will also periodically receive the light digital version which they will have to forward by email to all the confreres in the circumscription with an email address. The Council also decided to postpone the next official release of the complete digital version to 1.4.2024 (in the meantime a provisional version will be circulating, updated as of 21.1.24).

The printing and circulation of the paper version of the Yearbook is scheduled for 2026, i.e. after the new round of provincial elections.

The paper yearbook will be issued exclusively in the 'reduced' version; a copy will be allocated to each community, service, office and institutional function.

Ordination

Fr Biyanu Habtat Nuguse	(ER)	Mariam Zion / Qunnie	13.01.24
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Holy Redeemer Guild

February	01 – 15 C	16 – 28 EGSD	
March	01 – 07 CO	08 – 15 E	16 – 31 DSP

Prayer Intentions

February – That in the ongoing process of reconfiguration within the Institute of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, the meeting of the Provincials

may be guided by the Holy Spirit, the true protagonist of discernment and the mission. *Let us pray.*

March – That in this world marked by wars and situations of violence and injustice, women may be the artificers of peace, building up in daily routine and in the sacred space of life, gestures of love and reconciliation. *Let us pray.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

FEBRUARY

8	Saint Josephine Bakhita, virgin	Memorial
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Meaningful anniversaries

FEBRUARY

4	Saint John de Britto, martyr	Portugal
6	Martyrs of Japan	Asia
23	Kidane Mehret, Co-Redemptrix	Eritrea

MARCH

17	Saint Patrick, bishop	London Province
19	Saint Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Central African Republic

Publications

Arlindo Ferreira Pinto mccj, *Os desafios éticos da comunicação no limiar do século XXI. Desinformação, hackers, fake news, algoritmos e inteligência artificial.* This is the study published in the *MCCJ Bulletin no. 297* (October 2023), which the Portuguese publisher Papelmunde kindly edited (December 2023), including both an English and an Italian translation. The theme taken up by Fr Arlindo is extremely relevant today. With his three decades of experience as a communicator, he notes, in the *Preface*, that in the world of communications, it is daily necessary to conjugate and show the relationship between certain verbs. It is above all necessary to *read, look and listen* with close attention in order to *evaluate* all information received, seeking to *distinguish* what is true from what is false or somehow distorted. “To help us make this discernment from an ethical point of view – he tells us – is one of the main objectives of this study”. The interest aroused in its original environment by this work of Fr Arlindo resulted in his being awarded the ‘Gold Medal of Merit’ by the city council of Paços de Ferreira, with the following mention: “For his missionary activity and neighbourly dedication”. Though he accepted with some hesit-

ation the award, which he claims was an unmerited recognition, Fr Arlindo said he accepted it only in the hope that young people who read his work may feel inspired to follow the motivations that guided his life. Our congratulations to Fr Arlindo.

Kasereka Amini Wasingya, mccj, *Louange et adoration : un guide spirituel pour une chorale catholique. Méditations sur quelques passages bibliques*, Afriquespoir, Tchad 2023. A brief manual which, as stated by Mons. E. M. Matabaro, Bishop of Dungu Doruma (CN) in the Preface, is addressed to choristers that they may realise the greatness of their ministry which is that of assisting the faithful to pray, not to distract them, by taking their duty seriously and executing it proficiently.

APDESAM

General Annual Assembly

From 23rd to 30th January 2024, the Provincial Superiors and Delegates of Anglophone Africa and Mozambique gathered for their annual general assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

After a half-day retreat on the theme 'Servant Leadership and Collaborative Ministry', the Continental Coordinator welcomed and thanked all members for their presence and active participation. Sincere thanks go to the Province of Ethiopia for its fraternal and generous hospitality. The atmosphere was serene and conducive to sharing, discussion, discernment and the lived experience of brotherhood.

The values of our continental APDESAM experience were recognised and appreciated: communion, contextualisation, subsidiarity and collaboration. Ample space was given to the Relations of the Circumscriptions and the sectors of Formation, Mission (with its subsectors: Missionary Animation, JPIC, CLM, Mass Media, Interreligious Dialogue with Islam) and Economy.

Reports on APDESAM joint projects such as *New People Magazine*, CASE and Comboni Study House were also presented. The feasibility of merging the Circumscriptions in a new possible configuration was considered and it was decided that greater consultation of all interested parties, both in the subcontinent and in the General Direction, is necessary. Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse and Br. Alberto Lamana held a briefing on behalf of the General Council on pertinent topics, such as internationality/interculturality in the Comboni Institute, training, sustainability and protection of minors and vulnerable people.

From all the work mentioned above, the Assembly collected some resolutions and motions which were put to the vote. The results of our reflection and study will be duly presented to the General Council for their information and feedback, and to all the confreres of the English-speaking African Circumscriptions and Mozambique, in order to facilitate our common awareness of the continental vision and experience.

Furthermore, the Assembly carried out a review of the APDESAM Charter. During this General Assembly, we had a lunch meeting with His Eminence Souraphiel Card. Berhaneyesus Demerew, C.M., the Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Ababa, who recognised and gratefully appreciated the good missionary work that the Comboni Missionaries are carrying out in Africa and urged us to pray for peace in war-torn areas of the world.

Finally, we had a relaxing and worthwhile tour of the ancient palace site and church of Addis Ababa built by King Menelik II on a hill (about 3,000 meters above sea level) overlooking Ethiopia's ever-expanding capital. *(Father John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, mccj)*

ASCAF

Assembly of Superiors of Francophone Africa Circumscriptions

The meeting took place in the provincial house of Lomé. Present were: Father Marco Vailati (delegate of Tchad), Father Victor-Hugo Castillo Matarrita (delegate of Central Africa), Father Elias Sindjalim (general assistant, in charge of ASCAF), Father Timothée Hounake (provincial superior of the TGB), Father Kakule Muvawa Emery-Justin (provincial superior of Congo) and Brother Pascal Koffi Abotsi (representative of the ASCAF Brothers).

The meeting began on Monday, 29th January 2024, at 6.30 am, with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by Father Victor Hugo. At 8.30, the plenary assembly was formally opened with a warm welcome to Father Justin Kakule and Brother Pascal Abotsi, on their first participation in ASCAF.

Among the various topics discussed: the development and adoption of the Six-Year Plan of the Continent, sharing on the current situations of the constituencies, the unification of the constituencies, and the evaluation of some continental projects.

The meeting ended on Wednesday 31st January, at 11.00 am, with the approval of the minutes of the meeting.

Port Sudan: schooling in time of war

It is now nine months since the war began, and one of the sectors most affected is education. All schools at all levels have been closed. Before the war, the Comboni Secondary for boys had a thousand students. All teachers and workers were asked to accept the suspension of their salaries, thus losing their primary source of livelihood. At the same time, however, the school has given some of them the opportunity to take courses, with which some are able to earn an income.

Another possibility is represented by evening courses. In the evening, the school is open for English courses at various levels, Arabic for adult literacy and, recently, also for some computer courses. This is a good opportunity for teachers to work, for parents to guarantee continuity in their children's education, and for us missionaries to serve the needs of the local community in this particular situation. We ask for prayers so that peace can return and people can resume their lives. (*P. Ramírez Falcón Nicolás Martín, mccj*)

Exploring the areas of Renk and the Nuba Mountains

During the Christmas period, the provincial superior of Egypt-Sudan was accompanied by the provincial superior of South Sudan on two visits to the dioceses of Malakal and El Obeid, at the request of the two respective bishops. These visits are part of a reflection on how the province of Egypt-Sudan (perhaps, with the collaboration of South Sudan) can serve the Church of Sudan in the coming years, in the event that the three communities of Khartoum cannot be reopened soon. The bishop of Malakal asked the Comboni Missionaries to visit the Renk area, where one might think of a Comboni presence among the thousands of Christians who have returned from the North. The bishop of El Obeid, however, asked the Comboni Missionaries to explore the southern area of the Nuba Mountains, previously served by the many commitments of the late Monsignor Macram Max Gassis.

The two provincials have completed the visit and have now begun a wide-ranging reflection with their circumscriptions. (*Fr. Diego Dalle Carbonare, mccj*)

Celebrating Christmas among the Eritrean community of Zamalek

The Eritrean refugee community in Cairo celebrated Christmas on 6th January, with Christmas Eve mass at St. Joseph's, Zamalek. The celebration began with the vigil prayer (wazema) followed by solemn Mass in

the Geez rite. The war situation in Sudan has changed the lives of thousands of young Eritreans. As a result, the number of Eritrean refugees in Cairo and Egypt has increased. Many young people have crossed the desert from Sudan to Egypt. So, this year, we had a large number of new arrivals from Sudan, which made the celebration even more beautiful. The church was packed, with more people outside the church. About 2000 people attended the mass. Two weeks later, on Saturday 20th January, we celebrated the Baptism of the Lord. The celebration began with the morning prayer of the mahlet and was then completed with solemn mass in the Geez rite. Once again, the church was packed, and many had to assist from outside in the parish courtyard. The celebration ended with the blessing of the water and the sprinkling of all the faithful as a sign of renewal of baptism. (*Father Teweldebrhan Nayir Berkay, mcccj*)

ESPAÑA

***Mundo Negro* magazine receives two awards**

On Wednesday 17th January 2024, at the CaixaForum in Madrid, *Mundo Negro* magazine received the Africa Mundi award in the category of 'best special', for the monographic issue on Ghana, published in May 2023, the result of the journey that a team of the magazine carried out in that African country.

The award was accepted by the editors Javier Sánchez and Gonzalo Gómez, the main authors of the monograph prepared after their trip to Ghana, between the end of October and the beginning of November 2022, during which they were supported in the field by the Spanish Comboni missionary Pepe Girau Pellicer, who works in Cape Coast. The director of the magazine, Father Enrique Bayo, and two other members of the editorial team, Carla Fibla and José Luis Silván, also participated in the awards ceremony. This award adds to the many awards that *Mundo Negro* magazine has received during its 64-year history, for its quality journalism on the mission and other realities of the African continent.

The second prize, received on 22nd January 2024, was the CEU Ángel Herrera Award for the best journalistic work on the Social Doctrine of the Church. This award recognises the trajectory of *Mundo Negro* magazine as a point of reference for information in Spain on Africa and, in particular, on the work of missionaries and local African Churches.

XXXVI Encounter Africa Meeting

On 3rd February the XXXVI Encounter Africa Meeting took place in Madrid, during which the 'Mundo Negro Prize for Fraternity 2023' was

awarded to Monsignor Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of Sokoto (Nigeria), founder of the Kukah Center and promoter of some of the most important initiatives in favour of peace and democracy in his country.

The day, which began at 5.30 pm in the Exhibition Hall of the Comboni Missionaries, revolved around the question "Which democracy for Africa?".

After the opening by the director of the magazine *Mundo Negro*, Father Enrique Bayo Mata, a debate was held during which Kemit Ajamaat Diédhiou, head of Communications of the Women's Movement of Pastef-Les Patriotes in Spain, Ivorian political analyst Dagauh Komenan, and Jesús García-Luengos, a consultant and analyst of the African Studies Group of the Autonomous University of Madrid, reflected on the main challenges of democracy on the African continent.

Subsequently, the bishop presented his work in the diocese of Sokoto, in the north of the country, and the challenges faced by the Kukah Center, whose origins date back to 2008 when Mgr. Kukah first began to think about the need to create a centre for research, debate and action for the development of the country. Today, the Kukah Center is present in 25 of Nigeria's 36 states. It was the provincial superior of Spain, Fr. Miguel Ángel Llamazares, who presented the Award to the Nigerian bishop.

The Africa Encounter Meeting concluded on Sunday 4th February with a Eucharistic celebration at the Madrid parish of the Most Holy Trinity.

ITALIA

Christmas Cribs 2023 in Venegono

The theme chosen for the 'Christmas Cribs 2023 in Venegono', by the Pastoral community of Venegono Inferiore and Superiore, was: "Let's meet and listen to" the voices of the invisible people of our society, the individual people and social groups who are made invisible by the indifference of the majority and from political, social, and cultural choices. The birth of Jesus is announced to shepherds, emigrants and young people; they are the ones who act as spokespersons for what they have seen and heard, managing to share the joy that must be shared by all peoples.

This year too, after the visit to the nativity scene, the journey continues with the opening of the exhibition 'Beyond the Walls', which tells of the 77 barriers in the world which, combined with the barbed wire fences, surround the planet in an exclusive embrace between those inside and those outside.

During the journey, the 'Stop Border Violence' campaign is presented: the goal is to reach one million signatures. The European initiative, which officially started on 10th July 2023, will end on 10th July 2024.

The aim of the campaign is to ask the European Commission for new legislation that provides concrete measures to combat and prevent violence and torture against migrants and refugees in Europe and at its borders. To achieve this goal, however, it is essential that there are not just a million signatures, but that these signatures are the expression of at least seven different European countries.

The 'Let's break down walls to build bridges' workshop is reserved for the younger ones, through the 'Beautiful and good words' initiative, which will help build solidarity and brotherhood.

The Higher School of Applied Arts in Milan, coordinated by the professor and illustrator Silvio Boselli (artist of visual arts), author of the beautiful poster design, accepted our invitation to collaborate in the creation of this nativity scene. Professor Boselli and his students also discussed the topic of the 'invisible', the people who live next to us, the homeless, migrants, the poor, and the disadvantaged that society pretends not to see. Sixteen contemporary nativity scenes were created, the work of the third-year students of the illustration course.

The itinerary ends with the traditional "ethnic market" and the exhibition and sale of books that will help us to delve deeper into the themes presented by the nativity scene. The realisation of all these Christmas activities was possible thanks to the perseverance of collaborators who share our being and doing mission here at Venegono Castle.

African masks on display in Padua

"In the Heart of the Congo" was opened to the public on Monday 22nd January, an exhibition of Congolese masks, fabrics and statues from the collection of the African Museum of Madrid and which, before arriving in Padua, were exhibited, in autumn 2023, at the African Museum of Verona.

The exhibition was created with the contribution of the Culture Department of the Municipality of Padua and will remain open until March 22nd. It is an initiative that aims to bring the visitor closer to the complexity of the role of the mask in local culture and to the value of all the works on display: original pieces from different regions of the country which, despite being examples of African craftsmanship or art, have an important role in the local culture both for the mythical-religious aspects to which they are linked and for the social and therapeutic control action they exercise.

The Comboni Missionaries, whose community has been active in Padua for over a century, in recent years have promoted various initiatives to support understanding and intercultural dialogue between the peoples of the South of the World, with particular reference to the African reality, and the city of Padua.

Mission Assembly

The Mission Assembly of the Italian Province, held in Verona from 22nd to 25th January 2024, involved around fifty participants, including representatives of the Comboni Family (Comboni Sisters, Comboni Seculars and Comboni Lay Missionaries), as well as the General Secretariat of the Mission.

January 23rd was dedicated to reflection on the theme 'Integral Ecology and Economy', led by the Salesian priest Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam. The speaker underlined the interconnection between economy and ecology, recalling the documents of Pope Francis, in particular the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*.

Father Joshtrom examined seven fundamental points relating to integral ecology and economics, highlighting the crisis of the planet and the indifference of global structures. After the debate, he proposed joining the 'Platform of Laudato Si' Action Platform' as a tool to promote significant changes.

The subsequent sessions were dedicated to the presentation of the activities of the Secretariat and the various Commissions of the province, including "Cantiere Casa Comune", "Arena di Pace", migrants, communication, missionary animation and parishes.

The provincial superior, Father Fabio Baldan, underlined the current challenges of the Church and society, encouraging the 'synodal path' and referring to the Six-Year Plan, the 'Peace Arena 2024' and the Jubilee of the Church 2025 as paths of renewal.

On the final day, Father Arlindo Pinto briefly presented the structure of the General Secretariat of the Mission and underlined the problem of language in the Comboni mission, highlighting resistance to change. He emphasised that the mission is at the centre of the Institute and that education, the economy and other sectors must be oriented towards it.

Subsequently, Father Paolo Latorre, provincial bursar, highlighted the relationship between mission, economy and sustainability, underlining the duty to protect the environment and change lifestyles. The Province has developed a *Vademecum Laudato Si'* to guide the reduction and redevelopment of the way of life.

In the last phase of the assembly, the participants proposed lines of action and offered work indications for 2024.

KENYA

Annual meeting of the Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM)

What better way to plan the new year than to reflect on the year that was? From Friday 12th January to Sunday 14th January, our annual meeting of the Comboni Lay Missionaries took place. It is always joyful to be together. During those three days, we reflected on our activities and developed new ideas for 2024, to improve what are already doing. We also analysed our finances, discussing income and expenses. We thanked God for his Providence and thanked in our hearts all the people like you whom God has called to support the 'least' in his Kingdom.

After two years of formation, Mercy Chepoghisho is now a full member of the Comboni Lay Missionaries and is ready to be sent to do the work of the Lord. We are all very proud of her! May faith always light up her path. A few days ago, we witnessed the sending ceremony of two Kenyan Secular Comboni Sisters, Lucy and Ruth, assigned to missionary service in Uganda and we wished them well.

At the beginning of the new year, we elected new leaders of the CLM movement. In line with our statute, elected leaders are called upon to serve for a two-year term (which may be renewed). We express our sincere thanks to those who have carried out their roles excellently over the past two years. Our new leaders are Father Maciej Zieliński (reconfirmed as our 'chaplain' and provincial contact for the CLM), Martin Juma (coordinator), Maria Ajiambo (secretary) and Mukami Muthee (treasurer). Martin, Maria and Mukami will remain in office until January 2026. Congratulations to all three.

We also thank the community of Comboni Missionaries who hosted us splendidly during the weekend. May the Lord bless and reward them.
(Cecilia Nyamu, CLM)

MÉXICO

First International ECOPAX Assembly

From 19th to 21st January 2024, in Sahuayo, 46 lay people from various parts of Mexico, Ecuador and the United States, engaged in the Social Mission of Peace and inspired by the missionary principles of Saint Daniel Comboni, met at the Cultural Center for Peace.

The meeting, organised and animated by ECOPAX-Sahuayo, had the aim of sharing experiences, initiatives and peace processes in the different contexts in which ECOPAX animators carry out this social mission, in order to strengthen and encourage each other in this missionary task, so increasingly necessary and urgent in all areas of human coexistence. At the end of the meeting, common commitments and objectives for 2024 were defined, at a local and international level. The meeting ended with a thanksgiving Mass in the Comboni seminary and a meal offered by the beneficiaries of the Cultural Center for Peace of Sahuayo and their families, as thanks for the benefits they receive from ECOPAX.

TCHAD

Annual Assembly

From 8th to 12th January 2024, the annual assembly of the Delegation was held at the "Bakara" reception centre of the Praying Sisters. The first days, dedicated to reflection and discussion on ongoing formation, were animated by Father Enrique Rosich Vargas, from the community of Bodo, diocese of Doba, and by Sister Pilar Justo, from the community of Comboni Sisters who work at the Bébédja Hospital, in the same diocese.

A particularly interesting aspect of Father Enrique's intervention is that he retraced the educational path of Saint Daniel Comboni who, from a young age, showed a strong cultural curiosity for the acquisition of ideas and notions in view of the mission. In this, he was helped by his intelligence capable of assimilating material: he studied languages already as a seminarian at the Mazza Institute, acquired some notions of medicine, devoured texts on geography (especially African) and history... with a very specific aim: to prepare for the best possible approach to the peoples of Africa, not with the presumption of the explorer but with the humility, patience and empathy of the apostle.

The following days were dedicated to listening to the reports of the various secretariats, from which a delegation emerged committed to evangelisation and training in the various local realities. Once again, complaints were made about the chronic shortage of personnel which affects the apostolate. However, two positive facts were highlighted: the age of the majority of the confreres, between 35 and 50, and the fact that the Comboni missionaries in the delegation are almost exclusively African. It can, therefore, be said that in Chad, Comboni's dream of 'saving Africa with Africans' is a well-rooted reality. (*Brother Enrico Gonzales y Reyero, mccj*)

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Marcello Trotta (18.2.1939 – 10.12.2023)

Father Marcello was born on 18th February 1939, in Montefalcone Valfortore, in the province of Benevento. He did his novitiate in Gozzano (1955-1957) and made his first profession on 9th September 1957. He studied philosophy and theology in Verona (1957-1960) and Venegono (1960-1964); he took perpetual vows on 9th September 1963 and was ordained a priest on 28th June 1964. Father Marcello exercised his missionary ministry in Italy (about 41 years) and Mexico (about 17 years).

Psalm 6 can act as a mirror to what Father Marcello experienced in his last days. It is defined as the psalm of a sick person, a sick person who begs, and who then suddenly erupts into a cry for salvation. It seems to me that this psalm says a lot about the human and spiritual story of Father Marcello, especially in these last years, since dialysis was the faithful companion of his days and he, as the days went by, saw that his body was becoming more fragile, his autonomy diminished and his need for assistance increased. We witnessed the underlying serenity with which Father Marcello faced the test based on the faithfulness of God.

Some memories. He would come to watch the news and afterwards go to his room – latterly in his wheelchair – but the corridor was long and I pushed him along it more than once. Towards the end of the corridor, he would say: “Thank you. That’s enough. Your day is full enough, and you have so many things to do. Now I can manage on my own... Thanks for your help!” Once, almost absentmindedly, I said to him: “But, Marcello, we can’t forget about you...”. After a couple of months, he told me: “Thank you for those words! They did me good and gave me a lot of courage.”

Father Marcello arrived in the community of Castel d’Azzano in mid-2022 and left us on 10th December 2023 to go to Borgo Roma hospital in Verona, at around 7.00 pm. He had recently been hospitalised due to various complications and the numerous pathologies he already had (kidney failure, heart problems, diabetes...), with ups and downs in his state of health. Lastly, a gastro-intestinal haemorrhage occurred, which led to his death within a few hours.

Father Marcello’s funeral was celebrated on Wednesday 13th December at the community of Castel d’Azzano, presided over by Father Renzo Piazza, superior of the community. The provincial superior, Father Fabio Baldan, and some confreres from our community of the Mother House of Verona were also present. The remains were then taken to his home town, where his funeral was held on 14th December.

Father Marcello, I have not shared with you the labours of the apostolate or the mission, but only the last months of your earthly life. I would like to

tell you and everyone that loving you wasn't difficult. Thanks, Marcello!
Remember us. (*Father Renzo Piazza, mccj*)

Father Joseph Ukelo Yala (1.1.1939 – 19.12.2023)

Joseph was born in Lafon, diocese of Juba, South Sudan, on 1st January 1939, to Peter Yala and Anna Acan, parents of 10 children, five sons and five daughters. He was baptised and confirmed by Father Cesare Gambaretto in 1951. He attended primary school in his native village, then entered the minor seminary of Okaru (Torit, Eastern Equatoria). He then moved to the Major Seminary of Tore (Yei, Central Equatoria) for some time, but the seminarians were forced to flee due to the dramatic political situation. During their escape, they meet some Comboni missionaries who were about to leave South Sudan after the expulsion decree from the Khartoum government (1964). Joseph spent a year in Kit (near Juba), but then reached Uganda where he completed his training at the Major Seminary of Lacor. And it was here that he matured his Comboni missionary vocation.

In December 1967, he was sent to Florence for two years of novitiate. On 9th September 1969, he took his first religious vows and was sent to the scholasticate in Verona for the first two years of philosophy. In 1970 he went to the international scholasticate in Rome to complete his theological training at the Pontifical Urban College of 'Propaganda Fide'. On 23rd April 1972, he was ordained a priest in the church of Sant'Andrea, in Tivoli, by Bishop Guglielmo Giaquinta.

Shortly afterwards, he left Italy, destined for South Sudan, where, for a few months, he was vice-rector of the minor seminary of the diocese of Torit. At the end of 1973, he was assigned to the Terekela mission. From 1974 to 1977 he was deputy parish priest of Nalingoro-Kapoeta. In 1977 he was assigned to Mupoi as spiritual director of the Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He remained there until 1982.

In January 1983 he was sent to the Comboni province of Italy, assigned to the community of Bari for the missionary animation service of the diocese. In July 1986 he was sent to Eldoret, Kenya, for a pastoral course at the AMECEA Ggaba Pastoral Institute. In July 1987, the bishop of Torit, Msgr. Paris Taban, chose him as the Vicar General of the diocese, but he had to reside in Juba for security reasons. In July 1991, he went to Kampala, Uganda where he ministered at the parish of Mbuya.

On 1st January 1995, he was sent to South Africa, to the mission of Elukwatini, in the diocese of Witbank. For an entire year, he was engaged in studying the language and was then appointed local superior of the Comboni community, working in the apostolate and missionary animation. In 2004 he moved to the parish of Barberton, in the same diocese, but in July he had to go to Nairobi (Kenya) for medical treatment. Three months

later, he returned to South Sudan, to Lomin. The following year he was elected provincial councillor.

In 2006 he went to Rome for a refresher course, then, for a year and a half, he had to stay in Verona, at the Centre for the Sick, for medical treatment. He then returned to South Sudan and was again Vicar General of the diocese of Torit, based in Juba. In 2011 he went to stay at the Comboni House in Juba, in charge of ministry.

In March 2016, he retired to Moroyok (Juba), to the prepostulancy community. There he spent his last years, until his return to the Father's house on 19th December 2023.

«Joseph had many human qualities – writes Father Guido Oliana in his biography of Father Joseph – which he put at the service of his vocation as a Comboni missionary priest. He was a person who fearlessly said what he thought and believed. A man of principle. He always showed great courage in denouncing the injustices committed by the Arab government of Khartoum against the South Sudanese, risking his life several times. He was a man of great humanity. He had great leadership qualities and a great sense of responsibility. He had a profound spirituality, which showed in his spirit of prayer, patience and humility. He was also a committed priest, who intensely loved his religious consecration and his priestly identity." (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Father Rodolfo Cipollone (27.1.1941 – 29.12.2023)

Rodolfo was born in Cese di Avezzano, in the province of L'Aquila, on 27th January 1941. In 1952 he entered the Apostolic School of the Comboni missionaries of Troia and then attended high school in Sulmona. In October 1957 he began the novitiate in Gozzano and attended the second year in Sunningdale (England), where he took his first vows on 9th September 1959. Immediately afterwards, he returned to Italy to start high school in Carraia (Lucca). In 1962, he began his scholasticate in Verona, but was immediately assigned as 'prefect' to the Apostolic School of Padua. On 9th September 1965, he made his final profession and on 26th March 1966, he was ordained a priest in the Basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua, at the hands of Bishop Girolamo Bartolomeo Bortignon.

His superiors assigned him to the Apostolic School of Sulmona as a formator and vocation promoter. In 1969 he was sent to Ethiopia. In July, Father Rodolfo was already in Addis Ababa to start the Amharic course. The following year, he was assigned to Teticha mission, as director of the mission schools. Two years later, he was appointed parish priest there. In 1977 he went to Hawassa as parish priest. From July 1983 to June 1984, he stayed in Arramo to study a new local language: he learned to speak Amharic, Sidamo and Gedeo perfectly. From 1984 to 1986 he was parish priest of the mission parish of Fullasa.

However, the time also came for him to rotate and, in July 1986, he was in Bari where he was in charge of missionary animation and, the following year, he was appointed superior of the Missionary Animation Centre.

In Ethiopia the confreres were constantly asking for him and the superiors agreed that Father Rodolfo should return to Ethiopia: in July 1990, in fact, he was already engaged in pastoral ministry in Arramo. Two years later, he returned to Shafinna. In 1993 he was again in Hawassa as parish priest, remaining there until 1999, when he was appointed local superior of Fullasa.

In 2005, he moved to Arosa. In 2007, he returned to Fullasa. In 2013, he went to Dongora for two years. He never ceased moving. Being a master of the local languages, he never refused any appointment: once again he went to Teticha (2014-15), to Daye (2015) and to Hawassa (2016-18).

In October 2018, he was forced to return to Italy for treatment and on 8th December he was assigned to the Italian province.

In September 2023 Father Rodolfo was transferred to the 'Fr. Alfredo Fiorini Centre' in Castel d'Azzano. On 29th December, after a brief spell in hospital for heart failure and a general worsening of his condition, he passed away peacefully at the Borgo Roma hospital in Verona, cared for by hospital staff, the community of Castel d'Azzano and his family.

On 2nd January 2024, Father Renzo Piazza, superior of the Castel d'Azzano Centre, presided over the funeral mass and, during the homily, recalled the testimonies of Father Rodolfo's mission companions who presented him as a man much loved by all. "Even here in Castel d'Azzano, in the few months that he spent with us, he made us love him".

The funeral was celebrated on Wednesday 3rd January in his hometown, in the presence of the superior general, Father Tesfaye Tadesse, and the assistant general, Father Luigi Codianni. From the testimonies received from Ethiopia, gratitude emerged for his great commitment, his total dedication to pastoral work, his affability and tolerance, his affectionate approach to people, his sense of humour...". (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Father Emilio Zanatta (25.11.1941 – 29.12.2023)

Emilio was born in Pian di Borno, in the province of Brescia, on 25th November 1941. While still a boy, he entered the Episcopal Seminary of Pordenone, where he attended secondary and high school. On 1st October 1961, he entered the novitiate of the Comboni Missionaries in Gozzano (Novara), where he took his first vows on 9th September 1963. For the scholasticate, he was sent to Verona, where he made his final profession on 9th September 1966. On 25th June 1967, he was ordained a priest by Msgr. Edoardo Mason, mccj, in the Mother House of Verona. Immediately afterwards, he was assigned as a formator in the minor seminary of Thiene. In July 1968, he was bursar of the community of Bari and

in 1970 he was assigned to Mexico where he remained for sixteen years, carrying out various services: vocation promoter in the seminary of San Francisco del Rincón (1970-76), ministry assistant in the parish of San Felipe Usila (1977-79), parish priest of Tuxtepec (1979-81) and again in the San Francisco del Rincón seminary as bursar, until 1986, when he returned to Italy for a period of holidays.

Before leaving Mexico, Father Emilio wrote to Father Francesco Pierli, recently elected superior general, presenting him with the proposal of a sabbatical year in his homeland, followed by a missionary experience in Africa. Once in Italy, he went to Rome to meet Father Pierli, who already had a message ready for him, containing both the official certificate of the new destination – the Central African Republic – and a letter in which the superior general agreed to his request for a renewal year.

In July 1986, he was already in Paris for the French language course and to attend some courses and seminars on African culture. A year later, in July 1987, he flew to Central Africa, where he was assigned to the parish of Dékoa, as assistant parish priest. The following July, he was parish priest in Mongoumba. In 1990 he was appointed provincial bursar and went to Bangui, where the headquarters of the Comboni delegation was located. In 1994, he returned to Italy, assigned to the Mother House of Verona, attached to the ministry. The following year, he was employed at the Sick Assistance Centre. In 1997 he was in Cordenons, in charge of missionary animation.

“After ten years of exile in Italy, here I am again on a mission”, he wrote in the greeting card to family and friends for Christmas 2003. The heading of the letter leaves no doubt: *Misioneros Combonianos – Centro de Animación Misionera – San José – Costa Rica*. He arrived in the Comboni Delegation of Central America at the beginning of 2003 and remained there until 2011, enthusiastically engaging in missionary animation.

In October 2011, he returned to Italy for a new sabbatical year. The following year he went to Lucca for missionary animation service. But in 2014 he had to return to the Mother House in Verona for medical treatment. As long as he was able, he volunteered his services: some missionary appeals, the liturgy and reception. In 2017, he was a guest of the Sick Center of Castel d’Azzano, where his life ended on 29th December 2023.

On 2nd January 2024, the community of Castel d’Azzano bade farewell to Father Emilio. Several confreres from nearby communities, including the Provincial Superior, and family and friends participated in the celebration, presided over by Father Renzo Piazza. Father Emilio’s body was taken to Carbonera (Treviso) for burial. (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Father Ramiro Loureiro da Cruz (29.12.1934 – 30.12.2023)

Ramiro was born in Rio de Loba, a few kilometres from Viseu, on 29th December 1934. While a teenager, he entered the diocesan seminary of 'São José' in Viseu. He soon came into contact with the Comboni Missionaries and with them began a serious process of discernment, at the end of which he asked to join the Institute.

In September 1953, he was sent to Florence for the novitiate, which he concluded with his first religious profession on 9th September 1955. He then moved to Venegono Superiore (Varese) for theology courses. On 14th March 1959, he was ordained a priest in the cathedral of Milan by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Paul VI. Immediately afterwards, he returned to Portugal to work in missionary animation. In 1969 the experience of the so-called 'Iberian Province' ended and Father Ramiro was appointed provincial superior of Portugal, a post he held until 1975.

In 1976, he was assigned to Brazil, where he worked with the Indian communities, an experience that would mark him for life.

In 1981, he returned to Portugal to work in the formation of the Brothers, first in Viseu, then in Aradas (Aveiro) and, finally, in Maia. The professional and technical training of the Brothers was one of his major concerns and he spared no effort to equip the training centres with tools and machinery that facilitated it. In 1986 he returned to Latin America, this time to Colombia, as a formator at the International Brothers Center (CIF), and then to Ecuador, as spiritual director at the seminary of the Vicariate of Esmeraldas. In 2000, he went back to Portugal. Two years later, he left for Mozambique, where he worked as a formator in the Comboni Postulate of Matola and as a teacher of 'Interreligious Dialogue' in the philosophical and theological seminary of Maputo.

In 2009 he was in Viseu for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of his priesthood. The bishop, Msgr. Ilídio Pinto Leandro, sent him a cordial message of good wishes and appreciation, together with his blessing. Before leaving, he wrote the bishop a meaningful thank-you note: "I will never be able to thank you enough for your touching message... Be sure that I will continue to invoke God's abundant blessings on the pastoral work in our dear diocese of Viseu... Now I am returning to Mozambique to continue to be an expression of the missionary dimension of my diocesan Church of origin."

The first symptoms of Alzheimer's disease began to appear, which forced him to return to his homeland in 2012, to the community of Viseu, which welcomes the sick and elderly of the province.

On the evening of 29th December, he celebrated his 89th birthday with the whole community. He wanted to be the one to blow out the candles on the cake. With eyes bright with joy, he was taken to his room smiling and serene. During the night, he departed for his Father's house, without dis-

turbing anyone, as he had always wanted. The funeral mass was celebrated on 2nd January in the community chapel, presided over by the bishop of the diocese, Msgr. António Luciano dos Santos Costa, in the presence of confreres from all the Comboni communities and some diocesan priests from nearby parishes. The body was then taken to his hometown for burial.

I have extraordinary memories of Father Ramiro. I met him in Maia when I was studying philosophy. I have always admired his enthusiasm for promoting the mission, even in difficult times for our communities, plagued by tensions and misunderstandings – which caused him to have a nervous breakdown from which, fortunately, he recovered quickly and well. It was he who welcomed Father Rogério Artur de Sousa and me when, together with nine other Comboni missionaries, we were expelled from Mozambique in 1974, following our stance with the document ‘*An Imperative of Conscience*’. We met again at the 1975 General Chapter, when he participated as provincial superior of Portugal, and I as the delegate of Mozambique. Our paths crossed again when I was provincial superior of Portugal (1978-1984) and provincial bursar in Mozambique (1997-2009) and he was a formator and teacher in Maputo. Finally, we both returned to our homeland permanently: I myself in 2009 and he in 2012. In the last years of his life, already a guest in the house in Viseu, as long as he was able Father Ramiro continued to read and pray, and to keep up to date by surfing the Internet. With his death, a historical and identifying reference to the life and events of our province has been lost. (*Father Manuel Ferreira Horta, mccj*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHER: Vincent, of Sc. Hermann Mahunan Djimini (T).

THE MOTHER: Olimpia, of Fathers Antonio (MZ) and Domenico Guarino (NAP).

THE BROTHERS: José Ramón, of Father Álvarez Pérez José Luis (ES); Vito, of Father Lino Morosinotto (U).

THE SISTERS: Adele, of Father Walter Borghesi (BR); Yolanda, of Father Ricardo Andrade García (M); Antonietta, of Father Vincenzo Santangelo (BR); Bruna, of Father Mansueto Dal Maso (BR).

THE COMBONI SISTER: Sr. Giuliangela Filippini.