

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

828

April 2024

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL NOTES OF THE 25TH Consulta (March -April)

Appointment of the new Archbishop of Gulu

On 22nd March 2024, the Holy Father appointed our confrere Monsignor Raphael p'Mony Wokorach Metropolitan Archbishop of Gulu; Mons. Wokorach succeeds Mons. John Baptist Odama who has headed the Metropolitan See of Gulu since 1999. The GC and all the confreres express their thanks to Mons. Odama for the long years of episcopal ministry in a Diocese so closely linked to our history. They also express to Mons. Wokorach the assurance of their prayers for him and for the Christian people of Gulu.

The work of the Commissions on two aspects of the Chapter Mandate

The Rule of Life

The Commission for the final drafting of the *Rule of Life* – composed of Father Fernando Domingues, Father Victor Hugo Castillo Matarrita and Brother Alberto Degan – met in Rome from 4th to 8th March. During the week, the Commission compared the text of the changes approved by the Chapter with the corresponding minutes and made an initial grammatical-linguistic revision. It then applied all the changes in terminology approved by the Chapter (for example, the use of the term 'circumscription', and the expressions 'consensus vote' and 'opinion vote'). It then updated all the notes that refer to the letters of our Founder, replacing the references to the books *Carte per l'Evan-gelizzazione dell'Africa* and *Il Messaggio di Daniele Comboni* with those relating to the *Writings*. Finally, it gave indications to update and enrich all the other notes with references to the most recent texts of

the Magisterium and proposed some new notes. On 8th March, the Commission met with Father Elias Sindjalim Essognimam, General Assistant, to present what has been done and to see together the next stages of the Commission's work: a final revision from a spelling and grammatical point of view; the choice of precise quotations from the most recent Magisterium; the revision and sorting of citations from the Writings. The commission will meet via Zoom from May 27th to 29th. The commission's final proposal will emerge from this meeting, which will then be reviewed by the external consultant, Father Fabio Baldan. It is therefore expected that the Commission will deliver the final version of the 'new' *Rule of Life* to the General Council, at the beginning of September, at the latest. At this point, the General Council will contact a canonist to review the new edition of the *RL*, before handing it over to the competent Vatican Dicastery for examination.

Code of Conduct

The members of the Central Commission of the *Code of Conduct*, Father Rafael González Ponce, Father Jeremias dos Santos Martins and Father Markus Lorenz Körber, met in Rome from 4th to 9th March 2024, being actually present for the first time, while Father Fidèle Katsan Fodagni was connected from Kinshasa electronically. On Tuesday, 5th March, the group was received by the General Council to share some ideas, expectations and indications on the timing and work to be done. For the rest of the time available, the Commission focused on reading the current text of the *Code of Conduct*, which came into force on 10th October 2019, trying to update it on the basis of the various indications suggested by recent Church documents: (1) *Motu proprio "Vos estis lux mundi"*, of 25th March 2023, (2) *"Vademecum on some procedural points in the treatment of cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics"*, of 5th June 2022, and (3) *"The New Book VI of the Code of Canon Law"*, of 1st June 2021. In general, the tasks of the members of the Commission – appointed in the December 2023 consultation in line with the dictates of *Chapter Acts* 45.3 – will be, in addition to updating the current version of the *Code of Conduct*, the development of the proposal for a *"Guide to the institutional approach to the protection of minors and vulnerable adults"* and the development of a summary scheme of practical procedure for the various cases of abuse, according to the new rules. During the last session (9th March), in the presence of the GC representative for the Commission, Father David Costa Domingues, Vicar

General, the group set the date of the next meeting (5th July 2024) which will be held electronically.

The General Council asks that anyone who has suggestions and/or corrections to make to the code, currently under revision, should send them as soon as possible to the Vicar General who will forward them to the commission.

LCM

The Comboni Lay Missionaries are organising their VII General Assembly which will be held from 9th to 15th December 2024, at the house of the Comboni Missionaries in Maia (Porto), Portugal, and thank Fr. Fernando Domingues, provincial superior of Portugal, the province, and the community of Maia, for their logistical support and hospitality.

Documentation of the official acts and procedures with canonical implications

The GC reminds all circumscription superiors of some important points regarding the documentation of official documents in general and especially those that have canonical implications. It reminds us that every act has value only when it is duly documented. This implies that decisions transmitted only in words are not enough. For this reason, he reminds all district superiors that all acts – starting from the granting of leave of absence, warnings and other disciplinary measures, definitive assignments to a community, appointments, assignments to an office, etc. – must always be done with written documents. Furthermore, copies of these documents must be duly and diligently preserved in the archives of the respective circumscription; a copy of the documents regarding canonical processes and absences must be sent by email, without delay, to the Vicar General for information and general archiving (See *Vademecum of the Provincial Superior* – 2022, 137.2).

Migrants of Europe Assembly – human mobility a global reality

The GC appreciates the initiative of the European continent which met in Castel Volturno from 27th February to 2nd March, to continue to develop the pastoral care of migrants in Europe which is one of the continental priorities. The teaching of Pope Francis sees in this pastoral care one of the signs of the times that characterises our era on a global level and an existential periphery to be reached as an outgoing

Church. The GC hopes that other continents can also undertake a continental path of sharing, reflection, and development of guidelines for Comboni pastoral care among migrants.

Programme of Journeys of the General Council

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie

- From 13th April to 14th May: TGB, Canonical visit
- From 16th to 19th May: Italy-Verona, Arena of Peace
- From 21st to 24th May: Italy-Rome, Assembly of the Union of Superiors General.

Fr. David Costa Domingues

- From 3rd to 18th April: NAP, Provincial Assembly, Formative community and the Archdiocese of Chicago
- From 4th to 12th May: Mexico, Meeting with Circumscription Superiors
- From 13th to 28th May: Colombia, Canonical Visit

Fr. Elias Sindjalim Essognimam

- From 10th to 19th April: Perù-Lima, Continental Assembly of Formation
- From 21st April to 14th May: TGB, Canonical Visit

Fr. Luigi Fernando Codianni

- From 8th to 16th April: Poland-Krakow, Meeting with Provincials of Europe, visit
- From 5th to 12th May: Kenya-Nairobi, Meeting of provincial bursars of APDESAM
- From 16th to 19th May: Italy-Verona, Arena of Peace
- From 25th to 30th June: Spain-Madrid, Provincial Assembly

Bro. Alberto Lamana Cónsola

From 29th April to 1st May: Italy-Verona, European meeting for Brothers

The next Consulta

The next Consulta will be held from 3rd to 22nd June 2024

Perpetual professions

Sc. Martin Jere (Z)	Lunzu (MZ)	09.02.2024
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Ordinations

Atara Ababayehu Joseph (ET)	Haro Wato (ET)	16.03.2024
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Holy Redeemer Guild

April	01 – 15 CN	16 – 30 EC
May	01 – 15 ET	16 – 31 I

Prayer Intentions

April – That the Lord may grant all missionaries a share in the Paschal Mystery of Christ – the mystery of that life which is stronger than death – that they may learn to strip themselves of the old man and put on the sentiments of Christ: tenderness, goodness, humility, patience, magnanimity and closeness to the least in history. *Let us pray.*

May – For the victims of the many armed conflicts of today, especially innocent children, women and families who suffer because of so much violence. May the Lord of Peace touch the hearts of those responsible for such evils and bring them to an end. *Let us pray.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

MAY

27	Last Saturday of the month, The Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart	Memorial
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Meaningful anniversaries

APRIL

25	San Pedro de San José de Betancur, religious	PCA (Central America, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua)
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MAY

2	Saint Athanasius, bishop and doctor of the Church	Egypt
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Publications

By the Archdiocese of Nampula, the Commission for Evangelisation and Catechesis, *Igreja ministerial missionária*, Nampula 2024. This is a monthly formation aid for the catechists of the diocese of Nampula (Mozambique) – Father Davide de Guidi informs us – covering the whole of 2024, elaborated also with the collaboration of the Combonians of Nampula novitiate. As explained in the Introduction, with this aid we wanted to follow up on what was proposed in the IV National Pastoral Assembly, celebrated in Nampula in May 2023, on the theme *Reavivar o anúncio e o Testemunho da Palavra de Deus hoje (Reviving the announcement and the Testimony of the Word of God today)*, in particular by offering catechists training on the first theme presented to the Assembly, “Being an outgoing, decidedly missionary Church”, and taking into account especially the orientations of Pope Francis on this theme.

Tonino Falaguasta Nyabenda, mccj, *Bibbia: una parola per noi. Breve introduzione alla Bibbia*, Missionari Comboniani, Verona. This booklet is a useful means for knowledge of Holy Scripture. “Every Christian – Father Eliseo Tacchella writes in the Preface – must be initiated into reading and meditating the Bible. It is only in this ‘Library’ that we can encounter Christ and discover the way to salvation and happiness.”

Specialisations

Father Luis Enrique Ibarra Hernández, mccj, a Mexican, obtained his doctorate in *Utroque Iure* from the Pontifical Lateran University on March 6, 2024, with the highest evaluation, ‘*Summa cum laude*’. His thesis is entitled *The Rights of Minors as a Universal Human Value, protected and guarded by the Church: punishability of the crime of abuse against the dignity of the minor between canonical legislation (c. 1398, §1-2) and Mexican state legislation*. In this research work, Father Luis Enrique, also starting from his pastoral experience, underlines how the recent canonical legislation, regarding the treatment of this crime, shows how the Church, after a painful moment of procrastination, has taken action to deal with this problem with wisdom and determination. The Church’s attention, however, does not stop only at the punishment of the crime committed but also accompanies the victims on their path to recovery. In the thesis, Father Luis Enrique chose to offer, through a concrete reality – the Mexican one – a

systematic historical analysis that allows us to make an updated reading of the phenomenon.

Father Teddy Keyari Njaya, mccj, upheld his thesis for a Master's degree at the Federal University of Roraima (Brazil), in the Department of Society and Frontier - Comparative Studies on Amazonian cultures. The title of the thesis is *Estudo do terricídio a partir dos saberes indígenas da etnoregiao São Marcos em Roraima entre os anos 2000 a 2022* ('Study of terricide starting from indigenous knowledge of the São Marcos ethnoregion in Roraima in the years between 2000 and 2022'). This is a highly complex study of the culture of the indigenous Macuxi peoples in the Amazon, which analyses how indigenous knowledge responds to the challenges of terricide from the point of view of epistemology.

STUDIUM COMBONIANUM

Comboni continues to surprise us

The discovery of a new letter, written and published in the Brescia newspaper L'Alba dated 15th January 1858, is extraordinary for many reasons, first of all, because it remained unknown to Comboni research for 166 years, despite being the first writing by Comboni given to the press that we know to date. The date of writing is also extraordinary: in the last 30 years, several unpublished letters from Comboni have been found (many of which were published in the latest issue of the *Archivio Comboniano*, Anno LIV, 2024), but none dating back to the period of his first missionary experience. But what makes this new letter more extraordinary is its recipient: Don Filippo Rovetta, parish priest of Limone sul Garda from 3rd January 1841 to 18th September 1849.

Therefore, Don Rovetta was the parish priest in Limone during Comboni's first 'Veronese' period. He was his parish priest when he entered the Mazza Institute when he discovered his missionary vocation, when his brother Virgilio died and when he swore to consecrate his life to the African mission. All very important moments in Comboni's journey.

Comboni historiography has always paid attention to Comboni's relationships with the town and with the parish priests of Limone because they were significant for the development of his vocation, but, in his known writings, we find Comboni's only mention of Don Rovetta in a

letter written to his father, Luigi Comboni, from Cairo, on 19th October 1857. In the critical publication of this letter, in the third number of the *Archivio Comboniano*, the reference to 'D. Rovetta' passed without a note to help the reader identify him.

From Comboni's new letter we learn that his bond with Don Filippo remains even more than eight years after his departure from Limone and that their relationship is fuelled by frequent correspondence (Comboni mentions a previous letter of his to his former parish priest, from just over two months earlier) and which extended to Don Filippo's cousin, who would become Comboni's benefactor despite not knowing him personally.

CONGO

Father Tesfaye and Father Codianni visit the Province of Congo

From 7th to 17th March 2024, Father Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General, and Father Luigi Codianni, Assistant General in charge of the economy, visited the province of Congo. During those ten days, the two members of the General Council met individually with the confreres of the areas of Kisangani and Kinshasa, as well as the various communities and Comboni works. They also attended part of the Provincial Council meeting.

The visit took place five months after the one made by Father Elias Sindjalim, General Assistant in charge of French-speaking Africa, when he came to accompany us in dialogue and listening during the process of the election of the Provincial Superior.

Father Tesfaye and Father Codianni thanked the confreres for their missionary testimony and for the sacrifices they encounter in evangelisation, formation, missionary animation, in safeguarding creation... despite the challenges that the province finds itself having to face in terms of personnel and the economic situation.

In the conversations they had with the two members of the General Council, the confreres mentioned, among the major challenges, the excessive "nationalisation" of the province (82 Congolese out of 105 legal members) and a certain difficulty in managing it. The Superior General gave assurances that the General Council would do its best to further internationalise the province. However, he added: «Having many Congolese brothers should not be perceived as a problem. Among you there exists a multi-ethnic reality, which should be welcomed as a real blessing. Your responsibility is to manage it well and

be open to welcoming and collaborating with everyone, regardless of their national or ethnic origin.

Father Tesfaye therefore urged the confreres to deepen their spiritual and community life, to be ready for true openness and to seek support in case of difficulty, in order to be able to live the mission with joy.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), which this year celebrates 60 years of Comboni presence, is the second province of the Institute in terms of radical members (132; second only to Italy). It has twelve communities located in very remote areas.

Father Tesfaye recognised that ten days are not enough to adequately understand the reality of the province. For this reason, he promised a more prolonged visit to all communities, in particular to those 'dispersed' in the savannah.

The confreres heartily thanked Father Tesfaye and Father Codianni for the closeness they have shown to the Congolese province and for their encouragement to continue and spread the Comboni mission in DR Congo.

EGYPT-SUDAN

Sakakini: Scout group Silver Jubilee

Last 8th March, the 'Abu el-Houl' scout group celebrated its first 25 years of life. Hundreds of people participated in the celebration, which retraced the history of this group with photos and testimonies, which took its first steps thanks also to the initiative of Father Cosimo Spadavecchia, who invited the scouts to Sakakini in 1999. The scout group is perhaps a privileged experience of dialogue between young Egyptians, Sudanese and South Sudanese, in a historical moment in which the arrival of at least half a million refugees from Sudan is not easily welcomed by the majority of Egyptian society. The group also boasts the merit of bringing together both Christians and Muslims, thus putting into practice the dialogue of life and action. The testimony of some parents was particularly touching, as they wanted to personally thank the scout guides for their educational role. The party was enlivened by songs, dances, sketches and a raffle.

Omdurman: signs of a return to normality

Over the last month, there has been news of a certain return to normality in some activities in the city of Omdurman. While the situation in Khartoum remains somewhat tense, with reports of rather strong

clashes also in North Khartoum, in Omdurman there is talk of banks reopening and markets resuming activity. The Ministry of Education also announced that students who should have taken the secondary exam last year will soon be able to proceed. This news comes in conjunction with the month of Ramadan, which has always been considered a time of truce, in which conflicts stopped. Our prayers continue for the return of peace, and for our return to Khartoum and Omdurman, perhaps even by the end of the year, *in sha Allah*.

ETHIOPIA

Priestly ordination of Abebayehu Tefera Atara

The Catholic community of Haro Wato, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Hawassa, in southern Ethiopia, has given its first priest to the Comboni Institute. Deacon Abebayehu Tefera Atara, originally from the area, was ordained a priest on 16th March 2024, in the parish of Haro Wato, dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. Bishop Seyoum Fransua, Apostolic Vicar of Hosanna, presided over the Eucharist and conferred the ordination in the Guji language.

A large crowd braved the strong sun and gathered on the mission's football field, seeking relief under the shade of the adjacent trees, to witness the first priestly ordination celebrated in the parish. The ceremony lasted more than three hours.

There were two dozen concelebrating priests, including Comboni missionaries, members of the local clergy and missionary institutes. Also present were numerous Comboni missionary nuns, some Handmaids of the Church (a local Institute of Hawassa) and Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM). The large parish choir contributed to solemnising and enlivening each moment.

During his homily, Bishop Seyoum praised the work of the Comboni missionaries over the last 29 years in Haro Wato. He then added: "Abeyayehu's ordination is one of the first fruits of this missionary work." There was great emotion and prolonged ululations of jubilation greeted the 'presentation' that the ordinand's father, Tefera, and his mother, Alemitu Gedeccho, made of their son, accompanying him to the altar for ordination.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Father Asfaha Yohanes, provincial superior of Ethiopia, after thanking all those present, announced that the newly ordained will soon travel to Mozambique,

where he has been assigned for his first missionary ministry. The celebration ended with a meal offered to everyone.

Father Abestayehu is 36 years old. He is the eldest of nine siblings: six boys and three girls. He did his novitiate in Namugongo (Uganda), and concluded his theological training in Nairobi (Kenya). After his diaconal ordination, on 28th August 2023, he exercised the diaconate in his parish of origin.

Father Abestayehu said: “Being a priest is a holy and complex vocation, which requires a strong sense of social responsibility, constant commitment to one’s spiritual development and total willingness to give love and compassion without reservation.”

Brother Desu Yisrashe, the vocations promoter of the province, prepared the first priestly ordination in Haro Wato with a week of meetings with young people. (*Father José Vieira, mccj*)

The Comboni Missionaries’ Provincial Assembly

From 26th to 29th March, the Comboni missionaries working in Ethiopia gathered at ‘Comboni House’, Hawassa for their annual assembly. Eighteen confreres, coming from eight communities, have taken up the *Six-Year Plan* (2022-2028), with the guidelines and implementation schedule, and drafted eight resolutions that will have to be implemented in the plan, in light of the priorities suggested for the coming years.

The resolutions approved by the Assembly concerned the Comboni Youth Center of Hawassa, the commitments to be carried out in the field of education, the restructuring-redevelopment of the buildings that make up the complex of the Provincial House of Addis Ababa, sustainability in the economic field, a greater presence of the Province in the digital world, collaboration with the Comboni Family, the liturgies to be adopted on the occasion of perpetual vows and Ordinations, and ongoing formation.

Father Nicolino Di Iorio, on behalf of the Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Hawassa, Father Juan Núñez, engaged in the Plenary of the Episcopal Conference, presented the situation of the Catholic Church among the Sidama, Guji, Borana and Amara ethnic groups, and other issues related to the Vicariate.

Sister Weynshet Tadesse Haile, head of the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS) in Ethiopia, presented the process of reconfiguring the provinces of their Institute and the situation of the CMS in the country. She also spoke of collaboration with the Comboni Missionaries in the

sectors of ongoing formation, missionary animation and vocational promotion.

On 28th March, the work concluded with a 'social evening', to which the Comboni sisters of the Hawassa community were also invited. Father Asfaha Yohannes Weldeghiorghis, Provincial Superior, presided over the final Mass.

EUROPE

Meeting of Comboni media directors in Europe

The directors of publications of the Comboni circumscriptions in Europe met from the evening of the 26th to the morning of 29th February 2024, in the Comboni community of Sunningdale, a residential neighbourhood west of London. The meeting had two main points on the agenda: the sharing of the latest news in each of the European Comboni headlines and the elaboration of the proposal for a *European Media Centre* to be presented to the provincial superiors of Europe, who will meet from 8th to 13th April next in Portugal.

The morning of 27 February was dedicated to the report of the directors of each constituency on the news that occurred in the various editorial offices represented: Verona (Italy), Madrid (Spain), London (London Province), the German-speaking Province (DSP) and the General Administration (Rome).

Some of the participants expressed the urgent need to clearly regulate the research and use of photos used by our magazines and websites, avoiding violating copyright laws and receiving fines or sanctions. It was pointed out that sensitivity on the topic has redoubled in recent years and that, therefore, our attention on the matter must also be redoubled. In this regard, there was a reference to the article published in *MCCJ Bulletin* n° 290, January 2022, pp. 57-60, "Legal considerations on the use and publication of images", which could help confreres working in the communications sector.

It was also said that for years we have been talking about the need to create a digital archive of photos – with the exclusive copyright of the Comboni Missionaries – accessible to all our publications. It was therefore reiterated that a photo library common to all Comboni media – possibly also involving the General Administration – should be one of the initiatives to be included in the *European Media Centre* project.

We also spoke about the difficulty of finding people – confreres and lay people – who can write regularly from the provinces and countries in which we are present.

Regarding the decline in the circulation of our magazines, it was recognised that a decrease in subscriptions to printed papers is physiological and is part of the broader process of disaffection with reading, which transcends the boundaries of the publishing field. That said, it was agreed that the situation could be improved.

Furthermore, in preparation for the Missionary Animation Assembly for the entire Institute, which will be held from 22nd to 26th April 2024 in Rome, the General Secretariat of the Mission has sent a questionnaire to the participants of the circumscriptions, the answers to which will serve to outline today's overview on the Comboni mission from the point of view of missionary animation, which also includes the media. A second text proposed for the knowledge of the participants is the study entitled 'The state of health of Comboni communications', which appeared in *MCCJ Bulletin* n° 293, October 2022, pp. 20-36. Father Carmine Curci offered a historical retrospective on the path of the European Media Center project, the idea of which was presented for the first time in 2012, at the European Assembly of Missionary Animation in Pesaro (Italy).

Wednesday 28th February was dedicated to addressing the main point of the meeting: the drafting of the project document for a European Media Centre. There was discussion about the various aims of the Centre, including the provision of practical training in journalism (particularly for confreres), networking, the exchange of material between our media and the sustainability of the various initiatives.

Various proposals emerged, the synthesis of which produced the document that will be sent to the provincial superiors of Europe. The document voted on and signed by the directors present, proposes the following name for the centre: *Comboni European Media Centre* (CEMEC), based in Dawson Place (London), and asks that a date be established for the official opening of CEMEC and the formal appointment of its director.

The day of the 28th ended with a positive evaluation of the meeting by the participants who were pleased that the desire to arrive at a concrete proposal prevailed over the divisions. The meeting concluded on the morning of 29th February with the celebration of Lauds and Mass.

Those who participated in the meeting were: Br. Tomasz Basiński, media contact for the circumscription superiors of Europe; Fr Rubén Padilla Rocha, provincial of the London Province (27-28 February); Fr. Enrique Bayo, director of *Mundo Negro* (Spain); Fr. Giuseppe Cavallini, director of *Nigrizia* (Italy); Brando Ricci, journalist of *Nigrizia* (Italy); Fr. Günther Hofmann, representing the German-speaking province (DSP); Fr. Carmine Curci, representing the London Province (*Southworld* and LP websites); Fr. John Downey, representing the London Province (*Comboni Mission*); and Fr. Arlindo Pinto, representing the General Administration (Communications Office). Absent (apologies): the representatives of Portugal (*Além-Mar* editorial) and Poland (*Misjonarze Kombonianie*).

Meeting in Madrid of bursars of the European provinces

From 19th to 23rd February 2024, the continental meeting of the bursars of the European Comboni provinces was held in Madrid. The event was held in the context of a series of meetings taking place on all continents after the 2022 General Chapter.

The participants first showed how the indications contained in the Chapter Acts regarding the economic sector were implemented by the various provinces and then translated into decisions and directives in the respective six-year plans recently drawn up. Attention was paid to the important issue of sustainability.

Of great relevance for the European continent is the problem of the ageing of 'original personnel' and the urgent need to organise the care of elderly, non-self-sufficient and/or sick confreres.

The debate and exchange of opinions on these two issues were not limited to the European continent, but expanded to the level of the entire Institute, with the presentation of reports, reflections and sharing on the need to have a "sustainability fund" and a "seniority fund". Other topics covered were: the economic situation of the Institute as a whole; the reporting tools currently used; the Code of Conduct in its reference to economic abuse, especially in terms of its prevention, the sharing of experiences in this regard, and the work of each bursar; and finally continental collaboration.

During the meeting, one fact clearly emerged: the economists of the 'old continent' strongly feel the responsibility of transmitting the knowledge acquired in this sector to the new generations and believe it is of fundamental importance to open our training to this essential

area for the life of the 'Institute, accompanying the new recruits and gradually introducing them into the concreteness of daily life.

ITALIA

European Assembly of the Migrants Commissions and JPIC

The European Assembly of the Migrants and JPIC Commissions ended on 2nd March 2024, in Castel Volturno, in the province of Caserta. About thirty participants from our Comboni Family immersed themselves for four days, from Wednesday 28th February to Saturday 2nd March, in the frontier reality of Castel Volturno where we have been present, as Comboni Missionaries, for almost thirty years to walk with our migrant brothers and sisters.

During the Assembly, there was a beautiful fraternal atmosphere which allowed us to listen to the global challenges of migration, closely interconnected with the main factors of global instability, such as climate change, planetary inequalities and conflicts. Some interventions made it possible to share particular keys to understanding the complexity of human mobility.

Lorenzo Prencipe, president of the Centre for Migration Studies of the Scalabrinian Missionaries, presented an interesting historical excursus on migrations and the commitment of the Church according to the new paradigm of Pope Francis to address the 'sign of the times' of migrations, while Hillary Sedu, an Afro-Italian lawyer of the Judiciary of Naples, clarified those legal aspects and that culture of rejection and distrust towards migrants which so often are an obstacle to coexistence in the land of arrival. Comboni missionary Father Giulio Albanese presented the broad horizon of the connection between conflicts and migrations in the European context with particular attention to the relationship with the African continent, and moderated the conference on Thursday evening 29 February, in Capua, entitled "*Europe, where are you going?*", in the presence of the bishop of Palermo, Corrado Lorefice, of Father Alex Zanotelli, Comboni missionary, and Filippo Miraglia, coordinator of the Immigration and Asylum Table.

The film *Io Capitano*, by Matteo Garrone, nominated for an Oscar, screened on the evening of Wednesday 29th February, enabled the assembly and the participating public to grasp and appreciate the legitimate dream of many young people who leave their lands, but also

the immense obstacles and barriers that threaten its path along the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea.

The Assembly was accompanied by very incisive and conscience-arousing testimonies. Luca Casarini, of the NGO Mediterranean Saving Humans, told us about his call, the internal scream: “We must go into the sea to save human lives!” with the Mediterranean Ship, while, during the Via Crucis of the People with the migrant communities, on Friday 1st March, we listened with emotion to the voice of Appiah Kwasi, a young Ghanaian cultural mediator from our Black & White Association, who recounted the journey into the desert, and the words of Joy Owen, a young Nigerian victim of trafficking, and Mariangela, a young Ukrainian refugee in Italy.

Now the ball is in our court, that of the Comboni Family. It is a question of taking back into our hands and our hearts the provocations heard, the information acquired, and the proposals presented in order to implement concrete actions and signs that relaunch Jesus’ dream, well illustrated by Luca Casarini, of “destructuring the borders” to give new impetus to a humanity without barriers. (*P. Filippo Ivardi Ganapini, mccj*)

One Display, two Ways of the Cross, and a convention in memory of Ezechiele Ramin

“*Life is beautiful and I am happy to surrender it*”, wrote Comboni missionary Ezekiel Ramin in one of his letters. The Servant of God was murdered on 24th July 1985 in the Amazon for having defended the rights of the *Surui* Indians and landless farmers.

A few days before the 32nd Martyrs Missionary Day (24th March 2024), numerous events were organised in the dioceses of Rome and Porto-Santa Rufina to remember the sacrifice of Ezekiel, known as Lele, and of those who embraced the cross of martyrdom on a mission for the Common Home.

We started on Friday 15th March with the missionary *Via Crucis* ‘Martyrs of the Earth’, in different languages, promoted by the UISG - USG Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Commission, by the Office for missionary cooperation between the Churches of the diocese of Rome, Earth and Mission and the Laudato Si’ Movement, held in the Laudato Si’ Garden of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joan Antide Thouret (On the Aventine, in Rome). For each station of the Via Crucis, one of the martyrs of Latin America was remembered and one of

the rights violated in the Amazon, both of people and of the environment, such as deforestation and oil exploitation.

On that occasion, in the presence of the two executive co-secretaries of the USG and UISG JPIC Commission, Sister Maamalifar M. Poreku and Father Roy Thomas, the exhibition 'Amazonia Passion' was inaugurated, curated by Terra e Missione, by the Ramin family and the Comboni Family, with drawings made by the missionary. Twelve panels were exhibited which alternate images of the Passion of Christ with scenes of the life of the peoples of the Amazon depicting an invitation to recognise oneself in this human frailty, climbing with Jesus to Calvary starting from the reality of the indigenous peoples, portrayed through the eyes of Father Ezekiel.

The exhibition was then transferred to the diocese of Porto-Santa Rufina, where, on Friday 22nd March, at 7.30 pm, the celebration of the Via Crucis 'Martyrs of the Earth' was repeated inside the Laudato Si' Garden of the Parish of the Nativity of Maria Santissima (in Via Santi Martiri di Selva Candida 7, within the Municipality of Rome). Promoted by the diocese, in collaboration with Terra e Missione, Laudato Si' Movement and the Comboni Missionaries, the moment of prayer saw the participation of Ezechiele Ramin's brothers and Sr. Giovanna Dugo, SFMA, to whom Father Lele had written several letters during his years of mission in the Amazon. Leading the celebration was Don Federico Tartaglia, director of the Missionary Centre of Porto-Santa Rufina.

On Saturday 23rd March, from 9.00 to 13.00, at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences 'Auxilium', the 'Guardians of the Garden' conference took place, focusing on the theme "*The martyrs of environmental justice and the exploitation of resources*". Participants: Monsignor Gianrico Ruzza, Bishop of the dioceses of Porto-Santa Rufina and Civitavecchia-Tarquinia; Sister Piera Ruffinatto, of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), the Dean of the "Auxilium" Faculty; Father Adelson Araújo dos Santos, SJ, theologian and professor of spirituality at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Father Giulio Albanese, MCCJ, director of the Social Communications Office and the Missionary Office of the Diocese of Rome; the journalists Gianni Beretta, Lucia Capuzzi and Toni Mira; the brothers of Ezekiel Ramin. Participation in the meeting, promoted in collaboration with Caritas of Rome and the GreenAccord Cultural Association, enabled the journalists to obtain four credits in their professional training.

Family Day of the Combonians of Padua

On Sunday 10th March 2024, the annual Family Day of the Comboni Missionaries from a large part of the Veneto region took place in Padua. The participation was very heartfelt, and the satisfaction was great both for the fraternal meeting between everyone and for the contents and reflections shared. Father Fabio Baldan, the provincial of Italy, was present.

Among the many present, there were also the families of 25 confreres, most of them on mission in Africa. They told of their sons and Comboni brothers on the mission. At times the story was "one of suffering", because it spoke of difficult and even dangerous moments, due to the political situation of some African and Latin American nations.

Three mothers – those of Fathers Diego Dalle Carbonare, Lorenzo Baccin and Alessandro Bedin – spoke about their children in Sudan, where, for a year, an absurd war has been fought, for the moment without any glimmer of a peaceful solution. They spoke about them with concern, but also with pride for their courage and the gift they make of their lives, remaining close to a suffering people.

With deep emotion, the brothers and sisters of Father Roberto Ardini and Fathers Lorenzo, Elio and Vittorio Farronato, at present in the Congo, spoke of that country of great riches, plundered by Western industry that leaves behind death and misery.

With trust and hope, the parents of Msgr. Christian Carlassare spoke of their son's commitment in South Sudan for true reconciliation, seeking, walking – even physically – together with his people. "Those wounded legs still walk, stronger than before, to build peace!"

Also present with his family was Father Gino Pastore who, with strong emotion, spoke about the difficult, complicated and sad situation in Mozambique. Father Lino Morosinotto's family members invited everyone not to forget Uganda, where Father Lino has lived and worked for decades.

The missions in Ecuador were particularly 'represented' by the family members of Father Ottorino Poletto (also present at the celebration) and by those of Father Stefano Zuin; there was also brother Umberto Martinuzzo, in Italy for a short period.

Also present were the family members of Father Daniele Zarantonello (in Colombia), the mother of Brother Simone Bauce (in Brazil) and the family members of Father Vittorio Moretto (in Mexico). The words of Gabriella, a sister of Father Giuseppe Santi, as she remembered her brother killed in Uganda in 1979, aroused deep emotion.

Also present were the families of six brothers in Italy today: Father Vittorio Barin, Father Girolamo Miante, Father Vincenzo Todesco, Father Franco Noventa, Father Giorgio Padovan and Father Fabio Bal-dan (happy to meet his mother at the party).

Father Fabio was the guest of honour and entertained the guests, presenting an overview of the Comboni Institute in the world, highlighting the great change taking place, due to the origin of its members. The number of Italian Comboni Missionaries is continually decreasing while that of our African confreres who represent the younger part of the Institute is increasing. The commitments of the increasingly smaller and more elderly group of European Comboni Missionaries are also changing. Even the structures are forced to change: some houses are expected to be sold; for others, however, their use may be shared, making use of available space for homeless people, whether Italian or from other nations.

A great change is also taking place in the house and the Comboni community of Padua. Community spaces will be reduced and the house will be shared with a large group of university students.

Father Fabio's speech was greatly appreciated for the precise information it provided.

The day continued with a heartfelt celebration of the Eucharist and a fraternal convivial moment, experienced with joy by all. The comment of many family members was: "We feel at home here. We are very happy to participate in this celebration!" (*Father Gaetano Montresor, mccj*).

Verona: Installing the Relic of Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli

On 27th March, the XXXVII anniversary of the death of Bl. Giuseppe Ambrosoli, one of his bone relics was placed in the Comboni chapel of the Mother House of Verona, in the presence of all the brothers of the community, some Comboni nuns and lay people, and a good group of other friends. The rite of placing the precious relic began with the procession from the Buon Pastore chapel (on the first floor) to the historic Comboni chapel, which preserves the urn with some of the Founder's bones. Fr Eliseo Tacchella presided over the Eucharist, and Fr Tonino Falaguasta illustrated in his homily the missionary, spiritual and professional testimony of the blessed doctor from Kalongo (Uganda); after communion, some Comboni missionaries and Sisters shared their memories of Blessed Joseph.

After the final blessing, Fr. Eliseo placed the relic in the prepared urn on a column in the presbytery. In the ceremony, the hope clearly emerged that other columns could also accommodate the relics of new blessed and saints of the Comboni Family in the future and that this chapel would increasingly become a 'Combonian Sanctuary'. (*Father Romeo Ballan, mccj*)

MOÇAMBIQUE

Terrorist attacks continue in northern Mozambique

Since 20th February, due to the resurgence of terrorist attacks in the region on the border between the Mozambican provinces of Nampula and Cabo Delgado, thousands of people from the southern area of Cabo Delgado have abandoned their homes and started walking in search of a safe place. The cities of Chiúre (south of Cabo Delgado) and Namapa (north of Nampula), the closest, welcomed the largest number of displaced people. In a statement from the Diocesan Caritas of Nacala, we read: "In less than 4 days, the number of displaced people in Namapa has exceeded 33,000. Of these, more than 20 thousand are under 14 years old. Many are malnourished, exhausted and sick."

The Carmelite nuns and Comboni fathers Benjamin Avoga and Gino Pastore have decided to act and, through the Nutrition Center, support more than one hundred mothers and children on a daily basis.

The Diocesan Caritas of Nacala and the religious institutes that work in this area have appealed for solidarity from all the parishes and institutes, asking that the money from the 'Lenten fast' be allocated to this cause, in order to increase the support given to the displaced, especially to children.

According to news in recent days, spread by local media, various armed groups, which have been raging in Cabo Delgado since 2017, have attacked and occupied several localities in the Quissanga district, which is about 100 kilometres from the city of Pemba, the capital of the province of Cabo Delgado, and the island of Quirimba, the largest in the Quirimbas archipelago, in the Indian Ocean close to Mozambique.

Meanwhile, the three northern provinces of Mozambique – Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado – are hit by another plague: an epidemic of very contagious viral haemorrhagic conjunctivitis.

SOUTH AFRICA

Comboni Centenary at Orange Farm

The second local celebration of the Comboni centenary in South Africa, after the one held in Silverton, took place on 16th March in the parish church of Saint Charles Lwanga in Orange Farm, a populous township south of Johannesburg, in the diocese of the same name. The Christians, who came in large numbers, wanted to show affection and gratitude to our confreres, in particular to Father Kifle Kirba and Father Francis Manana, today at the helm of the parish, entrusted to the Comboni Missionaries since 2015.

The celebration began at nine o'clock in the morning with a theatrical performance by a group of very young boys and girls who staged the life of Saint Daniele Comboni and his love for Africa.

Father John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, provincial superior, in his detailed reflection, highlighted the originality of Comboni, who, ahead of his time, was able to combine evangelisation and human development – the key theme of the celebration at Orange Farm – in his commitment to the regeneration of Africa. The catholicity of Comboni's work, making common cause with the oppressed, the fight against slavery (still present in modern forms, such as economic neocolonialism, as underlined by Father John Baptist), and trust in Africans... are some of the aspects of the reflection offered to the participants who, for the first time, were able to appreciate, in summary, the richness of the Comboni charism.

A PowerPoint presentation, prepared by Father Rafael Armada and Father Efreem Tresoldi, illustrated the main stages and places of our 'secular' service in South Africa, focusing on the commitment to the human development of the parish of Saint Charles Lwanga, which for years has run a technical school and an after-school project for over a hundred children with learning difficulties.

In his testimony, a parishioner, known for his work in the field of justice and peace and the protection of creation, launched a challenge to the Christian community so that, following the example of Saint Daniel Comboni, a standard bearer of fraternal communion, it may put an end to every type of discrimination, starting with the habit of distinguishing South Africans from African immigrants.

The Eucharistic celebration, presided over by the Vicar for consecrated life of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, was concelebrated by fifteen priests. Alongside our confreres, Franciscans and Mis-

sionaries of Africa who were the founders of the parish took part. The parish choir accompanied the mass, involving the assembly enthusiastically with songs accompanied by the sound of drums. The festivities concluded with a meal offered to all the parishioners by the Catholic Women's Association. (*Father Efrem Tresoldi, mcccj*)

CHAD

The Visit of Father Elias Sindjalim to the Delegation

Listen, learn and accompany. Here are the three verbs that inspired Father Elias Sindjalim Essognimam in his first official visit to the Chadian delegation, from 1st to 28th February 2024, as General Assistant responsible for French-speaking Africa.

Father Elias was able to visit all the communities and meet not only the confreres but also the bishops, the Comboni Sisters, the sector managers, the catechists and "the people of God with whom they share the daily life of the mission."

Listening – "I came first of all – he writes in his letter after the visit – to listen to you, my brothers, your story, the beauty of what you are experiencing, the difficulties encountered and everything you have to say to the General Council and the Institute."

Knowing – For Father Elias, the visit was an opportunity to get to know the confreres in their personal and community realities: "It is one thing to read the minutes, another thing is to touch the concrete reality of the mission in Chad, a beautiful reality with a very fruitful Comboni presence. I saw the young confreres with a lot of missionary enthusiasm, ready to carry on the mission, despite the difficulties linked to the heat and distances."

Accompanying – "I have come to encourage you, to tell you that you are not alone and that the General Council has our Comboni mission in Chad at heart. This is why it is important to evaluate as best we can, as the General Council, to walk together with you and accompany the mission you undertake."

The brothers of the delegation said they were deeply grateful for the closeness of the General Council expressed through the presence of Father Elias. The visit was a moment of review and reflection for everyone, which increased the common desire to start again with renewed missionary impetus, in the awareness of always being "accompanied" by the entire Institute.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Henry Oswaldo Dunn Álvarez (20.12.1977 – 05.01.2024)

Henry Oswaldo was born in Limón, Costa Rica, on 20th December 1977. After elementary and middle school, he attended high school, where he obtained a technical diploma in commercial accounting.

I met Henry in 1998 in San José (Costa Rica) when he attended the first year of postulancy at the Comboni Seminary, in the Barrio Sagrada Familia. He came from the diocesan seminary, where he had already completed the introductory course: he was proud to have opted for the mission, and he did not hide it.

Once the postulancy was finished, in August 2001 we left together for the novitiate in Sahuayo, Mexico. The first-year group was made up of 18 novices. Officially the novitiate began for first-year students on 21st September, St. Matthew's Day.

Together we also had our first "missionary experience" outside the novitiate, starting from Holy Week 2002, in the parish of Patamban; we had our second experience – in a community – at the Comboni community of Monterrey.

On 10th May 2003, we made our first profession. Every newly professed already knows where he will go for the international scholasticate: Henry opted for the Democratic Republic of Congo. A few weeks later, he left for Kinshasa having given those of us from Central America a close experience of Africa. In Kinshasa, he made his final vows on 10th October 2006.

Of the moments spent with Henry, I particularly remember his poetic flair: he liked to write in a 'mystical way' about the Cross, about the Madonna, about the sense of total abandonment... Yes, I would say that he intended to discover Jesus and share him also through writing. For his priestly ordination, Henry returned to his homeland, and the ceremony took place in the Cathedral of Limón on 22nd September 2007. The event enjoys two 'firsts': Henry is the first priest to be ordained in that recently completed cathedral, and he is also the first to become a priest at the hands of the newly elected bishop of Limón, Monsignor José Rafael Quirós. He will have another first in his life: he will be the first Comboni missionary from the Province of Central America to die, at the early age of 46.

His first mission as a priest was in the province of Brazil, from 2007 to 2016. He loved living there, among the indigenous people, among the boats that travel along the rivers, involved with all his energy in

missionary pastoral care as we understand it... between difficulties and joys.

He was appointed community superior and elected a member of the Provincial Council. The most needy populations penetrated deeply into his heart and mind.

I again met him when he returned to his homeland in 2017, with the task of relaunching missionary animation in the province of Central America. The superiors had faith in his young spirit and engaging mission experience, particularly the most recent one in Manaus.

In the PCA, Father Henry brought about a revival of missionary animation and vocation promotion, while in the CAM Community of San José he offered his appreciated contribution to the management of the procurator's office.

In 2022, in Costa Rica, there began to take shape an idea that was immediately found attractive but needed more study before becoming a concrete proposal: the *Comboni Cenacles*. The objective is to promote prayer for missions in families, make Comboni and the Comboni charism better known, and encourage vocations in families and parishes. Henry took the project to heart and became an ardent promoter, even if only for little more than a year. His sudden death left a void not only in the province and also in these 'cenacles'.

Father Henry wanted an atmosphere of order, organisation and prayer for his community. I remember his last visits to Costa Rica and to the CAM community, always with new ideas for the renovation of the chapel, which the members wanted to improve as a space for prayer: however, thanks to him, the little chapel became a genuine space for recollection.

Towards the end of 2023, he had his first light attacks of fever. "Nothing to worry about," he would say. At the beginning of the new year, his fever rose so much he had to be hospitalised. He was diagnosed with a "serious infection" of the lungs which quickly turned into generalised septicaemia. On 5th January 2024, Father Oswaldo passed away. (*Father Juan Diego Calderón Vargas mccc*)

Fr. Orlando Borghi (25.10.1944 – 15.01.2024)

Orlando was born in Rescaldina in the province of Milan, on 25th October 1944. He attended primary school in the town. Every day, he spent hours and hours at the parish oratory, always ready to lend a hand to the parish priest and the curate.

In 1955 he enrolled in the industrial vocational training school of Rescaldina, located in the oratory premises. In 1957, a Comboni missionary, a teacher in the Venegono Inferiore scholasticate, was in Rescaldina for a week of missionary animation. Orlando was fascinated. He approached the parish priest and told him he wanted to become a missionary.

On 10th October 1967, he entered the novitiate in Gozzano. On 9 September 1969 he took his first religious vows and moved to Rome for theology courses.

On 8th December 1972, in the letter in which he communicated his 'missionary option' to the General Council, Orlando wrote: "I would like to leave immediately for the mission. I am available for every mission land, Spanish, English and French speaking; if you want to send me on a Portuguese-speaking mission, I will not preclude this path: I would commit myself to studying it thoroughly in the coming months. If your decision is different from what I deeply desire and I am asked to spend some time in the Italian province, I am also available for this, albeit with a pinch of regret."

On 2nd April 1973 Orlando made his perpetual religious profession and on 15th September of the same year he was ordained a priest in the cathedral of Como, at the hands of Bishop Teresio Ferraroni.

He already had the letter in his pocket telling him that he had been assigned to the Italian province for missionary animation and vocation promotion. That 'pinch of regret' does not last long: he just needed to reach the community of Troia, where there was also a seminary with 71 students, to recover all his enthusiasm. He spent four years there, esteemed and loved by everyone, even in the parishes that he visited to look for future missionaries.

In March 1977, he was assigned to the Comboni province of Mexico: The Apostolic Vicar of La Paz (Baja California) asked for a young missionary who could take an interest in the youth of that vicariate.

A few months later, Father Orlando was assistant parish priest of the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in La Paz, and in 1979, he was parish priest in Bahía Tortugas, also in Baja California Sur. In the missionary and pastoral context in which he found himself operating, Father Orlando finally feels like he is in the world and environment he has always dreamed of. In 1982 they asked him to go to Tuxtepec, first as superior of the Comboni community, then also as parish priest of the mission, and he wrote to his family, friends and parishioners: "I feel I am in Heaven."

In July 1987 he agreed to spend a sabbatical in Rome. He enrolled in refresher courses available both at our house and in other theological institutes in the capital. Then he returned to Mexico, assigned to the postulancy of Xochimilco, in Mexico City, as a formator of student postulants.

He remained in the postulancy for only two years. In 1990 he was again free to dedicate himself to parish pastoral work in La Paz, in the parish of Corazón de María. He writes home: "It's so beautiful here that I would stay here for my whole life, if only they would let me." The "paradise" of La Paz lasted until June 1997, when he is assigned to the parish of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, in Guerrero Negro. There too, Father Orlando was welcomed with open arms, and easily made friends with everybody.

However, Father Orlando also received a request to return to his homeland for service in his province of origin. He accepts reluctantly and on 1st January 2002 he became the superior of the Comboni community of Casa Madre in Verona.

After three and a half years spent in Verona, in September 2005 he was able to return to Mexico, to the community of Guadalajara, capital of the state of Jalisco, in charge of pastoral care and missionary animation. The local community was a large one. In these years, the seminary was closed and construction began of the Oasis, a centre for elderly and sick missionaries. Father Orlando took to heart the construction of the large chapel dedicated to Saint Daniel Comboni. But, close by it, he wanted halls, rooms and offices for the catechesis of children, teenagers and adults (a hall bears his name today).

In 2009, he spent five months in Rome, for the renewal course, and in September of the same year, he left for the mission again, assigned to the then Central American Delegation. He mostly resided in San Salvador (El Salvador), a place that became his second home. There he dedicated himself to the recovery of street children, built churches, oratories, structures for lay training courses, centers for vocational promotion... As they already did during the years he spent in Mexico, the parishioners of Rescaldina are once again at his side, ready to help him in any way.

In 2020 he returned to San Salvador determined not to move again. But he agreed to return to Italy to celebrate his 50th anniversary of priesthood on Sunday 17th September 2023, the patronal feast of the parish of Rescaldina. In early November, he was back in San Salvador. His health, however, suddenly began to fail; in December he felt

very weak and was diagnosed with cancer. He says: "What a grace! If I had been taken ill sick in Italy, they wouldn't have let me return. Instead, I'm here... I've always wanted to die 'on the missions'." His health deteriorated rapidly. The confreres watched him pass away little by little. The faithful of the parishes of San Tommaso and San Daniele Comboni worked hard to take care of him. Everyone was praying for him.

Father Orlando died in San Salvador on 15th January 2024. There were two nights of vigil, the first in the church of San Tommaso and the second in that of Saint Daniel Comboni. After the funeral, his body was buried in the parish church of Saint Daniel Comboni. On the 20th, in Rescaldina, a funeral mass was celebrated for him, the church crowded with people who knew, loved and supported him. (*Father Ramón A. Orendáin C., mccj, and Father Franco Moretti, mcccj*)

Bro. Abele Redaelli (01.04.1935 – 05.03.2024)

Brother Abele was born on 1st April 1935 in Carate Brianza, in the province of Milan (Italy). He did his novitiate in Gozzano (1963-65). On 9th September he took his first vows and on 9th September 1971 he made his final profession. For a couple of years, he was a cook in the Comboni community of Via Saldini, in Milan, and then in Barolo (Cuneo). From 1967 to 1969 he was in Sunningdale to learn the language, but he also had the job of housekeeper.

In May 1969 he was in Khartoum (Sudan), at Comboni College, then as a clerk at the provincial house for over twenty years. He was then sent to Port Sudan (1991-1996) and then to Nyala (1996-1999). In 2000 he attended a renewal course in Rome and then returned to Nyala. In 2004, he was bursar of the Comboni community of Malakal. In 2006 he was sent to Old Fangak to learn the Nuer language, but he fell ill and had to return to Khartoum for treatment. Having recovered, he returned to Port Sudan. In 2008 he was in El Obeid. Three years later, he was again appointed to Nyala, where he remained until 2016. Altogether, Brother Abel exercised his missionary ministry in Sudan for 47 years.

In 2017, he returned to Italy for health reasons, to the Sick Assistance Centre in Milan. In December 2021, he retired to Castel D'Azzano, to the 'Fratel Alfredo Fiorini' Centre.

In many who met him, he left the memory of a good, serene, smiling person capable of expressing gratitude for large and small things, which he considered a free gift from the Lord who loved him.

Towards the end of his life, health problems followed one after the other, forcing him to be hospitalised for about two weeks. He was taken back to his community and passed away on March 5, 2024, lovingly cared for by the community members and members of staff. The funeral was celebrated in the chapel of the Centre on Friday 8th March. In addition to members of the community, some family members and confreres and Sisters from nearby communities were present. Father Renzo Piazza, superior of the community, introduced the celebration, and then Father Luciano Perina, Brother Abele's mission companion in Sudan, presided over the celebration. In his homily, Father Luciano underlined the simplicity of Brother Abele, his friendliness and goodness of spirit, his joviality and optimism, and the way the people welcomed him. "He was respected by everyone. He had a solid spirituality that went to the essentials. He was a missionary immersed in God, but also in concrete reality."

To those who asked him "How are you?", he invariably replied: "Fantastic!", to the point that the healthcare workers of Castel d'Azzano had nicknamed him 'Brother Abele, the Fantastic!'

After the funeral, his body was taken to his town where he was buried, at the end of a celebration of the Word.

(Father Renzo Piazza, mccj)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE MOTHERS: Weronika, of the Sc. Miroslaw Kalinowski (†); Margaret, of Father Patrick Burns (†).

THE BROTHER: Gregory, of Father Kenneth John James Gerth (NAP).

THE SISTER: Rita, of Father Josef Gerner (DSP).

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sister Tsewaehab Hagos Ghebrewold, Sister Maria de las Mercedes Montero Pérez, Sister M. Francesca Galbiati, Sister Virginia Soso, Sister M. Primina De Guidi.