**XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER
CHAPTER ACTS 2015**

**Comboni Missionary Disciples**

**called to live the joy of the Gospel in today’s world**

Photograph of Capitulars

**Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus**

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**CONTENTS**

Abbreviations

Letter of Presentation

Introduction

**The Present Situation**

**The Spirit calls us to dream and to convert ourselves**

*Mission*

*Persons*

*Re-Organization*

**Operational indications**

A. The Mission

*Reflection on, and revision of, Commitments*

*Evangelization and specific pastoral services*

*The ‘Comboni’ Mission in Europe*

B. Persons

 *Inter-culturality*

 *Spirituality*

 *Reading and revisiting the Rule of Life*

 *Revision of the Rule of Life*

 *Number and location of the International Scholasticates and ICB*

 *Missionary Service of Scholastics*

 *Mixed Institute*

*Code of Conduct*

C. Re-Organization

 *Persons and Rotation*

 *Specializations*

*Co-ordination of the Institute and the General Direction*

*Continentality*

*Continental Reference Person for Brothers*

*Circumscriptions and Merging*

D. Finance

 *Implementation of the XVII General Chapter*

 *Sustainability and Local Resources*

 *Inter-Provincial Sharing*

 *Patrimony and Self-Limitation*

*Limits of Extraordinary Expenditure for each Circumscription*

*Table: Limits of Extraordinary Expenditure 2015*

The Holy Father’s Address to the Participants of the XVIII General Chapter

Prayer to Mary

**ABBREVIATIONS**

AEFJN Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network

CA Chapter Acts

CHPW Comboni Human Promotion Work

CIC Codex Iuris Canonici

CLM Comboni Lay Missionaries

CMS Comboni Missionary Sisters

CSM Comboni Secular Missionaries

EC Episcopal Conference

EG Evangelii Gaudium

FSCJ Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

GC General Council

GD General Direction

GDF General Directory for Finance

ICB International Centres for Brothers

JP/IC Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

LS Laudato Si’

MCCJ Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus

MFSC Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart

RFIS Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum

RL Rule of Life

TCF Total Common Fund

USG Union of Superiors General

VIVAT Humanitarian and Ecclesial Network at the United Nations

W Writings of St. Daniel Comboni

LETTER OF PRESENTATION

“*And immediately* … *he followed him along the road”*

*(Mark 10:52)*

Dearest Confrères,

 May the joy of the Risen Lord, who guides and accompanies us along the pathways of this world, dwell in the heart of each one of you.

 In your hands you now have the Acts of the XVIII General Chapter, the fruit of the work and discernment of the Capitular Confrères. We must recognize, however, that their work was made possible thanks to the extensive participation of each Confrère and all the Circumscriptions in the preparation for the Chapter itself. In a broad sense, therefore, these Acts are the fruit of the work and discernment of the Institute as a whole.

 Each Chapter is a ‘stand alone’ event and one Chapter does not resemble any other one. The XVIII General Chapter was special, first because many of the Capitular Confrères were native sons of Africa and the Americas, then because of the atmosphere of joy and fraternity that reigned among us, and finally because of the communion we all experienced.

 Truly we did discover anew the beauty of the gift of the vocation that renders us Comboni Missionary Disciples called to live the joy of the Gospel in today’s world. We exchanged ideas and voiced positions, ever seeking to grasp the voice of the Spirit speaking to us through a Confrère, ever striving to catch a glimpse of the pathways the Lord is marking for our Institute at this moment in history. The joy of being all together, engaging in dialogue and sharing our life as missionaries travelling the oftentimes dusty roads of our world today enabled us to once again feel the sense of our being brothers, sons of the same Father, co-heirs of the same charism.

 We also realized we are not alone on this journey and are accompanied by all the Confrères who live the passion for the Mission and for the peoples for whom they spend their whole lives. Even more than that, with our own hands we touched the presence of the Risen Lord, who goes before us and calls on us to be His co-workers in announcing the Father’s merciful love.

 Through these Charter Acts we wish to convey to you everything the Chapter decided, as well as the journey it has set for the entire Institute during the coming six years. Above all, however, we want to pass on to you the experience we lived, how we reached what these Acts embody, how we felt, and how enriched we felt when the Chapter came to an end.

 When you take these Acts in hand in the Circumscriptions to study and assume ownership of them, we trust and hope you will have the same experience we did: an experience of joy. The joy of one who knows he is called to conversion in order to share the self-same Mission of Christ and incarnate God’s passion for humanity today. The joy of one who discovers himself to be part of a common project that leads us to be small “Cenacles of Apostles” who set the world afire with the love of the Father rendered tangibly manifest to us in Christ. Or, as Pope Francis says, “to develop a spiritual taste for being close to people’s lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy” (*EG, No. 268*).

 We write these few lines to you from Limone sul Garda, from the birthplace of St. Daniel Comboni, our Father and Founder, and we place all the work during the next Six Years under his gaze so he may help us make God’s dream come true.

 The dream God has for each person He gives us as our Confrère: we are a gift for one another, a gift called to experience the joy of being with the Lord and announcing this joy to all the peoples of this earth.

 The dream God has for the Mission which He and the Church entrust to us, and to which they send us forth in order to be witnesses of that love which transforms and makes us children of the same God and brothers among ourselves.

 The dream God has for our Institute, calling us to undertake the re-structuring that enables us to respond to the challenges of the Mission today in a world subject to constant transformation. The re-organization of the Institute is not an issue of survival for the Institute itself, but rather a response to the urgent need to endow the Institute with those structures that enable us to serve the Mission all the better.

 The Chapter now hands over its reflections to the Institute as a whole, and we are all responsible for their implementation.

 We are encouraged by the words addressed to us by Pope Francis when he received us in audience at the end of the Chapter.

 Like Comboni, we harbour trust in the future because God holds it in His hands. We are also grateful to the Lord, who calls us to be instruments so that His dream may come true.

 May Mary, the Mother of God and our Mother, help us to be Comboni Missionary Disciples evermore joyful in living and announcing the Gospel in today’s world.

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, Superior-General

Fr. Rogelio Bustos Juárez

Fr. Pietro Ciuciulla

Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins

Br. Alberto Lamana Cónsola

**Comboni Missionary Disciples called to live the joy of the Gospel in today’s world**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. A living encounter with Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the dead to give life to the world, is the source of our being Comboni Missionaries (*RL, No. 21.1*). It is from this founding experience that our vocation springs forth: being at the margins of society as witnesses and prophets of fraternal relations based on forgiveness, mercy and on the joy of the Gospel. The footsteps of Daniel Comboni take us to the peripheries of suffering among the poorest and not yet evangelized. This is the horizon of our Mission.
2. **Missionary Disciples**: We are disciples of Jesus, called to accomplish His plan. Characteristic of such a disciple is the personal encounter with the Good Shepherd, listening to His voice, experiencing His love and following Him (*John 10:1-21*). Jesus calls us to live and to promote the fullness of life for all, aware that we live and work in a world where powerful forces pursue a project of death and destruction.
3. **Comboni Missionaries:** Saint Daniel Comboni, our Father in the Mission, calls us to live as a ‘small Cenacle of Apostles’ (*Writings, No. 2648*), ever ready to actualize our charism in the face of new missionary challenges (*RL, No. 1.3*). We have received and identify ourselves with a rich spiritual heritage: the Good Shepherd, sign of a life freely given so that all might have life to the full; the Cross, where the pierced Heart of Christ invites us to care for one another; Africa, icon of the human and cultural richness of our world, but also of the cry of the poor who are evangelized and become evangelizers.
4. **Called to live the joy of the Gospel**: a life given to Jesus and His people is a beautiful life, it is a life that gives joy (*EG, No. 268*). This is clearly a joy that has a high price: in order to defend the life of the sheep we often have to defend them from wolves and from thieves. Our Comboni Martyrs remind us constantly of this. Comboni tells us: “The happiest day of my life will be the one in which I will give my life for you” (*Writings, No. 3159*). We Comboni Missionaries truly live our identity when we passionately love people and struggle to ensure that all men and women lead a full life, a life worthy of their human calling.
5. **In today’s world:** The world is our *locus theologicus*, in which we are called to sow and cultivate the seeds of reconciliation and love. This is a multi-cultural world where we can offer the witness that a common fraternity among people of different continents, cultures and creeds is possible. Although we are perhaps not always conscious of this, we possess a great richness and a great joy to proclaim to others.
6. We are very grateful for the gift of being evangelized by the persons and the peoples with whom we walk. Furthermore, we harbour a great sense of gratitude to God for his nearness to us. In our weakness we are the first to be in need of His mercy. We want to continue journeying among the people of our world as pilgrims, in communion with the Church, for the accomplishment of the Mission that Jesus entrusts us today: “I have come so that they may have life, and have life in abundance” (*John, 10:10*).

**THE PRESENT SITUATION**

1. The world today is a large village; we feel geographically nearer to one another and the beauty of our differences enriches us and opens us to solidarity. Notwithstanding, a globalization of social inequality, injustice and poverty has taken hold, the *globalization of indifference* (*EG, No. 54*): others are not appreciated as brothers and sisters in a common humanity, but are seen as mere objects. A good part of humanity desperately seeks for justice, for survival, and many are often forced to abandon their own countries. The new poverties of today do not exist only in the South of the world; the whole planet is authentic missionary territory.
2. Among the most abandoned and mistreated of the poor is our oppressed and devastated earth, which “has been groaning in labour pains until now” (*Romans 8:22*; *LS, No. 2*).
3. The Church also shares in the weariness and confusion of the world. On one hand, it is plagued by scandals, rejection and cultural counter position in Western society; on the other hand, the breath of the Spirit through Pope Francis calls the Church to go forth out of her comfort zone and have the courage to reach the peripheries of society which are in search of the light of the Gospel (*EG, No. 20*).
4. Many of our Comboni Communities are already present in these peripheries:

areas of conflict and war, situations of continuous risk, political repression, social

and environmental violence, religious indifference and intolerance, xenophobia

and situations similar to those of slavery.

1. Our commitment has increased in the field of reconciliation, justice, peace and the integrity of creation (JP/IC) as intrinsic elements of evangelization, in line with various courageous pronouncements of Local Churches on the basis of the Social Doctrine of the Church.
2. The growing awareness of a new paradigm of Mission spurs us on to re-organize

 our activities along ministerial lines.

1. We are increasingly aware of the spiritual and cultural richness of discarded minorities (especially the Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples, pygmies and pastoralists, and urban slum-dwellers), believers in Islam, eastern religions and traditional African religions. All the more do we strive to be close to them as subjects and protagonists of their own re-birth and liberation, so they may have greater trust in their own richness and potential.
2. There are many well-identified Comboni Missionaries, generous and ready to give up their lives for Christ and the Mission; they spend their lives quietly, day after day, in the various services entrusted to them. The presence of Confrères who are witnesses of the Risen Lord among the poor and marginalized is a blessing that reminds us of the reason for our vocation in life. They are ‘existential parables’, reference points in the various services that we render.
3. Our Institute’s multi-culturality has increased considerably, and this is both an opportunity and a challenge for us. On the other hand, the number of Confrères is decreasing, but we nonetheless continue maintaining so many commitments in four continents. The Lord is still sending us vocations, in particular from Africa, but in other countries vocations are scarce.
4. The growth of vocations to our Institute in Africa, and the rapid diffusion of devotion to St. Daniel Comboni there, constitute a clear ‘sign of the times’ which bears witness to a continent that is grateful for the gift of faith and wishes to open itself to the Mission.
5. The growing number of Confrères who leave the Institute questions us. Others amongst us live in particular situations due to wounds related to their own personality, or the challenges of Community Life, or difficult experiences lived in the Mission. The significant decrease in the number of personnel and an aging membership are realities known to all Confrères.
6. Sometimes we have lacked clarity in our theological goals and in the identification of places and methodologies, working in many fields without focussing on priorities.
7. However, echoing in our hearts are the words of the Gospel: *“*Do not be afraid, Ihave overcome the world” (*John 16:33*). And those of Comboni: “I am dying, but my work will never die”. We are called to bear witness with humility to the beauty of our missionary vocation.

**THE SPIRIT CALLS US TO DREAM AND CONVERT OURSELVES**

1. We ask ourselves how we can announce the joy of the Gospel in solidarity with peoples and be promoters of reconciliation and dialogue, while re-discovering the spiritual dimension of our relationships at every level (inter-personal, institutional, social and with the environment).

 **MISSION**

1. We dream of an Institute ‘that goes forth’ (*EG, No. 20*), being missionary pilgrims who walk with the poorest and most abandoned (*RL, No. 5*), who evangelize and are evangelized through personal and community sharing of joy and compassion, working together for a humanity which is reconciled with God, with creation and with others (*EG, No. 74*).
2. As true Comboni Missionary Disciples, we are inspired by the passion of the Heart of Jesus for the world, and we want to continue listening to God, to Comboni and to humanity in order to know how to read and propose the ‘signs of the times and of places’ in the Mission of today.
3. Simple structures that are shared and welcoming make us more human, closer to people and happier. With regard to the contrary, we have to avoid the temptation of a comfortable and isolated life-style which impoverishes our spirituality and diminishes our passion for Mission.
4. We are invited to convert ourselves from the fear that tends to make us close in upon ourselves, to nurture trust in God and in others that brings us to dream great things despite our littleness.
5. We still have a strong tendency towards protagonism and being self-reverential.

 As Members of a ministerial Church which evangelizes as a ‘community’, we are

 called to convert ourselves to service and collaboration.

1. Lastly, we wish to choose the poor as our travelling companions and teachers (*EG, No. 198*)*;* for together with them we can promote the globalization of fraternity and tenderness.

 **PERSONS**

 The appeal to go out of self towards others reiterates the Christian vision of the person as a being in ‘relationship’, in contrast to an ever more widespread culture of individualism.

1. This vision responds to the Comboni spirituality of the Good Shepherd, places us in an attitude of ‘going forth’ towards others and becomes the source of our joy. To be able to live this impulse it is necessary to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ who introduces us to the contemplation of the mystery of God and to the mystery of man wherever we find him in his richness and diversity.
2. We want to have a relationship of communion with God and share this with those among whom we live. We want to read life and history in the light of faith, assuming a new style of life and communion grounded in evangelical choices.
3. We feel the deep need for a spirituality that heals and makes us whole, able to integrate our humanness and that of others with its limits, frailties and inconsistencies. A spirituality based on the Word of God that is listened to, lived, celebrated and announced, and is able to touch and inspire all the dimensions of our missionary life: the Person, Community, Mission, Finances and Governance (*EG, No. 174*).
4. Many negative aspects empty our life and threaten its balance: individualism, fragile human maturity, little care of the interior life, superficiality in living the values that sustain our consecration, a weak sense of belonging and responsibility, inappropriate life-styles, a loss of passion for service of the Mission. The Local Community really must be the place where we care for one another, with the courage of brotherly correction when required.
5. Conduct inconsistent with the vocation to the consecrated and missionary life on the part of some Confrères is a shadow that accompanies us with all the attendant pain, wounds and counter-witness. We condemn unreservedly any abusive behaviour which causes harm or distress to others. We are deeply sorry to anyone who has been hurt in this way, and we commit ourselves to do everything in our power to prevent such occurrences in the future.
6. We feel the need to recover the sense of belonging, the joy and beauty of being true “Cenacles of Apostles”, Communities characterized by profoundly human relationships. We are called to value, above all among ourselves, inter-culturality, hospitality and the ‘conviviality of differences’. The world has great need of such witness.
7. We are called to re-discover the Comboni Family (MCCJ, CMS, CSM, CLM) as the charismatic place outside of which we will not be able to fully capture the prophetic intuition of Saint Daniel Comboni.
8. We acknowledge the journey travelled by the Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM) and we intend to continue accompanying their processes of formation, structuring and self-reliance which help to consolidate their identity as a Lay Family, that is Missionary and Comboni, at the service of the Mission. In this journey we base ourselves on the agreements made by the CLM themselves in each Circumscription and at the international level.
9. The Mission in the peripheries of human life and the Institute which is now experiencing a new vocational geography pushes us even further in the direction of paths of formation founded on the beauty of the encounter with Christ (*EG, No. 264*), and to develop “the spiritual taste of being close to people’s lives” (*EG, No. 268*).
10. Youth thirst for a full life and authentic values. This challenges and invites us to share the riches of our charism with them. Through opening ourselves to young people and welcoming them, we promote vocational Communities whose missionary passion is renewed at the same time.
11. We thank the Lord for our elderly and infirm Confrères and cherish their witness of missionary serenity and wisdom. We are called to take care of them and be close to them, assuring them of the conditions for a dignified life such that they may continue to love and serve the Mission.

 **RE-ORGANIZATION**

1. The new context of society and Mission challenges us to be ‘daring and creative’ and to re-think objectives, structures, style and methods of evangelization and Missionary Animation (*EG, Nos. 33 and 27*). Aware that we cannot respond to all the expectations of our time, we feel guided by the Holy Spirit who goes before us on our journey and reveals to us new paths of evangelical fullness, albeit in weakness (*Cf. 2 Cor 12:10; Romans 5:20*).
2. The challenges posed by Mission have changed and seem to ask for evermore energy. Due to ageing and the decrease in the number of Confrères it has become impossible to maintain all our commitments. Our trust in God brings us to read such a resizing as an opportunity to start all over again with a sense of littleness and docility to the Holy Spirit.
3. The principles that inspire us, in discernment, for reaching common decisions are: collegiality, subsidiarity, joint responsibility, inter-action among the Circumscriptions and shared leadership.
4. It is necessary to develop greater inter-action among the various institutional structures and the Local Communities of the Institute. A greater fluency in communication can offer to all a more efficient service, a richer experience of communion and harmony in the diversity of ministries.

 Re-organization depends on commitment on the part of each Circumscription in order to overcome dispersion, helping us to concentrate on clear apostolic goals. Nonetheless, it also depends on the courage shown by Confrères and Local Communities in daring to attempt new forms of fraternity and service.

**OPERATIONAL INDICATIONS**

1. **THE MISSION**

 **Reflection upon, and revision of, our Commitments**

**44.1** The reality of the Mission undergoing constant change in today’s world calls for on-going reflection, both theoretical (theological and charismatic) and practical (places and spheres of missionary activity).

**44.2** A profound conversion of our missionary apostolate “requires abandoning the complacent attitude that says ‘we have always done it this way’” (*EG, No. 33*), and will have to reconcile fidelity to the charism, boldness and realism.

**44.3** Inspired by the summons of Pope Francis, we wish to launch a process of reflection that will have to focus on “re-thinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization” (*EG, No. 33*)of our Communities and of the Institute.

**44.4** In line with the journey begun with the *Ratio Missionis*, the General Council, through the new General Secretariat of Mission, will provide, during its first year of office, concrete indications for the development of this reflection, interiorise the Mission Pope Francis has highlighted, and foster the re-qualification of our missionary service in the light of his Magisterium (*EG and LS*)*.*

* 1. This re-qualification process will avail itself of external experts – facilitators, theologians and pastoral agents of the Local Church – and will keep in mind the following criteria:
* Closeness to the poor;
* Attention to the ‘signs of the times’;
* Simplicity of both structures and life-style;
* The reality of the persons in the Institute and in the Circumscriptions;
* The orientations of the Local Church;
* The options of each Continent (*CA ’09, No. 62*);
* Specific missionary services in the mainstream of evangelization which are attentive to inculturation, Missionary Animation – particularly through the Mass Media – and JP/IC.
	1. Every Community will be actively involved in this process.
	2. As part of its Six-Year Plan, each Circumscription will prepare a programme for the reduction and focalization of commitments. This programme will be presented to the General Council, discussed in the Continental Assemblies and assessed by the Inter-Capitular Assembly.
	3. Each Continent, during the Second Triennium and with the respective Assistant-General, will accompany the journey of each Circumscription so that the prepared programme is implemented.
	4. The Circumscriptions will have to create more numerically consistent, stable and international Communities, especially where this is presently not the case, in order to:
* Render our presence all the more meaningful through the witness of communion and brotherhood;
* Permit some Confrères to become specialized and hence qualify our commitments all the more;
* Guarantee continuity.
	1. In order to attain the aforementioned goals, the Institute as a whole will have to close at least forty-five (45) Communities during the next Sexennium. Those at each level of government – Provincial Councils, Continental Councils and the General Council – will work in a conscientious and responsible manner to achieve this aim.
	2. In light of the current decrease in the number of Members of the Institute, no new opening is to take place during the next Sexenniumwithout the explicit approval of the General Council.
	3. The Chapter calls on the General Council to ensure the internationality of the Circumscriptions when assigning Confrères.
	4. The exchange of personnel between Circumscriptions is to be promoted, in dialogue with the General Council, especially where the presence of Radical Members is especially high.
	5. The Chapter encourages new forms of communion in which the MCCJ, CMS, CSM and LCM, in full respect for their own identity, may live in Communities inspired by the charism of Comboni and the passion for announcing the Good News.
	6. Moreover, the Chapter acknowledges the emergence of new forms of community life – inter-Congregational and open to lay people – as possible models of ‘communion in Mission’.
	7. The Chapter re-asserts the Institute’s commitment to a consolidated and stable missionary presence in Asia. The Delegation Council of Asia will undertake an evaluation of the journey travelled thus far and define priorities for the future in dialogue with the General Council.
1. **Evangelization and specific pastoral services**
	1. The reduction of commitments must foster the re-qualification of our missionary service and not be limited solely to the closing of Communities.
	2. Our presence is meaningful when we are close to marginalized groups or in frontier situations. Nonetheless, such a presence in itself does not always avail of a specific apostolate that is qualified in terms of methodology and know-how.
	3. An important way to re-qualify our missionary presence is the option for specific pastoral services: inter-religious dialogue, JP/IC, education, health care, Mass Media, Missionary Animation, the urban apostolate, and the apostolate among indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, pastoralists, migrants, refugees and youth.
* These pastoral services are to be in line with the Continental priorities (*CA '03, Nos. 43 and 50; CA '09, Nos. 62 and 63*), shared among several Circumscriptions, and lived in broader collaboration on the inter-Provincial or Continental levels.
* In this manner, even if the number of Communities is reduced, by networking (with the Comboni Family, other pastoral agents, Organizations, reflection and research centres), we will be able to develop a specific pastoral presence.
* In addition to the specializations foreseen at the level of the Circumscriptions, it should be possible to share personnel and skills, and draw up plans of specialization at the inter-Provincial level.
	1. By the end of 2016 Provincial/Delegation Councils are to launch a process of identification and discernment regarding the specific pastoral services present in each Circumscription, as well as possible alliances to strengthen them.
	2. This discernment will have to be shared with the other Circumscriptions of the Continent in question and, during the first Triennium, lead to:
* The creation and consolidation of local and inter-Provincial specific pastoral networks in order to foster synergies for our work;
* The preparation of a plan of specializations consistent with the discernment shared beforehand at the Continental level and with the General Council;
* The development of the JP/IC dimension within such local and inter-Provincial specific pastoral networks.
	1. The Provincial/Delegation Councils will see that each Circumscription is active in the work of JP/IC, and will promote the involvement of the Confrères in networks at the Provincial/Delegation and Continental levels; for example in the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network, VIVAT International, and AEFJN. The commitment of the Brothers is likewise to be promoted in this service.
	2. The General Council will animate the Confrères so that at least one Comboni Human Promotion Work (CHPW) on each Continent is developed and consolidated, and its continuity guaranteed. Young Brothers at the time of their first assignment should preferably be appointed to such initiatives.
	3. The various Circumscriptions will be encouraged to adopt a clearer option for the youth, also by implementing a youth apostolate programmetypicalof the Comboni Missionaries.
	4. We recognize as a ‘sign of the times’ the decision made by the United Nations to celebrate an International Decade for Afro-descendents (2015 –2024), whose theme is “Afro-descendents: Recognition, Justice and Development”. In those Local Churches where we are present we undertake to promote activities in this sense and encourage Confrères already active in the apostolate among Afro-descendants to forge ahead in this important service, in the spirit of St. Daniel Comboni.
1. **The ‘Comboni’ Mission in Europe**
	1. The epochal changes that have taken place over the last few decades have also had an impact on our Mission in Europe. It no longer suffices to consider Europe as a place where nothing more than Missionary Animation and Vocation Promotion take place. Also in Europe we are called to have the courage “to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (*EG, No. 20*).
	2. The Local Church has primacy of place in responsibility for evangelization. In dialogue with it, and in the light of our charism, we are called to re-qualify our missionary service.
	3. The re-qualification of our presence in Europe according to the Comboni charism calls for:
* A greater internationalization of the Circumscriptions to be implemented through the General Council, and collaboration in inter-Provincial projects;
* An itinerary of on-going formation in the European Provinces regarding the new vision of Mission and the conversion this requires;
* A system of rotation that is not to be only ‘one way’;
* A revision of commitments as indicated in No. 43 above.
	1. This re-qualification will have to enhance our apostolate among youth, vocational accompaniment, and the animation of ecclesial groups that share the Comboni charism as a form of evangelization.
	2. The drama of displaced persons and refugees is a ‘sign of the times’ challenging us. Our Communities are urged to share both their premises and their lives with migrants. The Chapter invites the Continent’s Circumscriptions to develop a specific pastoral service in this area in communion with one another and with the Local Churches.
1. **PERSONS**

*“Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter into the life of a community*

*need to lose their individualism or hide their identity;*

*instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth.*

*The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren. …*

*The model is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts,*

*each of which preserves its own distinctiveness”* (*EG, Nos. 235-236*).

1. **INTER-CULTURALITY**
	1. Multi-culturality is a grace forming part of the ‘charismatic patrimony’ of our Institute ever since its foundation (*RL, No. 18*).
	2. The re-unification of the two branches of the Institute (FSCJ and MFSC) and the choice to engage in vocation promotion in the various countries where we are present has led to the co-existence of a diversity of cultures in the Institute (multi-culturality). The inter-action among them becomes a journey which enriches persons, Communities and our missionary service (inter-culturality).
	3. Some Confrères live multi-culturality with anxiety, frustration, indifference or superficiality. Conversely, others grasp in this dimension a grace for growth in both identity as Comboni Missionaries and the quality of inter-personal relations and the prophecy of the Mission.
	4. We are all summoned to abandon complexes and prejudices, suspicion and fear of the difference incarnated in the Other. On the contrary, we are called to open ourselves to mutual trust, to knowledge of the culture of the Other, to the respect for and enhancement of difference. The awareness and sharing of our riches and the relativization of cultural, religious and methodological views will help us deal with inevitable tensions.
	5. The certainty of our common vocation and of the charism itself constitute a source of inter-personal communion enabling us to come to terms with the disruptive forces that may be triggered by diversity. This becomes the prophecy of our Mission for the construction of a new world order.
	6. The Local Community is the privileged place where these dynamics are lived: in shared prayer, in community encounters and in initiatives around the theme of inter-culturality, choices regarding our style of life and programmes. Each Member of the Community is responsible for this process, and in particular the Local Superior and the Circumscription Superior.

To this end:

* In its programming, and with the assistance of experts in this field, the General Secretariat of Formation is to prepare study papers with content and methodology relevant to this theme, enhancing the riches of our spiritual and cultural patrimony;
* The General Council is to dedicate at least one year of On-going Formation to the theme of inter-culturality;
* The Superiors of Circumscriptions are to programme for specific formation about the dynamics of inter-culturality for Local Superiors so the latter may become the animators of this process;
* In preparing and revisiting the Community Charter, the Local Community is to determine how the dimension of inter-culturality is to be lived in the various aspects of its life.
1. **SPIRITUALITY**

*“Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the Good News not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence”* (*EG, No. 259*).

*“Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts” (EG, No. 262).*

* 1. The encounter with Christ lived in the charismatic gift of St. Daniel Comboni makes us Comboni Missionary Disciples. We cultivate and deepen this communion with the Lord in order to continue being impassioned with the Mission and thus live an integrated Comboni spirituality. Therefore:
* From the moment of vocational accompaniment, each Comboni Missionary cultivates the encounter with the Lord through constant prayer (*EG, No. 264*)*,* an experience to be developed in the various phases of formation, lived and borne witness to through his life;
* Each Comboni Missionary assumes a solid spirituality, based on Christian tradition: the celebration of the Eucharist, and listening to the Word of God personally and in Community;
* An important source of the spiritual life is closeness to people, particularly the poor, as willed by St. Daniel Comboni and so many of our fellow missionaries who have gone before us in service to the Mission.

**Operational Choices:**

* 1. Moments of daily prayer, with spaces of silence, meditation and sharing of the Word and each person’s journey of faith are to be provided for in the Community Charter.
	2. Our Communities are to be welcoming places with ‘open doors’ to those who are attracted by our missionary witness; this will help us live renewed relationships.
	3. The values of our charism are to be expressed in the new language inspired by *Evangelii gaudium*: tenderness, mercy, simplicity, humility…
	4. In the spirit of the Total Common Fund, greater solidarity and sharing of goods with the neediest persons and Circumscriptions is to be promoted, with trust in Providence.
	5. The ‘Personal Project of Life’, spiritual accompaniment and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are all to be emphasised.
1. **Reading and revisiting the Rule of Life**
	1. The Rule of Life forms part of our most genuine patrimony and still succeeds in expressing our identity, spirituality and Mission. Familiarity with it helps us grow in the values of missionary consecration, sharing and communion amongst us.
	2. Nonetheless, dating back to the 1970’s, it is part of a particular historical, cultural, ecclesial and Comboni context. This may render comprehension of the fullness of its richness difficult for some Confrères.
	3. This Chapter, in line with the indications of the Chapter of 2009 (*No. 31*), proposes that:
* A process of reading and revisiting the Rule of Life according to the dynamics experimented with *Ratio Missionis* be continued during the First Triennium*;*
* A team, constituted on the continental level, would help the Confrères in this process with materials, methodological indications and the preparation of animators.
1. **Revision of the Rule of Life**
	1. Some aspects of the Rule of Life need to be revised in the light of the Institute’s present situation, inter-culturality, recent documents of the Church and a better knowledge of the Founder.

To this end:

The General Council is to appoint a Commission of Confrères which, assisted by non-Comboni experts, would, during the First Triennium, collect suggestions for revision presented by Communities and Confrères, the fruit of the ‘revisiting’ of the Rule of Life. A draft of this work will be presented to the Inter-Capitular Assembly for initial review, and then sent to all Confrères for thorough study and personal evaluation. The Commission, accommodating the input of the Confrères, will present a ‘proposal for the revision of the Rule of Life’ to the next General Chapter.

1. **Number and location of the International Scholasticates and the International Centres for Brothers**
	1. Considering our present situation, “*the time has come to reduce the number of Formation Houses and concentrate the Scholasticates in**particular”* (*Report of the Superior-General and his Council to the XVIII General Chapter, No. 61*). In the process of revising the number and the location of the International Scholasticates and International Centres for Brothers, the General Council, in collaboration with the General Secretariat of Formation and the involvement of the Provincial Councils, Formators and Scholastics, is to take into consideration the following criteria, among others:
* The formation choice made by the Institute, namely the educational model of integration;
* The quality of theological studies and the possibility of other studies in the same country;
* The context of the Scholasticate: insertion, closeness to people, possibility of pastoral activities;
* The number of those in formation in this stage of formation;
* The difficulty in guaranteeing the number of formators necessary.
	1. The General Council, over the next three years and in collaboration with the General Secretariat of Formation and dialogue with Provincial/Delegation Councils concerned:
* Is to close one of the English-speaking Scholasticates;
* Is to maintain a formation presence for the Brothers in Latin America, deploying a new modality which will be determined on the basis of the number of candidates.
1. **Missionary Service of Scholastics**
	1. The decision made by the General Chapter of 2009 (*No. 101*) regarding Missionary Service after the Scholasticate as an integral part of the formation journey and the normal way for Scholastics to conclude their basic formation is reconfirmed. The Chapter charges the new General Secretariat of Formation and the Circumscription Superiors to monitor the *praxis* of Missionary Service, ensure that the objectives set are really achieved, and propose initiatives that may render it more incisive.
2. **Mixed Institute**
	1. The General Council is to create an *ad hoc* Commission to solicit the Holy See and other organisms such as the USG with regard to our changing from a Clerical Institute to a Mixed Institute. This Commission is to include two Brothers.
3. **Code of Conduct**
	1. All Circumscriptions are to undertake to prepare at least one Confrère able to assist Local Communities in studying and sharing the Code of Conduct, spurring them to assume the attitudes, methods and means necessary for continued faithfulness to our Comboni vocation and to prevent situations of counter-witness.
	2. The General Council, in dialogue with the Circumscription Superiors, is to ensure the preparation of some Confrères on each continent who have the competency necessary to carry out investigations as contemplated in the Code of Conduct (*Nos. 32.1 and 36.1*).
4. **RE-ORGANIZATION**

**Persons and Rotation**

1. Each assignment has the characteristic of being a departure with no deadline. What was declared at previous Chapters in this regard is reconfirmed: the first period of assignment outside the Circumscription of origin is to ordinarily last for nine (9) years.
2. During the first assignment the Confrère remains at the disposal of the General Council. Dialogue with a view to rotation must take place with the Confrère in question, the Superior of the Circumscription where he is located, the Superior of the Circumscription where he will be assigned, and the General Council.
3. Regarding assignment and rotation, the General Council is to consider criteria of ministeriality, the priority of some Circumscriptions, and frontier situations.
4. With all due allowance for exceptions hereto, return to the Province of Origin, change of Circumscription and the specializations of persons must be dictated by the needs of the Mission.
5. Each assignment is preceded and accompanied by adequate and confidential information about the Confrère in question. The Superior of the sending Circumscription and the Assistant General following the Continent are to see to it that the said information is madeavailable.

**Specializations**

1. The principal objective of all specializations, beginning from those undertaken during Basic Formation, must be towards providing a better service to the Mission. Discernment regarding their need and opportuneness must be made atall levels (*RFIS, Appendix No. 17 – Agreement for a Specialisation*).
2. When choosing Confrères for specialization according to the programme of the General Direction or the Circumscriptions, due account must be taken of their human maturity and vocational identification, as well as their intellectual prowess and personal aptitude (*RFIS, No. 621*).
3. The Chapter augurs that the General Council, on the basis of the information made available, may define a plan for the assignment of Confrères, their rotation, and their specializations such as to permit, generally speaking, a better management of commitments. This plan is to be drawn up in close collaboration and dialogue at the Continental level and with the Circumscriptions.
4. When deciding on specializations, priority will be given to the following sectors where there is greater need: Sacred Scripture, Pastoral Theology and Missiology, the social doctrine of the Church, inter-religious dialogue, Mass Media, finance and social anthropology.

**Coordination of the Institute and the General Direction**

1. The Chapter decides to unify the General Secretariates of Evangelization and Missionary Animation, and the Sectors of JP/IC and CLM into a single ‘General Secretariate for Mission’ headed by a General Secretary for Mission, who willwork in a team effortwith other Confrères according to the operational guidelines established to this end by the General Council.
2. The Chapter decides that the Central Commission for On-going Formation and the General Secretariate for Basic Formation are to be unified in a single ‘General Secretariate of Formation’ headed by a General Secretary for Formation, who will work in a team effort with other Confrères according to the operational guidelines established to this end by the General Council.
3. The Chapter therefore decides that the sentence “They are: the Secretariates for Mission, for Formation, and for the Economy” is to replace the sentence “They are: the Secretariates for Evangelization, for Formation, for Missionary Animation and for Finance” in the General Directory of the Rule of Life, No. 140.1.
4. The General Secretary ensures collaboration among the diverse Secretariates to facilitate the collection and organization of information about persons in order to improve the planning of assignments, rotation and specializations, as well as varied services to the Confrères.
5. In line with the unification of the General Secretariates, the corresponding structures at the Continental and Circumscription levels are to be streamlined.

**Continentality**

1. In line with the XVII Chapter (*cfr. CA ‘09, No. 132*), the validity of continentality is re-affirmed in order to foster co-responsibility and subsidiarity, regulated by the *Vademecum* on Continentality. The sharing of the decisions of the Assemblies will facilitate this process (*Vademecum, No. 7*).
2. Discernment regarding the personnel to be appointed/destined to continental projects is the task of the Assembly of the Circumscription Superiors of the Continent in question, which will do so in dialogue with the General Council.

**Continental Reference Person for Brothers**

1. A Brother is to be an animator and reference person for Brothers at the continental level. The method for choosing him will be established by each Continent, taking into due consideration a consultation with the Brothers in the various Circumscriptions. The Brother appointed will attend the Assembly of the Circumscription Superiors at the continental level.

**Circumscriptions and Merging**

1. The merging of Circumscriptions, which has already taken place between Egypt and Sudan, North-East Brazil and South Brazil, must continue. The Circumscription Superiors are to keep alive a vividawareness about the need for this. By the end of 2016 the General Council will indicate the Circumscriptions where merging seems more necessary and opportune. It will then pertain to the Circumscription Superiors and their respective Councils – with the encouragement and support of the GD and the GC – to organize and monitor the progress of endeavoursto help the individual Confrères to understand the reasons and the timing for eventual merging. Envisaged at an opportune moment is a formal consultation during which each Confrère may express his personal evaluation in this regard, as well as his agreement or disagreement.
2. After twenty-five (25) years of presence and activity in Poland, the group of Comboni Missionaries there (ten Confrères in two communities) is to be constituted as ‘The Delegation of Poland’ during the next Sexennium.
3. **Finance**

**Implementation of the XVII General Chapter**

1. The decision of the XVII General Chapter that the Total Common Fund (TCF) become a reality in all our Circumscriptions has been implemented. It is necessary, however, both for the journey towards and reflection on the motivations for the TCF to continue so it may become a worthyprocess of work being done in common.
2. It is necessary to grow from a perspective of sharing within the Circumscription to solidarity with the Institute at large.
3. Moreover, the Chapter augurs thatsome of the decisions of the XVII General Chapter which to date have only been partially implemented may be realised in full: the specialization of two Confrères in administration (*CA’09, No. 157.2*), and the institution of social security funds for those Circumscriptions where such provision is not undertaken by the State (*CA’09, No. 166.1*).
4. At the end the financial year each Circumscription is to have its accounts audited with the assistance of external auditors. The same is to apply to the accounts of the General Administration.

**Sustainability and Local Resources**

1. Each Circumscription is to aim at becoming economically self-supporting. To this end, in the first place the involvement of the Local Churches from where the Confrères come and where they work is called for, so that it is the People of God there who above all support their own missionaries.

1. There may also be worthwhile and simple initiatives of self-reliance (including pastoral commitments) that should however always avoid any suggestion of the worldly or of . It is essential for these initiatives to be accompanied by regulation and transparent administration.

**Inter-Provincial Sharing**

1. Albeit in the throes of a grave financial crisis across the globe, Providence has endowed the Institute with the resources to carry out its Mission. Nonetheless, the said resources are not equally distributed. It is therefore necessary to capitalize on existent channels for effective solidarity among Circumscriptions, and, if necessary, other channels will have to be identified.

**Patrimony and Self-Limitation**

1. In order to avoid an excessive accumulation of economic resources it is necessary for each Circumscription to verify the limits of Working Capital indicated in the Provincial Directory and adjust the stated policy for Funds in conformity with the new General Directory for Finance (GDF).
2. We reconfirm what was decided by previous Chapters: the General Council in dialogue with the General Secretariat for Finance, is to determine the way in which the possible *superavit* is to be distributed each year.
3. The disposal of property whose use is no longer suitable,and as desired by recent General Chapters (*CA’03, No. 103.3, CA’09 No. 155*), is to continue, while nonetheless avoiding any hasty sell-off of those assets. Preference in the disposal of such property is to be given to entities or associations whose aims are consistent with our own.
4. Fifty (50%) per cent of the proceeds from such sales is to be allocated to the Solidarity Fund.

**Limits of Extraordinary Expenditures for each Circumscription**

1. As indicated by the Rule of Life (*No. 170*), for the next Sexennium the Chapter sets the limits of extraordinary expenditure (A), and those for the assumption of debt and the alienation of property (B). The said limits are indicated in the table annexed hereto.

**Table: Limits of Extraordinary Expenditure 2015**

Column 1: ‘Limit of the Episcopal Conference’: - the maximum sum established by the Episcopal Conference for valid alienation, beyond which permission must be requested from the Holy See (*cf. CIC 1292 §2*).

Column 2: Limit (A) of expenditure beyond which the authorization of the General Council is required (*cfr. RL, No. 170, General Directory for Finance, No. 29*).

Column 3: Limit (B) for the incurring of debt and the alienation of property, beyond which the authorization of the General Council is required.

***Note****: Limits (A) and (B) are set by the General Chapter (cf. RL, No.170)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  **2015** |  **Column 1** **Limit E. C.**  |  **Column 2** **Limit A** |  **Column 3** **Limit B** |
| **CURIA** |  | US$ 1,000,000 | US$ 500,000 |
|  France | € 2,500,000 |  |  |
|  Italy | € 1,000,000 |  |  |
|  Poland | € 1,000,000 |  |  |
| **ASIA** |  | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
|  China (Macau) | US$ 1,250,000 |  |  |
|  Philippines | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
|  Taiwan | US$1,000,000 |  |  |
| **BRAZIL** | 3,000 x min. sal. | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC**  | US$ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **COLOMBIA**  | US$ 300,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **CONGO** | US$ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **CENTRAL AMERICA** |  | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
|  Costa Rica | US$ 55,000  | (US$ 50,000) |  |
|  El Salvador  | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
|  Guatemala | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
|  Nicaragua | US$ 50,000 | (US$ 50,000) |  |
| **GERMAN-SPEAKING PROVINCE** |  | US$ 1,200,000 | US$ 600,000 |
|  Austria | € 1,500,000 |  |  |
|  Italy | € 1,000,000 |  |  |
|  Germany | € 5,000,000 |  |  |
| **ECUADOR** | 1,000 x min. sal. | US$ 30,000 | US$ 30,000 |
| **EGYPT-SUDAN** |  | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
|  Egypt | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
|  Sudan | $ 100,000 |  |  |
| **SPAIN**  | € 1,500,000 | US$ 1,200,000 | US$ 600,000 |
| **ERITREA** | $ 100.000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **ETHIOPIA** | $ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **ITALY** | € 1,000,000 | US$ 1,200,000 | US$ 600,000 |
| **KENYA** | US$ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **LONDON PROVINCE** |  | US$ 1,200,000 | US$ 600,000 |
|  England | GBP 1,650,000 |  |  |
|  Ireland | € 1,500,000 |  |  |
|  Scotland | GBP 2,500,000 |  |  |
| **MEXICO**  | US$ 500,000 | US$ 200,000 | US$ 100,000 |
| **MALAWI-ZAMBIA** |  | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
|  Malawi | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
|  Zambia | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
| **MOZAMBIQUE** | US$ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCE** |  | US$ 1,200,000 | US$ 600,000 |
|  Canada  | CAD$ 3,500,000 |  |  |
|  USA  | US$ 5,000,000 |  |  |
| **PORTUGAL**  | € 1,500,000 | US$ 1,200,000 | US$ 600,000 |
| **PERU-CHILE** |  | US$ 200,000 | US$ 100,000 |
|  Peru | US$ 300,000 |  |  |
|  Chile | US$ 500,000 |  |  |
| **SOUTH AFRICA**  | Rand 4,220,000 | US$ 200,000 | US$ 100,000 |
| **SOUTH SUDAN** | US$ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **CHAD** | US$ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
| **TOGO-GHANA-BE­NIN** |  | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |
|  Benin | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
|  Ghana | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
|  Togo | US$ 100,000 |  |  |
| **UGANDA** | US$ 100,000 | US$ 100,000 | US$ 50,000 |

***THE HOLY FATHER’S ADDRESS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday 1st October 2015*

Dear brothers,

 I greet you wholeheartedly, beginning with the Superior General, whom I wish to thank for his introductory words to this encounter. It is taking place within the context of your General Chapter and offers me an opportunity to let you and the Institute at large know just how grateful the Church is for your generous service to the Gospel.

 You call yourselves, and you are, Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus. Together with you I would like to reflect on these words which are your name and your identity.

 *Missionaries*. You are servants and messengers of the Gospel, especially for those who do not know anything about it or who have forgotten it. At the origin of your Mission there is a gift: the gratuitous initiative of the love God, who addressed a dual calling to you: to be with Him and to go forth to preach (*cfr. Mark 3:14*). Underlying everything is the personal relationship with Christ rooted in Baptism, and, for some, strengthened by Ordination, whereby we can say with the apostle Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (*Gal 2:20*). This living with Christ determines in full our being and our doing, and is both lived and nourished especially in prayer, in remaining with the Lord, in adoration, and in speaking heart-to-heart with Him.

 It is precisely in this prayerful space that we find the real “treasure” (*Luke 12:34*) to give to our fellow men and women through preaching the Good News. In fact, each missionary becomes a servant of the God-who-speaks, who wants to speak with the men and women of today just like Jesus spoke to those of His time, and won over the hearts of the people who came from all over to listen to Him and were astounded when listening to His teachings (*cfr. Mark 6:2*). This relationship of the Mission *ad gentes* with the Word of God is not situated that much in the realm of ‘doing’, but rather that of ‘being’. In order to be authentic, the Mission must make reference to and place at the very centre the grace of Christ issuing forth from the Cross: only believing in Him is it possible to transmit the Word of God that animates, sustains and render fruitful the commitment of each missionary. For this reason, dear brothers, we must always nourish ourselves with the Word of God in order to be its faithful echo; embrace it with the joy of the Spirit, interiorize it and make it become the flesh of our flesh like Mary (*cfr. Luke 2:19*). Present in the Word of God is the wisdom coming from on high that enables us find the languages, the attitudes and the instruments best suited to responding to the challenges of changing humanity.

 Insofar as *Comboni* and *of the Heart of Christ,* you joyfully contribute to the Mission of the Church, bearing witness to the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni, one of whose primary features is the merciful love of the Heart of Christ for defenseless persons. This Heart is the well-spring of the mercy that saves and generates hope. Therefore, as men consecrated to God for the Mission, you are called to imitate Jesus, merciful and meek, in order to live your service with a humble heart, taking care of the most abandoned persons of our time. Never cease to implore the Sacred Heart for the meekness, which, insofar as a daughter of charity, is patient and always ready to excuse, hopes all, and endures whatever comes (*cfr. 1 Cor 13:4-7*). It is the meekness in the eyes of Jesus when He looked at Peter the night of Holy Thursday (*cfr. Luke 22:61*), or when He invited a doubting Thomas to put his hand close to the pierced Heart (*cfr. John 20:27*). From that heart we learn the meekness necessary to brave apostolic work in difficult and hostile surroundings.

 That Heart which loved men so much drives you to the margins of society in order to bear witness to the perseverance of patient and faithful love. Through contemplation on the wounded Heart of Jesus it is always possible for you to renew your passion for the men and women of our time, and this is expressed with gratuitous love in the commitment of solidarity, especially towards the poorest and neediest of all. Thus will you continue to promote justice and peace, respect and the dignity of each person.

 Dear brothers, I hope that the in-depth reflection on the themes of the Chapter to which you have been devoting your efforts during these days may shed light upon your Institute’s journey in the years to come, helping you re-discover your great patrimony of spirituality and missionary activity in an ever better manner. Thus will you be able to forge ahead most confidently in your much appreciated collaboration in the Mission of the Church. May you be stimulated and encouraged by the example of so many Confrères, who have offered their lives for the cause of the Gospel, prepared as well to bear the supreme witness of blood. In fact, it is well known that the Comboni Institute is characterized by an uninterrupted chain of martyrs all the way to our present day and age. They are fertile seeds in the spreading of the Kingdom and protectors of your apostolic commitment.

 Upon you and all the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus I invoke the protection of Mary, the Mother of the Church and Mother of missionaries.

 Before giving you my blessing I would like to say something that is not written here, but something I feel: I have always, always harboured great admiration for you, for the work you do, for the risks you face … I have always felt this great admiration. Thank you.

**Prayer to Mary**

*Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith: as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own “yes” to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the good news of Jesus.*

*Filled with Christ’s presence, you brought joy to John the Baptist, making him exult in the womb of his mother. Brimming over with joy, you sang of the great things done by God. Standing at the foot of the cross with unyielding faith, you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection, and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit so that the evangelizing Church might be born.*

*Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection, that we may bring to all the Gospel of life which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman.*

*Virgin of listening and contemplation, Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast, pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are, that she may never be closed in on herself or lose her passion for establishing God’s kingdom.*

*Star of the new evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world.*

*Mother of the living Gospel, well-spring of happiness for God’s little Ones, pray for us. Amen. Alleluia!*

POPE FRANCIS (*EG, No. 288*)