Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

**748 January 2017**



GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

**GENERAL NOTES**

**CONSULTA DECEMBER 2016**

**1. Appointments effective on 1 January 2017**

1.1. Following the restructuring process, the GC appoints

- **Fr. Mariano Tibaldo** General Secretary of the new *General Secretariat of the Mission*

- and **Fr. John Baptist Opargiw Keraryo** General Secretary of the new *General Secretariat of Formation*.

Both secretariats are made up of members who are resident in Rome and of councils (formation and mission) consisting of confreres proposed by the continents or sub-continents and appointed by the GC.

1.2. It also appoints

- **Fr. Arlindo Ferreira Pinto** in charge of the restructured *General Communications Service*

- and **Fr. Fermo** **Bernasconi** in charge of the restructured *General Service for the Accompaniment of the Confreres*.

1.3. The GC also appoints **Fr. Antonio Guirao Casanova** *Personal Secretary to Fr. General*.

1.4. The GC also appoints as members of the Commission for the celebrations of the *150th anniversary* of the Foundation of the Comboni Institute **Fr. Rogelio Bustos Juárez** (co-ordinator), **Bro. Alberto Lamana**, **Fr. Claudio Lurati, Fr. Mariano** **Tibaldo and Fr. Venanzio Milani** (of the Italian Province).

1.5 Lastly, the GC appoints

- **Fr. Stefano** **Giudici** as Superior and first formator of the Nairobi scholasticate

- and **Fr. José Joaquim Luis Pedro** as second formator *ad interim* of that scholasticate until the end of the current scholastic year (May, 2017)

**2. Postponements**

The CG, in order to be able to do further discernment and dialogue during the next meeting of circumscription superiors, has decided to postpone until the March 2017 Consulta:

* The appointment of the commission for the revision of the Rule of Life (CA ’15, 50.1)
* Indications regarding amalgamations (AC ’15, 72)
* The approval *ad experimentum* (2017-2019) of the statutes of the two new general Secretariats for the mission and for formation
* The complete organisation chart of the General Administration and the necessary changes to the directorial part of the Rule of Life 140-143.

**3. Programme**

The GC is furthermore planning a brief Consulta for 1 February, 2017, during which, among other things, the appointments of the new vice-provincials and vice-delegates will be made.

### Specializations

**Fr. Marco Innocenti,** on 19 December, 2016, was awarded a doctorate in theology at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, defending a dissertation entitled “THE ETHIOPIAN COMMENTARY *’ANDƎMTA* ON MT 1-4, Presentation and critical examination”. Congratulations.

**Perpetual Professions**

Bro. Ayih Teko Fafa D. J.-C. Pierre (SS) Lomé (T) 03.12.2016

### Ordinations to the priesthood

Fr. Amegnaglo Yaotse-Mensah (Jean Nestor) (T) Lomé (T) 17.12.2016

Fr. Dofonnou Dodji Emeric Lionel (T) Lomé (T) 17.12.2016

**Holy Redeemer Guild**

January 01 – 15 A 16 – 31 BR

February 01 – 15 C 16 – 28 EGSD

**Prayer Intentions**

**January** – That the young people may allow themselves to be challenged by the quest for meaning they bear in their hearts and may encounter witnesses to Christ who will show them the path of the Gospel. *Lord hear us.*

**February** – That the decisions, the plans and the commitments taken during General Chapters, Assemblies and Continental meetings may be put into practice with enthusiasm and determination. *Lord hear us.*

CURIA

**We here publish part of the letter of Fr. A. Baritussio from Brazil**

I am writing to remind you that, despite being far away, despite the changes in climate and the food, I am still «alive» and hoping somehow to come home again. Community here is but a pious wish, at least as far as I am concerned, being always on the move and with the odour of Amazonia or the smell of Archives and documents about me. As you will have noticed, my plans to conclude the Ramin Process and my return collapsed right when the end was in sight, seemingly just around the corner, bringing me down to earth with a bang and back and to the timescale that I thought was the same for everyone but was, in fact, very different.

The first short flight, with a soft landing, was planned for 25 May but then more time was needed to hear all the witnesses. Among other things, I found that those we might consider of least account, the simplest, the so-called «poor souls», are the most surprising. Having to visit them in their homes obliged me to postpone everything until 26 October. Then, another surprise. If you may try to somehow manage those who may scarcely have finished primary school and have a mine of previous experiences and sufferings, the professors and technicians whom you really need, and are only too well aware of their contractual power, continually ask you to delay matters and they oblige you to postpone the completion of the work to an ever later date. Very reluctantly, I had accepted 11 December as the final deadline. Instead, I was forced to agree to 4 March, 2017. I had very little room to manoeuvre and so I was obliged to stay here and make the best of a difficult job.

Despite everything, I accept it all because I feel that this Lele Cause is worth it for the Institute and the Church. The poor peasants and the Indios and, I must add, the Church in Brazil and the youth of this place support it and show they believe in this figure as a vehicle of values in a time when values are scarce, a time of unrestrained individualism and uncertain options. On 26 October, the deadline that was afterwards put back, the youth of the diocese of Ji-Paraná came just the same and spent twenty-four hours in prayer and confessions before the blood-soaked shirt that Lele had worn the day he was killed.

PERU

**Episcopal Ordination of Msgr. Barrera Pacheco**

On 18 December, 2016, Msgr. Luis Alberto Barrera Pacheco was consecrated Bishop of Tarma. The feast began at nine in the morning with a long procession through the streets of Lima in which the delegations from the 18 parishes of the diocese took part. The acclamations of the people showed their joy at having a Comboni bishop as successor to Msgr. Richard Alarcón, the fifth bishop of Tarma.

Msgr. Lucho (as he is known by everyone) first went to the church of the “Sagrario” to entrust to the Lord his new ministry, accompanied by numerous other bishops. Fourteen of them attended the celebration. After a solemn session together, at 11.00, all the bishops and about a hundred priests headed for the cathedral for the Mass led by Pedro Barreto, Metropolitan Archbishop of Ayacucho, assisted by Msgr. Salvador Piñeiro, Archbishop of Ayacucho and Msgr. Miguel Cabrejos, Archbishop of Trujillo, members of the Episcopal Conference of Peru. Msgr. Richard, Mons. Lucho’s predecessor was of course also present, together with Msgr. Lucho’s parents and many of his relatives.

After the celebration, Assistant General Fr. Rogelio Bustos Juárez, who had come from Rome to represent the General Council, addressed the congregation. Fr. Rogelio read Fr. General’s letter of felicitations expressing the joy of having a Peruvian Comboni bishop.

Msgr. Piñeiro took the opportunity to thank Bro. Kuno Stösser who worked for many years in the diocese of Tarma – from 1955 to 1984 – and directed the building works of the impressive shrine of Muruhuay.

The day after his consecration, Msgr. Lucho, went to Huasahuasi for the Golden Jubilee of the parish that was founded by Fr. Josef Pfanner before he was elected Vicar General at the MFSC Chapter in 1967.

TOGO-GHANA-BENIN

**Perpetual Vows**

On 3 December, 2016, the feast of St Francis Xavier, Patron Saint of the Missions, at the parish church of Christ the King in Kodjoviakope, Lomé, Bro. Pierre Fafa Ayih celebrated his Perpetual Profession in the Comboni Institute. The Eucharist was presided over by Fr. Girolamo Miante, Provincial Superior who concelebrated with various confreres and diocesan priests. His family, friends and the Christian community gathered in prayer and to praise God for the missionary “yes” of Bro. Pierre: a “yes” to a lifetime among the poor of South Sudan where he has been involved for some years. Fr. Miante, taking the Word of God from the readings, stressed the marvels that the Lord continues to work through the proclamation of the Gospel by means of concrete people like Pierre, despite our fragility and weaknesses. Bro Pierre, he said, had already experienced the hard times of war, the mission destroyed, the suffering of the people: what he saw did not discourage but, rather, strengthened his vocation to make a gift of himself for life. This is a beautiful testimony for Kodjoviakope, the first Comboni mission in Togo since our arrival in 1964. The parish is still missionary: the first Comboni of the Province, now in heaven, was Fr. Jean Pierre Legonou, the ripe fruit of an active and fecund missionary presence. Other confreres followed: Fr. Donatien Atitse, Fr. Victor Kouande and today Bro. Pierre. We also have Fr. Victor Kouande who is the first Togolese Provincial Superior who began his service on 1st January, 2017. We can only thank God for this marvel-filled missionary presence!

**Ordinations to the Priesthood**

At the parish church of St Teresa of the Child Jesus in Kégué, in the outskirts of Lomé, on Saturday, 17 December, the Togolese Comboni deacons Nestor Amegnaglo and Lionel Dofonnou were ordained to the priesthood. A further fourteen deacons of the Archdiocese of Lomé were also ordained by Msgr. Denis Amuzu Dzakpah, Archbishop of the capital. An immense crowd and a large group of priests accompanied in prayer and joy this ecclesial event: a gift for the Local Church and the whole world. The Archbishop underlined the importance of a life in Christ that is given to Him to enable one to give himself to all in the ministry, there wherever the Lord invites and wills it. An invitation to live faithfully the gift of the priesthood nourished by an intense spiritual life. Fr. Jean Nestor and Fr. Lionel will commence their priestly ministry in Togo and Brazil, respectively: by so doing they will witness to their faith and their missionary enthusiasm through the charism of St Daniel Comboni.

IN PACE CHRISTI

**Fr. Andrea Polati (24.12.1923 – 27.10.2016)**

Fr. Andrea is one of those people who, once met, are never forgotten.

He was born in Fumane, in the Province of Verona, 92 years ago. His details: 74 years of religious profession, 68 years as a priest; two years in Crema; ten years in South Sudan; three in Kenya; seventeen in Sicily (Messina and Palermo); seventeen in Brescia; seventeen in Limone and 212 days in Castel d’Azzano.

The first contact I had with him concerned his coming to Limone in 1998: as I tried to welcome him and show him round the house, he took no notice of me but went by himself to see what interested him. I said to myself: “This man needs no advice!” Sometimes, when visiting together, he would introduce me saying: “And this is my Superior”. I would add: “As if Fr. Andrea could possibly have a Superior!”. During a course of spiritual exercises, he noticed that silence was not being well observed. During the first meditation he appeared with his small suitcase which he placed on the table and said: “If there is no silence, I will leave”. No need to ask what happened…

Even though he was confident and sure of himself, he also had moments of fear and he could not bear being alone. The Word of God was his work, his passion, his mission. When he preached, he spoke with authority and influence. St. Mark says of Jesus: “He taught them with authority, unlike the scribes” because his word was powerful. The same may be said of Fr. Andrea. He would prepare himself, study, read and often quote his favourite masters, Paul VI and Cardinal Martini. He had a strong character and he loved God with the character he had. He used to say “God can do only one thing: love”.

People flocked to him because, when faced by a problem, he was able to suggest a broader view. He listened and answered with few words. He could speak to the heart. He attracted people who saw in him not just a man with answers but one who made them go deeper into things.

He was very much loved by people and formed deep and lasting bonds. Cardinal Francesco Montenegro, Archbishop of Agrigento, came to visit him a few weeks before he died. After staying with him about twenty minutes, he left with tears in his eyes, saying that his experience with Fr. Andrea in Messina, as a deacon, had greatly helped him and showed him the meaning of the mission; he was deeply grateful to Fr. Andrea.

When he was living in the house in Limone, he thought it narrow minded to speak only of Comboni. There was also the parish, the diocese and the Church. I have a catechesis of his which he gave to the catechists of Quinto Valpantena, entitled “I believe in the Church”: ten pages of deep reflections, substantial and stimulating. I remember on one occasion, when one of those present said “The Church is holy and also sinful” he replied: “No! The Church is only holy. The children of the Church are sinful!”.

He would start his talks with mention of Comboni and his holiness. “Welcome to this house which witnessed the birth of Blessed Daniel Comboni, one of the great apostles of Africa and the founder of our Comboni families. Our little community willingly and fraternally welcomes you but, most of all, Blessed Comboni welcomes you in the greatness of his spirit. This place is almost like a permanent sacrament of his invisible presence. To him, to his intercession, we entrust these two days that we are going to spend together. The aim of this Comboni house is to give the possibility to all our missionaries coming from all over the world to return to their roots and draw new energy to see if the fruits of missionary life comes from here”. Obedience was not his forte. This was evident when the possibility of living in Castel d’Azzano with the elderly and sick confreres was broached. One evening, he proposed to some confreres from Brescia to join him in putting pressure on the Superior against his transfer… He did not succeed. This may have been the reason why his change of residence was such a burden for some days. (*Fr. Renzo Piazza, mccj*)

**Fr. Vincent Anthony Maguire (27.06.1933 – 12.11.2016)**

Fr. Vincent Anthony Maguire was born on 27 June, 1933, in Lisnaskea, in Northern Ireland, the youngest of twelvechildren. His parents were by no means well off but were hard-working and they brought up their large family in the best Irish Catholic tradition. It was in that environment that Vincent’s first desire to be a priest began to form in him.

As a young child his family moved to Bunnoe in County Cavan, where his father had inherited the family farm from an elder brother. Until he was fourteen, Vincent attended the local primary school where he was noted as a keen student with a great desire to learn. In those days in Ireland, secondary education was usually reserved for the well-off, so Vincent had to interrupt his studies. He went to the capital city of Dublin where he found work at the Italian Embassy as a footman, all the time nurturing his desire for the priesthood.

As Divine Providence would have it, one day Vincent was walking down the main thoroughfare of Dublin, O’Connell Street, when he stopped to chat at a ‘Legion of Mary’ bookstall manned by a young man by the name of Sean Russell (who would himself become a Verona Father). In the course of their conversation, they discovered that they had something in common – a budding vocation to the missionary priesthood. Vincent sadly expressed his own poor prospects of ever fulfilling his dream given his lack of secondary education. Then Sean informed him that an Italian priest would shortly come to interview him and suggested that Vincent, too, came along. Vincent did so and managed to meet Fr. Filbert Polato and go, at the age of eighteen, to Sunningdale (England) to commence his course of formation that would lead him to the marvellous adventures of his missionary life in England, Italy, Uganda, and again in England and, last of all, back to Bunnoe, where his parents had been laid to rest and where his own funeral took place on 3 December, 2016.

He went to Sunningdale for his Novitiate and philosophical studies until 1956, when he went to Venegono (Italy), to follow the prescribed course of theology. He took Final Vows on 9 September, 1959 and was ordained a priest on 2 July, 1960.

F Vincent was then assigned to Uganda, which would be his home for thirty-nine years, mainly spent in the field of Education. His personal records show where he was based during those early years of missionary service: Arua-Ediofe (1960-1961); Ombaci (1961-1962); Lodonga (1962-1969); Kampala (1970-1971); and Arua-Ediofe (1972-1977).

Among the responsibilities given to Fr. Vincent were the chaplaincy work and the supervision of religious education in schools. This brought him into contact with various categories of people especially teachers, catechists and members of the clergy, among whom he soon established a reputation as a well-organised, competent and friendly priest, easy to work with and very sociable.

Like all good Verona Fathers, as we were called at the time, Fr. Vincent took his turn on the home front spending three years (1977-1980) as Local Superior and Rector of the Junior Seminary at Mirfield, followed by eight years (1980-1988) of ministry and chaplaincy work to overseas students at the International Chaplaincy in Holland Park (West London). Then he went back to his beloved Uganda where he had left his heart, again working in the all-important field of education. He worked continuously in Uganda for the next twenty-two years, based at Lira-Ngeta (1988-2010).

In summarising his life, Fr. Vincent wrote: “I’ve been a teacher, a Headmaster, a College Principal, a Chaplain, a Vocations Promoter, Editor of educational magazines and a giver of Retreats and Spiritual Exercises. In one place I was the local Sub-Postmaster for six years; at the Overseas Chaplaincy in London I was obliged to be a Bar Licensee as well. For a couple of years, I was a student at Makerere University and received a degree for my research into one of the local languages. I wonder what surprises the future will hold!”

It was soon after he had celebrated fifty years of priesthood in 2010 that Fr. Vincent encountered major health problems that, in 2012, required hospitalisation and surgery that brought him to death’s door. More than once, he was not expected to live through the night. With his typical tenacity, Fr. Vincent overcame the worst and settled into the routine of medication, hospital visits, and occasional hospitalisation, innumerable trips by ambulance or taxi, becoming less and less mobile and more and more dependent on others. Fr. Vincent accepted his illness, not as the end of everything, but as a new challenge that needed his full attention. He set about organising things and made the most of life in his condition, right up to his death.

He spent almost all of the last six years of his life at our Community in Dawson Place (London) where he impressed us all by the way he accepted the limits imposed by his long-term illness while, at the same time, never giving in to depression or allowing his illness to dominate his life. He died on 12 September 2016 in London and was buried at Bunnoe. (*Fr. Patrick Wilkinson*)

**Fr. Joseph Forlani, (06.01.1932 – 30.11.2016)**

Fr. Joseph Forlani was born at Romano Lombardo, near Bergamo, on January 6, 1932. He joined the Comboni Missionaries in 1950 and, while still a novice, was sent to the United States to continue his training in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he also studied philosophy and theology at Mt. St. Mary of the West seminary. He was ordained a priest on May 25, 1958, in the chapel of Sacred Heart Seminary (currently, Comboni Mission Center) at the hands of Comboni Bishop Angelo Barbisotti of Esmeraldas (Ecuador). Following ordination, Fr. Joseph taught at the seminary and worked in our West End parishes of Cincinnati while earning a MA in History at Xavier University.

After four years of ministry in the United States, Fr. Joe was assigned to the province of Ethiopia and Eritrea. There he taught at Comboni College in Asmara (Eritrea), before moving to the South of Ethiopia and serving the vicariate of Hawassa as superintendent of Catholic schools, administrator and bishop’s secretary.

In 1974 Fr. Joe was called back to the States where he reopened the novitiate in Yorkville, Illinois and served as master of novices for two years. His tenure is remembered as being on the strict side, but fair. The next two years we find him as associate pastor at St. Albert the Great in Compton, Cal. a large and complex Afro-American parish just south of Los Angeles in a racially tense and divided area. His down to earth attitude helped him to fit into the complex picture.

Soon, the desire to serve in the missions resurfaced and, by the end of 1980, he found himself in Ecuador. There he remained for 20 years serving in primitive and demanding places along the Pacific Coast in the diocese of Esmeraldas. He ministered to the Afro-Ecuadorian population and to the indigenous groups living along the rivers and in the forests of that remote area.

In his second phase he pioneered our missionary presence in neighboring Colombia, both in Cali and Bogotá. Then Fr. Joe was called to Quito, Ecuador’s capital, to take care of the province’s finances. It was at that time that Fr. Forlani began to suffer from painful symptoms of a disease that would give him constant ear aches and eventually damage his vocal cords.

He returned to the States in the year 2,000 and, thanks to his knowledge of Spanish, he was a great asset in the Comboni parishes of South Side Los Angeles. His health, however, was still giving him problems. He underwent surgery, but he gradually lost much of the use of his vocal cords, eventually making it impossible for him to carry out public ministry. As was his custom, he accepted this sacrifice without complaining and spent his remaining years in the States being a cheerful and attentive presence in the Comboni community of Covina, California.

While he could no longer preach, he was always ready to hear confessions both in the nearby parishes and at home, where many people came to seek his advice. Fr. Joe was known for “telling it like it is” and there was no arguing with him. I had heard that in his early days he was pretty stern, but by the time I met him he had mellowed. It was a joy to have him around.

It was hard to say good-bye to him in October 2014 but I knew he wanted to go “home” for his last days. He spent his remaining days in the Comboni Retirement Center of Milan, Italy. He died on 30 November 2016 after a full and rewarding life as a true, hard-working and faithful son of St. Daniel Comboni. (*Fr. Joe Bragotti*)

### Let us pray for our beloved dead

**THE MOTHERS:** Alejandrina, of Bro. Santos de la Cruz González (M); Ghedit Fadega Melhik, of Fr. Alazar Abraha (KE); Palmina, of Fr. Sergio Agustoni (I); Jovita Serrano, of Fr. José Antonio Delgado Serrano (M).

**THE BROTHER:** David, of Fr. Paul Michael Donohue (NAP).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. Sandrina Maccà; Sr. M. Virginia Sala; Sr. Mary Carmen Zinni.

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