

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

771

February 2019

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

General Secretariat for Formation Interculturality Workshop

From 20 to 27 January, at the General house, a “Workshop on Intercultural Skills” was held. It was organised by the members of the General Secretariat for Formation: Fr. John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, Fr. Siro Stocchetti, Fr. Elias Sindjalim, Fr. Fermo Bernasconi and Bro. Guillermo Casas. Work began with a welcoming address by Fr. John Baptist, General Secretary for Formation during which he recalled the content of the Letter of the General Council to the whole Institute which indicated that the year 2019 would be entirely dedicated to reflection and the reorganisation of concrete activities on the theme of interculturality.

Fr. Siro then presented the objectives and the methodology chosen for the workshop, emphasising that the main purpose of the week was to have a personal experience of reflection, sharing and growth in intercultural skills so that each one of the participants might animate the confreres of his circumscription.

The forty participants belonged to fourteen nationalities; two Comboni Sisters also took part: Sister Angelina Nyakuru, from Uganda, and Sister Iris Kelyna Gallardo, from El Salvador. Europe was the continent with most representatives (27, followed by Africa (8), America (4), Asia (1). The Europeans were mostly Italians (14), followed by the Spaniards (6), Portuguese (5), one German and one Pole.

At the end of the workshop, some intercultural experiences were selected and some concrete activities were specified that might help the Comboni circumscriptions to deepen the theme of interculturality.

General Secretariat

We are publishing a list of works born or inspired by the Comboni mission in the world. It is most probable that other names may be added to list. We kindly ask you to indicate these to us. Thank you.

INSTITUTES, CONGREGATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS & MOVEMENTS FOUNDED AND/OR ACCOMPANIED BY COMBONI MISSIONARIES AND COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS

FOR WOMEN

01. *Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate* > Mons. Angelo Negri and entrusted to Sr. Angioletta Dognini, Gulu (Uganda) 1945.

02. *Daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* > Mons. Johann Riegler, Glen Cowie (South Africa) 1949.

03. *Sisters of the Sacred Heart* > Mons. Sisto Mazzoldi, Juba (Sudan) 1952, assisted by Sr. Donatilla Moroni. It moved to Moyo (Uganda) due to civil war and was entrusted to the guidance of Sr. Elisabetta Goggi. They are now working in Sudan and in Uganda.

04. *Sisters of Nazareth* > Mons. Edoardo Mason, Wau (Sudan) 1956, together with Sr. Carmen Predelli. They later joined the new Institute of the *Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (1997).

05. *Sisters of Our Lady of Victories* > Mons. Domenico Ferrara, Mupoi (Sudan) 1957, entrusted to Sr. Bartolomea Pedretti. They joined the new Institute of the *Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (1997) under the Bishop of Tombura-Yambio who entrusted their formation to the Comboni Sisters.

06. *Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration of the Holy Trinity* > Mons. Angelo Tarantino, together with Sr. Anastasia Fumagalli, Arua (Uganda) 1960. An enclosed monastery.

07. *Lay Helpers* > Fr. Antonio La Salandra, Maracha (Uganda) 1970. A lay association.

08. *Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Church* (with a missionary and multi-tribal character) > Mons. Cesare Asili, diocesan bishop of Lira (Uganda) 1972. Formation was entrusted to Sr. Ignazia Curcis.

09. *Evangelizing Sisters of Mary* > Mons. Sisto Mazzoldi and Fr. G. Marengoni, Himo/Moshi (Tanzania) 1976, assisted by Sr. Peralba Figini.

10. *Misioneras Combonianas del Corazón de Jesús* > Mons. Enrico Bartolucci, Esmeraldas (Ecuador) 1982.

11. *Contemplative Evangelizing Sisters of the Heart of Christ* > Fr. Giovanni Marengoni (Kenya). It was meant to be the female branch of the contemplative congregation founded in 1986 but it was never realised due to converging counter-indications.

12. *Handmaids of the Church* > Mons. Armido Gasparini, Awasa (Ethiopia) 1988, assisted by Sr. Neghesti Tekié. First vows in 1991.

13. *Misioneras de María Estrella del Mar* > Mons. Olindo Spagnolo, Guayaquil (Ecuador) 1992, approved in 1995.

FOR MEN

14. *Brothers of St. Martin de Porres* > Mons. Sisto Mazzoldi, Juba/Kit (Sudan) 1953, assisted by Fr. Giuseppe Gusmini and Bro. Alessandro Pelucchi. They had to flee to Uganda; they now work in both Uganda and Sudan.

15. *Marian Brothers or Brothers of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* > Mons. G. Battista Cesana and Fr. Gino Albrigo, Lodonga (then in the diocese of Gulu - Uganda) 1954. Founded for teaching and for catechumens.

16. *Brothers of St. Joseph* > Mons. Edoardo Mason, Wau (Sudan) 1955. Religious and academic teaching. Overrun during the civil war, the survivors joined the *Brothers of St. Martin de Porres*.

17. *Brothers of St. Joseph the Worker* > Mons. Domenico Ferrara, Mupoi (Sudan) 1959. After the civil war they joined the *Brothers of St. Martin de Porres*.

18. *Apostles of Jesus* > Mons. Sisto Mazzoldi and Fr. Giovanni Marengoni, Nadiket/Moroto (Uganda) 1964. This was the first African congregation for priests and brothers.

19. *Pequeños Hermanos de María/Little Brethren of Mary* > Fr. Antonio Piacentini, La Paz (Messico) 1971. The movement was approved in 1991. It also has a female branch called *Piccole Sorelle di Maria*. It gained pontifical approval in 1991. It is present in 17 countries and has 20,000 members of whom 150 are consecrated.

20. *Petits Frères de l'Évangile*, Lomé (Togo) 1974, derived from the fusion of the *Disciples de Jésus* founded by Fr. Francesco Grotto in 1971 and the *Frères de St. Jean-Baptiste*, founded in 1968 by Archbishop Dosseh.

21. *Contemplative Evangelizers of the Heart of Christ* > Fr. Giovanni Marengoni, Rongai/Nakuru (Kenya) 1986.

22. Sociedad Sacerdotal Misioneros de “Estrella del Mar” > Mons. Olindo Spagnolo, Guayaquil (Ecuador) 1983, approved in 1995.

23. Misioneros de los jovenes de Maria Inmaculada > Fr. Santiago Moratiel, Ecuador, approved in 1995.

The following ecclesial organisations are connected to the Comboni Family:

24. Apóstoles de la Palabra > Fr. Flaviano Amatulli, Messico, 1978.

25. Servidores de la Palabra > Fr. Luigi Butera, Messico.

26. Misioneras Hijas de la Iglesia > Fr. Julio Herrero and Sr. M. Rosaria D'Anna, Quito (Ecuador) 1979.

27. Misioneros de la Reconciliación del Señor de los Milagros > ex Comboni Fr. Felipe Homero Fierro Radiilo, Lima (Perù) 1987.

28. A.M.S.E. = Asociación Misionera Seglar Ecuador, Quito 1994.

29. Hogares Daniel Comboni > Fr. Manuel Sánchez, El Carmen (Ecuador) 2002. For abandoned children.

30. Cenacolo Misionario Comboniano > Sr. Rosangela Passera and Ester Abbattista, approved by the diocese of Rome in 2002.

Perpetual professions

Sc. Musonda Cosmas (MZ)	Lunzu (MW)	24/01/2019
Sc. Sebutinde Michael (U)	Namalu (UG)	25/01/2019

Holy Redeemer Guild

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

Prayer intentions

February – That the witness of our inter-generational and intercultural communities may be a sign that God enfolds everyone in the embrace of his infinite love. *We pray to the Lord.*

March – That the canonisation of Bishop Romero may bring all the Christian communities of Latin America strength, perseverance and confidence in the power of the Gospel. *We pray to the Lord.*

Publications

Fr. Simon Mwaura Mbutia, *Fiqh al-aqalliyāt's Struggle between Established Traditions and the Need to Adapt fatāwā to the Western Context. The Debate about a Woman who Embraces Islam Without her Husband*, Pontificium Istitutum Studiorum Arabicorum et Islamologiae, Roma 2018. This a doctorate thesis in Arabic and Islamic studies by Fr. Simon who analyses the theme of the conversion from Islam in western countries in the case of a married woman whose husband remains in his own faith and the fatāwā in the context of the western world. The work takes into consideration the jurisprudence of minorities and the views of some experts in this area; it has an ample bibliography.

BRASIL

Celebration of thanksgiving for Fr. Gianpietro Baresi

In memory of Fr. Gianpietro Baresi, many of his friends organised a celebration of thanksgiving for his life. It was held at '*Arsenal da Esperança*, in São Paulo, on 19 January 2019.

In the past, the structures of the *Arsenal da Esperança* were used to receive the thousands of migrants coming to Brazil. Today, coordinated by the SERMIG fraternity, the project receives 1,250 homeless people daily, welcoming them and giving them shelter as well as washing facilities and also professional courses and lessons in self-esteem, service and inclusion.

While he was in São Paulo, Fr. Gianpietro would celebrate Mass at the *Arsenal* twice a week, an authentic actualisation, today, of Jesus incarnate among the poor.

Inspired by the Gospel of the Wedding Feast of Cana, a considerable number of Comboni Family members took part in the celebration: Sisters, Brothers, Fathers and lay men and women friends of Fr. Gianpietro close to the spirit of our charism. There were also representatives of the Prison and Worker chaplaincies, of the Centre for the defence of the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Sapopemba, of the centre for the defence of Human Rights, in Sapopemba and the Daniel Comboni Institute of the *Fazenda da Juta*, as well as members of ecclesial communities of the East Zone of São Paulo and the Sanctuary of Santa Cruz da Reconciliação, Caxingui.

Gianpietro was remembered for his closeness to the poorest, the friends of God and, at the same time, his ability to understand and make a deep analysis of the reality of the context of socio-political challenges, of the history and the prospects of the Church. Some Combonis who were his students or mission companions emphasised his intuitions in making religious formation more incarnate, going out to the peripheries and acting according to the situation.

The celebration also recalled his commitment to the defence of children and adolescents and with the magazine *Sem Fronteiras*: the words of Fr. Abel, the pseudonym he chose for his column of ironic, provoking and prophetic comment, resounded once again during this celebration. It was a celebration under the sign of the Gospel of the Joy to which Fr. Gianpietro was always a living and consistent witness. The many poor people whom he knew and served – it was said – must have welcomed him into Heaven. It is such as these that recognise the servants of God and confirm how worthwhile it is to spend one's entire life in giving, in prophecy and in the service of life.

COLOMBIA

Spiritual exercises and Assembly

The Combonis of the Delegation of Colombia ended the year dedicated to the Rule of Life (RL) with a week of spiritual exercises from 8 to 15 January, directed by Fr. Rafael González Ponce. "Fr. Rafael helped us greatly to know the RL and, especially, to savour and understand it" said Fr. Antonio Villarino.

On the following days, from 16 to 18 January, the Delegation held its annual assembly, the main theme of which was "Which mission are we conducting in Colombia and how can we improve it?" The missionaries commenced the assembly with a morning of prayer and reflection led by Fr. Carlos Correa, Provincial of the Jesuits in Colombia.

ECUADOR

Meeting to discuss the frontier zones

On 3 and 4 December 2018, at the Comboni parish of San Lorenzo the Martyr (Esmeraldas), a meeting was held to share ideas on the social and pastoral frontier zones. Present were representatives of the diocese of Tumaco (Colombia) and of the Apostolic Vicariate of Es-

meraldas: their bishops, Mons. Orlando Olave and Mons. Eugenio Arellano MCCJ, and around thirty pastoral agents including priests, religious and laity of the city of Tumaco, of the Vicariate and of the Northern Zone of Esmeraldas. There was also a substantial presence of Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Sisters among whom was Fr. Daniele Zarantonello, parish priest of Tumaco, Fr. José Martín Balda, co-ordinator of the meeting and Pastoral Vicar of Esmeraldas, as well as the missionary men and women working in the parishes of Santa María de los Cayapas, Borbón and San Lorenzo. Even though this experience is nothing new but forms part of a programme of activities going back more than twenty years, this particular meeting arose from a recently-created situation, especially at San Lorenzo and Tumaco, after the bombs that exploded in January and March 2018 at San Lorenzo and Borbón and following the episodes of violence (resulting in the deaths of four Ecuadorians in a mine explosion, the abduction and murder of three journalists and an Ecuadorian couple) carried out by armed groups involved in the drugs trade.

The meeting took place in three parts: the historical memory of pastoral frontiers, the presentation of the various problems by the delegations and the operative conclusions with an evaluation of the encounter.

First of all, the problems, already mentioned on various occasions, have been worsening. The presentation of the problems facilitated the understanding that the two zones are living the same situation, with the same problems and the same hopes, even if things are more serious in Tumaco and in the area of the Colombian border. In fact, they belong to the same ethnic groups and the people see no sense in having a frontier that limits movement, commerce and trade or in having different administration systems.

In this situation, marked especially by unemployment, the struggle for easy money is widespread with an increase in crime, prostitution, human trafficking and drug use. At the same time, traditional values are lost, families are increasingly fragmented and the number of girl-mothers increases as well as the number of abandoned children and alcoholics. There is also an invasion of religious sects and it is difficult to form Christian communities ready to take responsibility in the ecclesial, social and political fields.

In drawing conclusions, all the participants expressed their opinion that these meetings on frontier pastoral should continue. Various sug-

gestions were made: to strengthen Afro pastoral following the same lines in Tumaco and Esmeraldas; to promote integral formation, not only religious and sacramental but also social, for the youth and for community leaders; to form critical consciences; promote environmental pastoral, articulate our work with that of other organisations close to the Church; to try to understand what economic and political plans the government intends to propose in the frontier zones; to support producers' associations in the processing of products in the same territory; assist collaboration between dioceses.

ETHIOPIA

Priestly Ordinations

On 12 January 2019, the vigil of the patronal feast of the parish, a great feast was celebrated at Fullasa, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Hawassa, the parish that has by far the largest Catholic population in Ethiopia with around 40,000 Catholics, on the occasion of three ordinations to the priesthood.

The newly ordained were Iyasu Altesa Lodovico and Iyasu Daguna, from Fullasa, and Matewos Kebede, from the parish of Teticcha. Thousands of the faithful took part in the ceremony. There was an especially moving moment when Mgr. Roberto Bergamaschi invited the three deacons to take a vow of obedience to him and his successors, immediately afterwards invoking the Holy Spirit to take possession of them for a ministry that unites heaven and earth in the wake of the redemptive and salvific work of Jesus Christ.

Some Comboni working in Ethiopia were present among whom was Bishop Emeritus of the Apostolic Vicariate of Hawassa, Mgr. Lorenzo Ceresoli. Both the Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Sisters felt they had had a role in the training of these priests through prayer, example, catechesis and, at times, direct involvement in the seminary formation process. Deceased Bishop Giovanni Migliorati was remembered by the newly-ordained priests as an important figure in their vocational journey.

During the ceremony, the sad event of the killing of Iyasu's father, which happened two weeks previously during tribal conflicts, was recalled. Both parishioners and all the participants were saddened by this event which cast the shadow of mourning over the joy of the celebration.

ITALIA

ACSE Jubilee in Rome

The celebrations for the ACSE Jubilee began on 23 January with an interesting and well-attended meeting in Rome. About 150 people filled Dante hall of the Palazzo Poli, close to the famous Trevi Fountain. Those present included the friends of ACSE, the Comboni Sisters with their Superior General, the Comboni Missionaries (Father General was abroad visiting the missions), representatives of other Institutes, many young Africans and a number of other people.

Fr. Venanzio Milani, as President of ACSE, presented the history of ACSE from its beginning under Fr. Renato Bresciani up to the present day, together with its various activities. This was followed by interesting testimonies by one of the first women collaborators, by two young people, an Ethiopian and an Afghan, who benefitted from ACSE scholarships, with one becoming an engineer and the other a lawyer, and by Sr. Maria Rosa Venturelli, Vice President of ACSE. Honourable Rutelli, who knew and assisted Fr. Bresciani, remembered him as a man with a free and generous faith, who, when he was Mayor, helped him to understand better the conditions of immigrants and needy persons. The meeting ended with a masterful address by Senator Luigi Manconi on the question of immigration at the present time.

Other meetings are also planned to be held in Rome: on 28 February, at the General Curia on the theme of "The present situation of the health of migrants"; on 25 March at the Seraphicum with Fr. Alex Zanotelli on the theme "A welcome that regenerates"; on 18 May (venue yet to be fixed) a musical evening of African dance, music and song.

Statistics relating to the 38th Verona African Film Festival (2018) in the city and the Province

30 films were shown in 25 halls. There were 60 film shows in schools with 8,364 students attending (2,175 in Verona and 6,189 in the Province) and 937 teachers. A total of 14,385 people attended the festival.

The Comboni Missionaries, besides being one of the sponsors, provided accommodation for some film directors and made the Hall and the Museum available for quite a few collateral festival initiatives such

as the exhibition “The Dance of the Spirits”, films by the Travellers and Migrants sector as well as various conferences and the like.

PCA

Provincial Assembly on Networking

This year, from 7 to 10 January, The Combonis of the province gathered for their annual assembly. In the presence of Father General, Tesfaye Tadesse, and Assistant General, Fr. Alcides Costa, the members of the province covered the main themes of their daily apostolate. The theme of on-going formation was interculturality, proposed at Institute level for this year. We were assisted in our reflection by Fr. Mario Tubac, a Guatemalan priest in charge of indigenous pastoral in the Archdiocese of Guatemala City and by a group of his collaborators.

The theme of networking, which was ever present during the whole meeting, helped us to see our presence in Central America as an opportunity to work as a team, to unify our strengths and personal abilities in a common project. The presence of Frs. Tesfaye and Alcides confirmed us in our communion with the Institute and showed us how our ministry is to be seen in the context of a Comboni project. After the assembly, Fr. Tesfaye continued his visits to the communities of the Province to animate the missionaries in their service and to gain direct knowledge of the reality in which the Combonis of the Province carry on their work and ministry.

The assembly was an occasion to share joys, difficulties and hopes and to open new horizons for the coming years in fidelity to the charism of St. Daniel Comboni.

All the secretariats and sectors took some time to make their own evaluations and plans so as to delineate the journey of the Province this year.

PORTUGAL

Bro. Bernardino defends his doctorate thesis

Bro. Bernardino Dias Frutuoso has successfully completed the public exam for a doctorate in Communication Sciences at the Portuguese Catholic University of Lisbon (UCP), defending the thesis “As (re)configurações comunicativas do papado na era da (au-

to)mediatização” (The communicative (re)configurations of the papacy in the age of (self-)mediatization).

The commission, composed of six teaching professors of the UCP, the University of Coimbra and the “Universidade Nova” of Lisbon, awarded this work of 393 pages (with notes, references and a bibliography) 19/20 and *summa cum laude*. They praised “the theoretical quality and the empirical work” of the dissertation, the intellectual and personal abilities of the author and the record time – three years – in which he completed his doctorate while, at the same time, directing the Comboni publications in Portugal.

The defence of the thesis was held at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the UCP, Lisbon, on 22 January.

The newly qualified doctor has, for the past four years, been the director of the Comboni magazines in Portugal: “Além-Mar” and “Audácia” and of the bulletin “Familia Comboniana”. He previously worked for the Comboni magazines of Peru and Colombia.

CHAD

The parish of Abéché thanks Fr. Filippo Ivardi

On Sunday 30 December the parish of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus held a solemn Mass, in a very emotional atmosphere, to celebrate the Holy Family and the closure of the General Assembly of the Rewnodji Movement. It was attended by 300 of the faithful from the eight dioceses of Chad.

The Mass included a special moment when Dominique and Jeanne said their “yes” to each other for ever, followed by thanksgiving for the life of Fr. Filippo Ivardi Ganapini who, appointed to Italy, was due to leave the delegation in January, after nine years of service at Moissalla and N’djamena and five years as parish priest of Abéché.

This is the testimony of Counsellor Fidèle Tonalta Ngaryo, who spoke in the name of the parish community. “For all these years, you have carried out your mission, to announce the Good News with joy and love. You worked not only for the faithful but also for our Moslem brothers and sisters. Through your visits to the families, you were very close to the faithful, especially to Christian couples. I wish to emphasise that, despite the vast area of the parish which covers about a fifth of the country, you travelled to visit the communities, over long dis-

tances and bad, dusty roads. On Sundays, you did not think it right to see two Comboni priests celebrating Mass for the faithful of Abéché and so you would go with some of the faithful to say Mass in the prison. Through my words, the parish community expresses its gratitude for your closeness and your joy in accompanying them. So that you may always bear this memory in your heart, we present you with a 'portable' map of Chad, showing the outline of our parish”.

TOGO-GHANA-BENIN

Perpetual profession and priestly ordination

The Province ended the year joyfully due to two great events: the perpetual profession of Sc. Christ-Roi Tomety and the ordination to the priesthood of Deacons Sylvain Alohoungo and Noël Sakie.

The perpetual profession was held at the provincial house on 30 November 2018, the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, presided over by provincial superior Fr. Victor Kouande and attended by many relatives, friends and confreres of the newly-professed. In his homily, Fr. Victor invited everyone to listen to the voice of the Lord who continues to call men and women to leave everything and follow him. He then invited the newly-professed to imitate the apostles, including St. Andrew, responding always with promptness to the Lord who called him.

Deacon Sylvain Alohoungo was ordained priest on 15 December 2018 together with 18 other diocesan deacons, with the imposition of the hands by the Archbishop of Cotonou, Mons. Roger Houngbedji. In the course of the celebration, the Archbishop invited the newly-ordained priests to place all their lives on three fundamental pillars: awareness of their consecration to Christ, the logic of holiness and fraternal communion.

On 22 December, finally, it was the turn of Deacon Noel Sakie to be ordained, at Noépé, in the Archdiocese of Lomé. It was a most beautiful ceremony lasting five hours; there were 21 deacons of whom 20 were diocesan, with a great crowd and immense joy. In his homily, the Archbishop of Lomé invited the deacons to be assiduous in their work and to avoid avarice and especially the pursuit of money.

The three confreres received their appointments: Sc. Christ-Roi to Ethiopia, Fr. Sylvain to Mexico and Fr. Noël to Asia. May our prayers accompany them so that they may be true heralds of the Good News no matter where their mission takes them.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Fr. Gianpietro Baresi (08.10.1936 – 08.12.2018)

Fr. Gianpietro Baresi was born on 8 October 1936 at Gavardo (Brescia), into a large family of deep faith. “It is important to remember our parents – Fr. Gianpietro wrote a couple of years ago – our roots from which our lives and vocations were formed: I think of the sacrifices of my parents in bringing up a family of 15 children, in a period of war, with great suffering and fear. Theirs was a life of labour but also of great strength of soul and deep spirituality. When I was in formation and the road to Brazil was opening up before me, my mother would weep at the thought of my leaving... When my visa arrived I went to her and asked if I should refuse to go. *No No! Gianpietro! I taught you to take your first steps!* I left and she became the most ardent supporter of Brazil! The Rosary was always there in our family. At eleven in the evening we could hear the Hail Mary being prayed by our father as he returned on his bicycle from the factory ... I remember the evening prayer of my father (shortly before he died) with his mattress on the floor for fear of falling: *I am not sure if tomorrow I will awake on this side or the other. If it is on the other side then I hope God gives me a good place, not that I do merit it but because he is good!* It was the prophetic idea of the Merciful God of whom Pope Francis speaks so frequently!”

Fr. Gianpietro, after his novitiate at Gozzano and scholasticate in Verona and Venegono, was ordained priest on 7 April 1962. He then worked for about twelve years in Italy as vocations promoter, formator and teacher. In 1974 he left for Brazil where he spent forty years and carried out the bulk of his fruitful and impassioned missionary service. He took part both in pastoral as well as formation work, always with intelligent and caring attention towards the poor. He was fully committed in the ecclesial and socio-political life during the hot years of transition from the Brazilian military dictatorship and the renewal of the Institute.

Fr. Antonio Guglielmi, who lived with Fr. Gianpietro in Brazil, wrote from Palermo (10 December 2018): “When we heard the news of your death, dear João Pedro, my mind was filled with many memories of the period when we were at the São Paulo scholasticate on the Avenida Primavera de Caiena. Those were the years from 1983 to 1985.

Brazil, still under military dictatorship, was slowly making its way towards presidential elections. You were the formator and I was carrying on my theological studies in a formation context inserted in the outskirts of that great metropolis, close to the favelas. It was a 'dormitory' quarter and the people would get up very early in the morning to go to work. We ourselves did the same to go to the theological faculty. You managed to have the formation house "relocated" from the provincial residence to a residential area in Parque Santa Madalena, a "bairro popular", with unreliable infrastructure but inhabited by "o povo", the poor, and this contributed much to the formation of the missionary students. The real formators, you would say, were the poor, the people who struggled for survival to guarantee a living for their children.

Today, dear João Pedro, I can tell you how courageous you were, challenging all of us with this great insight of yours that has not yet found many followers and, in some respects, seemed too much to expect. It was a matter of learning to live on essentials with "no frills", and yet you helped me not to lose the vocation for which we were all created: that of being human. Yes. Before being religious, we had to learn to be human. Our closeness to those who daily risk their lives helped me to make my own the commandment "a vida em primeiro lugar", first of all life. I am grateful to you and all those who helped me to live this formative ideal.

You were ironic and you yourself said you were crafty when you told stories of your childhood. Your irony made us laugh and was an expression of inner freedom and a sense of humour that defused embarrassing situations. You knew how to handle children and this made you naturally accessible to all, without exception".

In 2015 Fr. Gianpietro returned to Italy for reasons of health. On 22 November 2018 he suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and was taken immediately to Borgo Trento hospital (Verona) where he went into a deep irreversible coma. He was brought home to his community at Castel d'Azzano on 7 December where he died the following day, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

To all the members of the community of Castel D'Azzano Fr. Gianpietro leaves happy memories: his playful smile, his ready wit, his broad knowledge which he continued to develop by reading ... but most of all his desire to communicate with everyone and his willingness to be of help to all the confreres.

Fr. Aladino Mirandola (11.04.1929 – 09.12.2018)

Fr. Aladino was born at Vigasio (Verona). This is how he himself tells in what way his vocation began: “From my boyhood I used to serve Mass and the Sisters at the pre-school used to tell me I would grow up to be a priest... I used to get very angry! I thought nothing of the sort! For some years I took part in Catholic Action but then I left it to follow the passion of my youth - dancing.

One Sunday I was standing outside the parish hall where a comedy was being staged; I hadn't the price of a ticket. The sacristan sent me to the presbytery to get some chairs (promising me free entry) and there I met the man who made me become a religious, the new curate who invited me to a meeting of CA. I cannot understand how but that evening I found myself at the CA meeting where I was received with open arms. I was confused. The following Sunday, I went back to the dance hall but just stood there watching. That was the last time I went dancing. Little by little my vocation grew... I was reading Nigrizia and something was moving within me ... I wanted to be a Comboni”.

In 1951, after the novitiate in Sunningdale (UK), Aladino took vows as a Comboni Brother and, in 1954, after three years in England, he was appointed to Uganda. There he carried out his missionary ministry, especially in teaching, until 2014, with a break of six years in Rome (1970-1976) for philosophical and theological studies with a view to being ordained priest (1976). In fact, after his ordination he returned to Uganda to exercise his ministry in West Nile for thirty-eight years.

Then he started having health problems. In 2015 he returned to Italy, first to Verona and then to Castel D'Azzano. His progressively serious condition of suffering and immobility, especially in his final months, weighed heavily upon his morale, causing him to become somewhat taciturn: before his illness he would enjoy going out and helping in ministry, as much as his health allowed, in the nearby parishes he knew so well. His family and friends often called on him for a chat and a word of advice. He died at Negrar hospital (Verona) on 9 December 2018.

These are the words Fr. Renzo Piazza, superior of the community of Castel d'Azzano, addressed to Fr. Aladino by way of a final goodbye, at the start of the Eucharist presided over by Fr. Giovanni Munari, Provincial Superior. “Fr. Aladino, this community where you lived for the past three and a half years wishes to thank you and greet you for the last time. When you came to Castel d'Azzano, right from the start

you began a practice in which we soon became experts: that of falling! Under the scorching sun on the third day of June, perhaps recalling your first vocation as a Brother, you went out to check the asphaltting work being done by the workers. You left some drops of blood on the new surface. You had a few scratches and forgot about it.

Many others followed your example ... You often bore witness to your life entirely dedicated to the missionary cause and of your “monogamic” love for Uganda where you worked for 16 years as a Brother and 38 as a priest, preaching and teaching. A total of 54 years! You gave us lessons in its geography as you recalled the missions where you worked: Moyo, Pakwach, Koboko and Ombaci; and in its politics as you recalled your friends in high places such as President Idi Amin.

You supported missionary projects of human promotion, gaining the help of friends (including the Chievo football team!), always mindful that “without money, the works of God are not established”, as Comboni said. You were happy to see the fruits of your work and were proud of one of your altar servers who, now a Comboni Missionary, is working in South Sudan.

You knew how to grow old gracefully in the community of Castel d’Azzano. Always faithful to community prayer, you would fix your eyes on the tabernacle and would always notice if the Blessed Sacrament lamp had gone out ... You were available for ministry as long as your health allowed and you kept in touch with your family and the town where you were born, grew up and where you used to go dancing as a youth ... and where, most important of all, you were educated in the faith and in the love for all. With a pinch of nostalgia, you showed us the ruined church where you used to say the Rosary as a boy”.

Fr. Pasquale Boffelli (12.04.1925 – 11.12.2018)

Fr. Pasquale was born at Fiorano al Serio (Bergamo) on 12 April 1925. At the age of 14 he entered the minor seminary at Rebbio. He then moved to that of Brescia and entered the novitiate on 12 August 1943. He took first vows on 15 August 1945 in Venegono. He studied philosophy at Rebbio and later returned to Venegono where he made his perpetual profession on 15 August 1951.

He was ordained priest in Milan on 7 June 1952 and in August of that year left for Lebanon to study Arabic.

The following year, 1953, he arrived in Sudan, appointed to Comboni College, Khartoum, as a teacher and, in 1961, as assistant at the boarding school.

In 1967 he moved to the Technical School as director; he then returned for a period to Comboni College.

From 1971 to 1973 he stayed in Italy at the General Curia. On his return to Khartoum and the seat of the Technical School, he worked as Sudanaid diocesan coordinator.

In 1978 he was appointed executive secretary of the Social Communications Commission, an organ of the Sudan Conference of Bishops.

Fr. Pasquale worked for many years with Bishop Macram Max Gassis who, in his testimony recalls: "During those difficult times for the Church in Sudan, especially my diocese of El-Obeid, due to the slavery and oppressive dominion exercised against the Christians by the fundamentalist Islamic regime of Omar El Bashir, I asked the Church personnel to keep a diary of the events. Fr. Boffelli took up this invitation and produced his famous 'Anonymous'. Most of the foreign ambassadors appreciated this 'circulation' with valuable information in particular concerning the enslavement and oppression of Christians, especially the people of South Sudan.

When I too was prevented from returning to El-Obeid for reasons of security – in fact I had approached the UN Commission for Human Rights in Geneva, given testimony to Congress and other international institutions as well as the mass media in Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Holland – I established my base in Kenya. I succeeded in reaching my flock in the Nuba region and I needed Fr. Pasquale as my assistant. He was happy to help me and took care of personnel. Everyone loved him, so much so that he was called 'Grandfather'. Even after he had to retire, we remembered him at Mass every Wednesday in the prayers of the faithful. Even after he left the country, all the personnel remembered him during the Eucharistic celebration".

Bishop Macram concludes: "I knew him well and I can give testify to his simplicity and humility despite all the talents the Lord had given him. He was a peaceful man. He was also a professional photographer and a talented electrician. He played a decisive role in the electrical installation at the Permanent Secretariat of the Catholic Secretariat in Sudan which belonged to the Episcopal Conference of Khartoum. I thank the Good Lord for the gift of Fr. Pasquale. He was al-

ways close to me, especially in times of trouble. The words of Sacred Scripture are really true: 'Whoever finds a friend finds a treasure'".

Fr. Lino Negrato (22.07.1928 – 04.01.2019)

Fr. Lino Negrato was born at Legnaro (Padova) 90 years ago. After his novitiate in Venegono he made his first profession on 15 August 1946 and went as a scholastic to Rebbio, Brescia and Venegono where he took final vows on 20 September 1951. After ordination to the priesthood, on 7 June, 1952, he was assigned to Uganda where he carried out his missionary service for almost ten years. In 1963 he had to leave the country. The anti-Catholic Protestant policy, promoted first by the British colonial power and exacerbated afterwards by Milton Obote after independence in 1962, led to the suppression of all efforts in the field of education and in that of the political sensibilisation of the Catholic youth. In this difficult context, Fr. Lino, being a youthful and combative missionary, created a number of enemies and, for this reason he was forced to leave the country at short notice.

After a short period (1964-1967) spent in Italy and Canada, in 1968 he was appointed to Togo where he arrived on 14 October. He was assigned to the mission of Kouvé and there he worked tirelessly for 20 years. That was the most fruitful period of the life and work of Fr. Lino. With the energy of his forties, fifties and sixties, his determined character and the baggage of his Ugandan experience, he threw himself into the work of human promotion, building tens of primary schools and one secondary school. At the same time, with apostolic zeal, he devoted himself to the evangelisation of the territory, fighting against the voodoo that dominated throughout the area, building chapels everywhere. Today, that mission, now transferred to the diocesan clergy, is the mother-mission of several other parishes.

Fr. Lino's name will be always associated with Kouvé. It is a beautiful and eloquent sign to see that the bishop of the diocese of Aného, to which Kouvé parish belongs, chose to be represented at Fr. Lino's funeral by the first native priest of Kouvé.

After Kouvé, Fr. Lino continued his missionary service in Ghana and Benin up to 2010. His last mission community was Adidome (Ghana). Celebrating his eighty years (half of which he spent in Togo, Ghana and Benin), he told me: "I do not feel eighty; inside I feel I am only twenty"! However, his health was weakening. In fact, a year later while in Italy for holidays, he fell seriously ill. After some months spent con-

valescing, he decided to return to the mission. After only a few months, on 21 September 2010, Fr. Joe Rabbiosi, superior of the community of Adidome, had to accompany him back to Italy and Verona.

Fr. Lino belonged to the community of Castel d'Azzano since 2015. For some months his health had worsened and, during the night of 4 January he died peacefully. On 7 January we celebrated his funeral Mass with Fr, Renzo Piazza presiding and in the presence of many members of the community and his family. Various testimonies brought out the figure of this missionary. In the afternoon his funeral took place in his home town of Legnaro where he was laid to rest. (*Fr. Manuel João Pereira Correia*)

Fr. Josef Knapp (14.02.1941 – 12.01.2019)

Fr. Josef Valentin Knapp was born on 14 February 1941, at Falzes, South Tyrol (Italy). At the age of eleven he entered the Milland Mission House where he did all his studies up to the priesthood; he was ordained on 29 June 1966. He left Milland only during the period from 1962 to 1963, to go and do his novitiate at Mellatz, near Lindau. From 1966 to 1968, while waiting for his visa to go to South Africa, he worked as bursar at Milland Mission House. From August 1968 up to the end of 1992, he worked in the South African missions of Burgersfort, Luckau and Glen Cowie. From 1993 to 1995 he was again in Milland. He then returned to South Africa where he stayed until 2003. From 1 July 2003 up to the day of his death on 12 January 2019, he was parish administrator of Waidbruck and Kollmann where, in 2016, he had celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood.

While he was in South Africa, Fr. Josef was always very interested in the culture and faith of the Africans. Reciprocal exchange between Africa and Europe was very important in his eyes, so much so that he organised several European tours with an African choir.

Fr. Josef was a happy and sociable man. He always sought what was right and what generated hope. He has now reached his goal and we are confident that God will reward him for all his efforts and all his works.

The farewells to Fr. "Seppi" were everywhere impressive: at Kollmann, Waidbruck and at Pfalzen. Seppi was a Comboni, a missionary and a pastor. He was even more, much more. He was, above all, a

man ready to meet others, to dialogue about the faith and the Church. In reality, all his life he was a “researcher”, without formulas or pre-wrapped answers. He was also a bridge-builder in many ways. Seppi understood and wanted bridges not only from Europe to Africa but also from Africa to Europe. He was imbued with the culture of others; he was acculturated; he was an expert on the African tribes among whom he worked. Fr. Josef was not just “a parish priest”, or “a Comboni”, he was just Seppi, the one who played cards, knew how to celebrate, carry out beautiful liturgies and to be one with the people with whom he lived. (*Bro. Bruno Haspinger*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHER: Francesco, of Fr. Flavio Mazzata (I).

THE MOTHERS: Margareta, of Bro. Hans Eigner (DSP); Almerinda, of Bro. António Carvalho Leal (P).

THE BROTHERS: Antonio, of Fr. Teresino Serra (I); Rino, of Fr. Bruno Tonolli (I); Rev. Pio (diocesan priest), of Fr. Elia Pampaloni (U).

THE SISTERS: Santina, of Fr. Lorenzo Tomasoni (I); María del Carmen, of Fr. José Manuel Sánchez Ortiz (M); Rosa, of Fr. Mario Mazzoni (I).

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Sr Luisangela Casula, Sr. Gioconda Ganassin. Sr. M. Vittorina Maroso, Sr. M. Giuseppina Margoni, Sr. M. Virginia Parini, Sr. Lettehawariat Bereketeab.

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