

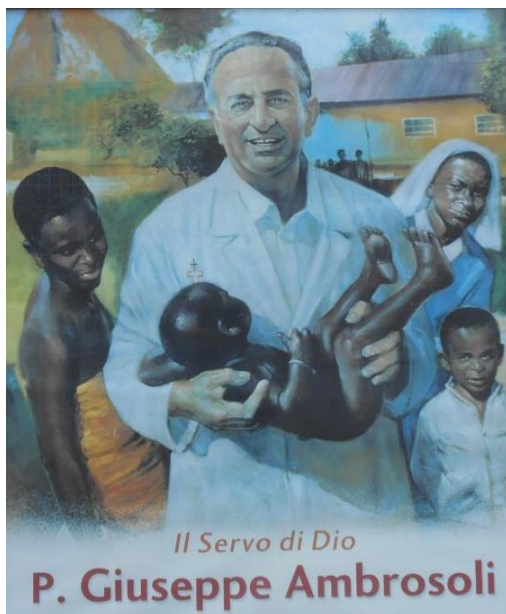
Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART

782

February 2020

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION



**The Beatification of Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli
in the land of Uganda: Kalongo, 22 November 2020,
The Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe**

Having heard the views of Father General and his Council, and having consulted the Local Church in Gulu through its Archbishop, His Grace John Baptist Odama, the Local Church in Como, in the person

of its Bishop Mons. Oscar Cantoni, and also the views of the Ambrosoli family, it was unanimously agreed that the Beatification of Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli should take place at Kalongo where Fr. Giuseppe carried out his missionary service fully and totally. It was agreed that the more suitable date for this event would be the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe.

Since this is a matter of a Pontifical Act, it was necessary to consult the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu who willingly agreed to preside at the Beatification ceremony, especially because of its missionary importance.

Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli is indeed a witness of the mission and more than once expressed the desire to be buried among his Acholi people where he spent 31 years of his service to the mission.

We Comboni Missionaries are filled with joy by this event and, at the same, time, with responsibility. In the first place, Kalongo (Northern Uganda), the location where the beatification is to take place, was once part of the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa of which Comboni was the first Vicar Apostolic and where Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli gave the best of himself in the work of the hospital and the midwifery school. Uganda represents, therefore, an important factor of material continuity, being the furthest outreach of the Vicariate that Comboni vainly dreamt of reaching, a dream that is now realised through Fr. Giuseppe, the first son of his Institute to be beatified.

Uganda is even more meaningful in the spiritual sense, for two reasons. Firstly, Fr. Ambrosoli, like our Holy Founder who preceded him, becomes part of the hidden foundation from which the African Church majestically rises. Secondly, because it is further confirmation of the method indelibly inscribed in his Plan: "Save Africa with Africa"! We therefore have many reasons to be grateful and to carry on the work with renewed vigour for the good of the Church and African society.

Perpetual Professions

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Sc. Adrupiako Akuma Pascal (CN) | Kisangani (RDC) | 01/01/2020 |
| Sc. Ruiz Eche Javier Martín (PE) | Pangoa (PE) | 04/01/2020 |
| Sc. Biseka Guerlain Joachim (CN) | Bangui (RCA) | 17/01/2020 |

Holy Redeemer Guild

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

Prayer intentions

February – That MCCJ Circumscription Superiors meeting in Rome may be enlightened by the Spirit and so discover the best ways to impart new vigour to our missionary service in the various continents. *Lord hear us.*

March – That, in their ministry, women may continue to offer support to families and create a sense of belonging in the communities where they live. *Lord hear us.*

CONGO

Visit by the Superior General

Our Father General, Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse, has, for the third time, paid a visit to the Congo Province, lasting from 15 December 2019 to 2 January 2020. On this occasion he visited the communities in the region of Isiro, greatly experiencing some of the difficulties that characterise the Congo mission: the great distances between our missions, impassable roads and difficult communications. He experienced at first hand the situation of poverty in which the Congolese people live. But none of these difficulties prevented him from reaching the confreres even in the most distant and out-of-the-way places, receiving a warm welcome both by the communities and the people. Fr. Tesfaye was struck by the beauty of the immense riches with which the Congo overflows: flora, fauna, water, mines, parks, the vitality of the people and their perseverance, their simple but joyful faith as well as the inculturation of their liturgy with very lively Eucharistic celebrations, not to mention the African heat.

Leaving Kisangani on 16 December, accompanied by the out-going Provincial Superior, Fr. Joseph Mumbere, and Provincial elect, Fr. Léonard Ndjadi, Fr. General visited the Comboni communities of Dondi, Mungbere and Isiro. A meeting with each confrere and each community with visits to works of the mission were important elements in strengthening each confrere in the missionary vocation and appreciating the ongoing missionary work. The highlight of every visit was the celebration of the Eucharist during which we thanked God for the gift of the missionary vocation, imploring that he give us the grace to continue our mission in a spirit of communion and solidarity, faithful to our charism and in collaboration with the Local Church and the entire Comboni Family.

Both at Mungbere and Isiro, Fr. Tesfaye met the groups of Comboni Lay Missionaries, the families of the missionaries and the Comboni Sisters. He then met the Bishop of Isiro with whom he discussed the mission of Dondi. He also made a pilgrimage to the three sites associated with Blessed Anuarite, Virgin and Martyr. We also remembered our own four martyrs killed during the Simba revolt in 1964.

At Kisangani, on New year's Day, Fr. Tesfaye received the perpetual vows of Sc. Pascal Adrupiako, in the presence of confreres, Sisters, relatives and friends. On that same occasion, Fr. Léonard Ndjadi, the new Provincial of the Congo, in conformity with Canon Law, made his profession of faith and so inaugurated his period of service to authority. The Congo Province sincerely thanks Fr. Tesfaye for his visit. It was a nice way to end the year. His canonical and fraternal visit, his simplicity and joy did us a world of good. We shall be eternally grateful. Long may the mission continue!

CURIA

Amazzonia and beyond

The celebration of the Synod for Amazonia drew public attention to some issues of vital importance far beyond the entire American continent and of relevance far beyond the event of the Synod.

Consequently, the Comboni Missionaries in Rome have decided to resume the study of these themes by holding three conferences that will take place over the coming weeks at the Generalate at 8.30 pm.

On Thursday, 27 February, with the title of **The destruction of the forests**, the theme of the environment will be taken up, looking at similar situations in other continents. The speakers will be Dr. Stefania Falasca, a journalist with "Avvenire", and Fr. Dario Bossi, Comboni Provincial Superior in Brazil.

The second encounter, entitled **Towards new ministries**, will be held on Thursday 12 March. Sr. Gabriella Bottani, coordinator of *Talitha Kum*, an international Network against human trafficking and Bro. Alberto Parise, former Director of the *Institute for Social Transformation*, Nairobi, will speak on the emergence of unforeseen needs and challenges and how they stimulate the generation of new ministries.

Dalila De Rosa and Giorgia Nigri, who hold doctorates of research in civil economy from the LUMSA University, Rome, and are economists in *Benedetta Economia*, will lead the third conference entitled: **Towards another economy**, on Thursday 2 April.

At the end of March, immediately after the gathering at Assisi promoted by the Pope, there will be a presentation of the “**Economy of Francesco**” and the passage from the management of resources to the care of our common home.

ITALY

Casavatore: conferral of ministries of lector and acolyte

On 15 December, at the parish of St. Agrippino of Arzano (Naples), Mons. Beniamino de Palma, Bishop Emeritus of Nola, conferred the ministries of Lector and Acolyte on some Casavatore scholastics.

After the homily, the Bishop addressed these words to the Lectors: “You will proclaim the Word of God in the liturgical assembly, you will educate adults and children in the faith and guide them to receive the Sacraments worthily; you will bring the missionary announcement of the Gospel of salvation to those people who do not yet know it. It is therefore necessary that, as you announce the Word of God to others, you may welcome it into your own selves in full docility to the Holy Spirit”.

To the Acolytes he said: “To you I have entrusted the duty of helping the presbyters and deacons in carrying out their functions, and, as extraordinary ministers, you may distribute Holy Communion to all the faithful, including the sick. This ministry binds you to live ever more deeply the sacrifice of Our Lord and to conform yourselves ever more, in what you are and in what you do, to Christ”.

The scholastics who received the ministry of lector are Gbedenya Kodzo Daniel (T), Got Tob Emmanuel (KE) and Bimbo Ngoabide Esdras Ulrich (RCA). Those who received the ministry of Acolyte are Tekle Melaku Wolde (ET), Valverde Arce Byron José (Costa Rica-PCA), Djekoundamde Florent (TCH) and Moisés Zacarias (MO).

KENYA

Ongata Rongai: death of a scholastic

On the evening of 1 February 2020, two of our scholastics were involved in an accident on the road between Ongata Rongai and Nairobi, about six km from the scholasticate.

In the head-on collision with a lorry, Sc. Bernard Amolo was killed outright while Sc. Stanislaus Jobo, who was driving, survived the crash and is at present in hospital having suffered several fractures. He is in a state of shock and has no recollection of the accident. There

was also a woman passenger in the vehicle with them who was also killed. She has not yet been identified due to the fact that, after the accident, the vehicle was vandalised and whatever items were in it were stolen.

As soon as he heard of the tragedy, the Provincial Superior informed the family of the death of Sc. Bernard. He visited Sc. Stanislaus at the hospital and spent hours talking to the police and visiting the place of the accident in order to get a better idea of how the accident happened and obtain as much information as possible.

PERÙ

A new missionary for the Asian mission

Fr. Eduardo Antonio Revolledo Villanueva, Fr. Edu to his confreres, was ordained priest on 21 December 2019, by the Comboni Bishop Luis Alberto Barrera Pacheco, of the diocese of Tarma, in Peru.

The ordination was celebrated in Lima, at the parish of *Cristo Misionero del Padre*, and saw the participation of a large number of the faithful, among whom were some of Fr. Edu's relatives and friends and some confreres, together with the Superior of the Asia delegation, Fr. David Domingues, representing the Combonis working in the continent of Asia where Fr. Eduardo carried out his missionary service as a scholastic and as a deacon.

Born in Peru in 1991, "Edu" joined the Institute to realise his deep desire to dedicate his life to the mission. He did the novitiate in Mexico and studied theology in Kenya.

After theology, he was sent to Vietnam to study the language of that country at the Comboni community.

He was afterwards transferred to Taipei, Taiwan, where he studied Mandarin. He also made his final profession there in July 2019 and was ordained deacon. He will return to Taiwan to continue his study of Mandarin with the aim of carrying out his missionary work in the Chinese world.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Bro. Ciriaco Gusmeroli (19.04.1930 – 28.11.2019)

Bro. Ciriaco was born at Tartano, in the province of Sondrio, on 19 April 1930. It was after hearing a missionary who came to speak about the missions that he began to think of going to Africa. He was then

thirteen years old and entered the seminary, going later to Thiene where there was an apostolic school for missionary Brothers. He studied there for three years learning carpentry and mechanics. In 1949 he entered the novitiate of Gozzano where, on 9 September 1951, he took temporary vows. He made his perpetual profession in Stillington, in the London Province, on 9 September 1957. In 1961 he was assigned to Uganda in West Nile where he remained for more than fifty years, working especially among the Madi people. "Small farmers and fishermen – he described them in an interview in 2001 – since their territory was along the banks of the Nile. They are very good people but stubborn. When they have something to say to you, they tell it straight to your face. But I too was hard-headed, being from the mountains, just like them; we got on very well together".

The Madi language – wrote Fr. Philip Zema who knew Bro. Ciriaco very well – is very hard to learn and the Madi have a tough character: if a missionary succeeds in staying with them for many years, we may say he has really been accepted. The name Ciriaco has negative connotations in Madi: Ciri means "wisdom" but Ako means "without", and so "Ciriako" means someone without wisdom, or foolish. Out of respect for Bro. Ciriaco, the people never called him by his name but always called him Bro. Giuseppe (perhaps because he was a carpenter like St. Joseph) Gusma (an abbreviation of his surname). I, too, came to know his real name only after I became a Comboni Missionary and had access to the *Annuario Comboniano*.

Bro. Gusma succeeded in staying among the Madi for as many as 28 years (1960-1987), and later on for two more years (1994-1996): he learned their language very well and liked the people. He was a calm sort of person and spoke little but, despite his serious appearance, he was gentle, generous and understanding. He was a typical "factotum" Brother who had acquired much technical skill which enabled him to work in every field of the life of the mission: building, carpentry, electrical installation, repairing vehicles, etc. His ability to work in every field prompted the Sacred Heart Sisters, who had a community in the mission of Moyo, to give him the title of "Bishop of Moyo".

In 1969 Bro. Gusma left Moyo for Metu (just five miles away) where he built his masterpiece, the beautiful church of our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Among the illustrious personalities present at the official inauguration was General Idi Amin Dada, then President of the Republic of Uganda. After 1979, when the Tanzanians overthrew Amin and until his transfer to Kampala to work in the Procure, the role of Bro. Gusma changed radically. There were no buildings to construct

and both missionaries and people had to flee to South Sudan. Their exile in Sudan was brief; when they realised the Tanzanian soldiers were not hostile, they returned to Uganda. Of course, much had been destroyed and the basic services were non-existent: clean water, toilets, medical assistance and schools. The mission and the missionaries themselves became the centre of everything, safeguarding the human rights of the people, providing services as best they could and defending and protecting the helpless.

The role of Bro. Gusma was especially appreciated by the homeless young, many of whom were secondary students who were unable to continue their schooling on account of the war and were given a place to stay at Moyo mission, in a house that had once been for the disabled and was then named “Agana”. Today, all those children of “Agana”, have become priests, doctors and engineers and they remember Bro. Gusma as a real brother. Furthermore, Bro. Gusma treated the UNLA soldiers who plundered the area of Moyo and killed many people, as brothers and not as enemies.

In 2006 Fr. Philip Zema was assigned to the community of Ombaci, the same community as Bro. Gusma, who – he emphasised – lived an exemplary life of prayer. The workers at Ombaci would also have many stories to tell. They remember how strict he was but also how he helped them to work with commitment. Besides, even though Bro. Gusma may have been strict, he was also very understanding, generous and gentle; it was from him that they learned to pray before starting work each morning, something they still do.

Bro. Ciriaco returned to Italy in 2014 for health reasons and went to the community for the sick and elderly in Milan, where he died on 28 November 2019.

We may conclude with the testimony of Fr. Torquato Paolucci: “I had the privilege of living with him at the procure in Kampala and again in Lodonga. He worked well also at Ombaci, where I often used to meet him. He was skilled in agriculture and planted vegetable gardens, orchards and vines which produced good wine. Above all, he loved the people and his workers, the sick and the elderly. He taught the workers their trade but especially how to be honest in life and how to relate to God. I thank God for his gift to us of Gusma, and for allowing me to know him and pass a number of years together with him. For me, Gusma is still a great example to imitate”.

Fr. Anton Graf (08.07.1934 – 07.12.2019)

Fr. Anton was a remarkable personality just for the powerful voice he had which could hardly go unnoticed. He was born on 8 July 1934 in the small town of Rabenstein/Corvara in Passiria, in the diocese of Bolzano/Bressanone, the second of 14 children. In 1947 he was accepted as a pupil at the Milland mission house. He was one of the first group of students who attended the Xaverianum which had reopened the previous year, after the Second World War. Each day the group would set out to walk to the Vinzentinum to attend secondary school. Intellectually gifted, Anton completed his secondary studies in 1955. He then went to the novitiate in Bamberg, Germany, and took first vows on 29 September 1957.

He then returned to Bressanone to commence his theological studies at the diocesan major seminary. On 25 December 1960 he consecrated himself to the mission with perpetual vows. On 29 June 1961, Bishop Josef Gargitter ordained him to the priesthood in Bressanone cathedral.

One year later, Fr. Anton left for the mission of South Africa. In those days, the diocese of Witbank was the sole field of work of the Comboni Missionaries in that country. He studied English at Middleburg and then Northern Sotho in Glen Cowie. He worked at that mission until 1967. Right from the start, Fr. Anton took an interest in the culture and language of the Bapedi whose language he learnt very well due to his daily contact with the people.

In 1967 he attended a six-month course at *Lumko Missiological Research and Training Institute* in the diocese of Queenstown, in view of an inculturated method of pastoral ministry.

Having completed the course, Fr. Anton was assigned to the vast parish of Acornhoek. There he had to learn another language, Shangaan. After a short time, he initiated a weaving project, with the help of Sister Cassiani Theiss, a Marianhill Missionary Sister and an expert in projects of that sort. Many women found work as weavers and earned enough to support their families. His mission companion was Fr. Angelo Matordes who belonged to the Italian group of Comboni Missionaries. This was a good preparation for the reunion of the two Institutes in 1979. The mission of Acornhoek suffered greatly on account of the war in Mozambique which had broken out the previous year. Many people fled that country and found refuge and support at Acornhoek and in many other places in South Africa.

In 1975 the *Pastoral Centre* at Maria Trost was opened with Fr. Anton as its first director. The centre developed rapidly and well and is

still functioning with many activities and courses. In 1980 Fr. Anton was assigned to the DSP and placed in charge of mission promotion in the area of Mellatz. He was later appointed superior of the community.

In 1987 he returned to South Africa and took charge of the parish of Schoonoord. There Fr. Anton built the parish church, a training centre for the laity, a home for the blind and a carpentry shop. Various German lay volunteers worked with him in those projects.

In 2001 Fr. Anton withdrew to Silverton (Pretoria) for a sort of Sabbatical Year during which he was in contact with professors and other university people. While there he expanded his knowledge of South African culture by reading and attending lectures and seminars.

Toward the end of July 2003, he accepted the invitation of Bishop Paul Mogale Nkhumishe of Pietersburg/Polokwane, and former Bishop of Witbank, to build the "Mater Dei Pastoral Centre" in his diocese, on the pattern of Maria Trost. He successfully completed the project and, in 2008, took charge of the parish of Sovenga while at the same time working as chaplain to the University of Turfloop (now Limpopo University). It was there that, in 2011, he celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood. A year later, Bishop Paul Nkhumishe died, and Fr. Anton returned to the diocese of Witbank.

After a few years alone in the mission of Apél/Sekhukhune, he went to Gugulethu, Elukwatini, as chaplain. Fr. Karl Kuppelwieser, his seminary companion, had built a retirement home there which was run by the Benedictine Sisters of St. Alban. Fr. Anton made himself available ministering to the Sisters and to the elderly.

He was now 84 years old and had various health problems. He therefore returned to the DSP in 2018, where he went to the Centre for Sick and Elderly Confreres in Ellwangen, still hoping to return to South Africa. He suspended his medical treatment for a few weeks to go and visit his relatives. While he was with them, he suffered a severe stroke from which he never recovered. He died in the *Marienklinik* of Bolzano on 7 December 2019, at the age of 85. He was buried in Rabenstein cemetery in the town where he was born.

Fr. Antonio Franzini (16.03.1933 – 25.12.2019)

Fr. Antonio Franzini was born on 16 March 1933 at Grosio, in the province of Sondrio, the only boy in a family of six children. In Autumn 1953, he entered Gozzano novitiate. A few months previously, the Parish priest of Ravedo di Grosio had written a letter giving some information regarding "the seminarian Franzini Antonio, a member of

my parish, who wishes to enter the Comboni Institute”, asking for prayers that the Lord “should raise up more vocations in my parish, since this seminarian is one of the first after more than 200 years”!

Fr. Antonio took temporary vows on 9 September 1955, was ordained priest on 31 May 1958 and took final vows on 19 March 1959.

He spent his first four years of priesthood in Italy, firstly in Riccione and then in the apostolic schools of Carraia and Rebbio.

In October 1962 he was assigned to Northern Uganda. Up to the end of 1966 he worked among the Madi, a Nilotic tribe, bordering on Acholi territory along the banks of the Nile, a stony place full of monkeys and mosquitoes. The Madi language is difficult to learn but “after just a month in the mission – Fr. Antonio wrote as he recalled those years in the article he wrote for his priestly Golden Jubilee – I was able to accompany the catechist to the villages and write my first homilies ... knowing very little English I had to speak Madi and the people forgave my mistakes since I was a ‘guest’ ”. At Pakele he was welcomed by the parish priests Fr. Antonio Spugnardi, a man who was open and optimistic and those were “two wonderful years”. The pastoral area of East Madi was vast. Fr. Antonio would go on safari on his bicycle or by motorcycle, followed by the bearers. “Due to the isolation of the people who lived far from the roads and inhabited centres, the children were growing up without being instructed or baptised. The passing missionary would rectify a few things but then, after he had gone, they were alone again. The Madi converted as a whole to Catholicism and, even though they were slow to attend the prayers and receive the sacraments, they were proud to be Catholics. From time to time the Moslems would tempt them with shoes and blankets. The Madi would take the gifts but never changed their religion. The Madi also had their first priests who were quite faithful and zealous. In Gulu we also had the first African Sisters who did a world of good work”.

From 1967 to 1974, Fr. Antonio worked among the mountain Alur, a very hospitable people. He settled in well both regarding the climate and the apostolate, “because the catechists were zealous, even if somewhat elderly”.

At Easter 1969, he returned to Italy for his first holidays and in 1970 did the Comboni Renewal Course in Rome. Early in 1974 he returned among the Madi and worked at Adjumani, helping Fr. Eugenio Caligari, who was then the only missionary in the whole of East Madi. “For me it was a fruitful and beautiful time, due to our perfect mutual understanding. Fr. Caligari was a man with a broad vision and was always very generous and optimistic”.

After two years he returned among the Alur and then, at Easter 1980, he returned to Italy and stayed in Rebbio as animator up to the end of December 1985. He spent a short period in Uganda but returned to Italy in July 1987. Starting in June of the following year he worked at Thiene as bursar. In 1996 he was assigned to San Tomìo where he remained until 2009, devoting himself to ministry, especially Eucharistic adoration and confessions.

Fr. Antonio spent from 2009 to 2017 in Rebbio, being treated for various health problems. In 2018 he was moved to the CAA in Milan where he died on Christmas Day 2019.

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE BROTHER: Carlos Ant3nio, of Fr. Jos3 Carlos Mendes da Costa (†).

THE SISTERS: Sister Maria Clementina, of Fr. Armindo da Silva Dinis (BR); Carmen, of Fr. Jos3 Manuel Garcia Oviedo; Maria da Paix3o, of Fr. Manuel dos Anjos (MO).

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Sr. Natalizia Carollo, Sr. Lina Maria Costalunga.

THE SECULAR COMBONI MISSIONARY: Rita Di Nizio.