

# Familia Comboniana

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

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784

April 2020



**HAPPY EASTER  
OF RESURRECTION**

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

### March 2020 Consulta: General Notes

#### 1. Coronavirus and the Comboni Missionaries

The Coronavirus pandemic is claiming victims in almost all the countries of the world. We too, as Comboni Missionaries and members of the Comboni Family, have been hit hard by this pandemic with the deaths of Confreres and Sisters whom we ask the Lord to welcome into his Kingdom of light and peace. Let us also remember all the others who are still threatened by the virus and accompany them with our prayers. We thank the Lord for those who have recovered completely from this sickness.

As an Institute, we continue making common cause with the holy people of God and we adhere to the decisions taken by the civil and religious authorities to avoid infection. We especially observe social distancing and hand washing.

Due to the pandemic, the members of the General Council have cancelled all their planned visits both within Italy and abroad in the months of May and June 2020 and ask the circumscription superiors and the various secretariats to consider whether it is necessary to cancel all provincial or regional meetings planned for the same period. We suggest the use of the social media to send messages of comfort and hope to all those with whom we share faith in the God of life who overcomes death and gloriously rises from the dead.

#### 2. Appointment of Circumscription Vice-Superiors

The GC, during the last two Consultas, appointed the following as Circumscription Vice-Superiors:

A	<i>Fr. Mejía Domínguez Víctor Alejandro</i>
BR	<i>Fr. Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos</i>
CN	<i>Fr. Pesquera Roa Eduardo</i>
CO	<i>Fr. Bolaños Palacios Martín Adolfo</i>
DSP	<i>Fr. Turyamureeba Roberto</i>
E	<i>Fr. Llamazares González Miguel Angel</i>
EC	<i>Fr. Jaramillo Arias Pablo Eduardo</i>
EGSD	<i>Fr. Eibu Dominic</i>
ER	<i>Fr. Estifanos Helafu Weldeghiorghis</i>
ET	<i>Fr. Asfaha Yohannes Weldeghiorghis</i>

<i>I</i>	<i>Fr. Aldegheri Giorgio</i>
<i>KE</i>	<i>Fr. Bwalya Andrew</i>
<i>LP</i>	<i>Fr. Alvarado Ayala Javier</i>
<i>M</i>	<i>Fr. Villaseñor Gálvez José de Jesús</i>
<i>MZ</i>	<i>Fr. Kasitomu James Milward</i>
<i>NAP</i>	<i>Fr. Ochoa Gracián Jorge Elías</i>
<i>P</i>	<i>Fr. Manuel António da Silva Machado</i>
<i>PCA</i>	<i>Fr. Barrios Morales Candelario Romeo</i>
<i>PE</i>	<i>Fr. Gaiga Gianni</i>
<i>RCA</i>	<i>Fr. Fazion Stefano</i>
<i>RSA</i>	<i>Fr. Riegel Bernhard Josef</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Fr. Maku Joseph</i>
<i>T</i>	<i>Fr. Kondo Komivi Antoine</i>
<i>TCH</i>	<i>Fr. Magoma Maripe Donald</i>

Those of Mozambique and Uganda have still to be appointed.

### **3. General Secretariat for Finance**

The letter concerning extraordinary contributions to the General Administration, usually sent out each year at this time, will be sent in some months' time.

The GC and the Secretariat wish to thank publicly the North American Province for their most generous contribution sent to us at the end of 2019. Thank you for sharing with the General Administration and the entire Institute.

The date of the general assembly for bursars, planned for November has been changed slightly: the assembly will start on 8 November and end on 19 November when the participants leave. Instructions will be sent directly to the interested parties as soon as possible.

### **4. General Mission Secretariat**

#### *4.1. Appointment of the GMS members, 2020-2022*

The GC appoints the continental representatives who will be members of the GMS for the triennium 2020-22: *Fr. Dario Bossi* – America/Asia, *Fr. Kyankaaga S. John Richard* – APDESAM, *Fr. Giorgio Padovan* – Europa, *Fr. Edmond Dimonekene Sungu* - ASCAF

#### *4.2. Programme for ministeriality*

The GMS has proposed for the Circumscriptions a programme of community reflection on the theme of ministeriality. The GC is fully aware of the times we are living in, so marked by COVID-19 which conditions us psychologically and spiritually. Since our pastoral activities may have been suspended out of civil responsibilities, this may

now provide us with an opportunity to dedicate our time to the suggested process. For this reason we invite all Circumscriptions to make an effort to adapt the material and try to relate the proposed themes to the situation each country is going through.

#### *4.3. Outlining social ministry in the Circumscriptions*

The outlining of the social pastoral is under way. The material hitherto assembled provides some very valuable elements for a systematic reading that will help in an analysis of the impact we make towards the transformation of society. It also allows us to compare our mission with the signs of the times and to grow in missionary fecundity. We encourage all the circumscriptions that have not already done so to contribute actively to this exercise.

#### *4.4. Comboni Social Forum on Social Ministry (CSFSM)*

The meeting is planned for 18-22 June, in Rome. However, the CSFSM committee is looking into the possibility of postponing the meeting to a more suitable date to be soon confirmed.

### **5. Revisiting and revising the Rule of Life**

During the meeting of circumscription superiors, in February, the work done so far was presented to all the participants. All those present had the opportunity to verify the corrections suggested by the confreres of the different circumscriptions and also to discuss some points of the text of the RL considered more controversial. The corrected text, prepared by the central commission for the RL, has been sent to all the circumscriptions with an accompanying letter indicating the path to be followed up to October. After that the commission will meet to prepare the final text to be presented to the GC, before the 2021 General Chapter. All confreres are therefore invited to familiarise themselves with the corrections and to propose further comments and amendments, sending them to the central commission before the end of August 2020. We regret the proposed corrections are only in Italian: in the communities and provinces the confreres will try to help each other understand the text.

### **6. Code of Conduct**

On 10 October 2019, the General Council approved the Code of Conduct and sent it to all the circumscriptions in the various languages (Italian, the original language, Spanish, Portuguese, English and French). Almost all the provinces have printed it in their own language so that all confreres may have both a digital and hard copy of it.

The GC wishes to extend lively thanks to all the confreres who helped to translate and carefully review the Code in the various languages. Now we find ourselves in the most important phase of this process, that of getting to know the Code at personal, community and circumscription levels; in this way, all the confreres will know the Code well and will keep to the norms indicated in it. The circumscriptions may also organise sessions of dialogue among the confreres to help everyone know the Code. A ceremony may then be organised during which each confrere signs the form of acceptance of the Code, to be found in the appendix of the Code itself.

The GC hopes that this document may help us to live more intensely and with integrity our missionary vocation at the service of the weakest members of the society of today.

## **7. General Secretariat of Formation**

There are **36 novices completing the novitiate**, 35 in our novitiates (Namugongo 14, Sarh 11, Nampula 4, Xochimilco 6) and 1 at Isiro-Magambe, in Congo. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the celebration of their first vows will take place in the novitiate houses, in a sober and simple manner, without the participation of externs. The appointment of the newly-professed to their Scholasticates/Brothers Centres will be carried out, as far as possible, in May 2020, when the number of newly-professed who can be accommodated in our scholasticates will be decided.

In the Francophone sub-continent there are **31 postulants in their final year**. The house at Sarh can take 18 novices and that of Cotonou has at present 17 second-year novices and so cannot accommodate all those remaining. The sub-continent of Anglophone Africa and Mozambique has a further **34 postulants in their final year** who are ready to leave for the novitiates of Namugongo and Nampula.

The GC also appoints a further 3 **members of the Formation Council** for the next three years, 2020-2022: *Fr. Fernando Domingues* (Europa), *Fr. Habtu Teklay Tiluq* (APDESAM) and *Fr. Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate* (ASCAF). The fourth, *Fr. José de Jesús Villaseñor Gálvez* (AMERICA-ASIA) had already been appointed.

## **8. The Beatification of Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli in Uganda**

The Beatification of Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli is due to take place on 22 November 2020 at Kalongo, Uganda, provided the coronavirus pandemic, which is afflicting the whole world, does not render this impossible. The availability of Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu to go to Ka-

longo as the Pope's representative at the Beatification ceremony has already been submitted to His Holiness. Meetings have been held between the General Council and the Provincials of Italy and Uganda in order to involve the respective provinces and the Local Church in preparing the event. We invite everyone to understand the missionary significance of this beatification which will take place in the mission as a true expression of being missionary: the exchange of gifts between sister churches, almost identification in which, in all credibility, a missionary – in our case the soon-to-be-beatified Fr. Ambrosoli –, is glorified amongst "his own people" in Kalongo. For the present, we must not cease to invoke the intercession, in this so worrying time for humanity, of one who faced up to sickness with illuminated determination, but above all with supernatural faith and charity

### **Holy Redeemer Guild**

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

### **Prayer intentions**

**April** – That cooperation with all people of good will may stimulate each one of us to contribute, in our particular ministry of service to the Gospel, to a more just world and a more dignified life for all. *Lord hear us.*

**May** – That those in positions of responsibility may entrust themselves to Our Lady in order to perceive the presence and wisdom of God in their decisions and actions and so serve with greater joy and effectiveness. *Lord hear us.*

### **Comboni renewal Course**

The next edition of this course will start on 4 January 2021 and end on 31 May of the same year. It is aimed mostly at confreres between the ages of 50 and 70, but especially those who have celebrated, or are about to celebrate, their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination, or in the case of Brothers, of their perpetual vows. The Course will end in the Holy Land (final three weeks).

Those interested, with the approval of their circumscription superior, should contact the Course coordinator Fr. Elias Sindjalim – e-mail: [esindjalimess@hotmail.com](mailto:esindjalimess@hotmail.com)

*N.B.* To enter Israel, the African confreres will require a visa which can only be obtained having first acquired a residence permit in Italy. Since at present it takes about four months, from the date of one's ar-

rival, to obtain a residence permit in Italy, those involved should come to Rome at the beginning of December.

Confreres who do not know Italian need at least three months to study the language here in Rome. They should plan to come to Rome at the end of September, so as to be able to start studying the language in October 2020.

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Fr. Anton Ellinger (09.06.1938 – 01.03.2020)**

Anton's childhood was marked by the bitter experience of being illegal and being expelled. He was born on 9 September 1938 at Milowitz – today called Milovice – in southern Moravia (The Check Republic), just ten kilometres from the Austrian border. During the time of National Socialism, the German minority held all the power in the country. Seven years later, the situation changed completely and there was a terrible vendetta. The German-speaking population, who had lived there for centuries, was savagely driven out of their territory and towards the Austrian border at the end of May 1945. Among those people there was his grandmother and his mother and her four children, one of whom was Anton, then just seven.

Finally, having crossed Austria, they reached Germany where they found lodging in the little village of Hohenrot, in the district of Künzelsau. Anton's father was then a prisoner of war in France. After he was freed and with the help of the Red Cross, he succeeded in tracing his family. In their new environment, the refugees first lived on the margins of society and experienced rejection by many but, at the same time, they were noticed and helped by others. Such experiences were later to help Fr. Anton to be sensitive towards the situation of the people in South Africa during the time of apartheid.

The village of Hohenrot was not far from the town of Bad Mergentheim, where the Comboni Missionaries had a seminary which Anton entered in 1949. Having finished primary school, the students went to the Josefinum seminary in Ellwangen. After his final exams (1959), Anton did the novitiate in Bamberg and Mellatz, where he took first vows on 29 September 1959, and studied philosophy and theology in Bamberg and in Rome where, on 18 December 1964, he made his final profession. He was ordained priest on 29 June 1965 and celebrated his first Mass with great solemnity in his adopted town. The

feast marked the complete integration of all his family into his new fatherland.

While still a student, Anton showed remarkable talents, especially in learning languages. In Bamberg and later in Rome he specialised in Old and New Testament Studies, learning several ancient oriental languages such as Aramaic, Ancient Syriac, Georgian and others. His treasure, in his private collection of books, was the many editions of the Bible in different languages and a large number of dictionaries. He knew the Our Father in 25 languages. To take a break from his work he would relax by opening a Russian grammar!

Immediately after his ordination, Fr. Anton was assigned to the minor seminary of Saldaña (Spain), teaching Latin, Greek, English and History. The students appreciated his intelligence and his linguistic knowledge but dealing with youngsters was not his suit. For this reason, he left, happy and content, for the mission in South Africa.

There, in a very short time, he mastered not only the two official languages of the country – English and Afrikaans – but also the three African languages, Zulu, Shangan and Sotho, that were spoken in the diocese of Witbank. He afterwards learned Xhosa, spoken in the diocese of Kokstad where the South African province had taken two parishes. Besides his pastoral work in different parishes, he accompanied the younger missionaries in their study of the languages and he dedicated himself to the translation of books, to study and to the Church.

In 1995, after 22 years working in South Africa, he was assigned to his original province to accompany and teach the *“missionaries for a limited period”* who were leaving for the mission. In 2007 he suffered a stroke that tested him not only physically but also psychologically.

For the last months of his life he was confined to a wheelchair and had dialysis twice a week. At his request, the dialysis was discontinued as he felt it was time to meet his Maker. He died on 1 March 2020 at Ellwangen hospice, situated a short distance from our Comboni house. (*Fr. Reinhold Baumann, mccj*)

### **Fr. Firmino Cusini (22.10.1940 – 16.03.2020)**

The news of the death of Fr. Firmino took us all by surprise. None of us expected it and neither did he. He was recovering well from the operation he had undergone in November and was looking forward to returning to Mozambique where he had spent almost fifty years of his life. During those years, he shared the various phases of the history of that country: the fight for independence, the civil war, the coming of a

new era with the peace accord, the democratic elections and the process of national reconstruction.

The last time I saw him was the weekend of 7-8 December 2019, in Milan. He was very happy to see me and asked what news I had of Mozambique, since I had visited the province recently. He was interested in everything and could not hide his great desire to return there. "Don't even think of me staying in Milan, or even in Italy. Mozambique is my native country. I have had to wait a bit but I hope to be there for Easter".

Fr. Firmino was born in Livigno, in Sondrio Province, on 22 October 1940. He joined the Comboni Missionaries and did his novitiate in Gozzano where he took temporary vows on September 1966. He did the scholasticate in Venegono where he took perpetual vows on 9 September 1969.

Ever since his ordination on 21 March 1970, apart from a few months spent in Portugal to learn Portuguese, Fr. Firmino always lived and worked in Mozambique. I first met him when I went there in 1984. He was then working at Memba as parish priest and superior of the community (1982-1993). A few years earlier he had reported a state of starvation in the area, possibly provoking his arrest or expulsion. We would have much to say about all those years he spent in Mozambique and his wonderful work there. I will just mention some characteristics of his that impressed me and motivated me in my missionary life.

Fr. Firmino was a man with a passion for the mission and its people. In order to evangelise better he studied the culture and learned Macua, the local language. Well identified as a Comboni Missionary, he was happy and felt realised in his missionary work, in the company of the people, the Macua, in visiting the Christian communities and in training their leaders. He was sensitive to the needs of the poorest and tried to give everyone he met a more dignified and more human life. He was a father, a brother, a friend and a companion. He was a pastor in touch with the situation of his people.

He also had a great passion for the local Church, the diocesan clergy and great respect for the bishop. For some years he was Vicar General of the diocese of Nacala and its administrator. He had a strong sense of belonging to the Church of Mozambique. Fr. Firmino gave himself completely to it and succeeded in obtaining quantities of material help to build chapels, schools and pastoral and catechetical centres. He used all the help he received from his many friends in Italy

for the benefit of the Church and the people, keeping nothing for himself. His lifestyle was simple and austere.

Fr. Firmino was a joyful and happy person who lived through the difficult times of the mission in impressive peace and serenity. I am certain that this joy had its source in the personal encounter with Christ which he cultivated daily. He felt the presence of God especially in his work and in the life of the people.

Fr. Constantino Bogaio, Provincial Superior of Mozambique, in his long testimony, brings out the “old soldier” quality of Fr. Firmino, the obedient missionary, always at the ready, and a great vocations promoter. Fr Bogaio also spoke of hearing from others who knew him well, of Firmino’s smile and his simplicity: “*Padre Nywo Atate*” was the affectionate nickname he had been given while he was working at Anchilo Catechetical Centre, due to his ever-generous manner and the way he would counsel others. Mgr. Germano Grachane, the first bishop of the diocese of Nacala, who worked with him for many years, on hearing of his death, spoke of his friend Fr. Firmino as a good counsellor, a good Comboni, a friend of the Mozambican people, a missionary with a heart of gold for him, the diocese and for the Nacala seminarians and the seminaries, both diocesan and Comboni”.

The testimony of Fr. Firmono’s life, his joy and serenity, even in the most difficult situations he had to face, the abundant life he infused into the various missions where he lived, all have the odour of the Gospel lived deeply at the service of the Kingdom. (*Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins*)

### **Bro. Libero Ribelli (02.06.1921 – 18.03.2020)**

Bro. Libero was born on 2 June 1921 at Polpenazze (Brescia), in the diocese of Verona. He used to say that, as a boy, he used to serve Mass. One day the parish priest took his altar servers to Schio, to visit a missionary display. There he met Sister Giuseppina Bakhita, the Sudanese slave who became a Canossian Sister and was declared a saint only a few years after her death. Bakhita wrote: “If I were to meet those slave traders who abducted me and tortured me, I would kneel before them and kiss their hands because, if that had not happened, I would not now be a Christian and a Sister”. We do not know how impressed Libero was by this Sister. We only know he never forgot meeting her.

Having joined the Combonis, he did the first year of the novitiate in Florence and the second at the Provincial House in Sunningdale

(England). There he took first vows on 20 March 1950. He then was sent to the house of Stillington where he could continue to learn English.

He spent the years from 1951 to 1956 in Verona, where he was cook, then in Crema and Troia, at the service of the community, in Rome as cook, gardener and engaged in mission promotion, at the ACSE and in the travels sector. On 19 March 1956 he made his final profession and was sent to Uganda where he stayed until 1962, firstly at Aliwang mission, in charge of building, then at Kaabong, working on the farm and then in Kangole, again busy with constructions.

He was assigned to Italy from 1962 to 1971, firstly at the service of the community of Venegono, where he also worked in mission promotion. Then, occupied mainly as the cook, he worked in the communities of Cuneo/Barolo and Asti, where he also assisted in mission promotion work.

He spent the years from 1971 to 1976 in Uganda, at Moroto, mostly engaged in building. He then moved to Asti, Italy, where he served in reception.

From 1978 to 1982 he served in the NAP, in the house of Cincinnati and later in Los Angeles, CA (then the Novitiate), and finally in Chicago, at the scholasticate where he also worked in mission promotion.

Bro Libero spent the years from 1983 to 1991 in South Sudan as local bursar and at the service of the Provincial House in Juba. As Fr. Raffaele Cefalo recalled at the funeral, those were, in Brother Libero's words, the best years of his life, years when he had the privilege of working where Comboni worked. It was a period in which the bishops of Sudan were looking for Comboni personnel, especially Brothers in the traditional sense of the word, factotum Brothers: builders, carpenters, mechanics, etc. to rebuild the many missions that had been destroyed. As a result, in June 1983, Fr. Libero arrived in Nairobi on his way to South Sudan and, a few days later, using the visa Fr. Cefalo had swiftly obtained for him, he reached his destination, Juba, after travelling for two days and having to mend seven punctures to the tyres of the Toyota Land Cruiser! This was a foretaste of the many challenges that lay ahead of him in the following years while he worked as a 'factotum' Brother in Juba, Wau and Bussere.

In July 1991 he returned for good to Italy, though he still officially belonged to the province of South Sudan for some time. He served the communities of Verona (2 years) and that of Rome, in the General Curia, from 1993 to 2013. While in Rome, Bro. Libero always carried out his work punctually and with care. He was sacristan for many years

and was always concerned with providing all that the church needed. He was friendly and understanding towards the confreres and always ready to help them or perform services for them.

On hearing of his death, Fr. Torquato Paolucci sent a message to the confreres of Milan community, signed by all the members of the Rome community, saluting Bro. Libero and emphasising the “unforgettable impression” he had left in the Curia where he spent more than 20 years. Everyone remembers his discreet and silent presence. When he left the community, he was sorely missed. He was always an example of work, attention to the liturgy and to each confrere. Everyone remembers his smile, his respectful greetings and how he would modestly speak of his military service in Russia, when he fought with his contingent in the defence of the River Don. “He taught us”, Fr. Torquato said, “that it is possible to be real Comboni Missionaries while far from the missions, something which, we are sometimes reluctant to believe when we have been away for many years from what we like to call the mission”.

### **Fr. Bruno Tonolli (04.12.1938 – 23.03.2020)**

Fr. Bruno Tonolli, born on 4 December 1938 at Cazzano di Brentonico, in the province and diocese of Trent, began his novitiate in Florence in 1960, and took first vows on 9 September 1962. He did the scholasticate in Verona where he made his final profession on 9 September 1965 and was ordained priest on 26 June 1966.

Soon after his ordination he was sent to Pordenone to teach the aspirant Coadjutor Brothers and as vocations promoter. In September 1969, Fr. Bruno left for Mozambique, where he was appointed curate at the parish of Nova Lusitânia, a small town in the province of Sofala which, after independence, took the name of Buzi. There he devoted himself to pastoral work and especially to the study of the Chindao language. Recalled to Italy in 1974, he was asked to take charge of the Postulancy in the outskirts of Naples and, three years later, he agreed to move to the Postulancy in Florence.

Appointed to Brazil in July 1981, Fr Bruno left for Brazil where his first mission was that of São Gabriel da Palha. He would later become the rector of the Comboni Seminary of Lages, in the state of Santa Catarina (SC), and of the Diocesan Seminary of the Diocese of São Mateus at Carapina, Vitória (ES).

This was the early seventies when new ways of rendering seminary life more functional were being sought, not removed from the people

but part of the environment of the poor in the outskirts of the city. From 1986 to 1991, Fr. Bruno worked at Lages as parish priest of the parish of Frei Rogério and as rector of the Comboni Seminary. Like his successor, Fr. Gianfranco Bettega, he too, after much work, dedication and prayer, unfortunately never had the satisfaction of seeing his seminarians reach the priesthood or persevering in it. In 2005, Fr. Bruno completed the Renewal Course in Rome, during which he renewed his resolution to “live the charism of Comboni and to be a true missionary according to the Sacred Heart of Jesus”.

Fr. Bruno was parish priest in some parishes: São Mateus (ES), São Gabriel da Palha (ES), Nova Venécia (ES), São José do Rio Preto (SP), and also Cacoal (RO), where Fr. Ezechiele Ramin worked and was assassinated by the hatred of the great land grabbers. Lastly, he was in charge of the parish of Santa Amélia, at Curitiba, the capital of the state of Paraná.

“In Naples, Florence, Lages, Carapina and Curitiba – writes Fr. Alessandro Garbagnati – Fr. Bruno was a true educator. He succeeded in balancing his way of treating the seminarians: on the one hand he was strict regarding the essential requirements of the mission; on the other, he observed and reflected upon the failures in the formation of candidates”.

When two young Comboni priests came to the parish of Santa Amélia in Curitiba, with ideas and projects for a new sort of pastoral ministry, Fr. Bruno chose to return home and work in Verona, at the Comboni parish of San Tomío.

From there, replying to a friend in Brazil to thank him for his birthday greetings, he wrote: “My Dear Fr. Aldir, your good wishes brought me great joy and I was deeply moved. Our Comboni happiness is to remember that the diocese of San Mateus is now served by Brazilian priests and we may say: mission accomplished”. Fr. Aldir also recalls how, in 1984, when Fr. Bruno was vicar at São Gabriel da Palha, the military governor ordered him to leave Brazil immediately as, it seemed, he did not have a permanent residence permit and was considered a “communist” because he defended the workers. While he was about to board a plane for Italy, he received an indult which had been obtained for him through the pleas of an ecclesiastical leader.

Physically weakened by various stomach operations, he was in constant pain but made an effort to put on a happy face and show nothing of his discomfort to those around him. He loved the liturgy and prayerfully prepared his Sunday homilies: they were missionary homilies,

clear and understandable. There are many who remember his friendly embrace and the cordial and festive welcome he accorded to all.

“Fr. Bruno – says Sr. Zulmira from the IFAP clinic of parapsychology, in her testimony – loved the Comboni Institute whose seminarians were being given a world-oriented education through the vision Fr. Bruno had of the world, his missionary approach to the planet, for his commitment to social and political causes and most of all for his passion for the mission. He wanted a dynamic Church, “outgoing”, as Pope Francis preaches today”.

Many seminarians of those days owe it to him if they are excellent priests of the diocese of São Mateus. During his funeral rites, it was stated

that Fr. Bruno was a great gift of God to the diocese of São Mateus and, above all else, a true and holy missionary for Brazil. (*Fr. Enzo Santangelo, mccj*)

### **Fr. Costante Ferranti (23.03.1931 – 24.03.2020)**

Fr. Costante Ferranti was born on 23 March 1931, at Orzinuovi, in the province and diocese of Brescia (Italy), into a deeply religious family. He received his first schooling in his home town.

In a text he himself wrote on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination we read: “In September 1944, I entered the Crema diocesan seminary and stayed there until I had finished secondary school. I was already 22 years old when I entered the novitiate”. His novice master there was Fr. Giovanni Giordani whom he would later meet again as his companion in the mission of Baja California.

On leaving the diocesan seminary, he entered the novitiate in Florence on 13 November 1953 and afterwards made his first profession on the feast of St. Peter Claver, as was then the custom, on 9 September 1955. He studied theology in Venegono Superiore and on 31 May 1958 he was ordained priest by the future Pope Paul VI. In July of that same year he went to Mexico City. Fr. Costante writes in his memoirs: “During the month’s holidays at home, my mother revealed my destination to me and said: Go to California; you will do well there; that is where the dollars are. I never found the dollars but such good people who made all that period a happy one and I thank God for that”. At that time he never imagined he would go to Mexico and stay there for the most of his missionary life. His first appointment was to Sahuayo, where he worked as formator in the seminary but, “fortunately – he writes – Mons. Giordani came and took

me to Baja California”.

After a short period spent in Mexico City studying Spanish, in July 1961 he began his apostolate in the Apostolic Prefecture of Baja California. Wherever Fr. Costante exercised his apostolate, he always distinguished himself for the missionary zeal and enthusiasm he transmitted to the people: at Villa Insurgentes, Ciudad Constitución, Santa Rosalía, Bahía Tortugas, Guerrero Negro and lastly in La Paz. In those lands he spent his most intense years of missionary pastoral service, visiting the farms and small villages of the parishes where there were no large Christian communities. He showed himself to be a very dedicated missionary, a man of prayer and total consecration to his ministry. Like all his companions, his style of life was one of poverty and great simplicity, in harmony with the experience and the situations of the people he was serving.

During his stay in Mexico, after some years of evangelising and pastoral work, he was appointed mission promoter at the seminary of Guadalajara (1970-1974), which was still under construction and in its beginnings, with a fine group of young aspirants to the missionary and Comboni life. There, too, he showed himself to be enthusiastic and a great worker and, as in other places, as having a great creative spirit: he formed new “Comboni Missionary Damas” groups made up of benefactors in various villages in the states of Jalisco and Colima. The basic activity of these groups was to promote the missionary spirit in their parishes, distributing *Esquila Misional* and *Aguiluchos*, and providing material support for the activities of our seminary.

Later on, after a number of years of service to the province of Mexico, was recalled to Italy where he dedicated himself to mission and pastoral ministry. From 1978 to 1988 he coordinated the ministry of mission promotion first in Sulmona and then in the community of Troia, in Italy.

During his last period in Baja California, from 1991 to November 1999, he again succeeded in working in pastoral ministry in various parishes in which he had begun his ministry. In 1991 he was parish priest in Ciudad Insurgentes, in Valle di Santo Domingo, in the midst of a congregation of small farmers who were experiencing difficulties related to the countryside and the agricultural crisis in that area. In 1997 he assumed responsibility as parish priest of the Christian community of Guerrero Negro, in the north of the peninsula, taking care of the workers in the great salt marsh of the Valle del Vizcaino and, finally, of the parish of Sagrado Corazón in La Paz, where he spent the last months of his ministry in Baja California.

He was forced by illness to return to Italy, this time for good. Fr. Costante writes: “My motherland, Italy, welcomes me, in September 1999, as I rest and animate the people at the sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima in the diocese of Milan. To sum up, I must admit that my missionary life has always found its energy in the shadow of Our Lady. I began at the quiet, small and remote sanctuary of Maria Auxiliadora. I then moved to that of Fatima, the first church I built. I continued in Troia under the gaze of Our Lady Mediatrix. In Guerrero, Our Lady of Guadalupe was a mother to me. And now I am in Milan, in the arms of Our Lady of Fatima. To her I offer my thanks”.

For almost a year he received treatment at the Milan Centre for Sick Confreres. From July 2000 to December 2004 he was in charge of the Rectory dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the community of the Milan Centre. For around 14 years, from 2005 to 2018, he offered his priestly ministry there. In 2018 he fell sick and stayed at the Ambrosoli Centre until his death on 24 March 2020. (*Fr. Enrique Sánchez González, mccj*)

### **Bro. Franco Bonadimani (19.10.1926 – 28.03.2020)**

Bro. Franco Bonadimani was born at Salizzole, in the province and diocese of Verona, on 19 October 1926. At the age of 17 he was already an accountant and immediately found a job. He handed over his first pay-packet to his father as times were hard and the family had to be fed; he took his second pay-packet to the church of Santa Eurosia di Salizzole “so that the poor might have some bread”.

In 1944 he entered the Comboni novitiate in Florence where he took first vows on 7 October 1946, at the age of 20. Having worked as cook in some communities in Italy, he was sent to Verona where he made his final profession on 9 September 1952. He lived a life consecrated to God for 73 years: 28 years at the Mother House, 2 years in Rome in the Curia, serving the procure, and again at the Mother House, again serving the procure, for 43 years. He never went to the mission but his life itself was a mission: as those who remember him testify, he always worked with dedication and responsibility and always for love of the missions.

At Castel d’Azzano, where he went for treatment in 2019 and where he stayed for a short period afterwards, all were impressed by his smile and his constant “thank you” for the small kindnesses done to him. Simplicity, obscurity, humility and service, the attitudes of Jesus

for 30 years in his home town of Nazareth, were those of Bro. Franco all his life.

On 31 March his funeral was celebrated. Bro. Franco was buried in Verona “with the Combonis” as he had explicitly requested a few days before he died. He was clothed in the habit he wore at his consecration (everyone wore it in those days) and which he had brought from the Mother House. In the days when the coronavirus pandemic was raging, when most of those who died were buried without ceremony, Bro. Franco was given a dignified burial and was offered back to God with the signs of consecration, and with the celebration of the Eucharist in the community, among the confreres he had loved and served. Fr. Teresino Serra recalled some of his characteristics during the funeral service. He was a man of prayer: he always prayed twice, first he prayed using the old manual of prayers of the Institute and then he prayed the psalms with the community. He was a man of silence, being deaf, but he spoke with his eyes and his testimony. He was careful and responsible in his duties: distributing the post, preparing envelopes for the mission appeals and helping in the kitchen washing dishes. He also spent time in the garden and the small vegetable plot; when he felt he could not continue “he asked for permission” to give it up. He lived with what was necessary and never asked for anything. When he was transferred to Castel d’Azzano it was easy to pack his things as there was very little in his room: just a large quantity of religious pictures, rosaries, family photos, prayer booklets and a book on Comboni that he must have read a thousand times over, from the worn state of the pages.

In conclusion, Fr. Teresino recalled that, for him, the word obedience was important: “When, in his final days, he would not take his medicine or refused to let the women come into his room to clean it, it was enough to tell him to do it “out of obedience” and he would agree to everything. When, in virtue of holy obedience I asked him to move to Castel d’Azzano just for a few weeks ... he answered me with a knowing look that meant ‘I know you are cheating me and that I will never come back to the Mother House’.

### **Fr. Gonzalo Antonio Dasilva Fernández (25.07.1962 – 29.03.2020)**

Fr. Gonzalo was born in Vigo (Spain), in the diocese of Tui-Vigo, on 25 July 1962. He entered the Moncada novitiate where he took temporary vows on 25 May 1985. He did the scholasticate in Elstree where he made his final profession on 2 June 1989, and in Rome

where he was ordained priest on 7 July 1990 and where he remained until mid-1993 for further studies.

In July of the same year he was assigned to the province of Togo-Ghana-Benin, where he worked from 1993 to 2010: 17 years of self-giving and commitment. He was affectionately called “Fada Koku”, because he was born on a Wednesday, a fact that shows how well he had become part of the life of the people, their language and culture.

We may see three phases in those seventeen years: the first period (1993-2001) mostly pastoral, spent in Ghana (Sogakope, Abor and Accra) and Togo (Kouvé); the second he spent in vocations and mission promotion and the third in finance.

Regarding his pastoral work, Fr. Antonio Gonzalo served at Sogakope and at Kouvé (1993-1996) where the traditional voodoo religion was still very strong, and the proclamation of the Good News required that the missionary lived among the people as a humble servant of the Gospel, visiting the small Christian communities scattered among the villages. A young and happy sort of person, Fr. Gonzalo threw himself into the ministry with enthusiasm. His ability to relate easily and in a friendly way to the youth gave his superiors the idea of entrusting him with a different sort of service: vocations and mission promotion in Ghana.

He began his second phase in the province. That year it was planned to increase the Comboni missionary presence in the province after the beatification of Daniel Comboni, by means of greater commitment in two aspects of the charism: promotion and animation. As a result, Fr. Antonio went to Abor (1996) to take the first steps in vocations promotion by accompanying a group of young men open to the Comboni vocation. However, since there were larger numbers of young people in the big cities, it was decided to move towards the capital. The Combonis had a house at Kaneshie, acquired by Fr. Angelo Confalonieri that could easily be fitted for a new Comboni community. Fr. Gonzalo was the first superior of that community (1999), and developed his work among the youth. A CMA (Centre for Mission Promotion) was opened in Kaneshie and he was its first animator. The plan was, with the help of other Combonis, to make the Comboni Missionaries known in the archdiocese of Accra and to create a network of contacts with both the clergy and the youth. Fr. Gonzalo gave the very best of himself in those youthful years which led him and Fr. Francisco Machado, to create the new Comboni parish of “Our Lady of the Assumption” in the New Achimota quarter of Accra.

Meanwhile, from 2001 and 2002, Fr. Gonzalo took part in the Comboni year in South Africa, after which, on his return to TGB, a new page was opened for him in his missionary experience, the third phase of his service. He became the new provincial bursar. After a period of apprenticeship at the school of Fr. Antonio Arbor, the retiring provincial bursar, Fr. Gonzalo was, for eight years, up to 2010, not only the administrator but also the financial animator of the economic province. It was the time when the Institute was reflecting on the introduction of the Total Common Fund, in view of making the circumscriptions self-supporting. Fr. Antonio immersed himself in his work with his usual competence, seriousness and consideration for his confreres, intending to work together with all of them. Since his work was appreciated at Institute level, he was made a member of the Financial Council of the Institute for a number of years, representing Francophone Africa. Together with these duties, Fr. Gonzalo's days were always occupied with pastoral commitment: the number of Christians attending Cacaveli was increasing each Sunday. Poor people were also coming and Fr. Antonio helped all of them, looking after the AIDS patients with his love and goodness. "Fr. Gonzalo was a man of prayer and action, wrote Fr. Victor Kouandé in his testimony. Despite a multiplicity of commitments, he always found time for personal and community prayer. As a bursar he was very exact and careful. He had a great love for St. Daniel Comboni and was well identified with his vocation which he lived in serenity and humility. He was close to the people and was able to listen to families in difficulty".

In March 2011, when the new provincial bursar was appointed, Fr. Antonio left Togo and returned to his original province of Spain. There he was appointed to the community of Madrid and was made provincial bursar; as we have mentioned above, and from 2017 he had been a member of the Council for Finance.

Fr. Gonzalo passed away on 29 March due to the coronavirus. "A few days earlier, Fr. Pedro Andrés, the provincial superior, writes, during a provincial council meeting dealing with financial matters, Fr. Gonzalo was coughing a lot, and so he withdrew and continued to follow the meeting via video. He loved his work so much that he often forgot himself and it was necessary to remind him to take care of himself. The health centre, that had been contacted by the confreres, reported that he 'presented symptoms compatible with a coronavirus Covid19 infection' and that he should go to bed. In the following days, his situation seemed stable and Fr. Gonzalo said he felt better: no-

body thought for a moment that the coronavirus would strike so treacherously or so soon”.

## **OTHER CONFRERES WHO DIED IN THE MONTH OF MARCH**

P. Simoni Giuseppe	09.11.1947	21.03.2020
P. Otero Magán Gabino	22.06.1943	25.03.2020
P. Luis Carranza	10.10.1948	31.03.2020

## **LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD**

**THE FATHERS:** Arlei, of the Sc. Zanioli Gonçalves Deivith Harly (BR), Rafael, of Fr. Rafael Güitrón (M).

**THE MOTHER:** Amelia, of Fr. Michele Tondi (C).

**THE BROTHER:** Claude, of Fr. Joseph Ngumba Lelo (RSA).

**THE SISTERS:** Rosalia, of Fr. Fernando Madaschi (PCA); Annamaria, of Fr. Werner Nidetzky (DSP); Afra, of Fr. Josef Pfanner (DSP); Angela, of Fr. Luigi Sala (I); Pierina, of Fr. Modesto Generali (I); Amalia, of Bro. Arsenio Ferrari (M).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. Marylisa Ceccato, Sr. Maria Lucia Bogliotti, Sr. Giannadele Angeloni, Sr. Anna Maria Casorio, Sr. Angelina Ferranti, Sr. M. Donatella Reghenzi, Sr. Argenta Brignoli, Sr. M. Martina Chiodi, Sr. M. Ausilia Lecchi, Sr. Lidianna Anzi.