

# Familia Comboniana

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

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787

July-August 2020

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

## General Notes of the Consulta of June 2020

### 1. COVID-19

As we all know, the virus is claiming tens of thousands of victims all over the world and this has led to an alarming financial situation for millions of people in the poorer countries. For this, and for other reasons, the GC invites the confreres to finance their projects by seeking grants from various organisations rather than using up the funds of their circumscriptions.

### 2. Journey towards the XIX General Chapter

In line with the indications of the Rule of Life n. 147, the Superior General, with the consent of the General Council, **by a letter dated 19 June 2020, has convoked the XIX General Chapter** which will be held in Rome at the General Curia House. The Capitulars must be in Rome by Sunday 29 August 2021 for a week of preparation. The Chapter will be opened with a solemn Holy Mass at 9.00 on Sunday 5 September 2021. It is expected to close with a solemn Eucharistic celebration on Sunday 10 October 2021.

The GC, having consulted the circumscription Superiors on how to prepare the General Chapter, has decided to continue to process along the four lines already begun in the circumscriptions:

- Revisiting and Revision of the Rule of Life
- Verification and Revision of Formation
- Ministeriality at the service of the requalification of our activities and presences
- Communion of goods: sharing and sustainability

As indicated in the RL 147.3, the GC wishes to involve all the members of the Institute in this process. Bearing in mind the progress already made and the difficulty of travelling because of the pandemic,

we propose the following timetable for the proximate preparation of the Chapter:

1. The GC asks each of the three General Secretariats (GSF, GSM, GSE) to prepare, by 7 August 2020, a questionnaire regarding the life of the sector to be sent to the confreres serving in the sector and considered experts in the subject. The Rule of Life Commission has already completed this exercise.
2. The three Secretariats and the RL Commission are also to prepare, by 7 August, three questions regarding their sectors to be sent to all the confreres of the Institute.
3. The texts of the two questionnaires will be presented to the GC at the mini-Consulta from 10-12 August 2020.
4. During that same mini-Consulta, the GC will appoint a *working group* from among the confreres of the General Administration and the Secretariats which will coordinate the despatch of the two questionnaires and all the replies that are received. Once the members of the Chapter and the Pre-Capitular Commission have been nominated, the working group will hand over all the material to the Commission and will then cease to exist.
5. By 1 September 2020, the General Secretary will send the circumscription Superiors the updated lists of confreres with the right to active and passive vote (RL 149.3). Together with these lists, the Secretary will send everyone the Prayer for the Chapter and the questionnaires whose replies are expected by 31 January 2021. During the Consulta of October 2020, further instructions will be sent to all, including a form for the preparation of the circumscription reports and the guide for continental/sub-continental assemblies.

### **3. Appointments to various services**

In the Consulta of June 2020, the GC has appointed:

#### **3.1. for the period 2020-22**

- **Fr. Kibira Anthony Kimbowa** Vice-Provincial Superior of Uganda.

#### **3.2. from 1 July 2020**

- **Fr. Monella Pierpaolo** socius at the Manila novitiate (A)

- **Fr. Guivi Yaovi Benjamin** socius at the Nampula novitiate (MO)

- **Fr. Akpako Théotime Parfait** socius at the Cotonou novitiate (T)

- **Bro. Redaelli Giuseppe** (SS) as a member of the Council for Finance, replacing Fr. Paolo Latorre.

- **Fr. Codianni Luigi Fernando** (I) as a member of the Council for Finance, replacing deceased Fr. Dasilva Fernández Gonzalo.

#### **3.3. from 1° August 2020**

- **Fr. Sindjalim Essognimam Elias** General Secretary of Formation.

### **3.4. from 1 September 2020**

- **Fr. Alenyo John Peter** Novice Master ad interim at Namugongo Novitiate (U)

- **Bro. Dimanche Godfrey-Abel** formator at Bogotá CIF (CO)

- **Fr. Bellucco Enzo** Novice Master at Isiro-Magambe Novitiate (CN)

- **Bro. Alfredo Ribeiro Neres** socius at Isiro-Magambe Novitiate (CN)

- **Fr. Nordjoe Yao Djodjo Eugene** formator at Kinshasa Scholasticate (CN)

- **Fr. Ardini Roberto** formator ad interim at Kinshasa Scholasticate (CN)

- **Fr. Peinhopf Karl** formator and bursar at Casavatore Scholasticate (I)

The GC wishes to thank all confreres who are now terminating their service in the field of initial formation (*Fr. Jérôme Anakese, Fr. Sylvester Hategek'Imana, Bro. Alberto Degan, Fr. Benedetto Giupponi, Fr. José Júlio Martins Marques*)

## **4. Reopening of a Novitiate**

The GC has authorised the reopening of the Isiro-Magambe Novitiate in Congo as from **1 September 2020**. This due to the growing number of novices in the Francophone provinces with no more room in the novitiates of Sarh and Cotonou. We thank the Lord who continues to call so many young men to the mission and urges us to continually seek solutions for their formation.

## **5. General Secretariat of Formation**

### **5.1. The Process of revising the Statute**

In the Consulta di June 2020, the GC has approved the Statute of the General Secretariat of Formation which came into force on 19 June 2020, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Statute, already approved *ad experimentum* in 2017, has been revised and updated. This instrument guides not only the functioning of the General Secretariat of Formation but also the continental secretariats of formation and those of the circumscriptions.

### **5.2. Mapping Social Ministry in the circumscriptions**

The exercise of mapping the social ministry of the Comboni Family is still going on. Some provinces have not yet sent in their replies. We would ask everyone to contribute generously to this important analysis of our missionary commitment.

### **5.3. Comboni Social Forum on Social Ministeriality (CSFSM)**

The commission charged with preparing the Comboni Family Forum has decided that it will be held from 12 to 16 December 2020, in Rome, at the General House of the Comboni Missionaries. Instructions on how to take part will be sent out as soon as possible.

### **5.4. The Book: “Noi siamo missione: testimoni di ministerialità sociale nella famiglia comboniana”**

This book brings together a variety of missionary experiences in the field of social pastoral. The material will be useful for the reflection that will be made during the CMFSF. The GC thanks all who have contributed to it. For the time being, the book is available in Italian, English, French and Spanish. The electronic version will also be distributed.

### **5.5. Thanks to Fr. Siro Stocchetti**

The GC wishes to thank Fr. Siro Stocchetti for his 18 years of generous dedication to the work of ongoing formation in the various courses: CYOF, The elderly and Renewal. Our heartfelt thanks go to him for his work on the material produced during these years which now consist of four books which continue to assist both formators and those who are still in initial formation, as well as all the confreres in their journey of ongoing formation.

### **5.6. Thanks to Fr. John Baptist Opargiw**

The GC also wishes to thank Fr. John Baptist Opargiw Keraryo for his eleven years of service as General Secretary of Formation. Our heartfelt thanks go to him for his dedication and his efforts in accompanying the formative journey of our candidates in the various stages of their growth: vocations promotion, postulancy, novitiate, scholasticate and ongoing formation. The GC invokes the light and presence of the Holy Spirit, the protagonist of mission, on Fr. John Baptist in whatever new work the Institute entrusts to him.

### **5.7. Reflection on the growing number of scholastics**

During the process of assigning the newly-professed, the General Council reflected upon the growing number of newly-professed and on how to approach the problem of finding room to receive them at Scholasticates/CIF. The growing number of newly professed is a relevant fact that urges us to foresee and plan accordingly, also looking ahead to the next assignments in 2021. As for the scholasticates which already have a large number of formandi, the GC will seek to assign them a third formator. The plan at present is to have two scholasticates with more than twenty scholastics and the

rest with around fifteen. The possibility is being considered of having some small formative communities, in the European and American circumscriptions that agree to do so, where small groups of scholastics (4 to 6) would be accepted for their Comboni and theological formation. In some ways, this model may also help in the internationalisation process of our Comboni presence, especially in Europe and increase the diversification of the theological formation of our scholastics. This reflection finds its place in the broad process of global evaluation of our Comboni formation which the GSF and the entire Institute is implementing. We invite all circumscription superiors, the formators and all who have worked in formation to make their contribution by helping us discern the best way to respond to the present challenges of formation.

## **6. Revisiting and Revision of the Rule of Life**

Last March, the Central RL Commission, together with the GC, issued the proposal of a journey of revision of the RL. As indicated in the letter, suggestions must reach the Commission by 31 August. We hereby make it known that the text of the corrections is available in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish, so as to facilitate the work of revision proposed by the Commission. The GC thanks all the confreres who carried out the translation and revision of these texts which are available, on request from the Commission or the General Secretary.

## **7. Code of Conduct**

The GC is happy to note that many circumscriptions have programmed activities aimed at assisting the confreres to understand better the Code of Conduct (CC). We would like to invite all circumscriptions to organise, as soon as possible, some conferences for the purpose of explaining and studying the CC. We also invite the circumscriptions to share what they are doing in this field. These meetings may be useful for the study of some themes covered by the Code and seen as more relevant for your circumscriptions. You will thus be able to study it in light of the civil and ecclesiastical laws in the circumscription.

## **8. Applying Mass Intentions**

The GC wishes to bring to the attention of all confreres some practices of our Comboni life which appear to be neglected or even unknown by a good number of confreres. The GC asks that each

confreres carefully adheres to what the RL 42.5 says concerning the application of Masses for deceased confreres, to RL 53.2 concerning the monthly Mass for the intentions of Father General and to RL 53.3 concerning Masses for one's own intentions or the intentions of non-priest confreres. Parish priests are urged to follow the norms of law concerning Mass for the people, the *missa pro populo* (can. 534§ 1). Furthermore, the GC appeals to the circumscription superiors to see to the intentions of the Holy Redeemer Guild as indicated each month in *Familia Comboniana*, in fidelity to the commitment we have of offering Mass according to the intentions of those enrolled. The GC asks the circumscription superiors to bring this matter to the attention of all confreres.

### **9. Receiving medical treatment in Italy**

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the resumption of hospitality activity in Italy is still rather slow. Confreres who wish to return to Italy and receive treatment in Brescia have to be ready for a very slow and unpredictable process (long-term appointments and frequent cancellations). It is also possible that they may have to go into quarantine if a case of Covid-19 were to be found at the Brescia house, or if, during visits to hospital or clinics, they happened to come into contact with other Covid patients. For this reason, those involved are asked to be ready to accept the way things work out during the Covid epidemic; things are now more complicated than previously.

### **10. Postponement of the ceremony of the Beatification of Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli in Uganda**

Due to the uncertain situation caused by the spread of COVID-19, the Archbishop of Gulu, Mons. John Baptist Odama, in dialogue with the provincial of Uganda Fr. Achilles Kiwanuka, has proposed to the Holy See that the ceremony of the beatification of Fr. Ambrosoli be postponed until 21 November 2021.

### **11. Visits to the Circumscriptions**

The GC will continue to discern the COVID-19 situation and the real possibility of visiting any of the circumscriptions.

### **Perpetual Professions**

|                                      |                 |            |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Sc. Mbusa Augustin Makasyaturwa (CN) | Cape Coast (GH) | 19/06/2020 |
| Sc. Nkumileke Macaire Mbo (CN)       | Cape Coast (GH) | 19/06/2020 |
| Sc. Agbonou Kouami Agbéssi René (T)  | Cape Coast (GH) | 19/06/2020 |

## Ordinations

|                               |                |            |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Fr. Welemu Anatole (MZ) Dedza | Lilongwe (MW)  | 27/06/2020 |
| Fr. Trevisan Stefano (I)      | Bressanone (I) | 28/06/2020 |

## Holy Redeemer Guild

|           |             |             |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| July      | 01 – 15 KE  | 16 – 31 M   |
| August    | 01 – 15 MO  | 16 – 31 MZ  |
| September | 01 – 15 NAP | 16 – 30 PCA |

## Prayer intentions

**July** – That the LCM, in their forthcoming continental meetings, may allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit and so respond generously to the needs of the people they meet in various countries. *We pray to the Lord.*

**August** – That those who govern the whole world may implement policies capable of building more human and fraternal societies, for the common good and not for vested interests. *We pray to the Lord.*

**September** – That the Secular Comboni Missionaries, while conducting their X General Assembly centred on the icon of the mustard seed, may live in the certainty that Christ will cause the seeds of the Gospel sown by them to bear abundant fruit. *We pray to the Lord.*

## ITALIA

### Houses of Brescia and Milan

As regards the house of **Brescia** (see n.9 of the General Notes), the confreres will refer to the information sent to their provincials.

#### Milan –

The fact that the Comboni house in Milan is home to sick and elderly confreres as well, as some active confreres, has made it necessary to discern how to alleviate the strict limits of access to the house set up during the lockdown.

Exact information regarding access to the house for confreres and others and the organisation of meetings in the house and the liturgy during post-lockdown Phase 2, is best available by contacting the house directly: tel. +39 02 645 6486.

### ACSE among the promoters of initiative for immigrants

On 18 June, in the late afternoon, an ecumenical vigil was held in the Basilica of S. Maria in Trastevere, Rome, in memory of the

migrants who died on the journey towards Europe. The organisers of the initiative were: Centro Astalli, St. Egidio, Caritas, Acli, Evangelical Churches, Community of Pope St. John XXIII, Fondazione Migrantes, Caritas Italiana, Scalabriniani and ACSE (*Comboni Association for Service to Immigrants*). Mons. Stefano Russo, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, presided at the function.

From 1990 to the present day, 40,900 people have died in the Mediterranean Sea or on other immigration routes towards Europe. This is a startling number which was worsened during the first months of 2020 when, despite the emergency caused by the Coronavirus, 528 people – half of them women and children – died attempting to reach our continent, especially from Libya by way of the central Mediterranean route.

During the vigil, some of the names of the dead were called out. “Each one of them”, said Mons. Russo, “is precious in the eyes of God who never forgets anyone. May hope be the help of those seeking a harbour of goodness, life and peace”.

Fr. Venanzio Milani and a just small group representing ACSE also took part, due to the limits imposed by the Coronavirus. Fr. Milani read the prayer intention for the Africans who died in the migrations towards Europe and in the continent itself.

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### **Priestly ordination**

On 29 June, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the diocesan Church of Bressanone gathered round the Comboni Family for the ordination to the priesthood of Stefano Trevisan, 36, from San Vigilio di Marebbe (Bolzano), a trilingual celebration – German, Italian and Ladino – in Bressanone Cathedral, presided over by Mons. Ivo Muser. Among those present were the community of Casavatore (NA), where Stefano did the scholasticate, and the communities of Castel Volturno, Bologna, Padua, Verona (Mother House and San Tomio), Brescia, Venegono, Trent and Limone, as well as the DSP communities. The provincials of Italy and Germany were also present.

Mons. Muser, who knows the Combonis well and appreciates them, spoke during his homily on the text of St John in which Jesus asks Peter: “Simon, do you love me more than these?” and said that the life of a priest must every day be a response to this basic question,



inviting Fr. Stefano to make it the central theme of his life. He then expressed the wish that the new priest “would always do everything not just for the people but with the people, so that they might themselves become the protagonists of their lives, capable of committing themselves to their rights and dignity”. And he added: “I also pray that your missionary work be marked by the struggle for justice, peace and care for planet Earth as our common home” and he concluded: “That is why, dear Stefano, in the journey you are starting today, we are sure that you will never be alone and that the great missionary from your Ladin valley, Giuseppe Frinademetz, will be always close to you”.

At the end of the celebration, the newly-ordained priest expressed his thanks – in Italian, German, Ladin and English – to all those who accompanied him to this important goal and all his fellow travellers over the years.

## MALAWI-ZAMBIA

### **Priestly ordination**

With great joy I wish to inform you that on 27 June 2020, the deacon Welemu was ordained priest in Dedza by Mons Tarcisio Ziyaye, of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. This event is good news for the Comboni Missionaries, for the Church in general and for the Malawi-Zambia Province: “We feel a sentiment of gratitude to God for his closeness to us” (Chapter Acts 2015 n. 6). Despite their weaknesses, the priests and religious will always be a blessing for the Church and the world.

Fr. Welemu is the first member of the Institute from the diocese of Dedza. I am convinced that this will be a determining factor in the promotion of vocations for the Institute from this region of Malawi. Many family members, friends and parishioners took part in the ordination ceremony. We were obliged to keep to the health regulations required by Covid-19 laid down by the government. For this reason, the ordination took place in the chapel of the diocesan Minor Seminary. However, it was not possible to subdue the rejoicing crowd at the ordination. The Malawians like to celebrate important events and their culture is able to inspire and motivate the priesthood.

The Province is grateful to His Grace the Archbishop of Lilongwe for agreeing to come to the diocese of Dedza to ordain Fr. Welemu. Actually, as you may be aware, Dedza diocese has no bishop of its own at present since the local bishop died. The ordination could only be celebrated on 27 June 2020 due to the coronavirus. Taking the

pandemic as his starting point, the Archbishop reminded Fr. Welemu and the other priests present that they must be servants of hope for the people: priests ought to walk with the faithful and not become simply celebrants of Masses and Sacraments. This ordination is a special grace granted by God to Fr. Welemu in a very difficult period in the story of humanity!

Fr. Malata and other confreres have had a central role in preparing this ordination. I am thankful that the spirit of collaboration and sacrifice in the province of Malawi-Zambia reflects what the Comboni Family stands for. May the Lord bless all who accompanied and supported Fr. Welemu in his journey of preparation and formation.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Father General and his Council for the way they are guiding the Institute in the right direction. Nothing happens by accident. Their good directives, with their spiritual and financial support facilitate vocations promotion and missionary animation. May God grant you good health and sustain your vision of the Institute. (*Fr. Michael Mumba*)

## MEXICO

### **Master, where do you live? Come and see (Jn 1, 38-39)**

Our hearts were open and ready to celebrate the First Professions in a very different context. Because of the world emergency, it was not possible to celebrate the ceremony as we usually do, with festivity, surrounded by family, friends and benefactors. Nevertheless, we felt in our hearts the closeness of all those who live, pray for and support the mission.

Saturday 9 May 2020, therefore, at the Xochimilco Novitiate, in Mexico City, the following novices made their first religious profession: David Eduardo Romero Chajón (Guatemala), Luis Felipe Bedoya Patillo and Yeison Olivo Morales Bolívar (Colombia), Iván de Jesús Bautista Ramos and José Manuel Hernández Cruz (Mexico). With the help and support of the grace of God, they consecrated their lives to the mission according to the charism and style of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.

The Eucharistic celebration started at 10.00 and was presided by the Provincial Superior, Fr. Enrique Sánchez González, accompanied by some Comboni Missionaries and some religious Oblates of Saint Martha. Fr. Enrique exhorted the novices to live their consecration in joy and serenity, living the availability of a constant yes and the dedication of their lives to God, trusting in the One who called them

and who will never forget to bring His promise to its fulfilment. He also invited them to allow themselves to be continually seduced by God, remembering that it will not be they who, by their merits, bring to completion this consecration but God Himself who will give them the strength to remain faithful. The celebration ended with a brief and joyful time of celebration.

## CHAD

### **First religious professions of eleven novices**

At the end of a formative journey 2018-2020, at the Sainte Croix Novitiate, at Sarh, in Chad, eleven novices (ten candidates for the Priesthood and one for the Brotherhood) took their first vows. They are from the province of TGB (5), RCA (2) and CN (4).

The ceremony took place on Sunday 3 May 2020, in the courtyard of the novitiate. At 9.00, the novices processed, with their formators, some priests, the Delegation Superior Fr. Fidèle Katsan, and the Bishop, Mons. Miguel Sebastián, and joined the small group of people – about ten people including some religious men and women and some laypeople – who had gathered in a shady corner of the courtyard.

The unhappy national and world context of the coronavirus with its restrictions on gatherings of people, was of help to us, on the pen hand, since it helped us to include in our prayers the sufferings of humanity and, on the other, to thank Our Lord for these eleven young men who, by the profession of the evangelical counsels, have accepted to be consecrated and sent into the world as rays of divine love to “embrace the less fortunate” (cf. WR 2742).

The Delegation Superior, Fr. Fidèle Katsan, received the vows of the eleven young confreres during a Eucharistic celebration warmly led by Mons Miguel Sebastián, even though he was still weak after a bout of malaria. After the Mass, a common fraternal meal kept the group together until 15.00.

The newly-professed are now residing in the various communities of the Delegation. Confined to the houses, they share community life and continue their preparation to living the mission fully. Some of them are learning new languages while others are working in the gardens and helping with house maintenance. We are waiting for the airports to reopen for international flights so that they can return to their original countries and go to the scholasticates/CIF after a period of holidays at home with their families.

## TOGO-GHANA-BENIN

### **Perpetual professions**

The international scholasticate of Saints. Peter & Paul was officially opened on 1 July 2009, as an inserted community in the parish of Saint Paul in Nkanfoa, in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast (Ghana). Since the beginning of the formative journey, around thirty scholastics received their formation in this scholasticate. Now, for the first time, the community is blessed by the perpetual vows of three Comboni scholastics.

On 19 June 2020, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the three scholastics Augustin Mbusa Makasyaturwa and Macaire Mbo Nkumileke, both from the DRC, and Agbonou Kouami Agbessi René, a Togolese, took perpetual vows. The professions were made in the chapel of the scholasticate, during a solemn Mass presided by Fr. Antoine Komivi Kondo, in an atmosphere of simplicity due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Five Comboni priests, some scholastic and a few parishioners took an active part in the Eucharistic celebration. It serves to remember that the scholastics who took perpetual vows had already completed their theological studies here in May 2019 and have been appointed to TGB for their missionary service. It is a privilege that they have returned to this same structure and dynamic community that sustained them right up to their perpetual profession.

The celebration was characterised by meaningful moments of prayer and thanksgiving to God for his ineffable love in the life of each one of them and by a period of celebration.

The whole community expresses its gratitude to God, the superiors, family members, to all who were present and all who were in communion of prayer in such a beautiful and transforming experience. May the scholastics who have just made their perpetual profession be joyfully faithful to their consecration, a unique moment of grace in human life.

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Fr. Germano Agostini (16.02.1925 – 27.05.2020)**

Fr. Germano was born in Fai della Paganella, in the province of Trent, on 16 February 1925. He entered the Florence Novitiate where he took first vows on 7 October 1943. He did the scholasticate first in Venegono, then in Verona and again in Venegono where, on 24

September 1948, he made his perpetual profession and, on 11 June of the following year, he was ordained priest. He was then sent to England to learn English. In 1951 he was assigned to Uganda where he spent almost 50 years in the missions of Maracha, Aber (2 periods), Matany, Lira-Ngeta (3 periods) and at Minakulu.

At this point we have some testimonies that will help us to reconstruct the work of Fr. Germano during his long life in Uganda.

Bro. Fernando Cesaro tells how he was with Fr. Agostini for two years at the same mission of Lira-Ngeta, from 1962 to 1964. He used to take him on Tuesdays when he went on safari to the chapels and, on Sundays, he would go to fetch him. Fr. Germano was doing evangelisation work: visiting the Christians, the families, preparing people for baptism and marriage. He would spend one week at the mission and the next on safari. He carried out this work of evangelisation during the early years. Afterwards, for 25 years, he was involved in the work of translating the liturgical books and catechisms into Lango, with the help of a confrere or a teacher. After Vatican II he began the translation of the entire Bible, a colossal task. "He was calm and peaceful, - Bro. Cesaro states – but the most important thing was that he was easy to live with".

Fr. Riccardo Bolzonella remembers especially Fr. Germano's physical suffering. He was still young and in Lira, at Comboni House, when he began to suffer from severe neuralgia which prevented him from doing anything: he often complained and sometimes stayed by himself because of the pain. His suffering was not well understood by the others and this saddened somewhat, causing him to become isolated and he felt a bit marginalised. At that time, in the diocese of Lira, the need was felt to have the Word of God translated into the local Lango language, since up to then people had been praying in a 'foreign' language (even though quite similar), Acholi. There was also the need, and the desire, to have the texts of the liturgy in the local language. Problems with his health led Fr. Germano to devote himself to the project of translations in the diocese. He had to work under difficult conditions: all the texts had to be typewritten by hand in Lira and then he had to travel 300 km to go to Kampala and to Kisubi, to have them printed. There, he had to get the work done, take the proofs home to correct them and then return to the typography".

In 2000, Fr. Germano was assigned for good to Italy due to his bad health. He spent twenty years in Arco, Verona and Castel d'Azzano, where he died at the age of 95, on 27 May 2020. His funeral was celebrated on Friday 29 May. Since the community was still in

isolation due to the coronavirus, it was not possible to take part physically in the funeral which was presided over by Fr. Renzo Piazza. The burial took place at the monumental cemetery in Verona.

In his homily, Fr. Renzo compared the figure of Fr. Germano with that of St. Peter who, in the Gospel of that day, meets the Risen Jesus at the Sea of Galilee.

“Three times Jesus calls Peter by name: Simon, son of John. And Fr. Germano, even in his old age, always called the people around him by name: the confreres, the workers, the young scholastics, including those from abroad, who passed fleetingly through the Fiorini Centre. A sign of respect, cordiality and real humanity. ‘Feed my sheep’, Our Lord repeated three times to Peter. With his work of translating, Fr. Germano allowed the Word of God to speak Lango; he fed the flock with the bread of the Word. His work was truly missionary. ‘When you are old, you will hold out your hands’: Fr. Germano had the gift of a long life and a period being elderly. To all this we must add his long old age with its aches and pains, its increasing limits and need. I will always remember his hand outstretched to anyone passing by his wheelchair, to ask for some little attention, a little affection, a small run through the corridors or some information. His wishes were not always granted ... ‘Someone else will take you where you do not want to go’: perhaps he was dreaming of the missionary life in contact with people, some gratifying pastoral work or the satisfaction of baptising many people ... His health problems probably took him where he did not want to go, to an office or to collaborate with difficult people. He never refused, never said no and never asked to go back home. He stayed while his strength lasted. ‘Follow me!’ Fr. Germano endeavoured to walk in the footsteps of his Lord. He inherited the Cross and he bore it for a long time, especially during his later years, filled with aches, pains and fragility”.

### **Fr. Mödi Abel Nyörkö (31.07.1943 – 01.06.2020)**

Fr. Mödi Abel Nyörkö was born on 31 July 1943 at Terekeka, near Juba (South Sudan) to Elizabeth Kaku Jube and Nyorko Jangara of the Mundari tribe. He attended the catechumenate at his village church and was baptised at Kadule in 1951.

When he had finished primary school, he entered the seminary at Okaru in 1956 where he completed secondary school and then joined the Major Seminary of Tore River (Yei). After a brief period of philosophy and theology at Kit and at Lacor (Uganda), in 1968 he left

for Italy to continue his formation with the Comboni Missionaries. He did the novitiate in Florence where he took first vows on 9 September 1970. He studied at the Pontifical Urbanian College from 1970 to 1971 and was ordained priest on 3 April 1971 at Macerata by Mons. Ersilio Tonini. He made his perpetual profession on 27 September 1976.

In late 1971, he was assigned to South Sudan which had by then been annexed by the region of Khartoum, under the guidance of Fr. Ottorino Sina, the regional superior. After the expulsion of the Comboni Missionaries in 1964, only those members originally from South Sudan could continue to work in the country. On 6 December 1971, Nzara was reopened and, four months later Fr. Mödi joined the members of the community as curate, becoming parish priest in 1977 until 1980. In 1973 – education was one of the main priorities of the country – Fr. Mödi had founded a Comboni primary school of which he was the first headmaster. The school is still functioning today.

From 1980 to 1984, Fr. Mödi was assigned to the NAP, also for reason of further studies. During this period he obtained a Master's in education at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio and later studied Christology at the Catholic Theological Union. He was then recalled to Juba by Archbishop Paulino Lukudu.

On his return to South Sudan, he held the post of teacher and Vice-rector of the Major National Seminary of Saint Paul in Bussere (Wau) and then at Munuki, (Juba) from 1985 to 1989. Four of his students at St Paul's Seminary became bishops. His seminarians considered him as being courteous, patient, calm, friendly and kind, a priest who was always smiling, a formator who lived his missionary life with zeal and dedication.

While he was Vice-Rector, he was appointed archdiocesan director of the Association of the Youth (1987-1989) and Fr. Cesare Mazzolari's Vice-Provincial from 1987 to 1989.

In 1989, Fr. Mödi was elected Provincial Superior of South Sudan and took office on 1 January 1990, as the first African Comboni provincial in the history of the Institute. The start of his mandate coincided with the intensification of the war in Sudan.

On 1 July 1990, Fr. Francesco Pierli, Superior General, formed a new group of Comboni Missionaries to serve the people in the so-called "liberated areas" (by the SPLA) and to guarantee a degree of stability. The Comboni Missionaries who belonged to the Province of South Sudan were also present. Fr. Mödi, whose mandate expired on 31 December 1992, was asked to continue as the Delegate of the Superior General.

It was the most difficult period of the circumscription due to the conflict that engulfed the whole of Sudan. During those years he also worked among the refugees, especially the Mundari, the Madi and the Acholi, in Juba refugee camp. He was then asked to move to Khartoum where he stayed for two years. In September 1996, he went to Rome for a Sabbatical Year and, on 1 July, he was appointed to the NAP, where he was engaged in ministry at the parish of Holy Cross in Los Angeles, California. He remained there from 1999 to 2008. He was also made vice-superior of the community in 2004.

On 1 January 2009, he was assigned to Mission promotion at the community of La Grange Park in Chicago, Illinois, continuing there until 2011 when he was transferred to our missionary centre at Covina, California, doing the same sort of missionary work.

Fr. Mödi was based at the parish of Saint Lucy, in Newark, New Jersey, in 2015 and 2016.

From 1 January 2017 up to the day of his death, he belonged to the community of Cincinnati as "an elderly missionary". His presence in the community was marked by a sense of sweetness and goodness and he was nicknamed "The African Chief".

Fr. Modi Abel Nyorko spoke Bari, Zande, English, Arabic, Italian and Spanish.

Fr. Mödi already had a number of problems with his health when he was struck by the COVID-19 which hastened his demise which occurred on 1 June 2020. His remains were interred in Saint Joseph's Cemetery, Monroe, Mich., on Wednesday 10 June.

### **Fr. Luigi Gusmeroli (29.08.1928 – 07.06.2020)**

Fr. Luigi Gusmeroli was born at Tartano, in the province of Sondrio, on 29 August 1928. He did the novitiate in Venegono and Gozzano where he took first vows on 9 September 1948. He went to Rebbio for the scholasticate and then to Venegono where he made his perpetual profession on 9 September 1954 and was ordained priest on 26 June 1955.

Fr. Luigi was a calm sort of man, reserved in his relationships and quite shy but essentially kind. To see him, one would never imagine he was a courageous missionary, a tireless worker and a pioneer.

Certain men are called to be pioneers, people who are the first to throw themselves into new projects and blaze a trail for others to follow. Fr. Luigi was one of those men. It was he who, in September 1966, began the Comboni presence in Central Africa, among the Sudanese refugees, first at Abosi and then at Mboki. The missionary



work among the refugees was moving and delicate. Luigi lived simply: his home was a hut built in two days like that of the nomads. He travelled everywhere by motorcycle to be close to the people and encourage them.

Again, it was Fr. Luigi who went to Chad, in December 1975, to start talks with Mons Henri Véniat, Bishop of Sarh, in view of a Comboni commitment in the country. Fr. Luigi moved from Bangui to Sarh the same way he did everything: without giving himself importance, discreetly, even though he was actually opening a new commitment for the Comboni Missionaries.

Not content with opening the way, he wanted to be personally involved: he returned to Chad and stayed there for good. His mission of earliest evangelisation had won his heart.

He first arrived in Bedjondo in February 1978. He had come directly from Grimari, without even taking a break for holidays. He was an expert missionary and he immediately set to work. He saw to most of the baptismal retreats for the catechumens. Fr. Pio Adami, a Jesuit who was then in charge of the mission, praised Fr. Luigi for the way he soon fitted in so easily. He was great worker and enjoyed his work.

In October 1980, he started to assist the parish of Bekamba, 23 Km from Bedjondo. He would go there on Wednesday and return on Sunday afternoon. On his return, we would get together over our only beer of the week to talk about recent events. It was a pleasure to listen to him. He was not very talkative but his words carried some weight and his experience was priceless.

In 1984, he went to Sarh. In order to move from Bedjondo to Sarh, he was obliged to go to Doba and take a plane since the civil war made it impossible to travel by road. He first worked at the parish of Saint Joseph, in the Kassaï quarter and, in 1988, he was made parish priest of the parish of saint Kizito in the Begou quarter. He adapted well to urban pastoral and worked a lot with the Foyers Chrétiens.

In January 1994, he was appointed second formator at the interprovincial postulancy at Bimbo, in Bangui where his goodness and wisdom helped in the discernment of the Comboni candidates from Chad and central Africa then in formation. He returned to Chad in November 1998, to the new parish of Saint Daniel Comboni in Doba, a parish that included both urban and rural areas with about fifty villages. Fr. Luigi threw himself especially into the service of the rural areas. He always preferred to meet the country people in their own environment.

In September 1999, Doba became a hospitality community to receive new Combonians coming to Chad: they would stay for three months in Doba to study the Ngambaye language and receive an introduction to the Chadian and ecclesial situation. The new arrivals were accompanied spiritually by Fr. Luigi, a wise missionary who was competent and had the benefit of a long and varied missionary experience.

He again agreed to change community: we know how difficult it is to change one's type of work, especially at a certain age. But Luigi was also a man of faith, obedient and with the mission at heart. He agreed to move without complaining. He went to the parish of Saint Michel of Bodo, a rural mission 54 km from Doba. And there he stayed, despite his age, until 2016. He had given up driving so he had a Sister belonging to the pastoral team take him to the most distant villages to celebrate Mass and meet the Christians. In 2016, while in Italy for holidays, he suffered a severe stroke that left him incapacitated. He did recover somewhat at the Milan Centre but was unable to speak properly. Nevertheless, he never lost his peace or his smile. (*Fr. Enrique-Javier Rosich, mcc*)

### **Fr. Claudio Crimi (28.11.1940 – 19.06.2020)**

Fr. Claudio died on 19 June in Milano after a long illness. In Mozambique, when someone important dies, they say a baobab has fallen. Fr. Claudio spent almost thirty years in baobab country in the province of Tete in Mozambique. We may say a baobab has fallen in Milan.

He was born on 28 November 1940 in Trieste, but lived in Genoa where his father worked for the maritime police. He became a diocesan priest in Genoa in 1964 and later became a Comboni Missionary. He did the novitiate in Gozzano and, after a few years in Italy, he left in 1971 for Mozambique at the age of 31.

“Here – Fr. Antonio Constantino Bogaio writes – he was known as ‘Father Mvuu’, which means hippopotamus in the Nyungue language which Fr. Claudio spoke fluently. His nickname was due to his great adventures on the Zambesi River ... Fr. Claudio was always in close contact with the people of Tete, especially in those places where priests were either scarce or non-existent”.

Up to 1986 he worked in Tete. He experienced the time of independence won by Mozambique in 1975, and then the long period of the civil war that began in 1976 and lasted until 1992.

He worked in Spain from 1987 to 1992, when he returned to Mozambique; I met him during that time. He was in Tete and I was in Nampula. "Starting in 1993 – Fr. Constantino Bogaio again writes – it was he, with his long apostolic journeys, who provided religious assistance to the Christian communities in the districts of Cahora Bassa, Mágoè, Marávia and Zumbo".

In 2006, at the age of 66, he returned to Italy due to some serious health issues. He worked with ACSE and then in Gozzano up to his death. I would like to say something of what I know about Fr. Claudio.

He was a great worker, untiring and never seeking to rest and never thinking of his health. He was always available and liked to be of service to others. I remember how, when I would go to Tete for the community visits, he was always available to accompany me and also to visit the refugees in Malawi. In those days, the province of Mozambique had two communities in Malawi among the Mozambican refugees.

He was very attentive to the problems of justice and peace and was sensitive to situations of injustice. He was easily angered by anything that seemed to undermine the rights of the person. Also at Comboni community level, he sought to ensure justice in relations and respect for each person. Someone who lived with him used to say that, in this matter he was a Comboniano doc!

In the same vein, he was attentive to human promotion. Unfortunately, some of the projects he started were not successful for lack of accompaniment and planning. I believe Fr. Claudio let himself be carried away by his enthusiasm and was not very realistic in his projects. A better use of means and careful community planning would have produced better results.

He had a passion for the people and for the mission. After the civil war ended, he kept alive the Christian communities on the shores of Lake Cahora Bassa, the great lake formed by the dam of that name, in Tete. The missions of Zumbo, Mukumbura and Maravia had been abandoned during the war. Fr. Claudio was the first priest to visit those people to see how they were and how they had survived the war. In those missions, his person and his name are well remembered.

Due to his boisterous character, he often had to suffer and made others suffer as well. He suffered especially when his ideas or plans that he proposed were not supported. Whenever the confreres or even the Bishop of Tete disagreed with him, he was annoyed and protested. Among the fishing projects he started, there are still two

boats that transport people along the shores of the Lake, from Songo to Zumbo, o the border with Zambia.

Fr. Claudio never rested. He was very restless and impatient. He had always to find something to do, a trip or someone to visit. He spent himself generously for the Gospel, no doubt with some exaggeration but also to the detriment of his health and with the right intention of helping and lending a hand to the neediest (the children, the youth and the women) who often deceived and robbed him; but he never let these situations get him down.

Let us pray for him that he may give us something of his restlessness and undying passion for missionary work. May the Lord of the mission give Fr. Claudio the recompense of his efforts and his pains for the mission and the people of Mozambique. (*Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins, mccc*)

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

**THE MOTHERS:** María, of Mons. Jaime Rodríguez Salazar (M); Elena, of Fr. Sylvain Alohoungo (M); Aurora, of Fr. Pedro Andrés Miguel (E).

**THE BROTHERS:** Zeray, di Fr. Estifanos Helafu (ER); Paride, of Bro. Arnaldo Braguti (E); Fr. Aurelian (OSB), of Fr. Alois Weiss (PE), Victor Manuel, of Fr. Guillermo Medina Martínez (M).

**THE SISTER:** Lina, of Fr. Carlo Faggion (BR).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTER:** Sr. Lidia M. Cahsai.

**James Murphy**, who died in May in Shettleston (district of Glasgow), was a former Comboni Brother who worked from 1982 to 1994 in Uganda and in the London Province and, after he left the Institute in 1995, continued to collaborate with the London Province, especially with the communities of Carmyle and Sunningdale.

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

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