

**MISSIONARI COMBONIANI DEL CUORE DI
GESU'
COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS**

**XVII CAPITOLO GENERALE
XVII GENERAL CHAPTER**

**RELAZIONI DEI CONTINENTI
CONTINENTAL REPORTS**

Relazioni in versione Italiano / Spagnolo

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AFRICA ANGLOFONA E MOZAMBICO

RELAZIONE SUB-CONTINENTALE DELLE CIRCOSCRIZIONI DI LINGUA INGLESE E MOZAMBICO

1. IMPORTANZA STORICA

1.1. Il nostro sub-continente ha un legame e una relazione con l'Istituto fin dalla sua fondazione. È qui che il nostro Fondatore lavorò e sacrificò la sua vita per il nostro popolo. Alcune delle nostre missioni vanno indietro al tempo di S. Daniele Comboni stesso. Ma il nostro legame con l'Istituto non è soltanto cronologico ma anche missiologico, spirituale e soprattutto carismatico.

1.2. L'espansione geografica dell'Istituto ad altri continenti derivò profondamente dall'esperienza missionaria di un buon numero di confratelli che sono diventati martiri e modelli spirituali per tutto l'Istituto.

1.3. Il 30% di tutti i Missionari Comboniani presta il loro servizio in questa parte del Continente Africano e il 35% dei Missionari Comboniani candidati, in formazione oggi, viene dal nostro sub-continente.

1.4. La nostra fedeltà all'ideale di S. Daniele Comboni si vede nel numero rilevante di agenti pastorali locali nelle aree in cui lavoriamo. Questi sono il frutto del profondo impegno per la realizzazione del sogno del nostro Fondatore di salvare l'Africa con l'Africa attraverso la preparazione del personale. Il Piano di S. Daniele Comboni di avere istituzioni di alta cultura che corrispondessero ai bisogni pertinenti e alle sfide della missione, si mantiene vivo nel nostro sub-continente attraverso molte istituzioni di formazione, tra le quali ricordiamo il Dar Comboni in Cairo e l'Istituto del Ministero Sociale in Missione di Nairobi.

2. SITUAZIONE SOCIALE, ECONOMICA E POLITICA

2.1. Situazione Sociale

2.1.1. L'Africa è un continente ricco, con molte culture differenti e con gente di talento.

2.1.2. Il rapido tasso di urbanizzazione dovuto alla massiccia migrazione di gente dalle aree rurali alle città in cerca di lavoro e di migliori divertimenti sociali, pone un serio problema. L'alto tasso di disoccupazione in una società prevalentemente giovanile come la nostra, espone i giovani a facili manipolazioni politiche. Si sono fatti alcuni sforzi per combattere la corruzione, ma essa è ancora rampante.

2.1.3. Come risultato dell'esodo dalle zone rurali alle città, c'è una rottura di valori tradizionali e culturali. I giovani sono esposti a pseudo-culture presenti specialmente nelle città. I Mass Media hanno una grande influenza su di loro.

2.1.4. L'assistenza medica in questa parte dell'Africa rimane ancora un gravissimo problema. La malaria continua a essere la prima causa di morte, quantunque curi, non costi molto. La mancanza di centri sanitari fa sì che le nostre nazioni abbiano il tasso più alto di mortalità materna dovuto a complicazioni al momento del parto. Il numero delle vittime di HIV/AIDS continua a crescere sia nelle aree urbane sia in quelle rurali.

2.1.5. Si sono fatti degli sforzi per rendere l'educazione scolastica accessibile a molti, ma sfortunatamente questo non è corrisposto a un aumento di strutture educative e di personale e in alcune aree la percentuale di analfabeti è ancora molto alta. Ci sono classi

con tantissimi alunni che quindi non possono essere adeguatamente accompagnati. Ciò ha contribuito a un calo notevole dello standard educativo nelle scuole governative.

2.1.6. L'immigrazione di persone qualificate ad altre nazioni che offrono migliori salari, impoverisce il sub-continente. Questi emigranti spesso diventano un sostegno fondamentale per le loro famiglie in patria.

2.2. Situazione Economica

2.2.1. Il nostro sub-continente è ricco di molte risorse naturali e sta subendo una rapida trasformazione. Alcune nazioni in cui lavoriamo hanno avuto una costante crescita economica fino al 15% prima della presente crisi economica mondiale. Questo ha aumentato il divario tra ricchi e poveri, specialmente nelle aree urbane. Il differente tasso di sviluppo nella stessa nazione crea tensioni e può essere la causa di futuri conflitti sociali.

2.2.2. Mentre il Sudafrica è una potenza economica con infrastrutture moderne, molte nostre nazioni sono tra le più povere del mondo. In alcune di esse con tristezza siamo testimoni della perdita di quasi tutti i guadagni economici precedenti perché il monopolio di stato ha paralizzato le strutture economiche e distrutto il settore privato. Altrove la mancanza di facilitazioni economiche rimane un ostacolo agli investimenti stranieri. In alcune nazioni la crescita economica è minacciata dalla recente instabilità politica.

2.2.3. In molte nazioni ci sono anche conflitti per il possesso delle terre, causati dalla crescita della popolazione, dalla presenza di grandi fattorie industriali, dalla distribuzione disuguale del territorio e da dispute etniche.

2.2.4. Molte NGO che lavorano per la gente del posto sono di mentalità affaristica con pregiudizi politici e spesso creano una mentalità di dipendenza.

2.2.5. Degno di nota è il settore della crescente occupazione in proprio, dove giovani preparati iniziano piccole imprese nonostante le magre risorse che hanno a disposizione.

2.3. Situazione Politica

2.3.1. Lo sviluppo positivo e il rafforzarsi del processo democratico in molte nazioni sono segni di una crescente consapevolezza socio-politica. La partecipazione della gente alle elezioni dei capi è stata fatta con crescente libertà e le elezioni stanno diventando più giuste e trasparenti. Tuttavia la maturità sociale della gente è ancora piuttosto lenta.

2.3.2. Spesso l'identità etnica è ancora più forte dell'identità nazionale. La corruzione e l'abuso di fondi pubblici mostrano che la preoccupazione per il bene comune manca tra i nostri leader.

2.3.3. A parte poche circoscrizioni, abbiamo situazioni politiche instabili. Paradossalmente nazioni in guerra da anni, hanno firmato accordi di pace che hanno portato cambiamenti positivi per queste nazioni e i loro popoli (Eritrea, Etiopia, Sudan, Uganda). Ma gli accordi raggiunti non sono ancora stati messi in pratica e l'insoddisfazione stanno crescendo, creando la paura che la violenza possa ricominciare.

2.3.4. La situazione dell'Eritrea, governata da una crudele dittatura di stampo comunista e il silenzio della comunità internazionale al riguardo, ci fanno sentire incapaci di fronte alle sofferenze e alle grida della gente. Le tante restrizioni e i controlli capillari a cui la gente è sottomessa, l'espulsione e la negazione dei visti di entrata per i confratelli stranieri, mettono la nostra missione e i confratelli di questa Delegazione in uno stato precario.

2.4. Situazione Religiosa

2.4.1. Le Religioni Tradizionali Africane sono ampiamente praticate nel sub-continente e sono strettamente collegate alle culture locali. C'è un forte senso del trascendente che influisce su tutte le sfere della vita. Molti elementi sono spunti positivi per un dialogo

con il cristianesimo e si devono accettare e incoraggiare. Tuttavia alcune pratiche sono in contraddizione con il Vangelo. Per alcuni dei nostri cristiani la mancanza di saggio discernimento apre la via al sincretismo.

2.4.2. L'Islam dilaga e cresce dappertutto. Negli ultimi anni un Islam aggressivo e militante si sta propagando, sostenuto da grandi mezzi finanziari e reso visibile dalla costruzione di moschee e scuole coraniche. Studenti di tutta l'Africa ricevono borse di studio alle università del Cairo e di Khartoum e sono poi rimandati nelle loro nazioni come predicatori islamici.

2.4.3. Le Chiese Protestanti principali sono presenti nel sub-continente in maniera consistente. Gli Ortodossi sono molto numerosi in alcune nostre circoscrizioni (Egitto, Eritrea ed Etiopia).

2.4.4. Le Chiese Pentecostali e le Chiese Africane Indipendenti fioriscono e attraggono molta gente. La crescita delle Chiese Pentecostali può essere dovuta al fatto che offrono soluzioni facili ma illusorie ai problemi che la gente ha.

3. SITUAZIONE ECCLESIALE

3.1. La Chiesa locale nel sub-continente non ha mai abbandonato la sua missione di una proclamazione olistica della Buona Novella, nonostante le situazioni politiche di disagio e rischio e regimi che a volte sono manifestamente avversi alla Chiesa Cattolica. Questo è dovuto al fatto che i leader ecclesiali locali sono molto uniti tra loro, specialmente i vescovi.

3.2. A volte la situazione di sofferenza, insicurezza e incertezza politica ha aiutato la nostra gente ad approfondire il significato del loro essere cristiani. Tuttavia per rispondere ai grandi problemi sociali che ancora persistono (corruzione, HIV/AIDS, guerra, violenza e criminalità) la Chiesa locale non può smettere di proporre la fede cristiana come strumento di trasformazione sociale, per rendere concreta la fede professata nella vita di ogni giorno.

3.3 Nell'insieme la Chiesa locale ha fatto passi rilevanti in avanti, nonostante alcune pressioni socio-politiche negative. Il numero degli ordinari locali e del clero è cresciuto. Vediamo esempi incoraggianti di Chiese che hanno fatto passi importanti nell'auto-dipendenza.

3.4. Ci sono comunità cristiane visibili e vibranti che celebrano la loro fede con gioia. L'implementazione delle Piccole Comunità Cristiane, in cui s'incoraggiano differenti ministeri, è stata adottata dai vescovi del sub-continente come una priorità pastorale. Tuttavia le Piccole Comunità Cristiane devono ancora crescere e diventare comunità dove i vari ministeri sono esercitati.

3.5. In alcune regioni, il cammino verso una Chiesa con leader locali sufficienti, che si propaghi da sé e che si autofinanzi, è appena incominciato. Ci sono Chiese che dipendono ancora in gran parte da personale e fondi stranieri.

3.6. Alcune sfide sono interne alla Chiesa, come la mancanza di vocazioni alla vita religiosa e al clero locale.

3.7. La percentuale dei cattolici nel sub-continente varia tra lo 0.6 e il 46 % della popolazione. Ma anche dove la Chiesa è in piccola minoranza, è apprezzata grazie al suo approccio missionario integrale, che le permette di dare particolare attenzione alla situazione sociale e fornire servizi fondamentali come certe strutture educative e

sanitarie che, altrimenti, sarebbero completamente assenti nella gran parte delle regioni dove lavoriamo.

3.8. La Chiesa ha e continua ad avere un ruolo essenziale nelle iniziative di Giustizia, Pace, Integrità del Creato (GPIC) e di riconciliazione. Il prossimo Sinodo (il secondo) dei Vescovi Africani è su questo tema. Speriamo offra direttive e uno stimolo per il necessario e logorante cammino verso una società più giusta e più fraterna.

3.9. Dobbiamo ricordare che i Movimenti di Rinnovamento nella Chiesa Cattolica hanno un ruolo importante nel coinvolgimento del laicato nella vita della Chiesa e rappresentano una forza attiva per prevenire che i cattolici accorranò verso le Chiese Pentecostali che hanno un forte fascino sulla gente.

3.10. Quantunque si sia fatto del progresso, l'inculturazione rimane ancora la più grande sfida alla Chiesa nel nostro sub-continente.

4. CAMMINO COMUNE DEL SUB-CONTINENTE

4.1. Riunioni dei Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione. L'Assemblea dei Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione del sub-continente si è tenuta regolarmente. Ha discusso problemi comuni, ha adottato politiche simili e cercato di condividere personale e responsabilità. Molti e vari i problemi che sono stati discussi. Il coordinatore sub-continentale è P. Giuseppe Sandri e le responsabilità per i vari settori sono state assegnate a: P. Sebhatleab Ayele Tesemma (Evangelizzazione e *Ratio Missionis*), P. Mariano Tibaldo (Promozione Missionaria), P. Giuseppe Filippi (finanze), P. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilassie (Promozione Vocazionale e Formazione), P. Cosimo Vittorio Spadavecchia (Islam), P. Massimo Robol (LMC) e P. Salvatore Pacifico (Formazione Permanente).

4.2. Assemblee Sub-continentali

4.2.1. Il sub-continente ha organizzato le seguenti assemblee: Formazione di Base (Layibi in Uganda, nel giugno 2007); Promozione Missionaria (Mariannahill in Sudafrica nel 2006); *Ratio Missionis* (Nairobi in Kenya nel luglio 2005; Gulu in Uganda nel maggio 2006; Cairo in Egitto nell'aprile 2007; Pretoria, in Sudafrica nel luglio 2008); Gruppo di Riflessione sull'Islam (N'Djamena in Ciad nell'ottobre 2007; Cairo in Egitto nel febbraio 2009); Finanze (Lilongwe in Malawi nel 2006); Assemblea dei Delegati al Capitolo Generale (Lusaka in Zambia nel maggio 2009).

4.2.2. Le riunioni del sub-continente su GPIC sono state tenute alla fine degli incontri sulla *Ratio Missionis* a Nairobi e a Gulu (vedi sopra 4.2.1.).

4.2.3. Molti rappresentanti del sub-continente hanno partecipato al Forum Sociale Mondiale (WSF) a Nairobi in Kenya nel gennaio 2007 e nel Forum Sociale della Famiglia Comboniana organizzato in collaborazione con le (SMC) subito dopo. Due dei nostri rappresentanti sono andati anche a Belém, Brasile per prendere parte sia al WSF sia al Forum Sociale della Famiglia Comboniana del febbraio 2009.

4.3. Progetti comuni dei MCCJ nel sub-continente

4.3.1. Le circoscrizioni dell'Africa di lingua inglese e del Mozambico hanno due progetti, uno nel campo della Promozione Missionaria (New People Media Centre) e una nel campo della Formazione (Noviziati di Namugongo e di Lusaka).

4.3.2. I Missionari Comboniani sono anche responsabili per due alte istituzioni accademiche, l'Istituto del Ministero Sociale in Missione al Collegio Tangaza di Nairobi in Kenya e Dar Comboni al Cairo in Egitto.

4.3.3. Le circoscrizioni del sub-continente condividono il personale nel ministero (Opere Significative) dei Fratelli nelle scuole tecniche di Layibi (Uganda), Lunzu (Malawi) e Carapira (Mozambico).

4.3.4. Lo scambio di personale tra le circoscrizioni si è raramente attuato.

4.4. Gruppo di Riflessione sull'Islam

4.4.1. Quantunque la composizione del gruppo non sia stata costante, si è incontrato regolarmente negli ultimi tre anni. Lo scopo della riflessione è soprattutto pastorale e illumina il nostro lavoro missionario concreto.

4.4.2. I membri del Gruppo di Riflessione e i Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione del sub-continente stanno ancora definendo la metodologia delle attività del gruppo.

4.5. Pastoralisti. Confratelli coinvolti nel ministero tra i pastoralisti in Karamoja (Uganda) e Turkana e Pokot (Kenya) si sono riuniti per condividere esperienze e trovare metodi specifici per la Prima Evangelizzazione da proporre ai Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione del sub-continente.

4.6. Mass Media

4.6.1. Nel nostro sub-continente i Mass Media sono un mezzo di Prima Evangelizzazione e Promozione Missionaria. Noi collaboriamo in un gran numero di progetti, ad esempio con stazioni radio FM (Arua in Uganda; Juba e Monti Nubani in Sud Sudan).

4.6.2. Al presente siamo incaricati di tre riviste: *Worldwide* in Sudafrica, *Leadership* in Uganda e *New People* che, quantunque di base in Kenya, è distribuito in molti paesi di lingua inglese nel continente africano. Il New People Media Centre di Nairobi include altre attività come vari corsi di formazione, produzione di CD e di programmi radio. Si sta discutendo la possibilità di unificazione le riviste.

4.7. Immigranti e rifugiati. La realtà degli immigranti e rifugiati è diventata una delle più grandi preoccupazioni delle nostre circoscrizioni (rifugiati sudanesi, eritrei ed etiopici in Egitto; un largo numero di rifugiati di tutto il continente in Sudafrica). Molti gruppi di rifugiati dispersi internamente (Uganda, Sudan e Kenya) rappresentano una grande sfida per le nostre società. Noi aiutiamo questi gruppi in collaborazione con le organizzazioni locali e internazionali.

4.8. Gruppo di Riflessione Teologica. Il Gruppo di Riflessione Teologica è limitato principalmente al Kenya, ma si fanno degli sforzi per coinvolgere confratelli di altre circoscrizioni. Questo gruppo è incaricato della pubblicazione di *Missionary Reflections*.

4.9. Il Piano Sub-continentale. In linea con le necessità dell'Istituto, i Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione del sub-continente lavorano per una stesura del Piano. Le *Prospettive future* alla fine di questa relazione riflettono le priorità del Piano Sub-continentale.

4.10. Collaborazione tra la Famiglia Comboniana

4.10.1. Diverse circoscrizioni accolgono i Laici Missionari Comboniani (LMC) e hanno incominciato gruppi locali come in Uganda.

4.10.2. La collaborazione con le Suore Missionarie Comboniane (SMC) è una realtà comune nel nostro sub-continente e va dalla stretta collaborazione nel campo

dell'evangelizzazione e promozione umana, al livello di Consigli Provinciali e di Delegazione e a progetti comuni come il Sudan Catholic Radio Network, il cui scopo è la fondazione di stazioni radio FM in ogni diocesi del Sud Sudan e sui Monti Nubani.

4.11. Unificazione o raggruppamento delle circoscrizioni MCCJ nel sub-continente

La discussione sul come amalgamare le Province e le Delegazioni è già incominciata. La riorganizzazione della nostra regione potrebbe includere Malawi-Zambia con il Mozambico e il Sudafrica, Khartoum con il Sud Sudan (o Khartoum con l'Egitto), l'Etiopia con l'Eritrea, il Kenya con l'Uganda ...

5. SFIDE PER IL SUB-CONTINENTE

“Si richiede un'analisi attenta della situazione socio-politica al missionario per scoprire le più concrete e appropriate opportunità per l'evangelizzazione, anche nelle condizioni meno favorevoli” (RV 61.7)

5.1. Globalizzazione

5.1.1. La globalizzazione tocca tutti e tutti gli aspetti della vita. Causa cambiamenti improvvisi di modi di vedere che portano ad abbandonare valori fino allora dati per scontati. Quindi la globalizzazione sfida continuamente il modo con cui evangelizziamo.

5.1.2. L'internazionalità delle nostre comunità è un segno vivente del valore evangelico della fraternità (*cf.* RV 37), che ci impegna a praticare e promuovere una cultura nella quale il bene comune è il criterio che guida le nostre decisioni personali.

5.2. Urbanizzazione. Il continente africano sperimenta una rapida urbanizzazione con gran parte della gente che si affolla nei bassifondi e nelle aree povere della città. La loro situazione conduce alla degradazione della loro dignità umana e a conflitti e violenza. Noi Missionari Comboniani, già presenti in alcune di queste situazioni, riconosciamo che dobbiamo fare molto di più per continuare a essere un segno di speranza in mezzo a questa gente condividendo il loro stile semplice di vita.

5.3. Gioventù. I giovani formano la maggioranza della popolazione africana e sono la ricchezza e la speranza del sub-continente. Li educiamo e li formiamo nelle nostre scuole e parrocchie e collaborando con i programmi pastorali e le strutture diocesane.

5.4. HIV/AIDS. Il continente africano è gravemente colpito dall'epidemia dell'HIV/AIDS che conduce molti alla morte, crea un gran numero di orfani e rallenta lo sviluppo economico. Noi collaboriamo con le SMC, LMC e altre organizzazioni per curare e sostenere (spiritualmente, psicologicamente, economicamente e socialmente) gli ammalati di HIV/AIDS.

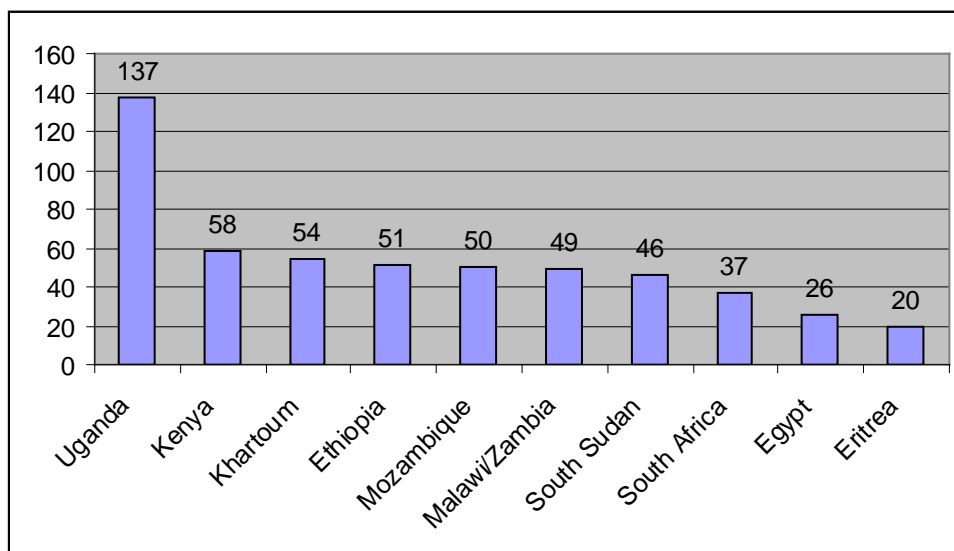
5.5. GPIC e riconciliazione. I conflitti etnici e il divario sempre più grande tra ricchi e poveri, hanno aumentato la nostra consapevolezza dell'importanza di lavorare per la GPIC e la riconciliazione. In situazioni difficili noi siamo rimasti con la gente come segno di speranza, lavorando con loro per una società più armonica. Il prossimo Sinodo (il secondo) Speciale dei vescovi per l'Africa è un'altra indicazione dell'importanza della giustizia, della pace e della riconciliazione.

5.6. Islam. L'Islam sta espandendosi qualche volta aggressivamente. Questo è un elemento nuovo che influisce sulla gente che noi serviamo nel nostro lavoro missionario. Siamo già impegnati in iniziative di contatto con l'Islam nelle sue varie

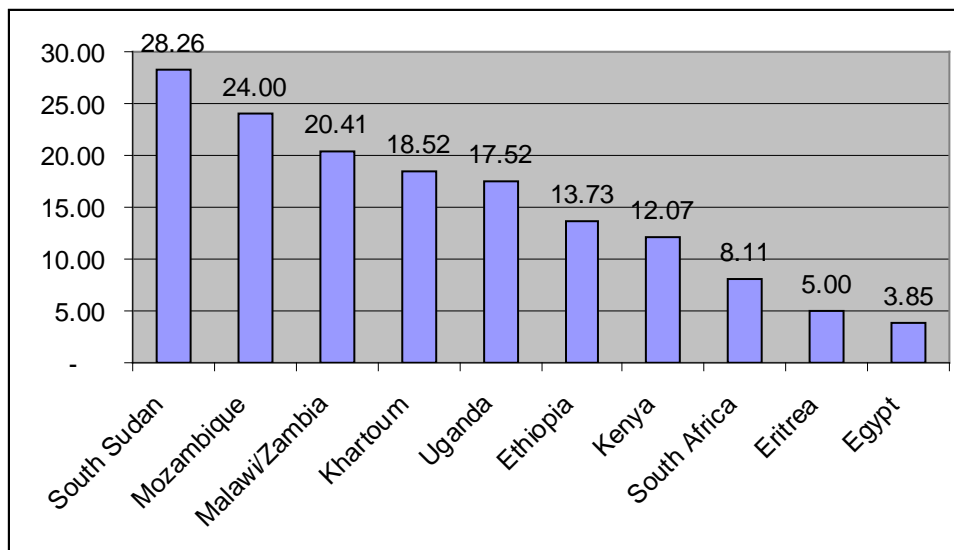
forme (Dar Comboni in Cairo, lavoro nelle scuole, corsi sull' Islam e gruppi di riflessione). Quindi la conoscenza dell' Islam e il dialogo con esso stanno diventando parte del nostro servizio missionario e vanno ulteriormente incoraggiati.

6. MCCJ NEL SUB-CONTINENTE
Statistiche sul personale MCCJ all'1 marzo 2009

MCCJ secondo l'appartenenza giuridica
 (Scolastici inclusi)



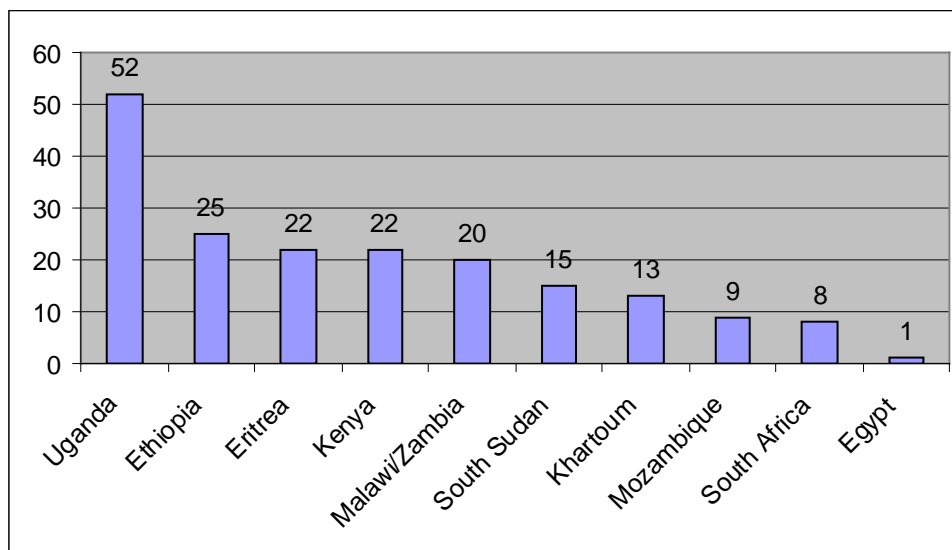
Percentuale di Fratelli per circoscrizione



Appartenenza giuridica

Nazione	Ves.	P.	Fr.	Scol.	Totale	%Fr.
Uganda	1	98	24	14	137	17.52
Kenya	0	45	7	6	58	12.07
Khartoum	2	39	10	3	54	18.52
Mozambique	0	34	12	4	50	24.00
Malawi-Zambia	0	29	10	10	49	20.41
Ethiopia	2	31	7	11	51	13.73
South Sudan	2	28	13	3	46	28.26
South Africa	0	31	3	3	37	8.11
Egypt	1	24	1	0	26	3.85
Eritrea	1	13	1	5	20	5.00
Totale	8	372	88	59	528	16.76

Appartenenza radicale (Scolastici compresi)



Appartenenza radicale

Circoscrizione	Ves.	P.	Fr.	Sc.	totale	%Fr.
Uganda	0	33	5	14	52	9.62
Ethiopia	0	13	1	11	25	4.00
Eritrea	1	15	1	5	22	4.55
Kenya	0	15	1	6	22	4.55
Malawi-Zambia	0	10	0	10	20	-
South Sudan	1	10	1	3	15	6.67
Khartoum	1	9	0	3	13	-
Mozambique	0	4	1	4	9	11.11
South Africa	0	5	0	3	8	-
Egypt	0	1	0	0	1	-

Età media

Circoscrizione	Media
Khartoum	63.03
Uganda	61.82
Mozambique	56.00
South Sudan	53.95
Malawi-Zambia	53.44
Kenya	53.40
Egypt	53.38
Ethiopia	52.63
South Africa	50.6
Eritrea	45.65

Età media generale: 56.30 anni

7. TEMI CAPITOLARI

7.1. Ratio Missionis

7.1.1. Il processo

7.1.1.1. Il mandato dell'ultimo Capitolo Generale di lavorare sulla *Ratio Missionis* fu un'ispirazione che ha toccato la vita di tutto l'Istituto e particolarmente quella delle circoscrizioni del sub-continente. Questo esercizio di autovalutazione della nostra spiritualità, identità, vita comunitaria e servizio missionario (*RV 99.1*) deve essere preso in considerazione nel prossimo Capitolo Generale per generare rinnovamento nel modo in cui ci sentiamo e viviamo come Missionari Comboniani del Cuore di Gesù.

7.1.1.2. Un successo già ottenuto dal processo della *Ratio Missionis* è che si è arrivati a comprendere in modo migliore cos'è il discernimento, facendolo metodo normale per analizzare la realtà e fare delle scelte. Una delle cause del lento rinnovamento delle nostre comunità e dei nostri impegni si può far risalire alla nostra limitata esperienza nel discernere la volontà di Dio nei segni dei tempi e nella nostra stessa vita.

7.1.1.3. Tutte le circoscrizioni valutano e fanno tesoro dell'esperienza fatta con il processo della *Ratio Missionis*. Ci siamo anche accorti che la *Ratio* era un processo di formazione permanente personale e comunitaria e che non era inteso a dare una risposta a tutti i nostri problemi. Il processo della *Ratio Missionis* ci ha insegnato un modo molto valido di discernimento comunitario che ci aiuta a pianificare e ad agire nella fedeltà alla volontà di Dio, al nostro carisma e alla nostra missione.

7.1.2. Spiritualità

7.1.2.1. La nostra spiritualità si basa su Gesù abbandonato e sulla croce, con il suo Cuore trafitto per amore dell'umanità (cfr. *RV 2.1*). Come persone che cercano ogni giorno di identificarsi con Gesù Cristo, siamo sfidati a diventare contemplativi in azione, fedeli alla Regola di Vita, alla preghiera personale e comunitaria, alla Carta della comunità e alla pianificazione e valutazione comunitaria.

7.1.2.2. Le sorgenti della nostra spiritualità sono la Parola di Dio, la vita e gli Scritti del nostro Fondatore, la Regola di Vita, la Tradizione del nostro Istituto, la vita della gente e quanto accade nel nostro servizio missionario.

7.1.2.3. Il processo della *Ratio Missionis* ci ha offerto un'opportunità per condividere i vari aspetti della nostra spiritualità missionaria e rafforzare le nostre convinzioni.

7.1.3. Identità

7.1.3.1. L'identità del Missionario Comboniano è quella di una persona chiamata da Dio, consacrata a lui per la missione, attraverso i consigli evangelici e secondo il carisma di S. Daniele Comboni. Tuttavia riconosciamo anche che c'è uno scarto tra i principi accettati da tutti e il modo in cui questi stessi principi sono messi in pratica nella nostra vita quotidiana personale e di comunità.

7.1.3.2. Uno dei nemici della nostra identità è l'individualismo nella metodologia, nell'uso dei soldi, nello stile di vita e nella vita comunitaria. Siamo quindi sfidati a superare la dicotomia tra ideale e vita vissuta, mettendo in pratica con coerenza i principi espressi nella Regola di Vita.

7.1.4. Missione

7.1.4.1. L'Istituto dei MCCJ esiste per il solo scopo di proclamare la Buona Novella alla gente che non l'ha mai ricevuta o che è inadeguatamente evangelizzata, con l'Africa come priorità.

7.1.4.2. L'Istituto si è esteso ampiamente nel mondo missionario e così si sono sviluppate differenti metodologie. Anche la parola "*missione*" ha assunto una varietà di

significati e conseguentemente è difficile per i membri dell'Istituto avere una concezione comune di missione. Dobbiamo chiarire a noi stessi il significato di *ad gentes, ad vitam, ad extra e ad pauperes*. Dovremmo essere pronti ad assumere nuovi campi di missione più in sintonia con la fedeltà al nostro carisma.

7.1.4.3. Con coraggio abbiamo scelto campi di missione che riflettono alcune delle ispirazioni del Comboni. Il nostro servizio missionario è con e per i poveri. Noi continuiamo a promuovere la formazione integrale dei nostri leader e della gioventù con scuole tecniche e con l'insegnamento formale e informale. In questa parte del continente africano abbiamo avuto confratelli che si sono dedicati con passione allo studio delle culture e delle lingue locali. Oggi continuiamo questa tradizione attraverso il lavoro di traduzione.

7.2. Formazione

7.2.1. La formazione dovrebbe sempre essere basata sul modello di missione proprio ai Missionari Comboniani.

7.2.2. È necessario continuare a investire nella preparazione di formatori che s'identificano con il carisma comboniano e capaci di applicare il modello di formazione sviluppato dall'Istituto.

7.2.3. Gli scolasticati continentali sono diventati la norma anche se con qualche eccezione. La prossima Assemblea Intercontinentale dovrebbe fare una valutazione di questa scelta.

7.2.4. Il sub-continente ha scelto di avere prepostulati in ciascuna circoscrizione e ha accettato la possibilità di postulati inter-circoscrizionali che dovrebbero assicurare un numero sufficiente di postulanti e di formatori ben preparati.

7.2.5. Molti problemi della formazione hanno origine nel tipo di giovani che la società (secolarizzata, edonistica, materialistica, globalizzata) produce oggi. Dobbiamo curare di più l'accompagnamento dei candidati prima che entrino nel postulato e fare un accurato discernimento prima di ammetterli nella casa di formazione (postulato).

7.2.6. Ogni confratello con la sua coerenza di vita e il suo impegno missionario contribuisce a formare comunità che sono formative, pronte ad accogliere e guidare i candidati, offrendo loro un'autentica esperienza di vita di comunità e di servizio missionario. La Formazione Permanente prepara alla Formazione di Base dei candidati. Una solida Formazione Permanente nelle comunità è di grande aiuto per la formazione dei nostri candidati e dei confratelli di voti temporanei.

7.3. Governo

7.3.1. L'orientamento del sub-continente è di mantenere la presente struttura di governo.

7.3.2. Siamo anche d'accordo di mantenere la presente durata di tempo per i termini di ufficio, ma di facilitare la ri-elezione del Superiore Generale e dei suoi Assistenti con la maggioranza assoluta.

7.3.3. Il modello di amalgamare (raggruppare) le circoscrizioni ha il sostegno di molti, perché sembrano troppe per un Istituto piccolo come il nostro.

7.3.4. Il processo di amalgamare delle circoscrizioni certamente ci sfida ed è difficile; quindi è importante incominciare a condividere servizi e iniziative fra circoscrizioni vicine.

7.3.5. I Segretariati Generali rimangano come sono ora.

7.4. Nuove proposte

7.4.1. È necessario dare al nuovo Superiore Generale e ai suoi Assistenti un tempo di preparazione prima di iniziare il loro servizio. Dovrebbe entrare in carica un mese dopo la conclusione del Capitolo Generale.

7.4.2. Il coordinamento delle iniziative di Formazione Permanente sia rafforzato per aiutare i confratelli a recuperare lo spirito e le motivazioni del nostro Istituto.

8. TENDENZE E SVILUPPI DAL CAPITOLO GENERALE DEL 2003

8.1. Invecchiamento dei confratelli e nuove vocazioni

8.1.1. Le statistiche (*cfr. Capitolo 6*) mostrano che il numero di missionari attivi sta diminuendo nel nostro sub-continente. Il gruppo di confratelli anziani sta crescendo, mentre i nuovi membri iniziano l'apostolato o il ministero in età più avanzata di prima. Le nuove vocazioni vengono in maggioranza dal continente africano e danno il loro servizio e la loro forza a tutto l'Istituto.

8.1.2. Il numero delle vocazioni di Fratelli sta diminuendo in maniera preoccupante.

8.2. Equilibrio tra personale e impegni e la riqualificazione. Tutte le circoscrizioni hanno fatto dei piani e si sono impegnate a ottenere equilibrio tra loro impegni e il personale che hanno a disposizione. Molte comunità sono state chiuse e certi impegni sono stati consegnati alla Chiesa locale o ad altri Istituti.

8.3. Formazione Permanente. Le varie circoscrizioni hanno portato avanti i propri programmi di Formazione Permanente con Assemblee di vari tipi, con il processo della *Ratio Missionis*, con gli esercizi spirituali, con lo studio del Codice Deontologico, con corsi per economi e superiori locali e con raduni per i vari gruppi di età dei confratelli.

8.4. Attenzione per i confratelli in difficoltà. Riconosciamo che il numero di confratelli che hanno bisogno di attenzione sta aumentando. Le ragioni sono molte e imprevedibili. Mentre al presente ogni circoscrizione cerca di fare il suo meglio per atender ai loro bisogni, il sub-continente dovrebbe arrivare a una politica comune.

8.5. Ministero dei Fratelli. Per rispondere meglio alle sfide della missione, ci sono gruppi di Fratelli che vivono nella stessa comunità, esercitando il loro ministero in progetti specifici come Scuole Tecniche (Layibi in Uganda, Lunzu in Malawi, Carapira in Mozambico, Chikowa in Zambia), istituzioni sanitarie (Mapourdit in Sud Sudan) e altri campi di missione come GPIC e Mass Media.

8.6. Prima Evangelizzazione. Tutte le circoscrizioni del sub-continente sono impegnate pastoralmente con gruppi di gente non ancora evangelizzata. Ci sono numerosi gruppi di gente, pastoralisti e altri, che non hanno ancora udito la Buona Novella; quindi riaffermiamo l'opzione preferenziale dell'Istituto per l'Africa.

8.7. Promozione Missionaria. Alcune circoscrizioni hanno strutture di Promozione Missionaria e usano dei Mass Media come riviste, calendari, radio e website. Una delle nostre priorità è di aiutare le Chiese locali ad acquisire una mentalità più missionaria.

8.8. Dialogo inter-religioso con l'Islam

8.8.1. Secondo la prassi della Chiesa Cattolica, il dialogo inter-religioso avviene su quattro livelli diversi:

- a) Dialogo di vita: condivisione della vita quotidiana tra credenti di entrambe le fedi.
- b) Dialogo di azione: comune impegno in progetti di sviluppo sociale.
- c) Dialogo di esperienze religiose: condivisione tra la gente comune della propria fede ed esperienze religiose.
- d) Dialogo di riflessione teologica: condivisione ad alto livello tra esperti.

8.8.2. Nel nostro sub-continente noi esercitiamo un dialogo di vita e di azione attraverso il contatto quotidiano e le relazioni personali con i mussulmani. A un livello più alto,

specialmente attraverso Dar Comboni, siamo impegnati in un dialogo di esperienza religiosa e di riflessione teologica.

8.9. Economia e Fondo Comune delle circoscrizioni

8.9.1. L'adozione del Fondo Comune delle circoscrizioni è un passo verso l'evangelizzazione della nostra economia. Le circoscrizioni del sub-continente al presente sono a diversi stadi nella pratica del Fondo Comune.

8.9.2. I confratelli del sud con meno accesso a risorse economiche aumentano, mentre i confratelli con più facile accesso a queste risorse diminuiscono; quindi dobbiamo incominciare a cercare vie per ottenere contributi locali nelle circoscrizioni del sub-continente.

9. PROSPETTIVE FUTURE

9.1. Evangelizzazione

9.1.1. Le Province e le Delegazioni del sub-continente s'impegnano a scambiare idee, programmi e personale nell'affrontare problemi di Prima Evangelizzazione ed Evangelizzazione nei seguenti contesti: Islam, pastoralisti, città e baraccopoli, promozione umana, GPIC e riconciliazione e formazione di leader locali e della gente in generale.

9.1.2. Raduni di confratelli che lavorano nei suddetti campi non solo provvederebbero uno scambio regolare di esperienze ma aiuterebbero anche a identificare forme concrete di collaborazione. Sarà compito dei Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione trovare come questa collaborazione si possa definire e sviluppare.

9.1.3. La pubblicazione *Missionary Reflections* continuerà a essere uno strumento di riflessione teologica al servizio del sub-continente.

9.1.4. Si spera che l'Istituto del Ministero Sociale in Missione diventi responsabilità di tutte le circoscrizioni del sub-continente.

9.2. Promozione Vocazionale e Formazione di Base

9.2.1. La *Ratio Fundamentalibus Studiorum* ci dà già la guida basilare per la Promozione Vocazionale e per la Formazione di Base (postulato). Ci preoccupa il fatto che i Direttori delle varie circoscrizioni permettono delle differenze nelle tappe di formazione dal postulato in poi. C'è bisogno di avere criteri comuni per la Promozione Vocazionale e la Formazione nella tappa del postulato. L'obiettivo è di ottenere un direttorio sub-continentale per la Promozione Vocazionale e la Formazione di Base. Mettendo assieme le risorse, l'esperienza, i materiali (stampati o altrimenti) è parte della collaborazione.

9.2.2. *Postulati per candidati al sacerdozio.* È necessario studiare la praticabilità di avere case di formazione inter-circoscrizionali, in particolare postulati (MZ-RSA-MO; KE-U-SS ...)

9.2.3. *Postulato per candidati Fratelli.* Si dovrebbe dare maggior attenzione alla promozione di vocazioni di Fratelli. È necessario analizzare la storia della formazione dei Fratelli nelle nostre circoscrizioni e identificare gli ostacoli che impediscono lo sviluppo di questa vocazione. I Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione vogliono identificare uno o due postulati comuni per Fratelli nel sub-continente.

9.2.4. *Noviziati.* I noviziati di Namugongo e Lusaka sono strutture al servizio di tutte le Province e Delegazioni del sub-continente (eccetto l'Eritrea a causa della presente situazione politica). Pur avendo piccole differenze nell'organizzazione del noviziato, dobbiamo continuare il presente cammino di formazione e valutare che garantisca la desiderata assimilazione dei valori religiosi e missionari. I padri maestri, con l'assistenza del Segretariato Sub-continentale della Formazione, vedranno che questi obiettivi siano raggiunti.

9.2.4.1. I noviziati di Namugongo e Lusaka hanno iniziato un tempo di sperimentazione in cui ogni noviziato ha un gruppo di novizi per due anni consecutivi; i noviziati si alternano nell'ammissione dei novizi del primo anno. Il cammino è valutato positivamente dai formatori e dai Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione.

9.3. Formazione dei formatori

9.3.1. La formazione dei formatori nelle nostre circoscrizioni continua e in questo si dovrebbe cercare di fare uso delle scuole e dei corsi presenti nel sub-continente.

9.3.2. Per scegliere i formatori per le case di formazione inter-circoscrizionali (scolasticati, noviziati e postulati inter-circoscrizionali) c'è bisogno di una più vasta consultazione tra Province e Delegazioni.

9.4. Formazione Permanente

9.4.1. La Regola di Vita sottolinea che il luogo privilegiato della Formazione Permanente è la comunità locale. I Superiori Provinciali e di Delegazione riconoscono che ci sono momenti speciali di Formazione Permanente che hanno bisogno del sostegno e della collaborazione di tutte le circoscrizioni. Alcuni di essi sono: assemblee di confratelli che lavorano nello stesso campo; lo scambio di materiale e programmi di Formazione Permanente; la preparazione di animatori in problematiche di Formazione Permanente comune a tutti, come la pastorale; la formazione personale dei confratelli incaricati di investigare casi di abuso come previsto nel Codice Deontologico e in servizi specializzati (psicologia, scienze dell'educazione e legge canonica); la formazione permanente dei confratelli secondo i gruppi di età; attenzione ai confratelli in difficoltà e cura di quelli anziani e ammalati.

9.4.2. Siccome è quasi impossibile per una singola Provincia o Delegazione provvedere un'adeguata assistenza ai confratelli in difficoltà e a quelli anziani e ammalati, i Superiori Provinciali o di Delegazione continueranno a riflettere su queste sfide e cercare possibili soluzioni.

9.5. Promozione Missionaria

9.5.1. Esiste una tradizione di collaborazione nel campo dei Mass Media. Nondimeno una migliore cooperazione e coordinazione delle nostre riviste, media e siti-web andrebbe incoraggiata. È anche necessario coinvolgere e animare tutti i confratelli a far miglior uso del materiale offerto dai Mass Media ed essere attivi nella distribuzione delle riviste *New People*, *Leadership* e *Worldwide*.

9.5.2. Assemblee e incontri di lavoro per i confratelli che lavorano nei campi dei Mass Media e della Promozione Missionaria assicureranno una collaborazione inter-circoscrizionale e aiuteranno a condividere esperienze e a formare coloro che sono assegnati a questo campo di lavoro.

9.6. GPIC. Ogni circoscrizione condivide i progetti di GPIC intrapresi in collaborazione con la Chiesa locale. Il centro di GPIC appena fondato a Kampala, dove la Provincia d'Uganda è uno degli azionisti, potrebbe diventare un centro che aiuta a proporre e coordinare le attività di GPIC a livello sub-continentale. Potrebbe anche coordinare e promuovere la *lobby* presso le organizzazioni internazionali.

10. PUNTI PRINCIPALI DA OGNI CIRCOSCRIZIONE

10.1. EGITTO

10.1.1. Priorità

10.1.1.1 Dar Comboni (Istituto per Studi Arabi e Islamici).

10.1.1.2 Rifugiati (Sakakini per i sudanesi e S. Giuseppe a Zamalek per eritrei ed etiopici).

10.1.2. Impegni

10.1.2.1. Impegni educativi nella scuola di Helouan per gli egiziani e 4 centri scolastici per i rifugiati sudanesi.

10.1.2.2. Dialogo con l'Islam. Dar Comboni è ora un Istituto Pontificio e si è organizzato meglio negli ultimi anni. In comunione con la Chiesa Copta locale, c'è una lunga ed eccellente collaborazione nell'insegnamento al Seminario Copto Cattolico, nel Centro Teologico per laici e nel Centro Catechetico Nazionale.

10.1.3. Promozione Missionaria

10.1.3.1. La Delegazione ha sviluppato una collaborazione efficace con le SMC e anche con la Chiesa Copta locale.

10.1.3.2. Campi estivi, partecipazione ad incontri diocesani Copto Cattolici nell'Alto Egitto, Alessandria e Cairo, il nostro bollettino ("Asdiqa Komboni") per i giovani e il sito-web.

10.1.3.3. La parrocchia di *Cordi Jesu* si è sviluppata come centro di Promozione Missionaria.

10.1.4. Presenza tra i rifugiati africani e tra la gente più povera in Egitto

10.1.4.1. Sakakini. Quattro centri per rifugiati sudanesi (scuole, attività pastorali) e attenzione alla violenza tra i giovani sudanesi.

10.1.4.2. Zamalek. Classi pomeridiane per bambini eritrei ed etiopici e per adulti e impegni pastorali (la maggior parte della gente che frequenta la parrocchia di Zamalek è straniera).

10.2. ERITREA

10.2.1. Dall'indipendenza nel 1991 al conflitto di confine con l'Etiopia nel 1998, l'Eritrea ha fatto notevole progresso nel ricostruire l'infrastruttura socio-economica (scuole, dispensari, ecc.) specialmente nelle aree rurali remote.

10.2.2. Alcuni passi verso la democrazia sono stati l'elezione dell'Assemblea Nazionale e Legislativa nel 1996, l'introduzione del Nakfa come moneta locale, l'elezione dell'Assemblea Costituzionale nel maggio del 1997 e l'abbozzo di una costituzione democratica che non è mai entrata in vigore.

10.2.3. Sin dal conflitto di confine con l'Etiopia del 1998-2000 che costò ai due paesi più di 100.000 morti, la situazione dell'Eritrea è andata peggiorando causando sofferenze indescrivibili alla popolazione. Si è iniziato a centralizzare e monopolizzare le infrastrutture politiche ed economiche. Il 18 settembre 2001, i cosiddetti riformisti G15 sono stati arrestati e la stampa privata è stata soppressa. È stato introdotto il servizio militare senza fine che tiene i giovani nelle trincee o gli obbliga a lavorare ricevendo un salario simbolico di 20 dollari USA per mese. 21 missionari cattolici

stranieri, tra cui quattro MCCJ, sono stati espulsi a scaglioni nel novembre del 2007, nel giugno del 2008 e nel marzo del 2009.

10.2.4. Arresti arbitrari (ci sono più di 20.000 prigionieri), corruzione, favoritismo, tortura e immigrazione di massa della gioventù sono all'ordine del giorno. Mancano cibo, grano, farina, latticini, medicine, pezzi di ricambio, materiale edile e la benzina. L'inflazione è sopra il 1000%. Una famiglia riceve una razione di dieci chili di durra per mese. Solo il 32% dei veicoli della Chiesa Cattolica ha il permesso di circolare.

10.2.5. Nonostante i suoi sforzi il regime non riesce a sottomettere la Chiesa Cattolica, come invece è riuscito a fare con i leader delle altre denominazioni religiose. I vescovi cattolici mantengono l'unità della Chiesa e prendono importanti decisioni assieme al CMRS. I vescovi con varie lettere, non pubblicate per paura di ritorsioni, hanno sfidato l'angheria e l'illegalità delle autorità.

10.3. ETIOPIA

10.3.1. Elementi economici, sociali e politici

10.3.1.1. Nonostante notevole crescita economica del paese, i salari non tengono il passo all'inflazione crescente sui beni essenziali. Questo è un grave peso per la gente comune.

10.3.1.2. A causa dei disordini scoppiati dopo le ultime elezioni nazionali (2005) c'è una certa preoccupazione per le prossime elezioni nazionali (2010).

10.3.1.3. Nonostante che al presente l'Etiopia non sia coinvolta in alcun conflitto armato, c'è una certa apprensione per la fragile instabilità politica nella regione del Corno d'Africa (Somalia, Eritrea, e Sudan).

10.3.2. Questioni rilevanti per i Missionari Comboniani in Etiopia.

10.3.2.1. Recentemente un Missionario Comboniano è stato consacrato Vescovo e nominato Vicario Apostolico del Vicariato di Awassa (Etiopia del Sud).

10.3.2.2. La Provincia ha focalizzato buona parte delle sue energie nella prima evangelizzazione di un popolo (i Gumuz) che è rimasta isolata in un'area remota ai confini con il Sudan.

10.3.2.3. La poca perseveranza dei nostri candidati in formazione di base rimane una sfida per la nostra Provincia.

10.3.2.4. La Provincia sta per decidere la modalità del prepostulato.

10.3.2.5. Riqualficazione: al presente la Provincia sta per dividere una parrocchia e per passare uno dei suoi impegni specializzati alla Chiesa locale nel Vicariato di Awassa (Centro Catechistico, Amministrazione del Vicariato o Seminario Maggiore). Così la nostra presenza di prima evangelizzazione fra i Gumuz può essere rinforzata con una seconda comunità.

10.4. KENYA

10.4.1. La violenza del 2008 ha toccato le nostre comunità di Kariobangi e Korogocho (Nairobi). L'Assemblea Provinciale fu rimandata e sostituita con un raduno di due giorni in cui i Missionari Comboniani hanno cercato di capire la situazione socio-politica del Kenya.

10.4.2. C'è molto lavoro di riconciliazione da fare tra i vari gruppi etnici.

10.4.3. Le nostre priorità missionarie sono: i pastoralisti, l'apostolato urbano e nelle baraccopoli.

10.4.4. Per la varietà culturale presente nella nazione, una delle sfide principali che i missionari affrontano è la diversità di lingue che rende problematica la rotazione interna. Tuttavia, ispirati dal nostro Fondatore e dal buon esempio dei nostri predecessori, siamo convinti che imparare la lingua locale è una necessità e uno dei mezzi essenziali con il quale il missionario viene a conoscere il popolo dove è mandato.

10.5. KHARTOUM

10.5.1. La situazione politica è ancora molto incerta e la guerra nel Darfur continua. La possibilità che la guerra ricominci nel sud non si può escludere. Avvengono ancora di tanto in tanto scontri tra sudisti e nordisti e anche fra gruppi tribali differenti, spesso fomentati dal governo di Khartoum. Una conseguenza di questo è che i sudisti continuano a rimanere nel nord. I politici sono riluttanti ad accettare qualsiasi cambiamento politico dello status quo.

10.5.2. Il rischio che i sudisti, compresi i cristiani, diventino musulmani è più grande di prima. Pastoralmente ci vuole un grande sforzo per formare cristiani capaci di affrontare la sfida di essere testimoni del Cristo in un ambiente Islamico. In questa situazione, la catechesi e l'educazione a tutti i livelli, inclusa l'università, sono di primaria importanza.

10.5.3. Al presente c'è crisi di vocazioni, sia per i MCCJ sia per la Chiesa locale. Negli ultimi anni seminaristi e sacerdoti hanno lasciato, attratti dalla possibilità d'impieghi ben remunerati. Il lavoro missionario aumenta mentre gli operai diminuiscono. La diocesi di Khartoum sta amalgamando parrocchie per far fronte alla situazione. Anche noi, Missionari Comboniani, stiamo diventando sempre di meno e invecchiando e ci è sempre più difficile mantenere i nostri impegni. Abbiamo lasciato quasi tutti gli impegni che avevamo a livello nazionale e diocesano (responsabilità nei seminari e negli uffici pastorali) per portar avanti il lavoro nelle parrocchie a noi affidate. La situazione è veramente difficile.

10.6. MALAWI-ZAMBIA

10.6.1. Lo Zambia è sette volte più grande del Malawi. Entrambi i Paesi hanno una popolazione di circa dodici milioni di abitanti e sono nel processo di consolidare una democrazia con molti partiti. C'è pace sociale, libertà di culto e di espressione. La gente è amichevole e pacifica.

10.6.2. La Chiesa locale è giovane, viva e in crescita. Il numero dei sacerdoti locali e religiosi sta crescendo gradualmente. Le Piccole Comunità di Base sono ben stabilite e incidono sulla vita pastorale delle parrocchie, quantunque la Chiesa locale sia ancora molto distante dall'essere autosufficiente. I maggiori problemi sono la povertà molto diffusa, la disoccupazione, la corruzione, HIV/AIDS e i numerosi orfani.

10.6.3 La Provincia è nel processo di mettere in pratica il Piano Provinciale Sessennale (2005–2011). Al presente siamo coinvolti nelle seguenti aree pastorali: prima evangelizzazione, sobborghi delle città, formazione dei leader, gioventù, Promozione Missionaria, Promozione Vocazionale e Formazione di Base. Il ministero dei Fratelli ha un ruolo importante con i progetti per i giovani a Lunzu e a Chikowa. Il Fondo Comune

Provinciale ha creato un ambiente di condivisione e comunione tra i confratelli. Come Missionari Comboniani noi collaboriamo con la Chiesa locale e ci sentiamo parte di essa.

10.6.4. Queste sono le sfide più importanti che incontriamo come Missionari Comboniani nella Provincia: approfondire la nostra identità missionaria comboniana; migliorare la vita di comunità e la nostra metodologia apostolica; mantenere vivo lo spirito e la pratica del Fondo Comune Provinciale; impegno nei settori di Promozione Missionaria, Promozione Vocazionale e Formazione di Base; impegno nella GPIC (lotta contro la povertà), allo sviluppo, alla promozione della donna, alla formazione della gioventù e della leadership cristiana; collaborazione con la Chiesa locale, con altre circoscrizioni MCCJ, con le SMC, con i LMC e altri Istituti religiosi, e promozione dei LMC locali.

10.7. MOZAMBICO

10.7.1. Il numero decrescente di confratelli e la loro crescente età rendono difficile dare continuità a tutte le nostre attività e impegni specialmente nel campo della prima evangelizzazione. Trovare una soluzione a questo problema rimane una sfida.

10.7.2. Continueremo a ridurre il numero di impegni, a rafforzare la vita comunitaria, ad aumentare la collaborazione e il lavoro d'insieme con i laici e altri religiosi, specialmente i LCM e le SMC.

10.7.3. Dobbiamo rafforzare il nostro impegno nel campo della GPIC.

10.7.4. Nonostante lo sforzo iniziale fatto dalla Provincia per promuovere il dialogo e l'incontro con l'Islam e con le altre religioni, abbiamo ancora molto cammino da fare in questo campo.

10.7.5. Una presenza nelle baraccopoli e nei sobborghi è prevista nel Piano Provinciale, ma la situazione attuale del personale rende difficile la sua messa in pratica.

10.7.6. Vogliamo continuare a dare il nostro contributo alla formazione di leader pastorali e di chi è coinvolto nel lavoro parrocchiale attraverso la nostra presenza nei Centri Pastorali Diocesani.

10.7.7. Faremo uno sforzo per migliorare la Promozione Vocazionale e la Formazione di Base come elementi importanti della nostra vita missionaria.

10.7.8. Collaborazione con altre circoscrizioni MCCJ a livello regionale e sub-continentale. È necessario superare il parrocchialismo se vogliamo migliorare la nostra presenza e il nostro lavoro, con nuove idee, nuove proposte e nuove soluzioni.

10.8. SUDAFRICA

10.8.1. La forte crescita demografica, l'influsso d'immigranti e rifugiati da altri paesi africani, dall'Europa e dall'Asia, la rapida urbanizzazione e la disoccupazione (circa il 40%) aumentano molti mali concomitanti: criminalità, droga, alcolismo, promiscuità, prostituzione, violenza contro le donne e i bambini, traffico di persone e il continuo crescere di HIV/AIDS, epatite, tubercolosi...

10.8.2. La percentuale di cattolici è diminuita di recente ed è ora 6% della popolazione. Tuttavia il clero locale, un buon numero di sacerdoti *Fidei Donum* e di religiosi e religiose da altri stati africani, rendono più africana la leadership della Chiesa.

10.8.3. I MCCJ sono responsabili di cinque parrocchie nelle aree rurali, due impegni *ad personam* nelle parrocchie di aree miste (rurali e urbane) e cinque parrocchie nei centri e nelle periferie delle città. Ci sono molte aree di prima evangelizzazione, dove migliaia di persone non frequentano nessuna Chiesa, nonostante ci siano molte chiese e un'enorme varietà di sette.

10.8.4. La sessione di lingua inglese dell'Anno Comboniano di Formazione Permanente iniziò in Sudafrica nell'ottobre 1997 e si tiene ogni due anni. Lo scolasticato internazionale iniziò a metà del 2002.

10.8.5. Il Worldwide Media Centre pubblica *Worldwide* (2.700 copie), *Comboni Friends Newsletter* (1.100 copie) e ogni anno il Calendario Missionario Liturgico (30.000 copie). I MCCJ sono anche coinvolti nell'insegnamento nei seminari maggiori, nella traduzione della Bibbia, nella formazione permanente dei sacerdoti, religiosi e laici e collaborano con le Chiese cattoliche locali, con strutture governative ed ecumeniche e ONLUS in vari campi come HIV/AIDS, immigranti e rifugiati.

10.8.6. La Provincia continuerà a ridurre e a riqualificare i suoi impegni, trovando un equilibrio tra il suo coinvolgimento nelle parrocchie rurali e di città, assumendo ministeri specializzati, come nei centri pastorali e rafforzando la Promozione Vocazionale, la Formazione di Base (prepostulato e postulato) e la Promozione Missionaria.

10.9. SUD SUDAN

10.9.1. Il gennaio 2005 fu una svolta decisiva nella storia del Sudan, l'Accordo Comprensivo di Pace (CPA) fu firmato tra il Governo di Khartoum e l'Esercito di Liberazione del Popolo del Sudan (SPLA). In generale il Sud Sudan è in pace, eccetto che per i frequenti attacchi ai civili da parte del gruppo ribelle ugandese LRA. Scontri tra gente di etnie diverse hanno sconvolto il sogno di molti rifugiati che desiderano ritornare alle loro zone di origine. Ci sono anche state anche dure battaglie fra truppe governative e gli SPLA in zone di confine contese.

10.9.2. Nuove strade, scuole e ospedali sono costruiti ma non come ci si aspetta. Le città crescono, ma manca l'acqua potabile e le fognature. La diffusa corruzione e il tribalismo mettono in discussione l'attendibilità del governo del sud.

10.9.3. La Chiesa è molto rispettata da tutti per aver condiviso le difficoltà della gente durante la guerra. Ha anche avuto un ruolo eminente nella mediazione del processo di pace. Al momento la Chiesa sta riorganizzandosi, ma le strutture ecclesiastiche sono troppo centralizzate e le Piccole Comunità Cristiane non hanno ancora messo radici.

10.9.4. La nostra presenza nel Sud Sudan è principalmente nel campo della prima evangelizzazione fra i pastoralisti. Le parrocchie sono grandi in estensione e hanno bisogno di più personale di quello disponibile. La maggioranza delle nostre missioni hanno anche scuole per far fronte alla devastante mancanza di strutture educative. L'ospedale di Mapourdit nella Diocesi di Rumbek è un punto di riferimento per le strutture sanitarie del Sud Sudan, dirigiamo un progetto di GPIC che consiste in una rete

di stazioni radio FM. L'impatto sulla promozione della pace e della riconciliazione è molto positivo.

10.9.5. Il provincialato è stato trasferito a Juba, ma la casa di Nairobi si terrà ancora almeno fino al referendum del 2011 che definirà se il Sud Sudan diventerà indipendente o rimarrà unito a Khartoum.

10.10. UGANDA

10.10.1. Le discussioni tra il governo ugandese e LRA che incominciarono nel 2006, quantunque si siano state interrotte di recente, hanno ottenuto una vera pace e la gran maggioranza della gente si è ristabilita nelle loro aree tradizionali. Il processo non è senza tensioni e conflitti.

10.10.2. C'è uno sforzo nel campo del GPIC per rendere la gente conscia che il bene comune deve avere priorità sugli interessi dell'individuo, del clan e della tribù. L'Uganda sta sperimentando l'influenza della globalizzazione della cultura e di nuove vie di vita. C'è un forte tasso di crescita demografica, la terra sta diventando scarsa con il risultato di appropriazione di terra e di conflitti. La rottura dei legami familiari, dei clan e di regioni genera nuovi tipi di tensioni sociali e deviazioni. Si stanno perdendo i valori tradizionali senza che siano rimpiazzati da nuovi. La militarizzazione del Karamoja ha portato sicurezza ma anche una rottura nell'ordine tribale tradizionale. Tutto è impegnato nello sfruttamento delle risorse minerarie.

10.10.3. La Provincia sta diventando sempre più internazionale con la presenza di membri radicali in aumento. La maggioranza dei confratelli è impegnata e dedicata al servizio del Vangelo in stretta collaborazione con la Chiesa locale.

10.10.4. La Provincia nell'insieme non sembra invecchiare, ma rimane vero che il 50% dei confratelli è sopra i 70 anni. Il prossimo Piano Provinciale si adatterà a questa realtà.

10.10.5. Promozione Vocazionale e Formazione. I valori tradizionali che cambiano e richiedono nuove motivazioni, discernimento più profondo, accompagnamento attento, focalizzazione sull'amore sacrificale di Dio, sui poveri e il regno di Dio.

Lusaka, 18 maggio 2009

AFRICA FRANCOFONA

RAPPORTO DELLE PROVINCE FRANCOFONE
XVII CAPITOLO GENERALE
Lomé 2009

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Missionari Comboniani del Cuore di Gesù
XVII CAPITOLO GENERALE
AFRICA – PROVINCE FRANCOFONE
RAPPORTO
Lomé 2009

1. INTRODUZIONE :

Alla ricerca di un sentire comune !

Noi capitolari delle 4 province francofone, ci siamo incontrati a Lomé dal 4 al 14 maggio 2009 per la nostra assemblea sottocontinentale in vista del XVII Capitolo Generale, il cui tema è: “Dal Piano di Comboni al Piano dei comboniani: riqualificare la missione, la formazione e il governo”.

1.1 Erano presenti : P. Giovanni Zaffanelli e P. Giorgio Aldegheri per il Centrafrica. P. Eliseo Tacchella e P. Joseph Mumbere per il Congo; P. Manuel João Pereira Correia e P. John Kofi Tasiame per il Togo-Ghana-Benin (TGB); P. Miguel Navarrete Arceo e P. José Gabriel Martínez Torres per il Ciad; Fr. Genesio Maroso, delegato dei fratelli. Erano presenti pure il P. Odelir José Magri del consiglio generale (CG) e Fr. Daniele Giusti della commissione precapitolare. In tutto eravamo 11 confratelli.

1.2 Abbiamo condiviso sui rapporti delle nostre province in atteggiamento di ascolto reciproco e di ‘simpatia’ in modo da avere una visione d’insieme del nostro sotto continente, così da poter inserire nel rapporto il nostro ‘sentire comune’ ma anche le diversità. Come segno della nostra volontà di integrare le diversità in modo positivo, faremo notare che le province francofone includono anche il Ghana che, con le sue caratteristiche di nazione anglofona, costituisce un’ulteriore ricchezza per il sottocontinente.

2. GUARDANDO CON PASSIONE

La situazione socio-politica, economica ed ecclesiale

“Ho visto, ho visto la miseria del mio popolo. Ho sentito il suo grido di fronte ai suoi oppressori, conosco le sue angosce. E sono sceso per liberarlo...” (Es 3,7-8).

Osservando la realtà del nostro continente, abbiamo riconosciuto la solidarietà di Dio che soffre oggi ancora con il suo popolo, schiavo di tante situazioni di sfruttamento e di miseria. Abbiamo pure constatato che la fiamma della Carità divina brilla anche nel rovetto del cuore di tanti nostri fratelli, che si sono dedicati con generosità alla Missione, facendo causa comune con gli ultimi, anche a rischio della propria vita.

Il nostro sguardo sulla realtà del nostro continente è dunque uno sguardo pieno di passione. Lo stesso del Dio dell’esodo, del Cristo dal cuore trafitto e di Comboni. Qui stiamo raccontando le nostre sofferenze ma anche le nostre gioie, rendendoci conto dei

segni di speranza che lo Spirito, a volte in modo inaspettato, sta seminando in mezzo a situazioni di morte o di sofferenza e che sostengono la nostra fiducia nel trionfo finale della Vita.

Elementi di sofferenza e segni di speranza

2.1 In quasi tutte le nazioni nelle quali lavoriamo, **il contesto politico** rimane assai instabile. Caratterizzato da conflitti e guerre, segnato dall'insicurezza, dalla violenza provocata da gruppi armati che continuano a seminare terrore in mezzo alle popolazioni. Purtroppo i diritti umani sono spesso ignorati o disprezzati. E' il caso della RDC, della RCA e del Ciad. A questo si aggiunga la corruzione generalizzata in ogni settore della vita pubblica, la connivenza e complicità del potere locale con certe istanze politiche ed economiche della comunità internazionale. Allora assistiamo al deteriorarsi delle infrastrutture e del tessuto sociale, alla miseria sempre crescente ma soprattutto ai traumatismi e ferite profonde nell'anima dei nostri popoli, sorgente di scoraggiamento, passività e senso di impotenza.

PERÒ non mancano segni di speranza. In Ghana e in Benin si vede un'evoluzione positiva e un conseguente consolidarsi del regime democratico, nonché un miglioramento delle condizioni di vita della gente. Un po' dovunque, si scopre con gioia l'emergere di una società civile capace di rivendicare i propri diritti e di prendere posizione di fronte ad una cultura della guerra e dell'oppressione. Mandati di cattura e arresti di fatto di certi leader e capi di stato, in questi ultimi tempi, da parte della corte penale internazionale hanno fatto crescere la coscienza che non ci sono più gli intoccabili.

2.2 Il **contesto economico** nei nostri paesi non è roseo. Nonostante le potenzialità delle loro ricchezze naturali, non si vedono che piccoli miglioramenti e progressi. Invece la miseria della maggior parte della gente pare non inquietare i governanti. Le ricchezze del suolo e del sottosuolo continuano ad essere depredate dalle multinazionali che firmano con i governi dei contratti ove fanno la parte dei leoni. Per cui non si vede che il crescere della ricchezza di un piccolo gruppo in cerca di profitto e di interessi privati a spese del bene comune.

MA anche qui si nota una capacità enorme della nostra gente di combattere e di lottare per sopravvivere giorno dopo giorno in un contesto che è quanto mai sfavorevole. Non si scoraggia di fronte alla miseria e alla mancanza dello minimo necessario per vivere e spesso ci meraviglia per la sua capacità creativa di arrangiarsi, di prendersi a carico, di trovare soluzioni alternative in situazioni apparentemente senza via d'uscita.

2.3 Il **contesto sociale** è contrassegnato da una grande miseria economica, culturale ed intellettuale. In paesi come la RDC, la RCA e il Ciad, abbiamo la situazione drammatica degli sfollati di guerra, delle violenze sessuali contro le donne, il degrado delle infrastrutture, dell'educazione nelle famiglie, nelle scuole e nelle università. La famiglia conosce una crisi profonda che si manifesta nella perdita dei valori culturali, etici e morali che la sostenevano. Il contesto culturale è quanto mai vulnerabile di fronte al modello occidentale vantato dai mass media, i quali con la loro capacità di fascino sono causa di squilibrio nelle nostre società. Ciò che è particolarmente toccato da questa modernità sono i rapporti giovani-anziani. E' triste vedere la frustrazione dei giovani che non intravedono un barlume di speranza circa il loro avvenire. Per cui fanno di tutto pur di poter andare altrove, mettendosi anche nell'immigrazione clandestina. Un sistema di sanità debole favorisce il diffondersi dell'AIDS. Il paludismo continua a mietere migliaia di persone povere e vulnerabili.

EPPURE, allo stesso tempo, si vede un miglioramento nella comunicazione, con la

diffusione del cellulare anche nei villaggi. I mass-media contribuiscono non poco alla presa di coscienza delle realtà sociali inumane. Apprezzabili sono il ruolo e la testimonianza di certe associazioni (ONG e altri gruppi), come pure di attivisti dei diritti dell'uomo e di giornalisti che rischiano la propria vita nella denuncia di violazioni dei diritti fondamentali delle popolazioni.

2.4 Il **contesto ecclesiale** è segnato anche dalle difficoltà che le nostre chiese locali incontrano nella loro crescita. Talvolta si nota una certa tendenza a chiudersi su di sé, perdendo slancio missionario e apostolico. Ciò comporta una perdita di identità e affievolimento della testimonianza profetica; suscita divisioni all'interno delle chiese stesse e tra i vari agenti pastorali; apre la porta al tribalismo.

Purtroppo dobbiamo anche constatare l'esistenza di situazioni gravi di contro testimonianza tra il clero, motivo di scandalo per i fedeli. La sfida delle sette è talvolta presa sotto gamba e affrontata piuttosto superficialmente. Tutto questo pare denunciare un'evangelizzazione di facciata, con molti battezzati e pochi convertiti e la mancanza di una leadership ecclesiale.

TUTTAVIA, si nota una grande sete di Dio. La gente si aspetta una parola di consolazione, che li aiuti a sperare in un avvenire migliore. La chiesa è un segno forte di speranza e esercita un ruolo insostituibile nella vita sociale e nello sviluppo della comunità (cf. il suo impegno nel campo dell'educazione e della sanità).

La chiesa vive e celebra la propria fede con entusiasmo ed esuberanza. Vari sono i laici impegnati con generosità e responsabilità nel farsi carico della chiesa. Con gioia si vede – malgrado le difficoltà di cui sopra – una chiesa locale crescere ed affermarsi. Il numero abbondante di vocazioni locali è indice di un momento particolare di grazia per le nostre chiese. L'indizione di un secondo sinodo dei vescovi per l'Africa (“La chiesa in Africa al servizio della riconciliazione, della giustizia e della pace”), nell'arco di 15 anni, è segno dell'attenzione e della sollecitudine della chiesa universale nei confronti dell'Africa.

Sfide per il nostro carisma

2.5 Come missionari comboniani che lavorano in questo contesto sociopolitico, economico ed ecclesiale che conosce luci ed ombre, gioie e sofferenze, noi ci sentiamo sfidati in modo particolare da:

- L'esigenza di un'attenzione costante alle situazioni di prima evangelizzazione e alla formazione delle comunità e di leaders a tutti i livelli.
- La necessità di elaborare una pastorale di incontro tra cristiani e mussulmani, capace di favorire il dialogo attraverso la realizzazione di iniziative comuni per il bene di tutti e la ricerca della pace.
- L'urgenza di un impegno nostro nell'ambito della giustizia e della pace, della riconciliazione e la formazione delle coscienze. La dimensione sociale dell'annuncio richiede da parte nostra maggior profezia e denuncia delle ingiustizie e delle violazioni gravi dei diritti umani, per essere la voce di chi non ha voce, di fare causa comune con la gente e di evangelizzare il nostro modo di vivere e di gestire l'economia.
- L'occasione di favorire il principio « salvare l'Africa con l'Africa », rivedendo continuamente il nostro stile di presenza in modo da lasciare sempre più il ruolo di protagonisti e un tipo di servizio missionario tributario di grandi mezzi economici e materiali.
- Il bisogno di impegnarci di più nei mezzi di comunicazione come strumento di educazione sociale, di annuncio del vangelo e di animazione missionaria.
- La necessità di favorire la vocazione del fratello come elemento costitutivo del carisma nell'istituto comboniano.

3. 172 CUORI PER LA MISSIONE

Presentazione della situazione comboniana

Osservando le cifre del personale in costante diminuzione, talvolta facciamo l'esperienza della perplessità e ansietà di Gedeone, quando Dio aveva ridotto la sua armata da 32.000 a 10.000, per poi finalmente ritrovarsi con un gruppo di 300 uomini e ciò affinché fosse chiaro che la gloria della vittoria va attribuita a Dio soltanto.

Noi siamo ancora di meno: 172. Comunque noi rinnoviamo la nostra fiducia nella potenza del braccio di Dio e vogliamo vivere con un cuore indiviso la missione che Lui ci ha affidato.

3.1 Le statistiche (1.7.09)

	RDC	RCA	TGB	CIAD	TOTALE
1. Confratelli di appartenenza giuridica alla provincia	84	38	76	28	226
1.1 Confratelli destinati alla provincia (dei quali sono fratelli)	67 (11)	31 (4)	47 (7)	27 (2)	172 (24)
a) Presenti in provincia	58	27	40	22	147
b) Fuori provincia	8	4	7	4	23
c) Fuori comunità	1	0	0	1	2
1.2 Scolastici e fratelli di VT della provincia in formazione	15 + 2	7	29	0+1	51 + 3
a) Scolastici in formazione (allo scolasticato)	9	6	23	-	38
b) Scolastici in servizio missionario (tra parentesi quelli fuori provincia)	6 (3)	1	6	-	13
c) Fratelli di VT in formazione al CIF + in provincia (per studi)	1+1	-	-	1	3
2. Confratelli di appartenenza radicale (specificando sacerdoti, fratelli e scolastici).	50 (26+9+15)	12 (4+1+7)	66 (27+10+29)	3 (2+1+0)	131 (59+21+51)
2.1 In missione (specificando padri, fratelli e scolastici)	17 (11+3+3)	3 (2 +1+0)	20 (12+8+0)	-	40 (25+12+3)
2.2 In provincia (specificando padri, fratelli e scolastici)	20 (12+5+3)	3 (2+0+1)	22 (14+2+6)	2 (2+0+0)	47 (30+7+10)
2.3 In formazione fuori provincia (specificando padri, fratelli e scolastici)	13 (3+1+9)	6 (0+0+6)	24 (1+0+23)	1 F (0+1+0)	44 (4+2+38)
3. Numero di comunità	18	8	12	8	46
3.1 Comunità di prima evangelizzazione	10	6	7	8	31
3.2 comunità di formazione di base	4	1	4	0	9
3.3 Comunità di animazione missionaria	1	-	1	0	2
3.4 Comunità con altri servizi	3	1	-	-	4

	RDC	RCA	TGB	CIAD	TOTALE
4.1 Personale impegnato nell'Evangelizzazione	37	16	23	20	96
4.2 Formazione comboniana e insegnamento	11	2	10	-	23
4.3 Animazione missionaria e P. Vocazionale	8	2	4	-	14
4.4 Promozione umana (sanità, sviluppo...)	3	2	1	-	6
4.5 Amministrazione provinciale	3	4	2	2	11
4.6 Studi , FP e sabbatico	4	1	4	1	10
4.7 Altri (assenti, ammalati...)	1	4	3	4	12
5.1 Comunità con meno di tre confratelli	0	0	0	2	2
5.2 Media confratelli per comunità*	3.4	3.5	3.9	2.8	3.5
5.3 Età media	55	52	51	45	52
5.4 Numero di nazionalità	8	7	12	14	-
5.5 Rapporto confratelli autoctoni /confratelli della provincia	20/67 (30%)	3/31 (10%)	22/47 (47%)	2/27 (7%)	47/172 (27%)

* = inclusi gli scolastici in servizio missionario.

Le cifre parlano e ci interpellano. Quale è il loro messaggio ? Abbiamo cercato di interpretarlo !

3.2 A proposito del personale

- a) Il personale, la nostra prima ricchezza, spesso è anche sorgente di preoccupazione e di problemi. Ecco le **difficoltà** che rendono problematica la gestione del personale:
- Lo squilibrio tra impegni e personale disponibile ;
 - L'instabilità del personale a causa delle urgenze, degli imprevisti legati all'età, alla malattia, alla rotazione e alle uscite;
 - La mancanza talvolta di un progetto provinciale, o il non rispetto della programmazione e l'individualismo;
 - Un'insufficiente qualificazione del personale;
 - La gestione della pluriculturalità e dei rapporti interpersonali nelle nostre comunità, come pure la differenza di età e il modo di vedere la missione.
- b) Notiamo che la **fisionomia del personale** sta cambiando rapidamente nelle nostre province con un aumento significativo del numero delle nazionalità e del personale autoctono (TGB e Congo in particolare). Ciò ci pone qualche sfida:
- Riunirsi attorno ad un progetto comune a livello provinciale e continentale con una visione aperta sull'avvenire che sta cambiando;
 - Curare la vita comunitaria e i nostri rapporti interpersonali;
 - Mettere in valore l'internazionalità , la pluriculturalità e il dialogo per vivere e fare missione nel rispetto delle nostre diversità;
 - Investire nella preparazione di confratelli per dei servizi qualificati nei vari settori del nostro lavoro missionario.
- c) **Questi ultimi anni una buona porzione del nostro personale è stata destinata al lavoro nella promozione vocazionale (PV) e la formazione di base (9 su 46**

comunità!). Questo è dovuto al fatto che stiamo vivendo un momento particolare nella pastorale vocazionale. Infatti ultimamente un terzo delle vocazioni dell'istituto provengono dal nostro sotto continente. Questa grazia ci pone anche delle sfide :

- Investire 'generosamente' nella PV e nella formazione;
- Ben discernere le motivazioni vocazionali dei nostri candidati ;
- Mantenere l'internazionalità delle equipe di formatori e assicurare loro una preparazione e una formazione adeguate;
- Garantire un buon accompagnamento formativo personalizzato dei candidati;
- Promuovere la vocazione dei fratelli, curare la loro formazione integrando qualificazione professionale e consacrazione missionaria ;
- Inculturare e contestualizzare di più la nostra formazione, facendo più attenzione all'ambiente familiare e culturale dei candidati.

3.3 Sulle nostre comunità

a) Guardando la **fisionomia attuale** delle nostre comunità ci accorgiamo di alcune caratteristiche che la nostra presenza sta assumendo nel sotto-continente:

- Una presenza più umile e discreta (il che ha comportato anche una diminuzione del numero di presenza in alcune diocesi) e un'inserzione più grande nella chiesa locale (offrendo una risposta missionaria ai suoi bisogni);
- Una presenza coraggiosa in situazioni difficili e in ambienti non sicuri ed isolati;
- Una presenza più semplice e provvisoria che cerca di sviluppare un modo nuovo di vivere la missione (vedi l'adozione del fondo comune provinciale) ;
- Una presenza pluriculturale e internazionale che si fa testimonianza di fraternità per la chiesa locale;
- Una presenza che si sposta verso i nuovi areopaghi, come quello delle capitali, per accompagnare il flusso delle popolazioni ma anche per un maggior impatto della nostra evangelizzazione.

b) Se consideriamo **l'evoluzione** del numero delle nostre comunità e dei loro impegni possiamo costatare alcuni cambiamenti significativi :

- Una più grande diversificazione dei settori di servizio: da un impegno quasi esclusivo nella prima evangelizzazione sino ad un passato recente, stiamo andando verso altri impegni quali l'animazione missionaria, i mass-media, la promozione vocazionale, la formazione di base, JPIC, formazione dei laici comboniani, pastorali specializzate...;
- **Ciò ha comportato da una parte l'aumento di comunità dedite a questi nuovi settori di servizio (13), dall'altra la conseguente diminuzione di comunità dedite alla prima evangelizzazione (31)**;
- Ciò richiede anche una maggior qualificazione e specializzazione dei nostri servizi, il che è un grosso impegno nonché sfida per le nostre province.

c) Nell'insieme la rilettura dei cambiamenti avvenuti in seno alle nostre comunità riflette pure una **strategia** di presenza e di impegno missionario:

- Essere fedeli al carisma, alle situazioni di Nigrizia, alla missione difficile, laddove c'è maggior bisogno di noi ;
- Essere presenti nei nuovi areopaghi, laddove si può pesare sull'opinione pubblica: mass-media, internet, ecc;
- Conservare un certo equilibrio tra presenza nelle campagne e presenza nelle città ;
- Andare verso una pastorale più specializzata e attenta ai gruppi o ambienti particolari (pigmei, Islam...);

- Coltivare le diverse dimensioni del carisma e del servizio missionario (prima evangelizzazione, animazione missionaria e formazione), per quanto possibile.

4. UNA VISIONE E UN PROGETTO IN FORMAZIONE

Valutazione del Piano continentale

Saranno una sola cosa nelle mie mani, dice il Signore al suo popolo diviso, con un gesto profetico di Ezechiele (Ez 37, 19).

Anche se noi non abbiamo come prospettiva di accorpate le nostre province in un avvenire prossimo, queste stanno facendo un cammino verso una maggior comunione ed unità, cercando di evitare o di superare i provincialismi, per cercare insieme “il bene dell’istituto e della missione comboniana” (cf. lettera del CG del 15.11.08).

4.1 In cammino verso un Piano continentale

Da alcuni anni i provinciali si sono incontrati regolarmente per condividere e programmare certe attività ed iniziative di collaborazione continentale (cf. il loro rapporto: “Il nostro cammino verso un Piano continentale”, Roma 2008). Senza parlare di “piano continentale” propriamente detto, la lista di iniziative interprovinciali proposte è lunga. Eccone alcune:

- Animazione missionaria: Centro *Afriquespoir* (riviste e pubblicazioni), sessioni di formazione per gli animatori, scambi sulla formazione, collaborazione con le comboniane...
- Vocazioni e formazione: noviziato interprovinciale di Cotonou, scolasticato di Kinshasa, postulato fratelli di Lomé (aperto alle altre province), sessioni di formazione per promotori e formatori, un centro di formazione missionaria (CeForMi)...
- Evangelizzazione: JPIC (formazione degli operatori), dialogo islam-cristiani, progetto pigmei...
- Formazione permanente (FP): GRAF (gruppo di riflessione dell’Africa francofona), condivisione regolare di materiale di FP, progetto di un centro di FP e di accompagnamento personale, lavoro di preparazione della Ratio Missionis , sessioni di formazione, programma di specializzazioni...
- Economia: fondo comune provinciale, formazione degli economi...

4.2 Valutazione di questi obiettivi

Nella nostra valutazione abbiamo notato che alcune iniziative non sono state abbastanza trasmesse o condivise con la “base”. Certe sono state in qualche modo dimenticate, altre sono ancora a livello di “progetto”.

- Ecco le iniziative dove la collaborazione ci pare sia **riuscita** meglio :
 - Mass-media (rivista, libri e altro materiale), con il CAE, Centro *Afriquespoir* (NB: in Ghana, *New People*, per il mondo anglofono);
 - Sessioni di formazione organizzate a livello continentale per gli animatori missionari, gli operatori di JPIC, i promotori vocazionali e i formatori;
 - Lavoro sulla Ratio Missionis;
 - Formazione di base soprattutto a livello di noviziato interprovinciale;
 - Formazione permanente (scambio di materiale);
 - Cammino verso il fondo comune provinciale;
 - Conoscenza ed aiuto reciproco dei provinciali.
- In altri campi la collaborazione è rimasta **indietro** rispetto a quanto ci si era proposto:

- Il GRAF (gruppo di riflessione dell’Africa francofona): da un certo tempo pare aver perso il suo slancio;
- Postulato candidati fratelli : il numero ridotto dei candidati ha messo in crisi la sua sopravvivenza ;
- “Centro di formazione permanente e di accompagnamento personale” : malgrado l’entusiasmo iniziale e la convinzione della validità del progetto, per il momento rimane sulla carta;
- Centro di formazione missionaria : sta per essere realizzato;
- Scambio di personale : rimane un pio desiderio !;
- Programmazione comune delle specializzazioni dei confratelli : pare essere stata dimenticata !
- Animazione e formazione degli economi: altra bella cosa ancora da fare!

5. GRIDA DAL CUORE

Ciò che sta maggiormente al cuore ad ogni provincia !

Il **CENTRAFRICA**, “al centro del continente africano e del carisma comboniano”, chiede al Capitolo:

- 1) **Maggiore attenzione** : tanti comboniani non conoscono il Centrafrica, il che condiziona le preferenze dei confratelli e le possibilità di orientazione del personale nella destinazione alla missione.
- 2) **Più coraggio** : per fare un vero discernimento circa i nostri impegni a livello di istituto e ripensare le nostre presenze.

Il **CONGO** così esprime alcune preoccupazioni particolari:

- 1) **Economia**: definire una politica economica dell’istituto che risponda alle sfide della crisi finanziaria mondiale e degli aiuti;
- 2) **Evangelizzazione** : fare dell’impegno per la giustizia, la pace e la riconciliazione una priorità per l’Africa, seguendo le indicazioni che verranno date al II Sinodo per l’Africa.
- 3) **Metodologia comboniana** : fare una valutazione della nostra metodologia comboniana di “salvare l’afrika con l’afrika” per sapere a che punto siamo con questo progetto carismatico del nostro fondatore.

Il **TOGO-GHANA-BENIN** attira l’attenzione su tre temi :

- 1) **Vocazioni** : la provincia lavora con gioia per offrire all’istituto numerose e sante vocazioni. Ci si aspetta un’attenzione speciale perché questo lavoro possa incontrare le condizioni necessarie. Si veda ad esempio la situazione del noviziato.
- 2) **Fratelli** : la mancanza di candidati e la debole sensibilità dell’istituto per la vocazione del fratello richiede maggiore attenzione. Noi proponiamo che le nostre province studino la possibilità di creare un’opera interprovinciale di promozione umana capace di mettere meglio in evidenza la vocazione del fratello comboniano.
- 3) **Gana** : i confratelli domandano che si riconosca la loro specificità e che li si accetti nella loro diversità, quale ricchezza ed elemento positivo. Che si assuma il nuovo scolasticato di Cape Coast come opera di tutti.

Il **CIAD** presenta a sua volta tre aspetti :

- 1) **La missione prioritaria** : nello sforzo di ridisegnare i nostri impegni non si devono applicare gli stessi criteri ovunque e in modo univoco. La provincia chiede di essere considerata come luogo privilegiato di prima evangelizzazione!
- 2) **Personale** : non è solo questione di numero ma anche di qualità. La provincia vuole mantenere la sua fisionomia “composita” ma che si faccia attenzione anche ad un maggior equilibrio (origine, età...).
- 3) **Accompagnamento personale** : l’accompagnamento dei confratelli sta diventando una necessità ma si manca di personale qualificato per questo servizio.

6. IN ASCOLTO...

Altri temi proposti al Capitolo

6.1 Il fratello comboniano

Constatiamo la diminuzione grande del numero di fratelli nell’istituto in questi ultimi anni e il numero esiguo dei nuovi candidati. D’altra parte, ci pare di notare un certo malessere da parte dei fratelli quanto alla sensibilità clericale che prevale nell’istituto e nella chiesa, e ciò non favorisce la nascita e lo sviluppo di questa vocazione .

Noi proponiamo allora (9/9) che il Capitolo prenda a cuore la situazione del fratello comboniano nell’istituto per approfondire la dimensione della ministerialità, sostenere la promozione della vocazione dei candidati fratelli e dare degli orientamenti per la loro formazione.

6.2 I laici comboniani

Le nostre province sono assai impegnate nella creazione e formazione di un laicato comboniano autoctono. Ma ci pare che questa modalità nuova di vivere il carisma comboniano sia poco coltivata da una buona parte dell’istituto. Riteniamo quanto mai opportuno che il Capitolo faccia sentire la sua voce in modo da chiarire, dare orientamenti e promuovere di più il laicato comboniano (LMC, amici e collaboratori).

Proponiamo (8/9) che il Capitolo rilanci l’impegno dell’istituto nella promozione di un laicato comboniano che condivida con noi il carisma del Comboni.

6.3 « Comunità inserite »

Facciamo nostra la proposta di un gruppo di confratelli circa l’inserzione come stile di vita e di missione (“Missione: Vivere e lavorare con i più poveri in zone di frontiera. Un’urgenza per un impegno rinnovato”). Riteniamo importante sottolineare di più i destinatari privilegiati del nostro servizio missionario riflettendo sulla nostra missione “ad pauperes”. Ciò ci aiuterà ad approfondire la dimensione del nostro far causa comune con i poveri.

Chiediamo (6/9) che il Capitolo prenda in considerazione questa proposta e discuta sul tema dell’inserzione.

6.4 L'elezione del superiore provinciale

In occasione dell'elezione del superiore provinciale è capitato che qualche provincia si sia trovata in una situazione delicata di malessere perché la scelta di un candidato era stata condizionata dai confratelli di voti temporanei o dai confratelli che si trovavano fuori provincia e di conseguenza con una conoscenza parziale della realtà locale.

Proponiamo (6/9 voti) che il Capitolo prenda atto di questo aspetto e cerchi una modalità di votazione (sondaggio, votazione) che favorisca un vero discernimento nella scelta del provinciale e suo consiglio.

6.5 Che il Ciad sia considerato come luogo prioritario di prima evangelizzazione.

Vista la situazione attuale del Ciad, noi proponiamo (5/9) al Capitolo di prendere posizione in favore di un orientamento prioritario programmatico per questa provincia nella distribuzione del personale, come aveva fatto il Capitolo nel 2003 in favore del Sudan (cf. AC'03, 133.4).

7. INSIEME GUARDANDO VERSO L'AVVENIRE

Prospettive per il futuro

Trovando ispirazione nel sogno del nostro fondatore che già intravedeva “un avvenire felice per l'africa”, ancorché coscienti della nostra debolezza ma anche della nostra responsabilità in questo momento di grazia, avendo il Signore messo davanti a noi “una porta aperta che nessuno può chiudere” (Ap. 3,8), ci disponiamo a guardare verso l'avvenire con ottimismo e fiducia. In attesa di quanto il Capitolo ci dirà circa il “Piano dei comboniani”, abbiamo cercato, partendo dalla nostra realtà, di intravedere quegli elementi che un domani potrebbero diventare base di una programmazione continentale.

7.1 Evangelizzazione

- Fare scelte prioritarie in favore di alcune situazioni di prima evangelizzazione;
- Continuare la riflessione circa la metodologia comboniana;
- Mantenere alcune presenze in zone urbane per l'animazione missionaria;
- Scambiare personale qualificato nei vari settori per dei servizi puntuali con altre province ;
- Creare un'opera interprovinciale di promozione umana che metta maggiormente in evidenza la vocazione del fratello comboniano;
- Qualificare il personale e privilegiare la formazione di leaders.

7.2 Animazione missionaria

- Elaborare una carta continentale dell'A.M. ;
- Favorire di più l'ambito dei mass-media del CAE (pubblicazioni, radio, internet...) soprattutto in funzione dell'A.M.;
- Aprire una succursale del CAE a Lomé;
- Realizzare insieme il progetto del Centro di formazione missionaria (CeForMi) ;
- Continuare le sessioni di formazione per gli animatori.

7.3 Pastorale vocazionale e formazione di base

- Dare priorità alla PV là dove si vede necessario con del personale preparato e a tempo pieno;
- Pianificare l'alternarsi e la preparazione dei formatori per un periodo alquanto lungo (almeno sei anni);

- Riaprire il secondo noviziato interprovinciale francofono à Sahr (Ciad), sulla modalità dell'alternanza dei gruppi di novizi (sul modello di Namugongo-Lusaka);
- Conservare, per quanto possibile, l'internazionalità delle equipe di formatori;
- Maggior attenzione ed accompagnamento personale dei candidati.

7.4 Riqualificazione del personale

- Programmare momenti di FP. dei promotori vocazionali e formatori alla maniera di Cotonou 2007, in modo regolare;
- Affidare ad alcuni confratelli qualificati l'organizzazione della FP dei formatori;
- Aprire il "centro di FP e di accompagnamento personale", in collaborazione con altre forze ecclesiali;
- Favorire e programmare le specializzazioni nei vari settori di servizio;
- Rilanciare il GRAF (gruppo di riflessione dell'Africa francofona), implicando nella riflessione, anche la base;
- Contestualizzare il Codice di condotta tenendo conto della legislazione in loco;
- Continuare lo scambio regolare di materiale di FP.

7.5 Economia

- Continuare il nostro impegno in modo che il fondo comune provinciale sia capito ed adottato da tutti i confratelli;
- Animare e formare gli economi locali : organizzare per questo sessioni di formazione, tanto a livello provinciale che continentale.

8. CONCLUSIONE :

Guardando una sedia... vuota!

Concludiamo la nostra assemblea il giorno della festa di san Mattia. La Parola ci fa contemplare una sedia vuota, che scomoda, e che Pietro in un "capitolo" di 120 delegati vorrebbe veder presto occupata da un nuovo testimone della risurrezione e così "rifare il gruppo dei Dodici" (Ac 1,15-26).

Anche noi vediamo varie situazioni che ci mettono a disagio, che ci ricordano la nostra debolezza e povertà. E' con coraggio, umiltà e fiducia che le vogliamo affrontare al prossimo Capitolo. Per cui ci impegniamo a prepararlo con tutti i confratelli delle nostre province in modo che sia un evento di grazia, la grazia del rinnovamento carismatico del nostro gruppo apostolico.

Che san Daniele Comboni interceda per noi!

Lomé, il 14 Maggio 2009

I Capitolari delle province francofone

P. Giovanni Zaffanelli

P. Giorgio Aldegheri

P. Eliseo Tacchella

P. Joseph Musanga Mumbere

P. Manuel João Pereira Correia

P. John Kofi Tasiame

P. Miguel Arceo Navarrete

P. José Gabriel Martínez Torres

Fr. Genesio Maroso

con P. Odelir José Magri e Fr. Daniele Giusti

AMERICA E ASIA

MISIONEROS COMBONIANOS EN AMÉRICA/ASIA

I. RELACIÓN AL XVII CAPÍTULO GENERAL

Los misioneros combonianos llevamos 71 años de presencia en el continente americano y 20 años en Asia; en la actualidad somos 448 y estamos presentes en 15 países. Durante estos años hemos caminado con los pueblos e Iglesias de estos continentes, siempre con el objetivo de servirlos, desde la riqueza de nuestro carisma, a través de la evangelización, la animación misionera y la formación.

La Delegación de Asia trabaja en comunión con las provincias/delegaciones de América. Comparte con nosotros algunas realidades e inquietudes, pero tiene también una dimensión específica. Por eso, después de esta Relación, seguirá la suya propia.

1. Situación socio-política y económica

Los países en que estamos presentes comparten muchas cosas: sistemas democráticos vigentes, algunos rasgos culturales, grandes contrastes económicos y sociales, un proceso de cambio y transformación continuo, un sustrato cristiano; y están afectados por la globalización en todos los campos, incluida la crisis económica actual. Sin embargo, también son muy diversos entre sí; cada país tiene su propia realidad y dinamismo, con sus avances y retrocesos. La migración es un fenómeno que afecta a todo el Continente, con efectos positivos y negativos, tanto para los países receptores como para los de origen.

- ✓ **La situación socio económica de los Estados Unidos de América (EE.UU.)**, en los últimos años, ha sido impactada mucho por la creciente presencia de los inmigrantes: 44.5 millones de origen latino, de los cuales 20 millones son ilegales; 13 millones son de origen asiático. Por otra parte, los afrodescendientes, con larga historia de esclavitud y segregación, son 30 millones. Con la elección de Barak Obama, primer presidente que sale de una minoría, se vive un momento de gran esperanza, que está cambiando la imagen de EE.UU dentro del país y a nivel internacional. La gran crisis económica y del sistema financiero afecta la sociedad en todos sus aspectos. A pesar de esto la NAP ha ofrecido a la DG y a las provincias, en los últimos 6 años, más de 20 millones de dólares.
- ✓ **México** está en un momento de crecimiento político, macro-económico y social. Existen signos esperanzadores: avanza el proceso democrático, crece la capacidad crítica de la gente y la libertad de expresión, se da mayor corresponsabilidad en la toma de decisiones ante los desafíos nacionales, aumenta la pluralidad de ofertas a todos los niveles y, en general, la sociedad civil está más organizada. No obstante lo señalado anteriormente, el país sufre una situación de violencia e inseguridad causada sobre todo por los cárteles del narcotráfico. La sociedad mexicana está cambiando sus valores, desgraciadamente en detrimento de la familia y del sustrato cultural tradicional. La grave crisis económica mundial ha provocado una recesión local tal que muchos trabajadores y emigrantes han perdido sus posibilidades de ingreso. Las poblaciones rurales e indígenas siguen siendo las más vulnerables. Es evidente la manipulación de ciertos grupos políticos que lucran con la miseria de la gente, a través de propuestas populistas, o implantando la visión empresarial tecnócrata que beneficia sólo a unos pocos privilegiados.
- ✓ **En los países de América Central** reconocemos como principal riqueza su gente con sus grandes valores de hospitalidad, respeto, ganas de vivir, su deseo de aprender y de crecer. Sin embargo, no faltan la violencia y la criminalidad que hacen sombrío el panorama social. Existen estructuras democráticas aún frágiles, muchas veces opacadas por la corrupción y la impunidad; eso hace que la gente vea por momentos el futuro con poca serenidad. La emigración de muchos centroamericanos hacia los Estados Unidos es garantía de sobrevivencia para sus familias. Las

oportunidades de trabajo en algunos de estos son escasas y la mano de obra barata no es remunerada justamente.

Por otra parte, Centroamérica cuenta con una riqueza de recursos naturales, tierras y climas que representan un potencial muy importante para las industrias y el turismo que podrían ser buenos generadores de empleos en la región.

- ✓ **Colombia** tiene 45 millones de habitantes, de los cuales 10 millones son afrodescendientes y 1 millón indígenas. Es una democracia muy asentada, aunque son frecuentes las violaciones de los derechos humanos. Hay un gran desplazamiento interno de personas (3 millones) y la emigración al exterior también es numerosa (5 millones). Hay un fuerte problema de violencia producida por grupos armados y el narcotráfico. Por otra parte, asistimos a un despertar cada vez mayor de la sociedad civil, que, a pesar de la continua persecución, revela la riqueza de su composición y de su compromiso por la paz en el país. Colombia goza también de una legislación favorable a afrodescendientes e indígenas, pueblos que están en un momento de visibilización y participación social.
- ✓ En **Ecuador** se vive con especial relevancia el fenómeno migratorio y se siente mucho la influencia del conflicto colombiano. También es motivo de preocupación la privatización de los recursos naturales y la deforestación. Como signos positivos, hay una mayor presencia de los pueblos indígenas y afroecuatorianos en la sociedad. Los afrodescendientes, con los cuales nosotros trabajamos, son alrededor de 800.000, distribuidos prevalentemente en las dos grandes ciudades: Guayaquil y Quito; y en las provincias de Esmeraldas, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas e Imbabura. Los indígenas, según el último censo, son el 43 por ciento de la población. En estos años la pastoral afro ha impulsado desde los centros afros de Quito y Guayaquil la formación de líderes; ha crecido la Hermandad de los Misioneros afro, los evangelizadores populares afro y los promotores de JPIC en diferentes provincias.
- ✓ **El Perú** se encuentra bajo el segundo gobierno aprista con Alan García en el poder, que, después de un primer periodo desastroso (1985-90), ahora está tratando de reivindicarse con la población fortaleciendo las instituciones y evitando cometer los mismos errores del pasado.

Sin embargo, es evidente un cierto autoritarismo en algunas de sus decisiones, impidiendo que, en la práctica, exista una verdadera oposición política. Ha habido varios intentos de dar leyes para disolver las ONGs con capacidad de incidencia y fiscalización, se ha identificado, en ocasiones, a los defensores del medio ambiente con los terroristas de sectores radicales de la izquierda, se han detectado intentos por comprar los medios de comunicación y de aprovechar el erario estatal para los propios fines, entre otras cosas.

Entre sus méritos está el de respetar la política económica establecida por su predecesor, lo que ha permitido un crecimiento económico y una estabilidad de la moneda en los últimos siete años, haciendo del Perú el país más estable de la región y con un buen crecimiento macroeconómico. Es un hecho que la pobreza en el país ha decrecido en varios dígitos, aunque la disparidad social sigue siendo evidente y los beneficios no llegan a los más pobres.

La *Defensoría del pueblo*, una de las instituciones que goza de más credibilidad, ha señalado al inicio del año en curso, más de doscientos puntos de conflicto en el país, relacionados en gran parte a la sobreexplotación de los recursos naturales; así mismo, el crecimiento de la violencia asociada al narcoterrorismo es preocupante, como la inseguridad que percibe la población.

La situación de **Chile** difiere mucho de la realidad peruana. Chile es un país que se ha desarrollado bastante en los últimos años y goza de estabilidad social, económica y política.

- ✓ **Brasil** es un país de amplitud continental con 191 millones de habitantes. De éstos, 85 millones son afrodescendientes, víctimas de discriminaciones raciales, económicas y religiosas. Hay más de 700 mil indígenas; muchos de sus 605 territorios han sido invadidos y más de la mitad aún no han sido demarcados legalmente. En estas realidades hay presencia misionera de comunidades combonianas.

Es un país de enormes contrastes económicos, sociales y tecnológicos. Hay, por un lado, una minoría que controla los bienes de producción y los medios de comunicación; y, por otro, una gran mayoría de pobres, entre los cuales más de 30 millones viven en la pobreza extrema. Hay también un poder legislativo corrupto y un sistema judicial ineficaz, que permite el aumento de la violencia y el narcotráfico.

Continúa la deforestación de la Amazonia y el movimiento de los Sin Tierra que exige la reforma agraria.

Por otro lado, Brasil es un potencial económico que genera muchas expectativas y esperanza de la población. El presidente Lula ha intentado dar otro rumbo a través de políticas asistenciales permitiendo que 18 millones de pobres mejorasen su calidad de vida, pero eso no ha logrado cambiar la realidad. Mucha gente está desilusionada, los movimientos sociales debilitados. Crece la conciencia política y social en el pueblo y la exigencia de respeto a los derechos humanos, la vida y dignidad para todos.

2. Situación eclesial

Por más de 50 años, las Iglesias de América Latina están haciendo un esfuerzo por caminar conjuntamente. El último hito de este camino ha sido la V Conferencia del Episcopado Latinoamericano, celebrada en Aparecida (Brasil), que redescubrió la doble vocación de cada bautizado como discípulo y misionero de Jesucristo. Propuso una Misión Continental, cuyo lanzamiento tuvo lugar en el Tercer Congreso Americano Misionero/Octavo Congreso Misionero Latinoamericano (CAM3-COMLA8). Sin embargo, cada día se cierra más a la misión fuera del continente. Con ocasión de dicho Congreso, los combonianos nos comprometimos a insertarnos en esta Misión Continental, buscando promover la dimensión *ad gentes*. Por su parte, las Iglesias de Estados Unidos y Canadá están siguiendo su propio camino, aunque buscando acercamiento a la Iglesia Latinoamericana, debido a la gran presencia de latinoamericanos en esos países del norte.

- **La Iglesia de EEUU** es una Iglesia viva: los laicos participan activamente en la vida de la Iglesia y no son meros espectadores; muchos ministerios y responsabilidades administrativas son confiados a hombres y mujeres. La Iglesia tiene el desafío de atender a los muchos emigrantes. Es también una Iglesia, que, por los casos de abusos sexuales por parte de algunos sacerdotes y religiosos, ahora sufre persecución. Además, hay personas que quieren lucrar con esta situación. Eso ha generado desconfianza en la Iglesia. Nuestra labor como misioneros se ha hecho más difícil, inclusive en la dimensión económica. La labor de los que trabajan en el campo vocacional sufre por esta situación y, además, por el despertar de varios grupos religiosos muy conservadores que captan la atención de muchos jóvenes.
- En cuanto a la **Iglesia en México** existen grupos y movimientos religiosos (en particular, la vida consagrada) comprometidos en una pastoral más ministerial y más cercana a la gente. Con todos sus defectos, la Iglesia mexicana está en un proceso de renovación. Su fuerza sigue siendo la fe auténtica y la religiosidad sencilla del

pueblo. Percibimos al interno de las instituciones eclesíásticas una incapacidad de diálogo ante la realidad actual que cambia rápidamente. Igualmente se advierte un retroceso hacia formas que parecían ya superadas: sacramentalismo, clericalismo (preocupación exagerada por lo cultural y por el control del poder), un sincretismo de tipo espiritista, inadecuación de lenguaje hacia el mundo de los jóvenes. También notamos una reducción del concepto de misión: sólo hay un interés en las necesidades internas y se está perdiendo la generosidad de ir más allá de las propias fronteras y de ser capaces de “dar desde la propia pobreza”. El futuro próximo de la Iglesia es difícil, hay una fuerte campaña de desacreditación de la misma.

- En **América Central** hay un abanico de experiencias en el campo religioso: por un lado, hay grupos seriamente comprometidos y, por el otro, hay grupos ultraconservadores y espiritualistas. También hay un gran deseo de profundizar la propia formación. Como institución, la Iglesia es creíble, pero muchas veces no habla, no se involucra abiertamente en favor de la gente: es una Iglesia instalada y a la defensiva. En este contexto eclesial es de singular significación la participación de los laicos, quienes asumen sin dificultad responsabilidades en sus comunidades. Vemos con satisfacción también un aumento de la conciencia misionera de las Iglesias locales, fruto, en buena parte, del aporte comboniano a través de la animación misionera realizada en estos años.
- **Colombia** tiene una religiosidad tradicional. En el pasado la Iglesia tenía una gran influencia en la sociedad, ahora eso está cambiando. Es una Iglesia muy organizada, pero la distribución del clero no es equitativa, ya que en las zonas habitadas por afrodescendientes e indígenas hay muy poco clero y una presencia muy limitada de la Iglesia institucional. A pesar de esto, hay unos 2 mil misioneros colombianos en el exterior y muchas personas y comunidades eclesiales vivas, comprometidas con los más pobres y con una Colombia justa y pacífica.
- **La Iglesia ecuatoriana** ha perdido algunos obispos proféticos, entre ellos Mons. Proaño y Mons. Bartolucci, luces para el mundo indígena y para el mundo afro. Muchos de los obispos actuales provienen de movimientos eclesiales de tipo tradicionalista. Por un lado, continúan algunos grupos eclesiales comprometidos en lo social y, por otro, crecen los grupos en los que prevalece una espiritualidad desencarnada, a costa de una fe comprometida. Todavía la Iglesia tiene un papel importante dentro de la sociedad, incluso con algunos escándalos de los últimos años. Entre la mayoría de los cristianos se experimenta un divorcio grande entre fe y vida. El último CAM3-COMLA8, realizado en Quito el año 2008, ha manifestado la poca apertura misionera *ad gentes*, no sólo de nuestra Iglesia ecuatoriana, sino en general de todo el Continente. El lanzamiento de la Gran Misión Continental *ad intra* de las Iglesias americanas, manifiesta aun más la crisis de profetismo y de apertura al mundo. La Gran Misión Continental podría transformarse en un verdadero *kairos* para la Iglesia ecuatoriana, si asume el reto de estar en un estado permanente de misión.
- **En Perú**, señalamos el compromiso serio de la vida religiosa con los más pobres y necesitados, encontrándoles en zonas difíciles, dando testimonio del Reinado de Dios. Estas opciones son fuente de conflicto con algunos Pastores y otros sectores de la Iglesia que desconocen su trabajo. Señalamos el aumento de personas, incluidos obispos, ligadas a los sectores más conservadores de la Iglesia, lo que origina desencuentros y tensiones en el trabajo pastoral. La **Iglesia chilena** es poco

abierta al discurso misionero *ad gentes*, pero con sensibilidad para apoyar las varias iniciativas eclesiales al interno del país.

- **Brasil**, a nivel eclesial, está sufriendo un cambio muy fuerte, que le está dando un rostro nuevo, diferente al que tenía hace tiempo. Gran parte del clero es sacramentalista, hay gran oposición a la Pastoral Social, aumento de los movimientos carismáticos y crecimiento de las sectas neo-pentecostales. Pero hay también luces: firmeza de varios sectores eclesiales populares en favor de la vida, la justicia y la promoción de nuevos ministerios. Muchos organismos eclesiales creen e invierten mucho en la formación de los laicos. Crece la conciencia misionera de la Iglesia local. Hay 1.800 misioneros brasileños en misión más allá de las propias fronteras, compromiso misionero entre diócesis, en especial por la Amazonia, Proyecto Misionero en Timor Oriental, Angola y Mozambique.

3. Presencia comboniana

3.1 Estadísticas

Los combonianos presentes en América/Asia somos actualmente 448, de los cuales 53 son Hermanos; tenemos 96 comunidades, que se distribuyen de la manera siguiente en las distintas jurisdicciones:

- NAP: 32 (31+1), en 8 comunidades
- México: 80 (66+14), en 18 comunidades
- Centroamerica: 33 (30+3), en 8 comunidades
- Colombia: 20 (14+6), en 4 comunidades
- Ecuador: 46 (36+10), en 9 comunidades
- Perú/Chile: 56 (51+5), en 15 comunidades
- Brasil sur: 60 (57+3), en 15 comunidades
- Brasil NE: 44 (35+9), en 13 comunidades
- Asia: 20 (19 +1) en 6 comunidades

En cuanto a candidatos, tenemos los siguientes:

a) **39 Escolásticos más 5 Hermanos en formación**

- México: 9+2
- América Central: 10+3
- Colombia: 4
- Ecuador: 3
- Perú/Chile: 5
- Brasil Sur: 4
- Brasil NE: 1
- Asia: 3
- Total: 44**

b) **6 Novicios**

- México: 1
- América Central: 2
- Perú/Chile: 1
- Brasil NE 1
- Asia 1
- Total: 6**

c) 50 Postulantes

- México: 14
- América Central: 6
- Colombia: 2
- Ecuador: 4
- Perú/Chile: 8
- Brasil Sur: 6
- Brasil NE: 2
- Asia: 8
- Total: 50**

3.2 Recalificación y Planes provinciales

Se está haciendo un camino de mayor colaboración entre las provincias y delegaciones (noviciado único de América, revistas, intercambio de personal...) y se está trabajando en torno a las prioridades siguientes: Animación misionera-Promoción vocacional-Formación, la opción preferencial por los afrodescendientes, los indígenas y las periferias urbanas, con la Justicia, Paz y Respeto a la Creación como eje transversal.

Todas las provincias y delegaciones tienen las tres dimensiones del carisma: evangelización, animación misionera y formación. Todas están también en un proceso de recalificación de los compromisos, con planes sexenales, en los que se señalan objetivos, medios y pasos a dar. De hecho se han dado pasos muy concretos:

- ❖ **La NAP** ha realizado los siguientes cambios: 1) En Canadá, de centro de sola Animación Misionera hemos pasado a parroquia (zona de evangelización) con centro de animación misionera adjunto; 2) En Chicago aceptamos la parroquia adjunta al *Peace Corner* (evangelización/pastoral entre afrodescendientes); 3) Hemos entregado una de las dos parroquias en Blue Island (Los Siete Santos Fundadores) en 2007; estamos en proceso de entregar la otra en 2010. Eran compromisos significativos, pero tenemos que dejarlos por falta de personal.
- ❖ **En México**, durante este sexenio, hemos entregado las parroquias de Bahía Asunción (BCS), San Felipe Usila (Oaxaca), Bahía Tortugas (BCS), San Ignacio (BCS). Igualmente hemos cerrado el Seminario Menor de Guadalajara (se convirtió en el Oasis San Daniel Comboni, para ancianos y enfermos) y el postulante para Hermanos de Monterrey (quedó como centro de AM).
- ❖ **En la Delegación de Centroamérica** hemos abierto tres presencias nuevas, una entre los indígenas en Guatemala, una parroquia en situación de periferia en Costa Rica y una presencia de Animación Misionera en Managua, Nicaragua
- ❖ En **Colombia** se entregó a la Diócesis la parroquia de Aguachica, en zona campesina, para fundar una parroquia nueva en las afueras de Tumaco, en la periferia del país, con población totalmente afro; también se dejó una estructura grande de AM en la parte rica de Cali para ir a un barrio marginal habitado por afrodescendientes en la misma ciudad.
- ❖ **En Ecuador** se cerró la parroquia La Catorce para potenciar la pastoral afro del Norte de Esmeraldas y la Animación Misionera.
- ❖ En **Perú**, desde el 2003, se han entregado las siguientes comunidades: Ambo y Huariaca (2003); Yanahuanca (2004); Villa Alhué, Chile (2005); la mitad de la

Parroquia de Trujillo (2005); María Misionera de Renca, Chile (2009) y Pozuzo (2009). En el 2009, en línea con la opción continental de trabajar con los pueblos indígenas, se ha abierto la comunidad de San Martín de Pangoa (nativos de la Amazonia peruana). Se ha reforzado también nuestra presencia entre los afrodescendientes (en Chíncha).

- ❖ La **provincia Brasil Sur**, desde 2003, ha entregado a las diócesis una obra social en São José do Rio Preto, São Paulo; las parroquias de Conceição da Barra y Pedro Canário, en São Mateus, Espírito Santo; la parroquia de São Sebastião en Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro; las parroquias de Ouro Preto y Cacoal en Ji-Paraná, en Rondônia; la parroquia de Taguatinga en Brasília y una parte de la parroquia de São José Operário en Carapina, en Vitória, Espírito Santo. Vamos a entregar la parroquia de Nova Venécia, en febrero de 2010, a la diócesis de São Mateus. Cerramos dos comunidades de Animación Misionera y de promoción vocacional en Lages, Santa Catarina, y Ouro Preto, Rondônia; la comunidad de la revista Sem Fronteiras y Alô Mundo en São Paulo; el noviciado en Nova Contagem, Contagem, Minas Gerais, el propedéutico en Curitiba y una comunidad en Carapina, Espírito Santo.

En este tiempo, de acuerdo con las prioridades provinciales en el sexenio y de las orientaciones del Capítulo General, abrimos cuatro nuevas comunidades: una en São Paulo para los trabajos de JPIC; una de Animación Misionera, en Indaial, SC; dos en el norte de Brasil, Boa Vista, Roraima y Manaus, Amazonas, para el trabajo con los pueblos indígenas y la realidad de la Amazonia.

En total, hemos cerrado 12 comunidades y abierto 4. En este momento la provincia ha logrado un equilibrio entre personas y compromisos. Teniendo en cuenta la edad avanzada del grupo, hemos decidido quedarnos también en algunos lugares más tradicionales donde estamos desde hace años.

- ❖ **En Brasil NE**, la provincia ha elaborado un plan teniendo como eje central de su presencia misionera la Justicia, la Paz y la Integridad de la Creación. Dentro de esta opción metodológica, definimos como primer paso el análisis de la realidad social, económica y religiosa con creación de bancos de datos, identificando potencialidades y fragilidades existentes en el contexto de nuestra actuación. Cada comunidad a partir del eje provincial ha elaborado su plan, escogiendo una realidad específica (socio-ambientalismo, derechos humanos, indígenas, afro-descendientes y juventudes) a ser trabajada en las dimensiones bíblica, catequética, social y pastoral.

3.3 Plan continental

Desde hace años, en el continente existe una tradición de reuniones de provinciales/delegados y de los varios sectores de nuestro servicio misionero (evangelización, FB y PV, AM, Economía, etc.), para tratar asuntos de común interés.

A partir de la asamblea inter-capitular (México 2006), para responder mejor a las exigencias de la realidad actual del Instituto, propusimos una reunión de carácter inmediato entre el CG y los provinciales/delegados del Continente con la finalidad de concretar los elementos de un Plan continental que, según las reflexiones de ese momento, serviría para elaborar un plan Global del Instituto. Los demás continentes creyeron oportuno realizar también reuniones semejantes.

Durante la reunión de Sao Paulo, febrero 2007, se definieron las prioridades, que servirían de guías para definir nuestras presencias en el continente. Como reacción a los análisis del CG sobre la realidad del Instituto y a su invitación a reflexionar, sentimos igualmente la necesidad de proponer posibles reagrupamientos de jurisdicciones para un

mejor aprovechamiento del personal y dar un servicio más calificado. Pusieron como ejemplo la posible unión de las dos provincias de Brasil y Ecuador-Colombia. Nos propusimos estudiar, asesorados por algunos co-hermanos más competentes, lo que podrían ser las líneas comunes de un trabajo continental entre los afros, indígenas, AM, JPIC, etc.

En la reunión de Chicago, julio 2007, evaluamos lo hecho hasta ese momento y la forma de seguir el proceso para su realización. En particular, subrayamos la importancia de involucrar, antes que nada, a todos nuestros co-hermanos, para que el resultado sea fruto de la aceptación de todos; nos propusimos informar/concienciar a la base y detectar ya posibles áreas de colaboración por regiones. Se recomendó que los provinciales/delegados realizaran intercambio de ideas por zonas (Brasil-Andes-Norte). De hecho, se reunieron más tarde los del Norte y los de Brasil.

Durante la reunión de delegados capitulares (Quito, mayo 2009), en repetidas ocasiones confirmamos la urgencia de un Plan Continental, que exprese la manera nueva de hacer misión en colaboración y por ello hemos elaborado algunas propuestas concretas. Entre otras, las siguientes:

- optamos por un camino en colaboración
- confirmamos las opciones preferenciales
- apoyamos el fortalecimiento de la Delegación de Asia
- apoyamos las OCPH
- queremos una forma no jurídica de agrupamiento: más bien de apoyo mutuo y de trabajo en equipo en las varias áreas.
- establecimos la fecha de la Intercapitular del 2012 para revisar la marcha y elaborar un Plan continental.

3.4 Espiritualidad, vida comunitaria, atención a la persona

El proceso de la *Ratio Missionis* ha sido un momento de gracia para evaluar nuestra vida comunitaria, espiritualidad y nuestro ser combonianos. Nos ha motivado para formar comunidades más fraternas.

Este discernimiento ha incentivado a cada provincia y delegación para ir dando pasos concretos que le ayuden a tener una mayor claridad de su identidad y manera de ser misioneros combonianos en el contexto de nuestro continente y la realidad actual.

Todas las provincias/delegaciones tienen planes e iniciativas de formación permanente, para ayudar a que cada hermano haga un camino de crecimiento humano, espiritual y pastoral. Sentimos una fuerte inquietud por asegurar, dentro del Continente, un acompañamiento cualificado a los co-hermanos que requieren una atención especial.

Varias provincias han organizado ya centros para co-hermanos de la Tercera Edad: Guadalajara (México), San Jose de Rio Preto (Brasil Sur), Teresina (Brasil NE) y Covina (NAP).

El Continente (México) alberga también el Año Comboniano de Formación Permanente en años alternativos.

3.5 Economía

La renovación se refleja también en el camino que cada jurisdicción está haciendo por adoptar el Fondo Común Total. Algunas ya lo adoptaron: Centroamérica, Colombia y NAP. También estamos buscando maneras de avanzar hacia la autosuficiencia económica.

3.6 Campos de acción

a) Animación misionera y promoción vocacional

La Animación Misionera es fundamental en el servicio que prestamos al continente, ya que es una contribución particular de nuestro carisma comboniano para la

Iglesia local; ésta es una de las prioridades de nuestro continente. Nuestra sola presencia es ya una motivación para que las Iglesias locales tomen conciencia de su vocación misionera.

- Son **múltiples las actividades** y medios que utilizamos en la Animación misionera: revistas, programas de radio y televisión, CDs, DVDs, páginas *web*, *blogs*, libros, folletos, jornadas misioneras, colaboración con las instituciones misioneras de la Iglesia local, retiros, encuentros, redes de amigos y bienhechores, misioneros de la Tercera Edad, Cursos de formación misionera, etc. Estamos reflexionando sobre formas y medios nuevos de hacer la animación misionera que respondan a la realidad actual.
- Dentro de este gran ámbito de la animación misionera realizamos una intensa **promoción vocacional** entre los jóvenes con resultados desiguales: algunas provincias están teniendo más frutos que otras; en general, podemos decir que estamos viviendo un momento difícil que nos está haciendo repensar los métodos que utilizamos para que respondan más a la realidad del joven actual de nuestro continente. Hemos vivido distintos momentos en la promoción vocacional. Hubo años en los que tuvimos abundantes candidatos, en la actualidad son pocos, pero tenemos la esperanza de que la situación mejorará.
- **La juventud** es la categoría más numerosa y también la más dinámica con muchas potencialidades, aunque frágil; por ello hemos invertido en procesos educativos y formativos. De un lado intentando crear una cultura de paz y del otro lado haciendo una propuesta clara a la vocación cristiana y misionera. Algunas provincias/delegaciones tienen movimientos juveniles: América Misionera en Ecuador, Colombia y DCA; y Jupaz (juventude pela paz) en Brasil NE.
- El Continente (Nueva York) alberga también una oficina de **Africa Faith and Justice** Network y VIVAT para trabajar, junto con organizaciones no gubernamentales, Iglesias y otros institutos religiosos, en favor de los países más pobres.

b) Formación

En cuanto a estructuras formativas, hay un noviciado americano en Sahuayo (México) y otro en Manila (Filipinas); tres escolasticados: Lima (Perú), San Paulo (Brasil), Chicago (EE.UU.), más una comunidad formativa inserta de escolásticos en Nova Contagem, Brasil; y un CIFH en Bogotá (Colombia). Además, cada provincia tiene alguna estructura formativa de postulante, a veces en comunidades insertas. Se ha conseguido que casi todas las provincias /delegaciones tengan una etapa propedéutica de diferente duración. Algunas provincias y delegaciones están trabajando intensamente en la preparación y formación permanente de los formadores. Una gran dificultad que encontramos en este campo es la del personal, ya que resulta difícil contar con formadores suficientes.

c) Evangelización

Todas las provincias/delegaciones, cada una según su historia, contexto y posibilidades, están en un proceso de discernimiento para la recalificación de los compromisos en línea de las opciones continentales: afrodescendientes, indígenas, y periferias urbanas, con la JPIC como marco de fondo que de un tinte particular a la evangelización. Creemos que nuestro carisma comboniano encuentra un campo de crecimiento y ampliación, siendo fieles a las raíces y acudiendo al grito de estos pueblos

históricamente marginados, tanto en la sociedad como en la Iglesia y con muy poco contacto con el Evangelio.

Por varias décadas nuestros co-hermanos han venido haciendo un trabajo significativo y valioso, pero creemos que podemos mejorar nuestra presencia; podríamos crecer en el campo de la inserción, en un trabajo por los derechos de los pueblos, la inculturación, el diálogo religioso, la creación de comunidades que experimenten el Evangelio como una fuerza liberadora que los lleve a vivir una vida plena. Creemos que el eje transversal de nuestra evangelización debe ser la justicia y la paz con el fin de promover una vida más digna para nuestros pueblos.

En esta línea, contamos ya con cuatro Obras Combonianas de Promoción Humana (OCPH), en diferentes niveles de realización, en Ecuador, Brasil NE, México y Colombia.

3.7 Laicos Misioneros Combonianos

Muchas provincias/delegaciones tienen grupos de **Laicos Misioneros Combonianos (LMC)**, tanto nacionales como extranjeros, aunque con realidades diferenciadas.

-**La NAP** tiene 7 LMC en el exterior: 4 en Perú (dos parejas con hijos), 2 en Kenia, 1 en DCA. De México recibe 1, que trabaja con emigrantes. En formación tiene 4 (dos parejas sin hijos). 30 LMC completaron su compromiso en la misión y realizan actividades varias de colaboración en la provincia (Jornadas misionales, animación misionera, boletines).

-**En la Provincia de México** hay cinco grupos de LMC con un total de 45 miembros. Ya son numerosos los LMC mexicanos que han servido a la misión *ad gentes* dentro y fuera el país. En la actualidad, hay cinco mujeres en misión: 4 en Perú y 1 en EEUU.

-**En Centroamérica** están viviendo el momento de convocación y organización del grupo en Guatemala y Nicaragua. Se cuenta actualmente con la presencia de un laico comboniano de la NAP.

-**La Delegación de Colombia** ha optado por la creación de un Movimiento Misionero Laical Comboniano, que tiene como objetivo involucrar en un proceso más amplio diferentes expresiones laicales misioneras, en el que se inserta el proceso formativo de los LMC, que en este momento son 8.

-**La Provincia de Perú-Chile** valora la presencia de los LMC. Actualmente prestan su servicio en el Perú: 4 de la NAP en Trujillo, 4 de México en Baños y El Carmen; 3 de España en Arequipa y El Carmen, 2 de Perú-Chile en Baños.

-**Brasil Sur** tiene 8 LMC (6 en Brasil y 2 en Mozambique).

-**Brasil NE** tiene 3 LMC: un español, un portugués y una alemana. Los primeros dos trabajan en la formación técnica de jóvenes campesinos y la otra en la periferia de São Luis a favor de los derechos de los niños y adolescentes.

4. Perspectivas de futuro

Los combonianos tenemos en América/Asia una gran oportunidad de realizar nuestro carisma misionero, en fidelidad a la rica herencia recibida, y abiertos creativamente a nuevas posibilidades y desafíos.

Pensamos que debemos reafirmar y mejorar nuestra animación misionera, para incidir más en la vida de las Iglesias locales.

También queremos afinar más nuestros métodos de promoción vocacional y de formación inculturada, teniendo en cuenta la realidad de nuestros jóvenes y los desafíos misioneros del Instituto.

En cuanto a la evangelización, estamos haciendo opciones muy claras por los afrodescendientes, los indígenas y las periferias urbanas, teniendo como eje la JPIC, con

el objetivo de que estos pueblos tengan vida en abundancia y encuentren en Jesucristo esa vida que todos buscamos.

Para ser fieles a esta vocación y a esta misión, somos conscientes de la necesidad de renovarnos continuamente en una fuerte espiritualidad, de crecer en fraternidad y de organizarnos mejor, incrementando la colaboración entre provincias y delegaciones.

5. Propuestas

5.1 DCA PROVINCIA

La DCA, durante este sexenio, ha ido consolidando su presencia, constitución y fortalecimiento de las comunidades, así como una mayor autonomía económica. Creemos que es el momento de dar el paso a la erección como Provincia, siguiendo las indicaciones del Capítulo del 2003 (Cfr DC 2003, 135).

5.2 OBRAS COMBONIANAS DE PROMOCIÓN HUMANA (OCPH)

- Que las provincias/delegaciones de Brasil NE, Ecuador, y Colombia asuman estas obras en sus planes sexenales.
- Que las OCPH sean asumidas como proyectos continentales de colaboración en los temas específicos que se adoptaron en el continente.
- Reconocer el centro de Bogotá como centro de enlace y acompañamiento (FP) de las obras y de la presencia de los Hermanos en el continente.
- Que los provinciales/delegados del continente, junto con la DG, garanticen las presencias de 7 Hermanos dedicados a estas obras sin excluir la presencia de los sacerdotes.
- Que México continúe su proceso de discernimiento sobre su OCPH.

5.3 AFRODESCENDIENTES: OPORTUNIDAD MISIONERA

Que las provincias en América asuman compromisos concretos (obras, proyectos, comunidades) en el acompañamiento de la población afro. Este acompañamiento –cuyas formas y modalidades pueden variar de lugar a lugar– debería tener las siguientes dimensiones:

a) El aspecto espiritual, o sea, la valoración de la experiencia de Dios que tiene el Pueblo Negro. Dentro de este aspecto hay que recalcar la importancia de una lectura específica de la Palabra a partir de la realidad actual del Pueblo Afro y de la presencia del negro en la Biblia.

b) El aspecto antropológico-cultural, o sea, la valorización y la re-creación de la identidad cultural del Pueblo Afroamericano en el contexto de la sociedad globalizada, requisito indispensable para su plena afirmación de la propia dignidad.

c) El aspecto sociopolítico, o sea, la lucha por la afirmación de la plena ciudadanía de los pueblos afroamericanos y por el reconocimiento pleno de sus derechos individuales y colectivos, contra toda forma de marginación y discriminación.

TEMÁTICAS CAPITULARES

1.- Ratio Missionis

Identidad Comboniana desde América /Asia

Nuestra misión en el siglo XXI

Convocados por el Espíritu de Jesús, herederos de Comboni, nos sentimos llamados a vivir en plenitud y a ser portadores de vida, como Jesús Buen Pastor, para dar vida abundante y ser mensajeros de una esperanza creíble para los pueblos.

Como combonianos nos sentimos llamados y consagrados a vivir y a compartir la vida con los más abandonados y excluidos para ser signos ante ellos del amor y cercanía del Dios de la vida. Cada provincia/delegación –en sintonía con el Instituto- discierne dónde están esos grupos humanos en cada lugar y época, a partir de su propia historia y de la realidad social y eclesial. Desde este principio, los combonianos de América/Asia optamos por los afro-descendientes, los indígenas, las periferias urbanas y el mundo chino.

Esta misión por la vida la realizamos en tres dimensiones básicas:

1.- Proclamación de la Palabra de vida. Creemos que las personas de nuestro mundo esperan una Palabra que sea verdadera, iluminadora, consoladora, liberadora, que les hace verse a sí mismos como Dios los ve, es decir, como hijos e hijas amados y llamados a vivir en comunión. Y creemos que esa Palabra encuentra una “encarnación” especial en las Escrituras, leídas desde la vida y con apertura al Espíritu. Dentro de esta dimensión, los combonianos nos sentimos específicamente llamados a dar prioridad al anuncio y testimonio de la Palabra que genera vida. Reafirmamos nuestra decisión de dar prioridad a los pueblos y grupos humanos que están más allá de las fronteras eclesiales y que no están recibiendo el don de la Palabra encarnada en Jesús de Nazaret (primera evangelización).

2. El servicio. Iluminados por la figura del Buen Samaritano, nos dedicamos con gozo y generosidad al servicio de los pobres, realizando “signos mesiánicos” (signos de la presencia del Reino) que muestren la cercanía de Dios. En esta perspectiva, consideramos un servicio necesario en los tiempos de hoy un trabajo fuerte a favor de la Justicia, la Paz y el respeto por la Creación.

3. La comunión. Creemos que la humanidad es una sola familia de hijos de Dios, cuya plenitud de vida se realiza en la fraternidad. Por eso promovemos la comunión y participación, procesos de reconciliación, creando o re-creando tejidos comunitarios de solidaridad en un mundo más justo y fraterno, sin dominados ni dominadores. Con las comunidades de discípulos que el Espíritu va suscitando, celebramos la santidad de la vida, la belleza de sentirnos hermanos, la esperanza de un mundo nuevo; y nos alimentamos frecuentemente con el pan de la Palabra y del Cuerpo del Señor. En esta dimensión, favorecemos el diálogo intercultural e inter-religioso, así como la animación misionera de las Iglesias, promoviendo la comunión y colaboración entre Iglesias y pueblos.

Metodología

Los combonianos de América/Asia queremos realizar nuestra misión siguiendo el principio comboniano “salvar África con África”, que, para nosotros en este momento implica:

1. **Inserción** social, afectiva y cultural como medio de acercarnos a los pobres con los que queremos compartir la vida. Cada provincia/delegación y comunidad debe discernir los modos, tiempos y condiciones de este principio.

2. **Escucha** atenta de la realidad, de las personas y de los signos de los tiempos, con actitud de respeto y capacidad de análisis.
3. El **discernimiento** personal y comunitario como método de trabajo y para tomar decisiones.
4. Creación de pequeñas **comunidades eclesiales**.
5. Formación de **líderes** para la sociedad y para la Iglesia
6. Yendo **más allá de las fronteras eclesiales**, incluso creando iniciativas misioneras no circunscritas a la parroquia.
7. **Animación misionera**, para que nuestras Iglesias se abran a la misión en la “otra orilla” (Aparecida 376), a través de medios de comunicación, testimonio personal, estando presentes en los organismos de la Iglesia local, cooperando con otras instituciones de la sociedad, etc.
8. **Promoción vocacional y formación de nuevos discípulos misioneros**.
9. **Internacionalidad**. Vivimos la vocación-misión como una comunidad de hermanos procedentes de los más diversos lugares y culturas, lo cual enriquece nuestra respuesta al llamado recibido.
10. **Pluri-ministerialidad**. Siguiendo la intuición de Comboni, en nuestro instituto vivimos la misión con una pluralidad de ministerios, de sacerdotes y Hermanos, abriéndonos también a otros ministerios laicales y a toda la familia Comboniana. Ese principio informa también nuestra acción evangelizadora y pastoral.
11. **Cooperación**. Como portadores de vida, cooperamos con cualquier persona e institución que trabaje a favor de la vida, especialmente de los más pobres.

Espiritualidad

Nuestra espiritualidad está marcada por los mismos elementos de nuestra identidad-carisma-misión (Buen Pastor: Palabra, Servicio y Comunión), en sintonía con la herencia de Comboni y vivida desde el hoy de nuestra vida. Nos identificamos con Jesucristo,

-Buen Pastor, que busca al alejado

-Samaritano de corazón compasivo para con los excluidos, los enfermos, los alejados, aquellos cuya vida es negada.

-Palabra del Padre, que da sentido e ilumina el frágil devenir humano

-Hijo, que crea fraternidad.

2. Formación y Promoción vocacional

El Instituto Comboniano a lo largo de muchos años ha ido haciendo un camino que encontramos plasmado en documentos, fruto de Asambleas, encuentros y experiencias de personas que han servido a la misión, desde el sector de la formación y la promoción vocacional. Consideramos importante aprovechar de la sabiduría recogida en este tiempo, manteniéndonos abiertos a la acción del Espíritu y respondiendo a los actuales desafíos que hoy encontramos en el trabajo de acompañar a nuestros candidatos. Por tanto, presentamos las siguientes propuestas:

1. El Continente de América-Asia reitera su confianza en el **modelo educativo de la integración***, haciendo lo posible por encontrar co-hermanos con una experiencia positiva y personal de Dios y de Comboni, con pasión, alegría y entusiasmo por la misión y la vocación comboniana, disponibles hacia los pobres, siendo hermanos de los jóvenes, caminando con ellos, para acogerlos, acompañarlos y amarlos. Personas preparadas y dedicadas; para ello ofrecerá a los promotores vocacionales y formadores los medios necesarios para una adecuada preparación a su trabajo antes y durante su servicio. Además, para el conocimiento y la necesaria profundización de ese modelo pedagógico, proponemos que continúen los encuentros provinciales y

continentales de formación para los acompañantes (promotores vocacionales y formadores) y se les proporcione el material adecuado asegurándose de que todos los miembros de una provincia/delegación lo conozcan, de modo que las comunidades sean comunidades formativas, corresponsables en la tarea de formar a los futuros discípulos misioneros (cfr. *Aparecida* 276 ss) e incrementando una cultura vocacional.

2. En todas las provincias/delegaciones de América-Asia nos preocupamos por ofrecer una formación que responda a las nuevas exigencias de la misión que nos exige vivir la vida en plenitud (Jn 10, 10) y defenderla en todas sus dimensiones, inspirados en el Evangelio (Jesús, Buen Pastor, Samaritano, e Hijo: Palabra, servicio, comunión) y los valores Combonianos: corazón de Jesús (RV 3), Misterio de la Cruz (RV 4), los más pobres y abandonados (RV 5), salvar África con África (RV 7), Cenáculo de Apóstoles (RV 39), así como tener presentes las indicaciones de la *Ratio Studiorum Fundamental* y las conclusiones de las varias asambleas celebradas (Pesaro, Limone, Palencia...), con un decidido esfuerzo para inculturar los mencionados valores a la realidad cultural de cada contexto. En este sentido, se privilegiará la formación de los acompañantes en el mismo continente, aprovechando de las iniciativas que nos ofrece la Iglesia local o el mismo Instituto.

3. Que en la Asamblea Intercapitular de 2012 se evalúe el servicio misionero en curso y la duración de las etapas formativas existentes. Asimismo se revise la praxis de la continentalidad de la formación y las experiencias de los estudiantes de teología insertos en comunidades combonianas.

NB El objetivo de este modelo es la humanización entendida como respuesta al amor gratuito e incondicional de Dios, mediante un camino de integración humano-espiritual de la persona para una respuesta más asumida, libre, responsable, capaz y generosa a la llamada de Dios.*

3.El gobierno en el Instituto

a) Continentalidad

De la reflexión que hemos venido haciendo durante los últimos años y particularmente en la asamblea de los delegados al Capítulo General, el grupo continental América/Asia, creemos que la RdV nos ofrece los elementos fundamentales para que el servicio de la autoridad realice su doble función carismática: animación de las personas y coordinación de nuestra actividad misionera.

Creemos también que la renovación de nuestro Instituto exige crecer aún más en la corresponsabilidad, diálogo y subsidiaridad, atención al proceso de crecimiento integral de los cohermanos-comunidades que les permita una mayor fidelidad a la propia vocación misionera comboniana.

Pensamos que hoy es urgente implementar una dinámica de coordinación continental que, en sintonía con el Instituto, permita una permanente interacción y colaboración entre las provincias y delegaciones. En vista a una eficaz respuesta a las demandas misioneras que nos exige la contextualización de nuestro carisma.

Subrayamos para esta coordinación continental los elementos siguientes:

- Todas las provincias-delegaciones del continente nos comprometemos en la elaboración de un Plan continental definiendo prioridades, metas y estrategias, hasta la próxima Intercapitular.

- Las asambleas continentales de provinciales y delegados tengan carácter deliberativo y no sólo consultivo, respetando las competencias del Consejo General y demás instancias.
- El Consejo General convoque un encuentro anual con los provinciales-delegados del continente para establecer un auténtico proceso de programación y evaluación.
- Que el provincial coordinador del continente sea invitado a participar a la Consulta de Roma cada vez que haya asuntos que lo exijan.
- Como continente nos orientamos por un tipo de reagrupación de circunscripciones no jurídico sino de mutuo acercamiento y colaboración en todas aquellas áreas posibles, siempre en vista a la recualificación de nuestras presencias.

b) Superior General

Habiendo constatado que seis años son insuficientes para un conocimiento y acercamiento apropiado tanto a las provincias como a las realidades del instituto y para implementar las directrices del Capítulo, proponemos que el período de gobierno sea extendido a 8 años sin posibilidad de reelección.

Nota: En caso que el Capítulo General no considere conveniente esta propuesta, nosotros proponemos que la RdV sea modificada en los números 155 y 156 corrigiendo la norma de mayoría de los dos tercios exigida para la reelección del General y los consejeros.

c) Consejo General

Con base en la experiencia hecha en estos últimos años en nuestro continente (América/Asia) en relación con los consejeros y secretarios generales de los distintos sectores, vemos necesario un cambio de la estructura actual que:

- Simplifique la gestión del servicio que ellos dan a todo el Instituto.
- Que facilite la disposición del tiempo que requieren para un acompañamiento eficaz de las jurisdicciones que se les encomienda.
- Que favorezca la comunicación e intercambio entre los provinciales y la administración general.

Para lograr estos objetivos proponemos:

Aumentar el número de los consejeros de 4 a 6. Los consejeros asumen los secretariados generales de:

- Formación de Base
- Animación Misionera
- Evangelización y Justicia y Paz
- Comisión de la formación permanente

Nota: el Vicario General no asume ningún secretariado.

d) Secretariados

Teniendo en cuenta las experiencias de otras instituciones, conscientes del valor de atención a la persona que capítulos anteriores han reconocido y constatando que en la práctica resulta complejo dar respuestas adecuadas, consideramos que es momento de crear un Secretariado de recursos humanos. Este secretariado podría ofrecer al Instituto:

- Un conocimiento realista de los miembros del Instituto con sus potencialidades, cualificaciones, cualidades, opciones y límites.
- Orientaciones concretas para asegurar un mejor acompañamiento de las personas en general y de aquellas que manifiestan una exigencia particular.
- Instrumentos de formación permanente.

- Herramientas para la programación y cualificación del personal.
 - Asesoría multidisciplinar para la formación y la salud integral de las personas en el Instituto.
- e) **Otros**
- Cambiar la norma de entrada en ejercicio del General y su Consejo. Que tome posesión sesenta días después de la clausura del Capítulo.
 - Los períodos de gobierno de los provinciales-delegados y sus consejeros pasen de 3 a 4 años, si los mandatos generales son aprobados para un período de 8 años.

II. ANEXO

Delegación de Asia

1. Introducción

La apertura de los misioneros combonianos en Asia se hizo realidad hace 20 años con un objetivo principal: la primera evangelización en China. La presencia en las Filipinas es necesaria para un acercamiento logístico a China, además de ofrecer la posibilidad de contribuir a la Iglesia local por medio de la animación misionera y la promoción de vocaciones para la misión.

2. Situación socio-política y económica

Los Misioneros Combonianos estamos presentes en tres países asiáticos.

La República Popular China cuenta con una población de 1.300 millones de habitantes. Después de décadas de aislamiento tras el triunfo de Partido Comunista de Mao Tse Tung en 1949, China ha entrado en los últimos años en un proceso de apertura en vistas de un desarrollo tecnológico y económico. En la actualidad el gobierno ejerce un control estricto sobre toda actividad política y religiosa.

Dentro de China estamos presentes en **Macau SAR** (Special Administrative Region) que es uno de los territorios más pequeños y poblados del mundo: cuenta con 18,800 habitantes por km², la mayoría de los cuales son inmigrantes de China continental. Macau sufre y se beneficia de la presencia de grandes casinos que han contribuido a su desarrollo y rápido crecimiento económico. Al mismo tiempo la sociedad se ha visto afectada por un creciente individualismo y pérdida de los valores éticos con los consiguientes problemas en las familias. Desde 1999 Macau es parte de China.

Las Filipinas es un país de contrastes económicos y sociales. Numerosos casos de corrupción han llevado a una creciente falta de confianza en los líderes políticos. Las dificultades económicas han provocado una fuerte emigración de más de 10 millones de trabajadores (10% de la población). La familia es la institución más afectada por este movimiento migratorio: mientras que se da una mejora de en las condiciones económicas el coste es de familias rotas o separadas e hijos que en muchos casos crecen sin aluno de sus padres.

Taiwan cuenta con una población de 23 millones, la mayoría de los cuales son de origen chino. Taiwán vivió momentos de separación y tensión con China, pero en la actualidad el Gobierno busca maneras de promover lazos más estrechos a nivel económico, cultural y de comunicación. Taiwán cuenta con una economía estable y creciente basada en el desarrollo tecnológico con una baja inflación y paro. La crisis económica actual está teniendo su impacto en la vida de la gente más sencilla.

3. Situación religiosa y eclesial

La Iglesia en la **República Popular China** vive momentos de crecimiento dentro de un contexto de control por parte de las autoridades civiles. Los años de aislamiento han llevado a la necesidad de formación seria de los agentes pastorales. En la actualidad los

retos mayores son superar ciertas divisiones internas, un creciente compromiso social y un asumir la tarea evangelizadora dentro de la sociedad china y más allá de sus fronteras.

Por otro lado **Macau** ha sido históricamente un centro de actividad misionera. Los católicos representan el 3.6% de la población. La Iglesia cuenta con la estima y el respeto del gobierno en Macau debido a su aportación en la educación y las prestaciones sociales. El clero diocesano es escaso y de una edad media alta.

En **Las Filipinas** los católicos son más del 80% de la población y la Iglesia Católica ha jugado un papel muy importante en la vida social y política del país. La Iglesia aún conserva su voz aunque algo debilitada aunque el reto actual es acercarse más a los grupos más desfavorecidos y alejados: los pobres, los cristianos nominales, otras Iglesias y religiones (sobre todo a los musulmanes). Cada vez se siente más la necesidad de formación, catequesis y animación de cara a una mayor apertura misionera de una Iglesia a menudo cerrada en si misma, clericalizada y sacramentalista. Poco a poco los laicos van asumiendo su labor de ser evangelizadores de su propia gente.

En **Taiwán** los cristianos son apenas el 3% de la población y los católicos el 1%. El país goza de libertad religiosa. El gran reto para la Iglesia y los misioneros en el país es compartir el Evangelio en una sociedad altamente modernizada, consumista y centrada en el trabajo y la producción.

4. Presentación de la Delegación en números

La Delegación cuenta con 20 miembros: 19 padres, 1 hermano distribuidos en 6 comunidades.

En la Formación de base hay 3 escolásticos, 1 novicio y 8 postulantes.

En la Delegación se hablan 4 lenguas (inglés, cantonés, mandarín y tagalog).

5. El Camino recorrido y el crecimiento en la Delegación desde el último Capítulo

a. Consolidando una presencia misionera en Asia

La Delegación ha caminado, en los últimos años, hacia una consolidación estratégica de nuestra presencia en el mundo chino y hacia una presencia de animación misionera en las Filipinas. La dificultad de trabajar en China y la experiencia adquirida con los años nos lleva a afirmar que la consolidación de nuestra presencia misionera en China necesita un mínimo de tres comunidades (ya establecidas):

1 – La comunidad en la Parroquia de San José Obrero en Macau. Es una presencia de evangelización en un contexto parroquial. La participación en la diócesis de Macau nos garantiza el apoyo necesario para moverse con más facilidad en China continental.

2 – La comunidad en la Parroquia de Ren Ai en Taipei (Taiwan). Trabaja en la pastoral y en la primera evangelización. Además ofrece posibilidades para estudiar y practicar el mandarín (la lengua oficial en China) en el marco de una comunidad comboniana y en un contexto pastoral, que garantiza una preparación adecuada para el apostolado en China continental.

3 – La comunidad de San Zhao Rong en Macau tiene como foco principal el trabajo y los proyectos en China continental. Esta comunidad se encarga de llevar adelante el proyecto de Feng Xiang (FX), un proyecto dedicado a promover la formación de agentes pastorales para la Iglesia en China continental y al mismo tiempo promover e implementar proyectos de promoción humana en colaboración con la iglesia local.

Por otro lado en las **Filipinas** hemos renovado las estructuras físicas de la comunidad en Roosevelt, sede en la actualidad del Postulantado y del Noviciado. El Comboni Mission Center, además de acoger la revista World Mission, contribuye de manera significativa en la animación misionera.

También se dio un paso hacia una nueva presencia en el sur de las Filipinas, pero la comunidad está suspendida después de tres años de estar abierta por falta de personal.

b. Comunidades y personal

Las realidades culturales y sociales en Asia presentan un gran reto a la vida en comunidad y al trabajo pastoral. Sentimos la fragilidad de algunas de nuestras comunidades debido al número reducido de miembros en algunos casos y a la existencia de actitudes individualistas en otros.

c. Llevando adelante la misión

- **Evangelización.** Las comunidades en parroquias en Macau y Taipei contribuyen de manera muy significativa (dentro de su pequeñez) a la evangelización en sus contextos y son la base para el apostolado de los combonianos en China continental. Los co-hermanos que trabajan en China están preparados porque antes han pasado años en las comunidades y en las parroquias.

- **Animación Misionera.** Esta es nuestra mayor contribución a la Iglesia en las Filipinas por medio de la revista World Mission. Constatamos que es bien acogida, aunque supone un reto mantener o incrementar el número de suscripciones. Además se dan otras formas de animación misionera: trabajos pastorales y vocacionales, presencia en la OMP diocesana, etc.

Desde hace tiempo el grupo en las Filipinas siente la necesidad de un compromiso pastoral misionero concreto que además de enraizarnos en la realidad nos haría más creíbles y significativos en la Iglesia local.

- **Promoción Vocacional y Formación de base.** La promoción y formación de vocaciones para la misión es una de las mayores preocupaciones de la Delegación. En los últimos seis años se ha dado una disminución en el número de candidatos. La apertura a acoger candidatos de la China continental no ha dado muchos resultados por el momento.

- **Economía.** En la delegación las comunidades comparten con el 15% de todos sus ingresos.

6. Algunas notas de la presencia en Asia

- Los compromisos de primera evangelización en Asia son expresión de la identidad misionera de nuestro Instituto. En el contexto de Macau y Taipei las parroquias son el lugar apropiado para la catequesis de los nuevos catecúmenos, para la formación de la comunidad Cristiana y para el diálogo inter-religioso.

- La misión en China es particularmente difícil, pues se necesitan de largos periodos de preparación (de 4 a 5 años) para estudiar la lengua e irse adentrando en la cultura.

- Los co-hermanos filipinos están llevando adelante algunos de los trabajos en la Delegación. Deseamos que en el futuro vayan tomando mayores responsabilidades. El proceso aún puede ser largo, puesto que algunos (7) de los filipinos de los primeros grupos han dejado el Instituto o están en proceso de incardinación.

- El hecho de que dentro de una misma Delegación haya dos realidades tan distintas es al mismo tiempo una bendición y un gran reto, sobre todo a la hora de mover el personal dentro de la Delegación. Mientras que los que trabajan en China pueden ser destinados con facilidad a las Filipinas, lo contrario no es posible debido al largo proceso de preparación.

- En los últimos seis años un buen número de co-hermanos han dejado la Delegación por diversos motivos y no ha habido un número equivalente de co-hermanos destinados a Asia. El grupo trabajando en China se ha visto reducido a un mínimo de siete misioneros distribuidos en tres comunidades. Dos co-hermanos con la preparación

necesaria para trabajar en el mundo Chino están destinados (por necesidad) en el Postulante y en la Administración en las Filipinas.

7. Perspectivas para el futuro

Mirando al frente con optimismo confiamos que en el futuro la Delegación contará con comunidades estables y numéricamente completas. Siendo realistas sabemos que esto será posible sólo si hay un apoyo decidido por parte del Capítulo General y de la Administración General a la misión en Asia.

Somos conscientes de que las comunidades crecerán como agentes de evangelización si se convierten en lugares donde los miembros crecen juntos, se apoyan mutuamente y viven la alegría de la consagración para la misión. Esto llama por un compromiso personal y comunitario a la oración y la formación permanente y se manifiesta en el compartir fraterno y la planificación comunitaria de las actividades y del trabajo.

La evangelización en China es una tarea que nos reta como instituto misionero. Para llevarla adelante necesitamos sentirla como nuestra y comprometernos con personal preparado. En estos momentos,

- Afirmamos una vez más la validez de la presencia de los Misioneros Combonianos en Asia en general y en el mundo Chino en particular. Nuestra presencia en Asia es una riqueza para el carisma misionero y comboniano, además de ayudar al Instituto a mantener el foco en el acercamiento a los pueblos en los que la Palabra de vida no ha sido aún proclamada.

- Constatamos que la evangelización en China está vinculada a la existencia de un grupo de co-hermanos preparados para esta misión. Es necesario que haya una inversión por parte del Instituto ya que la preparación para esta misión lleva tiempo.

En estos momentos la Delegación siente la necesidad de un apoyo efectivo expresado en el compartir generoso y sacrificado de lo que somos y tenemos como Instituto misionero y dejando que la misión en Asia nos enriquezca y contribuya a la renovación de nuestro Instituto.

EUROPA

MISIONEROS COMBONIANOS DEL CORAZÓN DE JESÚS

PROVINCIAS DE EUROPA

RELACIÓN CONTINENTAL

PARA EL XVII CAPITULO GENERAL

INTRODUCCIÓN

Tras el trabajo realizado en cada una de las provincias de Europa, se tuvo la Asamblea continental de preparación al Capítulo General en Pésaro del 14 al 24 de abril. El presente informe continental es el fruto del trabajo realizado y expresa el sentimiento de comunión y el camino que vamos realizando juntos como misioneros combonianos en Europa.

A pesar de nuestras diferencias y de la difícil realidad en la que estamos viviendo, nos sentimos llamados a responder con optimismo y entusiasmo a los grandes retos que la sociedad y la iglesia europeas nos presentan. La convicción de que el Espíritu guiará nuestros pasos en el XVII Capítulo General alimenta nuestra esperanza para seguir trabajando y ser testigos del Reino de Cristo, convencidos de nuestra vocación y de nuestro ser misioneros en Europa.

REALIDAD SOCIAL, POLITICA Y ECONOMICA

Nuestras Circunscripciones de Europa (Curia, Italia, España, Portugal, LP y DSP) están integradas en el sistema socio-político y económico de la Unión Europea. Participan, por lo tanto, de sus fuerzas y sus debilidades.

Entidades como el G20 están luchando por mantener el capitalismo y el neoliberalismo. La urbanización, la migración y la globalización son tres fenómenos muy presentes en la vida de Europa. Tras un período de bonanza económica, hoy nuestros países respectivos se resienten de la actual crisis económica global, que está dando lugar a nuevos sectores y niveles de pobreza. Hay muchas familias que sufren, incluso en las ciudades, debido al desempleo creciente. La gente busca el confort y se adapta con realismo a la situación, tratando de sacar el mayor provecho posible: hedonismo y consumismo, favorecidos particularmente por la gran influencia de los medios de comunicación y la publicidad.

Vivimos en un mundo en movimiento. El período de bonanza atrajo a muchos inmigrantes, especialmente de África, América Latina, Asia y los países del este europeo, lo que ha dado lugar a un fuerte crecimiento en la diversidad cultural. Esta diversidad, unida a la crisis económica y a la falta de empleo estable, ha dado lugar a un incremento del racismo y la xenofobia y ha fortalecido la “Fortress Europe”. Por otra parte, las restricciones para conceder los permisos de residencia o asilo son cada vez más duras para los que vienen del sur del mundo.

En el campo político, asistimos a una falta de credibilidad en los políticos, que usan la política para sus propios intereses con un progresivo desinterés en los asuntos políticos en detrimento del servicio a los demás. El sentido del servicio público se ha perdido. Imagen e intereses personales y financieros han sustituido el sentido de la confianza y la fidelidad a la conciencia. Hay también una debilidad de los sindicatos. El sentido y la

comprensión del bien común están desapareciendo. Los gobiernos privatizan los beneficios y nacionalizan las deudas.

Hay un gran número de musulmanes que ejercen una gran influencia cultural y religiosa en muchas sociedades europeas. Después del 11N y de los atentados terroristas en algunas ciudades europeas, los musulmanes han empezado a estar en el punto de mira y han sido objeto de discriminación y temidos como posibles agentes de terrorismo que constituyen una seria amenaza para la seguridad europea. Demográficamente están creciendo en número y son vistos como una amenaza que invade Europa.

REALIDAD ECLESIAL Y RELIGIOSA

Ante la situación de secularización y de ateísmo militante y la presencia de otras religiones (Islam, ortodoxos) que se están viviendo en todo el continente, la Iglesia no parece haber encontrado aún la respuesta adecuada. El número de personas que participa activamente en la vida de la Iglesia descende cada vez más, especialmente entre la población joven, incluso en países de gran tradición católica, como Italia, Irlanda, España o Portugal. Hay todavía mucho clericalismo y poco protagonismo de los laicos, aunque allí donde hay laicos comprometidos, se ve más vitalidad en la Iglesia.

En general, la Iglesia es poco creativa y tiende a replegarse sobre sí misma, con una tendencia a lo tradicional y orientada a una cierta centralización. La sociedad tiene cada vez menos confianza en los estamentos jerárquicos de la Iglesia, aunque siguen valorándose instituciones como Caritas o los misioneros.

La movilidad de las poblaciones hace cuestionar la organización “tradicional” de la parroquia y valorizar los nuevos movimientos, que están experimentando un importante auge. En algunas Iglesias locales hay grupos parroquiales, beneficiarios de una pastoral juvenil iluminada por los movimientos e institutos religiosos, sorprenden por la vitalidad cristiana y la creatividad apostólica. Hoy el mundo de los jóvenes supone para nosotros un gran reto; no sólo a nivel de convocatoria, sino también de compromiso misionero “ad vitam”.

La Iglesia local tiende a identificar la misión *ad gentes* con la nueva evangelización o con el compromiso con el tercer mundo. En algunas diócesis, se da a la misión *ad gentes* una atención secundaria. Sin embargo, se nota una concienciación de las Iglesias locales como sujetos de misión, lo que hace que asistamos a un crecimiento del voluntariado misionero laical, sea organizado por las diócesis como por los institutos misioneros o las organizaciones católicas.

Todos estos cambios socio-eclesiales y las transformaciones verificadas en la sociedad nos han llevado, a lo largo de estos años, a repensar el sentido y el modo de nuestra presencia, especialmente en nuestra actividad misionera, de pastoral vocacional y de formación y evangelización. Estos cambios nos interpelan, puesto que ya no estamos en una sociedad católica. Cosas que antes eran evidentes, ya no lo son hoy. Por otra parte, se abre el espacio “*ad gentes*”.

REALIDAD COMBONIANA

	Total	Padres	Hermanos	Esc. / CIF	Edad media	> 70	< 50	Comunidades	Postulantes
DSP	61	39	21	1	67,4	28	0	8	1
Italia	256	203	47	5 / 1	71,1	154	23	23	4
España	38	34	4	0	58,8	2	5	6	2
LP	18	18	0	0	65,6	7	0	6	0
Portugal	41	31	10	0	54	5	17	6	3
Polonia	21	11	1	9	42,7	0	8	2	3

De los datos de cada Provincia destacan algunos elementos que marcan de manera indudable nuestro ser en Europa:

Envejecimiento:

La media de edad es, en general, muy elevada, lo que nos cuestiona y estimula a buscar nuevas formas de cara al futuro. El 86 por ciento de los hermanos de Europa tienen más de 50 años.

Hermanos ancianos y enfermos:

El número de hermanos ancianos y enfermos es cada vez mayor y, en circunscripciones como la italiana y la DSP, es un hecho que determina mucho la vida de la provincia y limita sus actividades. Otras provincias, como España o Portugal, han empezado a plantearse qué hacer de cara a la atención que estos hermanos necesitan.

Hermanos:

Algunas circunscripciones, como la LP o Polonia, no tienen ningún miembro Hermano. En España son tan sólo 4. El número va descendiendo.

Formación y pastoral juvenil vocacional

El número de formandos ha descendido enormemente. Actualmente tenemos muy pocos postulantes y ningún novicio. El tema de la pastoral vocacional nos está interpelando de manera muy fuerte. Hemos de buscar nuevos caminos.

Internacionalidad:

La mayoría de las provincias han destacado la falta de internacionalidad como una carencia importante. De cara al futuro es un aspecto que todos vemos como una gran necesidad que habría que cubrir. No se trata de supervivencia, sino que ayudaría a dar un testimonio de cara a la gente y nos serviría de ayuda y favorecería el compartir entre

nosotros. Esto supone una preparación mutua, tanto de los que puedan venir como de nosotros mismos.

Estructuras:

Tenemos grandes estructuras que respondían a otras exigencias que en la actualidad ya no son válidas. Hoy prácticamente no las utilizamos y suponen un gran esfuerzo para su mantenimiento, tanto en personal como en medios económicos.

Nuestra vida:

Salvo algunas excepciones, nuestras comunidades son sólidas en cuanto al número de miembros. Hay un cierto sentido de pertenencia en nuestras comunidades y provincias. A pesar de que el individualismo está siempre presente y supone una dificultad, logramos llevar adelante una cierta vida comunitaria. Se hacen los retiros y encuentros comunitarios mensuales, aunque nuestro compartir se da mucho más a nivel del hacer que del ser.

La Ratio Missionis ha ayudado mucho en este sentido. La valoración que se ha hecho de ella ha sido, por lo general bastante positiva. Casi todas las provincias subrayan la necesidad de fortalecer el sentido de comunidad misionera comboniana.

La ausencia del fondo común en algunas provincias y las grandes estructuras que tenemos, marcan fuertemente nuestro estilo de vida y dificultan el compartir la vida y los bienes.

NUESTRA ACTIVIDAD

Nuestro “hacer”, la manera que tenemos de responder a las necesidades que hay en Europa, depende mucho de lo que “somos”. Nuestro concepto y nuestra visión de lo que hoy es la “Misión”, marca de manera muy clara nuestro trabajo y lo que hacemos como Misioneros Combonianos en Europa. De los informes de las provincias se desprende que estamos en búsqueda de ese “ser”.

Estamos llamados a trabajar y dialogar con la Iglesia local. Nos preguntamos cómo inserirnos y con qué modalidades podemos trabajar y colaborar con una Iglesia local de la que también formamos parte, enriqueciéndola con nuestro propio carisma.

Animación Misionera

Esta actividad es la primera prioridad de nuestras provincias, aunque somos conscientes de que la distinción entre animación misionera y evangelización no es ahora tan clara. Constatamos que no es suficiente hablar de animación misionera solamente en términos de actividades misioneras, preferimos hablar hoy de presencia misionera, que incluye la animación, pero que subraya el estilo de vida y nuestra forma de ser. La agenda de nuestra presencia y actividad misionera viene de la escucha del mundo, de los signos de los tiempos y de los lugares y de la escucha del grito de los pobres. Algunos sienten que la evangelización está esencialmente unida a nuestro modo de estar presente, mientras otros creen que la evangelización es responsabilidad de la Iglesia local.

Muchos de nuestros hermanos se sienten poco preparados para responder a las nuevas necesidades y peticiones de las Iglesias locales. Los ámbitos y los métodos de animación misionera han evolucionado mucho tanto en el contenido como en el

lenguaje. Constatamos que somos parte integral de la Iglesia local, ofreciéndole los dones de nuestro carisma específico y de nuestra experiencia misionera.

La animación misionera nos ofrece canales de colaboración con otros organismos (institutos misioneros, ONGs, centros misioneros, diócesis, OMP, etc...). Los medios más utilizados y que siguen teniendo una gran importancia, son nuestras revistas, que continúan siendo muy apreciadas. En este campo destaca el encuentro anual que se viene haciendo a nivel de directores y responsables de medios de comunicación para programar, compartir y evaluar juntos. La valoración es muy positiva. Nos preocupa el descenso del número de suscripciones. Hay, además, otros muchos caminos, como las peregrinaciones, la caravana de la paz y otros. Dadas nuestras limitaciones y todo lo considerado anteriormente, la voz de Comboni en el mundo de los medios de comunicación europeos (revistas, Internet, exposiciones...) exige una formación profesional y es eficaz dentro y fuera de los ámbitos de la Iglesia.

Evangelización

Incluimos aquí todas las actividades que realizamos en los campos de justicia y paz, inmigrantes y LMC; tres aspectos que todas las provincias consideran también como una prioridad de nuestra presencia en Europa.

Inmigrantes:

Todas las provincias son sensibles a este tema y algunas están comprometidas ya con personal dedicado a ello. Es un tema que preocupa a todos y al que debemos dar una respuesta como combonianos en Europa. No ha habido ninguna comunicación ni encuentro europeo a este nivel, lo que vemos como una carencia importante que hay que solucionar.

Justicia y Paz:

Aunque todas las provincias se sienten implicadas en este tema, cada una trabaja según sus peculiaridades. Es un camino diversificado en el que todavía tenemos mucho que hacer. Todos coincidimos en que es un campo importante de nuestro trabajo y presencia en Europa, en donde tenemos que involucramos más. Una nueva visión de la misión se transforma en acción global y ofrece una nueva espiritualidad y una opción por los pobres.

Algunas provincias tienen sus comisiones y personal dedicado a temas de JPIC, en contacto con otros institutos religiosos, la Iglesia local y organismos dedicados a temas de justicia y paz y han empezado a tomar ciertas opciones en este sentido (banca ética, opciones en el estilo de vida, etc...).

Nuestros medios de comunicación social son una buena muestra de nuestra implicación en JPIC y un medio privilegiado para la concienciación dentro y fuera de nuestras comunidades. Varias provincias enviaron representantes al Foro Social Mundial y al Foro Comboniano de Brasil.

La Provincia de Italia ha iniciado ya una experiencia de inserción en Castelvolturno y en Nápoles, donde las comunidades, inseridas en casas pequeñas, están al servicio de los más pobres y marginados de la sociedad. La LP ha iniciado también una experiencia en el sur de Londres dedicada al trabajo con inmigrantes y solicitantes de asilo.

LMC:

El movimiento está presente en la mayoría de las provincias, aunque el grado de identidad y crecimiento varía mucho de unas provincias a otras. Algunos llevan ya un gran camino realizado en vías de su propia autonomía, tanto organizativa como económica. Han realizado ya varios encuentros a nivel europeo, lo que les ha ayudado en el camino que están haciendo y ha permitido que exista ya una coordinación a nivel continental.

Pastoral juvenil vocacional y formación

Los rápidos cambios nos desafían. Las diversas tendencias juveniles conviven más con las transformaciones y se alejan de los adultos e instituciones. El percibir que los jóvenes son una oportunidad para el servicio misionero, es entrar en clave de Pastoral Juvenil Vocacional. Sin embargo, nuestro desafío mayor está en confiar y convocar a los jóvenes para la misión.

Es un sector vital, al que deberíamos dedicar el personal necesario. Sentimos la necesidad de integrar más las actividades de animación misionera y las de la pastoral juvenil vocacional. Todas nuestras actividades deberían tener presente este aspecto vocacional y juvenil.

Todas las provincias están comprometidas en la pastoral juvenil vocacional a través de diversas actividades: encuentros, grupos de trabajo, experiencias de comunidad, actividades misioneras, peregrinaciones, etc. Todas ellas ofrecen el servicio de acompañamiento a los jóvenes.

Debemos trabajar más en común la pastoral juvenil vocacional a nivel continental. Realizar actividades de manera conjunta (Camino de Santiago, Limone, encuentros de jóvenes a nivel europeo...).

Cada comunidad debería ser un centro atrayente para los jóvenes. En cada provincia debería haber una comunidad formativa (pequeña e inserida en medio de la gente) que infunda el espíritu vocacional, con un testimonio de vida que alimente a los jóvenes y a los formandos en el espíritu vocacional y misionero. Para ello es necesario que los miembros de esa comunidad estén formados y preparados para trabajar en este campo. La mayoría de las provincias reconoce el valor vocacional de las comunidades inseridas, pequeñas y acogedoras y que viven con un estilo de vida que da testimonio de nuestra identidad misionera, presencia y compromiso.

En cuanto a la formación, notamos la necesidad de una transformación en nuestras estructuras formativas para adaptarlas a la nueva realidad que vivimos. Hemos de buscar fórmulas comunes para lograr una cierta unicidad antes de entrar en el noviciado (noviciado único para todo el continente). Algunas provincias han estudiado y están implementando diferentes caminos para introducir a los jóvenes en la vida comboniana (comunidades de inserción, de formación..).

Formación Permanente

Todo el proceso de la Ratio Missionis supuso un gran empeño para todas las provincias. Fue un gran instrumento de formación permanente que ha ayudado a descubrir un sentido más profundo de pertenencia y a vivir y descubrir nuestra propia vocación. Demandó mucho tiempo y absorbió muchas energías, pero ha producido en casi todas un buen fruto. Además de todo lo hecho, la Ratio nos ha permitido también tener una visión más de conjunto de todo el Instituto.

Ha habido en cada provincia diversos encuentros de FP: (ejercicios espirituales, formación de superiores, formadores....).

Aunque el trabajo del GERT es apreciado, constatamos la dificultad para hacer accesibles sus aportaciones a los hermanos. Los diversos sectores en Europa han organizado encuentros que han ayudado a tener una visión más amplia, conocer mejor al otro y profundizar y construir una visión común.

Hermanos en dificultad

Algunas provincias tocan ligeramente este tema. Son hermanos a los que hay que ayudar y tratar con comprensión y confidencialidad. Podría ayudar una cierta colaboración entre las provincias en este sentido. Aunque es de destacar el esfuerzo que se está haciendo, especialmente a través de la comisión de la FP para ayudar a los hermanos en dificultad, es necesario mejorarlo.

Economía

El dinero y el uso de los bienes tienen una gran importancia en la manera como nos presentamos y como nos percibe la gente. Estamos todavía lejos de evangelizar nuestra economía.

La crisis económica nos ha llevado a cuestionarnos nuestro estilo de vida y ha llevado a muchas comunidades a optar por un estilo de vida más sobrio. Algunas provincias funcionan desde hace ya tiempo con el Fondo Común. Otras están todavía lejos de él, aunque haciendo un cierto camino.

Es necesaria una mayor y mejor formación de los ecónomos, tanto locales como provinciales. Necesitaríamos tener consejos a la hora de invertir nuestros fondos, tanto en el aspecto ético como financiero.

Varias provincias han aumentado la ayuda que se envía anualmente a los hermanos que están en misión.

Además de las diferentes asambleas de administradores que se han hecho en cada provincia, se han realizado varios encuentros de administradores provinciales a nivel europeo.

Todas las circunscripciones de Europa pertenecen al sistema patrimonio estable recientemente establecido en el instituto. Aún así, esta iniciativa crea todavía alguna perplejidad y algunas dudas.

Otros temas

Atención a los enfermos y ancianos

Aunque no es un tema actual en todas las provincias, sí es un asunto que merece nuestra atención. En Italia y en la DSP es un aspecto que se está viviendo ya. Otras provincias, como España o Portugal, empiezan a pensar en ello de cara a un futuro no muy lejano (personal y estructuras)

Actualmente experimentamos una gran dificultad para encontrar personal disponible y con la preparación necesaria para atender a nuestros hermanos enfermos y ancianos.

Rotación:

Es un asunto que nos concierne a todos. El sistema actual de rotación en la mayoría de las provincias dificulta la especialización, la inserción en las comunidades y la continuidad en los trabajos y programaciones. Rotación y servicio cualificado deberían ir juntas. El actual modo de tratar la rotación deja mucho que desear, puede crear conflictos y amargura entre los que están involucrados. Este tema puede ser profundizado con la cuestión de la colaboración entre las provincias de Europa. El capítulo debería estudiarlo para ayudar a las provincias a mantener un equilibrio entre la apertura a la misión y el mantenimiento de nuestra presencia aquí.

Una dificultad que experimentamos es la “esquizofrenia” que se vive con mucha frecuencia de sentirse solamente misioneros cuando partimos, pero no mientras estamos en Europa. Hay una dificultad manifiesta en algunos hermanos para venir a trabajar en Europa y de otros para partir. Esta forma de ver las cosas y de entender la misión, dificulta mucho la inserción de los que llegan y coarta la iniciativa de los que ya están aquí, que sólo piensan en el momento de partir.

Colaboración con la familia comboniana

Nuestra colaboración con la familia comboniana (combonianas, LMC, Seculares....) no se vive de la misma manera en todas las provincias. Nuestra colaboración se centra fundamentalmente en actividades de animación misionera y pastoral juvenil vocacional.

Limone

Limone está en el corazón del Instituto y pertenece a todas las provincias, debería ser llevado adelante por un equipo internacional.

¿Qué misión en Europa?

Ad gentes en Europa

Introducción

Conscientes de nuestra propia realidad como misioneros combonianos en Europa y teniendo presente este contexto concreto en el que estamos llamados a realizar nuestra labor misionera, hemos intentado dar una respuesta a esta pregunta: ¿Cuál es nuestra misión hoy en Europa como Misioneros Combonianos? Presentamos a continuación el fruto de la reflexión que se ha hecho en nuestras provincias.

Como misioneros combonianos en Europa, estamos llamados a salir para un servicio más allá de los confines del continente, pero reconocemos que el compromiso misionero en nuestros países de origen no es en ningún modo menos significativo. Necesitamos crear una mentalidad nueva que nos ayude a trabajar en Europa con alegría y entusiasmo.

En los últimos años las provincias europeas han reflexionado sobre los criterios y campos de trabajo que, como combonianos, debemos implementar. Teniendo en cuenta

que nuestro carisma nos lleva a estar siempre en las fronteras de la Iglesia y de la sociedad, los campos prioritarios de nuestro trabajo en Europa hoy deben ser:

- 1.- Animar a la Iglesia local a la misión hacia los lejanos / *ad gentes* en la movilización de medios materiales y espirituales, incluso de vocaciones, con un compromiso particular hacia los jóvenes.
- 2.- Las situaciones de primera evangelización en el contexto de la gran diversidad cultural, lingüística y social.
- 3.- JPIC para ser voz de los que no tienen voz y capacitar a los que no tienen poder para que su voz sea oída.
 - 3.1.- A través de los medios de comunicación social.
 - 3.2.- Sirviendo a una de las capas más débiles de la sociedad, es decir, los inmigrantes, para promover la acogida y el respeto de su dignidad humana.
 - 3.3.- Integrando el servicio evangélico en los países lejanos para la promoción y el crecimiento de las relaciones equitativas entre los pueblos y la erradicación de las principales causas de la pobreza.

Relación con la Iglesia local

Queremos vivir en colaboración con la Iglesia local, como parte integrante de la misma en la particularidad de nuestro carisma, que la enriquece gracias a la experiencia misionera que traemos de fuera y que compartimos con ella través de la riqueza de las comunidades internacionales; estimulándola para que el trabajo misionero aquí en Europa las abra a otras realidades y no suponga para nosotros una excusa para huir de situaciones de frontera.

Los modos concretos de realizar esta colaboración son:

- 1.- Sensibilizarla para mantener vivo su espíritu misionero *ad gentes*, estimulando el crecimiento de un movimiento misionero global, a través de la formación de animadores locales y grupos misioneros.
- 2.- Estimularla sobre las situaciones locales de frontera colaborando con ella.
- 3.- Ser puente entre las Iglesias del Sur y del Norte. Ser altavoces en la Iglesia europea de otras Iglesias jóvenes con mayores necesidades que las de aquí. Ser Iglesia hoy en Europa debe suponer un dar y un recibir personas y bienes entre las Iglesias.
- 4.- Somos conscientes de que trabajamos por un mundo mejor codo a codo con personas de buena voluntad más allá de cualquier afiliación religiosa.

El respeto por la Iglesia local y la complejidad del mundo contemporáneo exigen un servicio cualificado, con la presencia de algún hermano en centros formativos y teológicos de la Iglesia local y una constante actualización del lenguaje y la metodología, así como una recalificación y formación adecuada de nuestro personal.

Nuestro estilo de vida

Nuestro estilo de vida transmite lo que somos, ya que el instrumento es mensaje en sí mismo. Por ello, nuestra manera de vivir debe reflejar nuestra naturaleza internacional y misionera, por lo que consideramos fundamental:

- 1.-** Tener comunidades internacionales en las que reina la estima y la colaboración entre los miembros, que viven en un ambiente de fraternidad y que irradian un auténtico espíritu misionero allí donde están inseridas.
- 2.-** Tener un estilo de vida sobrio en lo que se refiere al uso que hacemos del dinero, de los bienes materiales y de los medios que usamos.
- 3.-** Un compromiso renovado para adecuar nuestras estructuras a la nueva realidad, reduciendo gastos excesivos y favoreciendo un testimonio de simplicidad. Algunas estructuras pueden ser usadas con más creatividad para ponerlas al servicio de la gente: inmigrantes, asociaciones que comparten nuestros valores etc...

Nuestro estilo de vida y nuestra presencia significativa en el campo de la evangelización, harán visible nuestra identidad misionera; y no sólo ayudaría a la Iglesia local a abrirse a la dimensión *ad gentes*, sino que haría nuestra animación misionera más significativa y ayudaría a nuestros candidatos en su proceso de identificación.

Temáticas Capitulares

Se incluye en este apartado una síntesis de las reflexiones que se han hecho en nuestras respectivas provincias sobre las tres temáticas propuestas para el Capítulo General: Gobierno, Formación y Ratio Missionis; síntesis enriquecida con el trabajo de reflexión hecho durante la Asamblea continental para preparar el Capítulo y elaborar esta relación.

GOBIERNO

1.- Introducción

El servicio de la autoridad, tal y como está implementado en la actualidad, crea un cierto desasosiego en la base debido, en parte, a los cambios y transformaciones de la sociedad, los signos de los tiempos y la fisonomía actual del Instituto. Se constata la necesidad de una mayor descentralización, subsidiaridad y diálogo. Se subraya, por otra parte, que el cambio en la estructura de gobierno no garantiza automáticamente la solución a la rotación del personal. Se pide que se definan bien los programas de actividades prioritarias y los periodos de permanencia en los diferentes trabajos y responsabilidades, para que haya una adecuada programación.

Sentimos la necesidad de preservar la unidad y el espíritu saludable en el Instituto. Al examinar nuestro sistema de gobierno, partimos siempre de la cuestión ¿qué visión de misión tenemos?

Sentimos también la necesidad de evaluar el funcionamiento del Consejo General y de los consejos provinciales, clarificando cuáles son sus competencias (decisiones sobre el personal, rotación, cierre de casas, etc...). Lo que ha surgido en nuestras discusiones

fue la necesidad de más apoyo y más diálogo entre el Consejo General y los consejos provinciales.

2.- Propuesta de gobierno

2.1.- Algunas provincias (E, I, C, DSP) no ven la necesidad de cambiar el modelo de gobierno actual ni aumentar las estructuras ya existentes.

2.2.- La LP prefiere, con algunas adaptaciones apropiadas, el modelo 3, subrayando aun más las funciones de coordinación, la comunión y la subsidiaridad; mientras que Portugal se inclina por el modelo 2.

2.3.- Se necesita valorar más las indicaciones ya presentes en la RV, el Directorio General, el Vademécum del Provincial, etc, especialmente en lo referente a la subsidiaridad, la cooperación, la corresponsabilidad y el diálogo.

2.4.- El Instituto no crece en Europa. No hay personal suficiente para responder a las necesidades básicas en los diferentes sectores de nuestro trabajo. Hay comunidades, por ejemplo, en las que una misma persona es superior y ecónomo. Para ciertos trabajos se podría contar con los laicos.

3.- Secretariados Generales y Otras alternativas

3.1.- Varias provincias son de la idea de conservar los Secretariados de Economía y la Formación a nivel general, y los de la Animación Misionera y la Evangelización pasarlos a nivel continental, para una mejor contextualización. La elección del Secretario a nivel continental, se realizaría a través de los secretarios de ese sector de cada provincia, dejando a los provinciales del continente la nominación oficial del secretario de la AM y de la Evangelización, que residiría en su provincia de pertenencia jurídica.

3.2.- Una provincia prefiere dejar los Secretariados como están, ya que garantizan las líneas generales de reflexión y acción para todo el Instituto. Y otra, que elige el modelo alternativo, propone que los secretariados de Animación Misionera y Evangelización pueden ser asumidos por el CG, al aumentar a seis el número de los Consejeros Generales.

3.4.- Finalmente, una parte de la provincia de Italia propone un Secretariado General (uniendo los actuales Secretariados) que pueda profundizar las cuestiones y ofrecer al Consejo General propuestas de acción, garantizar la memoria del pasado y la continuidad entre los mandatos; y un Secretariado del Personal que pueda tener una visión global de la situación del personal y las necesidades del Instituto, que programe la rotación, promueva la formación permanente y las especializaciones en los diferentes sectores.

4.- El coordinador continental, competencias y autoridad

4.1.- La figura del coordinador continental se considera como un elemento positivo, que incentiva a la base (encuentros, colaboración a nivel de secretarios provinciales, etc.) pero ha de definirse mejor a nivel jurídico y operativo. (AC 2003, 137ss).

5.- Duración del Consejo General y del Superior Provincial

5.1.-La mayoría de las provincias opta por mantener el modelo actual de seis años, ya que la sociedad cambia a ritmo muy rápido, fomentando más la descentralización, la comunión y subsidiaridad, pero cambiando la RdV con la posibilidad de que el Superior General y Consejeros generales puedan ser reelegidos con mayoría absoluta.

5.2.-Se subraya, por otra parte, la importancia de garantizar una cierta continuidad entre las administraciones, bien prolongando el mandato o reeligiendo a algún Consejero General, a través de encuentros prolongados entre el nuevo y el anterior CG, o a través de los Secretariados. Lo mismo vale para el Superior Provincial y su Consejo de un mandato a otro.

5.3.-Portugal propone un mandato de ocho años para el CG y cuatro para el Consejo Provincial.

6.- Unión de Provincias

6.1.- Favorecer un proceso progresivo de agrupación de las provincias, previo una reflexión y unificación de criterios que definan esa agrupación: si es sólo a nivel territorial, o de responsabilidades. La reagrupación de provincias requiere un cambio de perspectiva del Instituto

6.2.-La unión de provincias, simplifica las estructuras y da mayor subsidiaridad e independencia. Ayuda también a afrontar los grandes retos comunes con estrategias comunes y adecuadas.

FORMACIÓN

1.- Observaciones generales

1.1.- *El documento que se envió a las provincias para la reflexión describe el modelo actual de formación y no abre nuevos caminos. No hay una metodología para nuestro tiempo, continúa en la mentalidad del pasado. En términos generales es positivo, aunque no ofrece una evaluación concreta de éxitos ni de los fracasos en el último sexenio. Se reafirma en él la validez de la Ratio Studiorum, aunque algunos puntos de ella deberían ser actualizados (por ejemplo, la edad máxima para ser admitido al postulantado).*

1.2.- *No parece que tenga suficientemente en consideración la diversa realidad social y cultural de la que proceden los candidatos. Todos somos conscientes de que la geografía vocacional ha cambiado.*

1.3.- *No habla de la promoción vocacional ni establece los requisitos necesarios para aceptar a los candidatos.*

1.4.- *Entre las motivaciones que explican los límites y los fracasos de la formación de base, se subraya el estilo de vida de muchas de nuestras comunidades, caracterizado por el individualismo, el escaso compartir y la incoherencia.*

2.- *¿Piensas que el modelo de la formación comboniana con los cuatro niveles (postulantado, noviciado, escolasticado y servicio misionero) y los cuatro aspectos (humano, cristiano, espiritual y misionero) responde a las exigencias de la misión hoy?*

2.1.- El modelo de la formación, esencialmente como exposición teórica, es considerado válido y describe el acompañamiento del formando en todas las fases de la formación. Por otra parte, aparece poco el aspecto eclesial y comunitario. La atención se centra sobre el conocimiento de si mismo y el desarrollo del proyecto personal, con el riesgo de no educar a una confrontación con el otro, con la vida comunitaria y la realidad compleja.

2.2.- Su puesta en práctica no es fácil. Todo el camino de la formación es un proceso de iniciación y de crecimiento que tiene sus etapas, durante las cuales:

- Se ayuda a clarificar y purificar las motivaciones.
- Se subraya el discipulado y el seguimiento.
- Se acentúan particularmente algunos valores: calidad en las relaciones, sobriedad, austeridad, amor como don de si, sacrificio... elementos de nuestra tradición formativa (como la ascesis) que deberían estar más presentes.
- Cultivando un fuerte sentido eclesial se ayuda a los candidatos a conocer y a inserirse en la historia de la familia comboniana para madurar el propio sentido de pertenencia e identificación.

2.3.- La dimensión misionera es importante: una formación que bebe de las fuentes de la misión, que tiene en cuenta la especificidad de la misión comboniana y, eventualmente, la preparación para un ministerio específico al cual el candidato se siente más llamado.

2.4.- El período de servicio misionero durante el tiempo de formación, distinto del tiempo de la preparación académica, debe ser vivido como parte integrante del camino formativo de base. Se debe clarificar aún más su finalidad y preparar y acompañar a los escolásticos que lo realizan.

Se han expresado algunas dudas sobre la etapa más adecuada para ofrecer este servicio misionero: más que al final de los estudios teológicos, sería más ventajoso al final del postulantado.

2.5.- Es necesario promover itinerarios formativos más contextualizados (inculturados) y personalizados, teniendo también en cuenta la madurez y la edad de algunos formandos; una formación que parta de la realidad del candidato y no solamente de nuestros esquemas.

3.- *¿Piensas que la fragmentación del camino formativo en contextos socio-geográficos diversos y con diferentes formadores es negativa para el crecimiento de los formandos? Si sí, ¿qué sugieres para obviar este límite?*

3.1.- El ciclo formativo está muy fragmentado y le falta continuidad. Un cambio exagerado de formadores y del ambiente cultural durante el camino de la formación de base es negativo. A ello le sigue con frecuencia un fuerte salto cultural y lingüístico en el primer destino misionero. Es importante, pues, orientar el camino formativo hacia la continentalidad.

3.2.- *Postulantado:*

- Hay que darle una importancia fundamental al postulante, base de todo el camino de formación. Debe tener las características de un camino catecumenal. El empeño académico no debe prevalecer sobre otros valores y vías educativas.
- La duración no debe estar ligada al camino académico, sino al proceso formativo y a un discernimiento vocacional serio.

3.3.- Habría que hacer mucho más por los formadores del postulante, que es una etapa crucial de la formación. Si no encontramos formadores, habría que reducir las casas: demasiadas casas de formación y pocos formadores.

3.4.- Cuidar la selección, la formación y la rotación de los formadores

- Los formadores deben trabajar en equipo y en comunión y estar en condiciones de guiar a los candidatos en el conocimiento de sí mismos, atentos en la medida de lo posible a que los formandos no arrastren problemas personales esperando que sean resueltos en las siguientes etapas de formación.
- Existen varias lagunas a las que hay que estar atentos: psico-diagnóstico antes de entrar en el postulante, afectividad, sexualidad, problemas de autoridad, incapacidad de escuchar al otro, soledad, falta de algunos aspectos humanos, etc.

4.- Conscientes de que la calidad de nuestro testimonio de vida misionera influye positivamente o negativamente en la formación de nuestros candidatos, ¿en qué aspectos de nuestra vida personal y comunitaria tenemos que convertirnos para favorecer el crecimiento de nuestros hermanos en formación?

4.1.- Nuestro testimonio personal y comunitario de vida consagrada y de misión, tiene una influencia decisiva en el camino de formación. Es preciso construir comunidades formativas y vocacionales formadas por combonianos coherentes que sepan vivir y transmitir los propios valores con entusiasmo.

El testimonio de muchos hermanos ancianos que viven todavía en plenitud y con serenidad y entusiasmo su vocación misionera, es un elemento positivo a valorizar plenamente.

5.- ¿Qué sugieres para contextualizar la propuesta formativa en Europa?

5.1.- Estamos convencidos de que en Europa todavía hay jóvenes llamados a la misión y dispuestos a buscar la voluntad de Dios siguiendo nuestro camino formativo. Se trata de identificar nuevos caminos y nuevas modalidades para encontrarlos y lanzarles la propuesta misionera.

5.2.- Hay que organizar periódicamente a nivel continental cursos de formación para formadores. También es importante promover la especialización de hermanos en teología y misionología para que puedan enseñar en los institutos que frecuentan nuestros candidatos.

5.3.- Se deben promover comunidades vocacionales y de formación, pequeñas e inseridas, marcadas profundamente por el testimonio de la vocación misionera, la proximidad de la gente y con una pastoral bien definida.

5.4.- Se debe hacer un estudio cuidado que permita conocer más eficazmente la pastoral juvenil a nivel europeo, favoreciendo encuentros entre jóvenes y subrayando la importancia de experiencias concretas en misión, organizando iniciativas en este sentido.

6.- Otras propuestas (de algunas Provincias).

6.1.- Repensar el postulantedo:

- Período de catecumenado, introducción al camino del discipulado
- Formación en familia con un acompañamiento personal y una seria preparación para entrar en el noviciado.

6.2.- Como consecuencia, el noviciado sería reestructurado con una fase de preparación inmediata que incluye el estudio de la lengua.

6.3.- Que se implemente el proyecto de continentalidad de los escolasticados y que se reafirme la validez de la experiencia de pastoral misionera (ya en marcha) y de los escolasticados inseridos.

6.4.- Que se dé especial atención al paso de las fases formativas y a la asignación a la primera comunidad de misión.

RATIO MISSIONIS

Introducción

Para el trabajo sobre la Ratio Missionis, se tomó como elemento de base la síntesis que se hizo en Maia en junio del año pasado sobre la segunda fase (discernimiento), la cual se ha enriquecido con las aportaciones de las provincias y del trabajo en esta Asamblea Europea de preparación al Capítulo.

En la presentación del camino hecho en cada provincia durante la fase del discernimiento, destacan los siguientes aspectos:

- La dificultad que tenemos a nivel de vida comunitaria, a menudo afectada por el individualismo y el activismo.
- Un sentido débil de pertenencia y de identidad.
- La tendencia a enfocar nuestra actividad como misioneros en el Sur del mundo, en la misión, y no de igual manera en Europa.
- Tenemos diferentes espiritualidades.
- Dificultad para identificar lo específico comboniano en Europa.
- A menudo, la justificación inicial de los temas propuestos en las fichas de trabajo ha sido percibida como demasiado negativa.

Espiritualidad A

“La espiritualidad comboniana está centrada en Jesús Buen Pastor como fuente de su vida y de su misión”

Constataciones previas

A nivel general, se siente la necesidad de un cambio en un contexto europeo marcado por una fuerte y rápida transformación. Un cambio que nos ayude a profundizar y revitalizar nuestra espiritualidad misionera comboniana.

Propuestas

A nivel continental

- Necesitamos retomar una espiritualidad encarnada en la nueva realidad que está viviendo el continente europeo.
- Mantener o buscar compromisos concretos con la gente como expresión de nuestro ser misionero. No quedarnos encerrados en casa.

A nivel de Instituto

- Dar mayor importancia a la Formación Permanente, para que sea una continuación de la Formación de Base.
- Potenciar la casa de Limone como un centro de espiritualidad comboniana para todo el Instituto, un “santuario de la misión comboniana”.
- Continuar y potenciar el ACFP y el Curso de Renovación de Roma.
- Buscar tener en nuestro Instituto especialistas en espiritualidad, psicología y discernimiento para que nos ayuden en estos campos.
- Aprovechar la metodología usada en la RM para otros momentos de reflexión en el Instituto y las diversas reuniones o asambleas de las provincias.

Espiritualidad B

“Cenáculo de apóstoles: evangelizar como comunidad”

Constataciones previas

Las respuestas manifiestan que sentimos la necesidad de una vida fraterna en comunidad en la que sea más importante el SER que el HACER, comunidades viables en las que el individualismo deje paso al estar y vivir juntos.

Propuestas

A nivel continental

- Buscar y profundizar formas de colaboración entre las provincias en los diversos campos en los que trabajamos en Europa (AM, formación, medias, justicia y paz...).
- Tener más comunidades internacionales.
- Enriquecer nuestras Iglesias locales con la experiencia de comunidades de base que traemos de la misión.
- Tener presente que los hermanos mayores y enfermos constituyen una riqueza para el Instituto. Darles la atención especial que merecen y necesitan.

A nivel de Instituto

- Que haya un tiempo de formación específica para los Superiores Provinciales.
- Fomentar técnicas humanas que nos ayuden a vivir juntos y superar los problemas personales y comunitarios.
- Mayor seriedad y exigencia en la formación de base. Para ello, renovar y unificar los criterios para el nombramiento de los formadores.
- Mantener un equilibrio en las comunidades, tanto a nivel de personal como de trabajo, de vida y de compromiso. Prestar para ello mucha atención a la hora de planificar la rotación.

Identidad A

“Misión, Comboni y Corazón de Jesús: elementos del carisma que son irrenunciables”

Constataciones previas

Sintetizamos aquí las propuestas que más han salido y que son aceptadas por todos. Algunas son más concretas que otras.

Propuestas

A nivel continental

- Superar el pesimismo que tenemos a nivel de PV y AM. Para ello, apoyarnos más en Cristo que en las técnicas y dar vida a lo que ya tenemos.
- Renovar profundamente todo el íter formativo.
- Renovar y fortalecer el concepto de autoridad y las relaciones con ella.
- Prestar nuestros servicios a la Iglesia local para que sea misionera en su propio territorio, viviendo juntos la pasión “*ad gentes*”.
- Que haya grupos de reflexión teológica a nivel continental para reflexionar y profundizar nuestra espiritualidad y carisma comboniano.
- Destinar combonianos originarios de otros continentes para trabajar aquí, en Europa.

A nivel de instituto

- Que el Instituto (DG) nos de pautas y signos claros de identidad comboniana.
- Dar mayor protagonismo a los Secretariados para favorecer una descentralización.
- Unificar los criterios en la Formación de Base concentrándola sobre todo en los valores y elementos propios de la identidad comboniana.
- Escoger la misión difícil, con los más pobres y abandonados, utilizando medios pobres.
- Profundizar en la teología del Corazón de Cristo, especialmente en el aspecto de la misericordia y la reconciliación y para construir comunión y fraternidad.
- El superior debe ser el que ayude a comprender mejor la identidad comboniana, fomentando fuertemente el sentido de pertenencia.
- Que la idea de “Nigrizia”, como expresión de los más pobres y abandonados, sea el auténtico criterio para las opciones carismáticas del Instituto.
- Valorizar la perspectiva cristológica: nuestro propio nombre (MCCJ) es ya todo un programa.
- Es necesario reducir nuestras estructuras.

Identidad B

“Somos misioneros religiosos ad gentes – ad extra – ad vitam – ad pauperes”

Constataciones previas

Hoy hay una crisis de identidad en la Iglesia y en la vida religiosa que también nos afecta a nosotros. No logramos tener elementos claros que configuren nuestra identidad como combonianos. Alguna provincia incluso pide directamente al capítulo que dé pautas y orientaciones que nos puedan ayudar discernir este aspecto.

Viendo las propuestas que han surgido, constatamos que el aspecto que más influye en nuestra identidad es, sobre todo, el HACER. Todas las provincias manifiestan la

necesidad de un compromiso pastoral, especialmente en los campos más marginales (inmigrantes, refugiados, pobres...) como elemento fundamental de esa identidad. ¿Qué pautas? ¿Qué caminos? ¿Qué orientaciones seguir para sentirnos plenamente misioneros y combonianos en Europa? Son preguntas que surgen de lo que han reflexionado nuestras provincias europeas y a las que habrá que buscar una respuesta.

Propuestas

A nivel continental

- Nuestro carisma nos pide que no nos limitemos a la AM, sino a valorar la posibilidad de presencias misioneras.
- Rever el “*ad gentes*” y el “*ad extra*” teniendo en cuenta el desafío de la inmigración, en colaboración con la Iglesia local.
- Redefinir el “*ad extra*” de los hermanos que vienen de países llamados “de misión”.
- Aceptar compromisos pastorales en Europa. Insertarnos en la Iglesia local para ayudarla a abrirse a los demás.
- Que las provincias de Europa colaboren entre ellas para el trabajo con inmigrantes, la PJV y la AM.
- Favorecer y potenciar la colaboración con otros institutos misioneros.

A nivel de Instituto

- Estos elementos (“*ad gentes, ad extra...*”) deben ser determinantes en el discernimiento vocacional. Deben ser también determinantes en la revisión de los compromisos.
- Elaborar una “mística comboniana”.
- Revisar el nº 13 de la RdV, sobre todo lo que concierne a los “pueblos no suficientemente evangelizados”.
- Terminar el comentario a la RdV iniciado hace años.
- Rever el sistema actual de la rotación en función del “*ad vitam*” para que sea respetuosa con la misión.
- Re-estudiar estos elementos a la luz de la primera inspiración de Comboni.
- Insistir en estos aspectos a nivel de formación permanente. Clarificarlos desde el punto de vista bíblico y evangélico y vivirlos según nuestros documentos.

Misión/Evangelización A

“Anunciamos y damos testimonio de Cristo y su misión con generosidad y audacia”

Constataciones:

Nuestra razón de ser y estar presentes en Europa no debe basarse solamente en la animación misionera, aunque ésta sea importante y necesaria. Todas las provincias han destacado que debemos dar también respuestas concretas a ciertas situaciones de misión, particularmente los inmigrantes y refugiados, comprometiéndonos en campos como la justicia y la paz y colaborando con otros institutos y con los diversos organismos que trabajan en este campo (Caritas, Missio, AEFJN, Amnistía Internacional...).

Destacamos también que las dificultades que experimentamos en Europa (falta de vocaciones, hermanos ancianos y enfermos...) no deben desalentarnos; al contrario, debemos vivir nuestro presente con optimismo buscando nuevos caminos. En este sentido, sería muy positivo impulsar la internacionalidad, ya que las fuerzas jóvenes que

vienen del Sur pueden ser una riqueza para nosotros y para las Iglesias en las que trabajamos. También es importante que demos más cabida a los laicos.

Propuestas

A nivel continental

- Buscar respuestas a los cambios que se están viviendo en Europa ¿Qué hacer?
- No limitarnos a la AM. Reflexionar sobre cuál debe ser nuestra presencia misionera en Europa, hacer un plan significativo en este sentido.
- Tener un diálogo con las religiones y las culturas de Europa. Prepararnos bien para ello.
- Unificar, compartir, coordinar el trabajo que hacemos con inmigrantes y refugiados en las diversas provincias europeas y las de fuera de Europa.
- Confiar más en los jóvenes combonianos que vienen del Sur.

A nivel de Instituto

- No poner en el centro la preocupación o angustia por la supervivencia de la provincia o del Instituto.
- Evangelizar nuestra economía, nuestra manera de usar el dinero.
- Insistir menos en las estructuras y más en la formación.
- No aprobar ningún proyecto que no implique la participación local o que sean “proyectos personales” no elaborados por la comunidad. Que la gestión de esos proyectos sea hecha por laicos.
- Recalificar nuestros compromisos teniendo los pobres como punto de referencia.
- No crear nuevos medios, estructuras, plataformas. Usar las que ya tenemos.
- Poner la evangelización como nuestra razón de ser. Partir de nuestros valores combonianos.
- Acentuar la ministerialidad (sacerdotes, hermanos, laicos...).
- Recuperar el Plano de Comboni, siendo fieles a la intención e inspiración original del Fundador, actualizarlo según la realidad del mundo actual.
- Recuperar los valores que guiaron a figuras significativas del Instituto.
- Recalificar nuestras presencias para ir a lugares más significativos de frontera.
- Colaboración y corresponsabilidad con los laicos.

Misión/Evangelización B

“La misión que nos caracteriza es aquella que favorece el protagonismo de la gente en diferentes ámbitos” (“Salvar a África con África”)

Constataciones previas

Ha cambiado el contexto social y eclesial, lo que ha llevado a un cambio en la relación de los combonianos con la realidad y con la gente. En Europa vivimos una realidad multicultural, plurirreligiosa y multiétnica. Se trata más de integrar, de entender, de estar abiertos a la alteridad y valorar la diferencia.

Para realizar un servicio misionero comboniano, renovado, cualificado y en línea con los signos de los tiempos, las provincias de Europa intuimos una llamada a la conversión y la necesidad de un cambio de actitudes en nuestra manera de ser para mejorar la capacidad de escucha, de colaboración, de compartir, de corresponsabilidad.

Propuestas

A nivel continental

- Conocer mejor la mentalidad y los valores de los jóvenes de hoy para adaptar nuestras propuestas a su realidad.

- Crear grupos, centros de AM. y Promoción Vocacional.
- Reflexionar más sobre el modelo de Iglesia que queremos promover.
- Hacernos promotores de la diferenciación y no de la uniformidad en la Iglesia, respetando el pluralismo y las culturas.

A nivel de Instituto

- No crear estructuras costosas que no puedan ser llevadas por la Iglesia local.
- Contar con la Iglesia local y los laicos.
- Situaciones de inserción: vivir más en ello.
- Potenciar más el papel de la mujer, sobre todo en África.
- Que se fomente desde la Formación de Base la autofinanciación de los proyectos y compromisos.
- Teniendo conciencia de que la mayoría de los hermanos serán no europeos, favorecer la autosuficiencia de las provincias combonianas (en un proceso paulatino: de la semilla a la planta).
- Promover el Hermano como animador de comunidad y responsable de lo social.
- Favorecer y ayudar las jóvenes Iglesias para que sean cada vez más misioneras.
- Invertir energías, personas y dinero en la formación de agentes pastorales locales para que sean ellos mismos los protagonistas de su propia evangelización.
- Continuar el camino del Instituto con los Laicos Misioneros Combonianos, llegando, si es posible, a establecer puntos comunes para el camino formativo y la metodología misionera.

Aspectos a destacar

Vemos la preocupación que hay en nuestras provincias por encontrar nuevos caminos. Estamos en un momento de cambio a todos los niveles (social, eclesial, religioso...). Esto nos interpela y nos invita a buscar nuevos cauces para nuestra presencia en Europa. Vemos que el camino hacia el futuro debe estar marcado por una colaboración entre las provincias de Europa. Una internacionalidad a nivel europeo en nuestras comunidades puede ser interesante y ayudar en este aspecto.

El contacto y la comunicación entre los diversos sectores (AM, PVJ, Revistas, Justicia y Paz, Inmigrantes...) podría ayudar mucho a esa colaboración a nivel continental. La experiencia que ya están haciendo los directores de las revistas desde hace algunos años (un encuentro anual) está siendo muy positiva.

Vemos también la necesidad de una mayor colaboración, tanto entre nuestras provincias como con los laicos. Se habla mucho de ello y ha salido constantemente en esta fase de discernimiento. El trabajo con los laicos está siendo cada día más una llamada y una necesidad que sentimos. Hemos de avanzar en este camino.

Sentimos también la preocupación por la formación, tanto de base como permanente. Ha salido en prácticamente todos los ámbitos.

Durante nuestra Asamblea continental de preparación al Capítulo hemos querido destacar los siguientes aspectos que nos parecen básicos:

Elementos básicos en la ESPIRITUALIDAD

1.- Hemos visto el fuerte deseo de volver a una más profunda espiritualidad comboniana junto a la visión de misión que queremos realizar en el futuro.

Conscientes de las limitaciones que caracterizan nuestras provincias europeas, nos sentimos retados a cultivar y a vivir una espiritualidad encarnada, fundada en una espiritualidad de la kenosis, con la persona de Jesucristo en el centro, cultivando una fuerte unión personal con Él y con la Palabra.

Esta espiritualidad se traduce en alcanzar la humildad, escucha, oración y acogida, que subraye el SER más que el HACER, la escucha y la valorización del otro más que el protagonismo; el compartir la vida y el compromiso con los más pobres más que la ostentación de medios y la eficacia material.

2.- Hablamos de una espiritualidad encarnada y vivida en una comunidad comboniana. Una comunidad querida por el Fundador como cenáculo de apóstoles, no entendido como un grupo cerrado que se refiere a sí mismo, sino más bien como una familia abierta a la realidad concreta de la Europa de hoy.

3.- Una espiritualidad renovada, fundada en la humildad y el sentido del realismo, que ayude a nuestra inserción en las Iglesias locales como presencia misionera comboniana. Una espiritualidad que lleve a un estilo de vida de pequeñas comunidades inseridas y acogedoras, al lado de los desfavorecidos, capaz de liberarse de estructuras ya obsoletas para un testimonio de valores evangélicos más coherente.

Elementos básicos en la IDENTIDAD

1.- Subrayamos el trabajo del GERT como un instrumento muy importante que nos ayuda a descubrir nuestra identidad misionera comboniana. Sentimos la necesidad de revisar el *ad gentes, ad extra...* a la luz de sus últimas reflexiones y contribuciones teológicas y misionológicas, especialmente cómo insertar este trabajo en el contexto de la misión global. Consecuentemente, reconocemos que nuestra Regla de Vida debe ser actualizada a la luz de estas reflexiones.

2.- Consideramos muy significativo profundizar la teología y la espiritualidad del Corazón de Jesús, especialmente en los aspectos de la misericordia, reconciliación y compasión de Dios por la humanidad, la cual nos conduce a una mayor comunión, fraternidad, solidaridad con los más pobres y nos ayuda en la construcción de una sociedad más justa.

3.- La actividad de los Hermanos no debe ser considerada solamente en el contexto del trabajo que hacen las ONGs. Hemos de recuperar la identidad y la ministerialidad del Hermano comboniano como una expresión viva y una señal de fraternidad concreta ad intra y ad extra.

Elementos básicos en la MISIÓN/EVANGELIZACIÓN

1.- Nuestra razón de ser y estar presentes en Europa es animar la Iglesia y la sociedad según el carisma comboniano para abrir horizontes universales de fraternidad. Hemos destacado que debemos dar respuestas concretas a ciertas situaciones de misión, particularmente los inmigrantes y refugiados, comprometiéndonos en campos como la justicia y la paz, colaborando con la Iglesia local y con los diversos institutos y organismos que trabajan por el mismo fin.

2.- Queremos elaborar un plan europeo para realizar gradualmente unas acciones comunes en los campos de la Promoción Vocacional, de la Formación y de la Justicia y Paz.

- comunicándonos lo que hacemos
- proyectando iniciativas en común
- compartiendo el personal y abriéndonos a la internacionalidad.

Pesaro, 24 de abril de 2009

English Version of the Continental Reports

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ENGLISH SPEAKING AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE

SUB-CONTINENTAL REPORT OF THE MCCJ CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE

1. HISTORICAL RELEVANCE

1.1. Our Sub-continent has a historic link and relationship with the Institute since its foundation. It is here that our founder laboured and gave his life for our people. Some of our missions go back to the time of St. Daniel Comboni himself. But our link with the Institute is not only chronological but also missiological, spiritual and above all charismatic.

1.2. The geographical expansion of the Institute to other continents drew deeply on the missionary experience of many confreres who had worked in this part of Africa. Our history has been proudly marked by a good number of confreres who have become martyrs and spiritual role models for the whole Institute.

1.3. We note that 30% of all the Comboni Missionaries are presently serving in this part of the African continent and that 35% of Comboni Missionary candidates in formation today come from our Sub-continent.

1.4. Our fidelity to the ideal of St. Daniel Comboni is seen in the significant number of local pastoral agents in the areas where we are working. These are the fruits of deep commitment to the realisation of our founder's dream of saving Africa with Africa through the preparation of personnel. The plan of St. Daniel Comboni to have institutions of higher learning that would respond to the pertinent needs and challenges of the mission is kept alive in our Sub-continent through many educational Institutions among which we mention Dar Comboni in Cairo and the Institute of Social Ministry in Mission in Nairobi.

2. SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION

2.1. Social Situation

2.1.1. Africa is a rich continent with a variety of cultures, with gifted and talented people.

2.1.2. The rapid rate of urbanization due to massive migration of people from rural areas to towns in search of jobs and better social amenities poses a serious problem. The high rate of unemployment in a predominantly youthful society like ours exposes young people to easy political manipulation. Some efforts to fight corruption have been made but it is still thriving.

2.1.3. As a result of the rural-urban exodus, there is a rupture of traditional and cultural values. The youth are exposed to pseudo-cultures predominantly present in towns. The Mass Media have a strong influence among them.

2.1.4. Health care in this part of Africa continues to be a major concern. Malaria is still the first killer although its treatment is relatively cheap. The lack of health care centres makes our countries have the highest rates of maternal death due to complications at childbirth. The number of victims of HIV/AIDS continues to grow in urban and rural areas.

2.1.5. Efforts have been made to make education accessible to many, but unfortunately this has not been followed by an increase in educational facilities and personnel, and in some areas illiteracy is still high. We witness crowded classrooms without a proper accompaniment of the students. This has led to a drastic drop in the standard of education in government schools.

2.1.6. The brain-drain of prepared personnel who migrate to other countries that offer better salaries is impoverishing the Sub-continent. These emigrants often become the breadwinners for their families back at home.

2.2. Economical Situation

2.2.1. Our Sub-continent is rich in many natural resources and is undergoing a rapid transformation. Some of the countries in which we work had a steady economic growth of up to 15% before the onset of the world economic crisis. This has widened the gap between rich and poor, especially in urban areas. The different rate of development within the same country creates tension and prepares an uncertain future of social upheavals.

2.2.2. While South Africa is an economic powerhouse with modern infrastructure, a number of our countries are still listed among the poorest in the world. With sadness we have witnessed in some places the loss of nearly all the previous economic gains due to monopolistic state control which has paralyzed economic structures and killed the private sector. Poor incentives in some areas remain a real obstacle to foreign investments. In some countries in the region, economic growth has been jeopardized by recent political instability.

2.2.3. To this we must add conflicts over land in many countries due to population growth, industrial farms, unequal distribution and ethnic disputes.

2.2.4. Many NGOs working for the people in the area are business-minded with political bias, and they often create a mentality of dependency.

2.2.5. Worthy of mention is the growing self-employment sector where skilled young people with meagre resources venture into small scale businesses.

2.3. Political Situation

2.3.1. The positive development and strengthening of the democratic process in many countries are signs of growing socio-political awareness. The participation of the people in the election of leaders has been done with growing freedom and elections are becoming more transparent and fair. Yet, empowerment of the people in our region is still quite fragile.

2.3.2. Often ethnic identity is still stronger than national identity. Corruption and mismanagement of public funds show that concern for the common good is lacking among our leaders.

2.3.3. Apart from few circumscriptions, we have unstable political situations.

Paradoxically, countries that have known war for years have made peace agreements that mark a turning point in the life of the country and of the people (Eritrea and Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda). But the agreements reached are yet to be implemented and feelings of dissatisfaction are growing, creating fear that violence may return.

2.3.4. The situation of Eritrea which has a tight dictatorship with a strong communist tendency and the silence of the international community make us feel helpless in front of the sufferings and the cries of the people. The restriction and strict control of movement, the expulsion and denial of entry visas for our expatriate confreres put our mission and confreres in this Delegation in a precarious state.

2.4. Religious situation

2.4.1. African Traditional Religions are widely practised in the Sub-continent and are strongly tied to the cultures of the people. There is a strong sense of the transcendent that affects all areas of life. Many elements are positive entry points for dialogue with Christianity and are to be preserved and encouraged. However some practices are in contradiction with the Gospel. The lack of good discernment leads some of our faithful into syncretism.

2.4.2. Islam is spreading everywhere with Muslims increasing in number. In the last years a type of aggressive and militant Islam is propagated, supported with great financial means and made visible through the construction of mosques and Quranic schools. Students from everywhere in Africa receive scholarships to universities in Cairo and Khartoum and are being sent back as Islamic preachers to their own countries.

2.4.3. The mainstream Protestant Churches are present in the Sub-continent in a consistent way. Orthodox Christians are present in large numbers in some of our circumscriptions (Egypt, Eritrea and Ethiopia).

2.4.4. Pentecostal churches and the African Independent Churches are flourishing and attracting people. The rise of the Pentecostal Churches may be due to the offer of quick and easy but illusionary solutions to the problems people are facing.

3. ECCLESIAL SITUATION

3.1. The local Church in the Sub-continent has never given up its mission of a holistic proclamation of the Good News in spite of the political realities of uneasiness and risk, and of regimes that at times are manifestly against the Catholic Church. This is thanks to a strong unity in the local leadership especially among the Bishops.

3.2. At times the situation of suffering, insecurity and political uncertainty has helped our people to deepen the meaning of their being Christians. But in response to the striking social problems that still persist (corruption, HIV/AIDS, war, violence and crime, etc), the local Church cannot fail to continue proposing the Christian faith as an instrument of social transformation, as the concrete translation of the faith professed into daily life.

3.3. We are conscious that as a whole, the local Church in the region has taken meaningful positive steps forward in spite of some negative socio-political pressures. The number of local ordinaries and clergy has grown. We see encouraging examples of Churches that have made important steps towards self-reliance.

3.4. There are visible and vibrant Christian communities which celebrate their faith with joy. The foundation and creation of Small Christian Communities, in which different ministries are fostered and developed, has been adopted by the Bishops of the Sub-continent as a pastoral priority. However, the Small Christian Communities have still to grow and become communities where various ministries are exercised.

3.5. In some regions the journey towards a self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting Church has hardly taken off. We have Churches that are still dependent on foreign personnel and relying heavily on funds from outside.

3.6. Some challenges strike the Church from within, like the vocational crisis experienced by the religious and local clergy.

3.7. The percentage of the Catholics in the Sub-continent ranges between 0.6 to 46% of the population. But even where the Church is a small minority, it is appreciated, thanks to its holistic missionary approach that allows it to pay particular attention to the social situation and to respond through the provision of basic services like education and health care, which otherwise would be completely absent in most of the regions where we are working.

3.8. The Church has and continues to play a vital role in regard to issues of Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation and Reconciliation. The forth coming II Synod of the African Bishops on this theme will hopefully offer guidelines and a way forward in this tedious but necessary journey for a more fraternal and just society.

3.9. We must mention that the Renewal Movements within the Catholic Church play an important role on the involvement of the laity in the life of the Church and represent an active force to prevent Catholics from flocking to the Pentecostal Churches which have a strong grip on the people.

3.10. Though progress has been made, inculturation still remains a major challenge to the Church in our Sub-continent.

4. COMMON JOURNEY OF THE SUB-CONTINENT

4.1. Meetings of Provincial and Delegation Superiors. The Assembly of Provincial and Delegation Superiors of the Sub-continent met regularly to discuss common issues, adopt similar policies and try to share personnel and responsibilities. The range of issues discussed was very wide. The sub-continental coordinator is Fr. Giuseppe Sandri, and the other responsibilities are shared as follows: Fr. Sebhatleab Ayele Tesemma (Evangelization and *Ratio Missionis*), Fr. Mariano Tibaldo (Mission Promotion), Fr. Giuseppe Filippi (Finances), Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie (Vocation Promotion and Formation), Fr. Cosmo Vittorio Spadavecchia (Islam), Fr. Massimo Robol (CLM) and Fr. Salvatore Pacifico (Ongoing Formation).

4.2 Sub-continental assemblies

4.2.1. The Sub-continent held the following assemblies: Basic Formation (Layibi, Uganda in July 2007), Mission Promotion (Mariannhill, South Africa in 2006), *Ratio Missionis* (Nairobi, Kenya in July 2005; Gulu, Uganda in May 2006; Cairo, Egypt in April 2007 and Pretoria, South Africa in July 2008), Reflection Group on Islam (N'Djamena, Tchad in October 2007 and Cairo, Egypt in February 2009), Finances (Lilongwe, Malawi 2006), Assembly of Delegates to the General Chapter (Lusaka, Zambia in May 2009).

4.2.2. The sub-continental meeting on Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) took place in the context of the *Ratio Missionis* meetings in Nairobi and Gulu (see #4.2.1. above).

4.2.3. Many representatives from the Sub-continent participated in the World Social Forum (WSF) at Nairobi, Kenya in January 2007 and in the Comboni Social Forum organized in collaboration with the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS) soon after. Two of our representatives also travelled to Belém, Brazil, to take part in both the WSF and the Comboni Social Forum in February 2009.

4.3. Sub-continental common MCCJ projects

4.3.1. The circumscriptions of English Speaking Africa and Mozambique run two projects, one in the field of Mission Promotion (New People Media Centre) and one in the field of Formation (Namugongo and Lusaka novitiates).

4.3.2. The Comboni Missionaries are also responsible for two higher academic institutions, the Institute of Social Ministry in Mission at Tangaza College in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar Comboni in Cairo (Egypt)

4.3.3. The circumscriptions of the Sub-continent share personnel in the Ministry (Opera Significativa) of Brothers in the Technical Schools of Layibi (Uganda), Lunzu (Malawi) and Carapira (Mozambique).

4.3.4. An exchange of personnel among circumscriptions rarely materialized.

4.4. Reflection Group on Islam

4.4.1. Though the composition of the group has not been constant, it met regularly over the last 3 years. The purpose of the reflection is pastoral in character, enlightening our concrete missionary work.

4.4.2. There is an ongoing discussion between the members of the Reflection Group and the Provincial and Delegation Superiors of the Sub-continent on the methodology of the group's activities.

4.5. Pastoralists. There have been meetings of confreres involved in ministering among the pastoralists in Karamoja (Uganda), Turkana and Pokot (Kenya). These meetings are part of an effort to share experiences and to find proper methods of First Evangelization to propose to the Provincial and Delegation Superiors of the Sub-continent.

4.6. Mass Media

4.6.1. In our Sub-continent Mass Media are a means for First Evangelization and Mission Promotion. We collaborate in a good number of projects such as with FM radio stations (Arua in Uganda, Juba and Nuba Mountains in South Sudan).

4.6.2. At present we are running three magazines: *Worldwide* in South Africa, *Leadership* in Uganda and *New People* that though based in Kenya is distributed in a large number of English-speaking countries within the African continent. The New People Media Centre of Nairobi includes a number of activities like training courses, editing of CDs and radio programs. A discussion on merging some of the magazines is underway.

4.7. Immigrants and refugees. The reality of immigrants and refugees has become a major issue of concern that is affecting our circumscriptions (Sudanese, Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in Egypt; a large number of refugees from all over the African continent in South Africa; etc.) Many groups of Internally Displaced People, (for example, in Uganda, Sudan and Kenya), represent a great challenge for our societies. We minister to such groups, in collaboration with other local and international organizations.

4.8. Theological Reflection Group. The Theological Reflection Group is mainly limited to Kenya but efforts are being made to involve confreres from other circumscriptions. This group is in charge of the publication *Missionary Reflections*.

4.9. The Sub-continental Plan. In line with the requirements of the Institute, the Provincial and Delegation Superiors of the Sub-continent are working on the definition

of its Plan. Future Perspectives at the end of this report reflect the priorities of our Sub-continental Plan.

4.10. Collaboration within the Comboni Family

4.10.1. Several circumscriptions welcome the Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM) and have started their own local groups such as Uganda.

4.10.2. Collaboration with the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS) is a common reality in our Sub-continent and it ranges from close cooperation in the field of evangelization and human promotion, to the level of Provincial and Delegation Councils and to common ventures like the Sudan Catholic Radio Network which aims at the establishment of FM radio stations in each diocese of South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains.

4.11. The amalgamation (*grouping*) of MCCJ circumscriptions in the Sub-continent. Discussion of how to amalgamate the Provinces and Delegations has started. The reorganization of our region could include: Malawi-Zambia with Mozambique and RSA, Khartoum with South Sudan (or Khartoum with Egypt), Ethiopia with Eritrea, Kenya with Uganda ...

5. CHALLENGES FACING THE SUB-CONTINENT

“Careful analysis of the socio-political situation is needed for the missionary in order to discover the most appropriate and concrete opportunities for evangelization even in less favourable conditions” (RL 61.7)

5.1 Globalization

5.1.1. Globalization affects all members of society, of all walks of life. It provokes a change of world view in no time with the consequent disruption of previously established values. Therefore, globalization presents a challenge to the way we evangelize.

5.1.2. The internationality of our communities is a living sign of the gospel value of fraternity (*cf.* RL 37). Through it we take upon ourselves the task of practicing and promoting a culture in which the common good is the criterion for one's personal decisions.

5.2. Urbanization. The continent of Africa experiences rapid urbanization with a large portion of people flocking into the slums and poor areas around the cities and towns. Their situation leads to a degradation of their human dignity and is conducive to conflicts and violence. As Comboni Missionaries, already present in some of these situations, we acknowledge that much more is to be done in order to continue being a sign of hope in their midst by sharing their lot with a simple life style.

5.3. Youth. Young people make up the majority of the African population; they are the wealth and hope of the Sub-continent. We care for their education and formation in our schools and parishes, and by collaborating with the existing diocesan pastoral programs and structures.

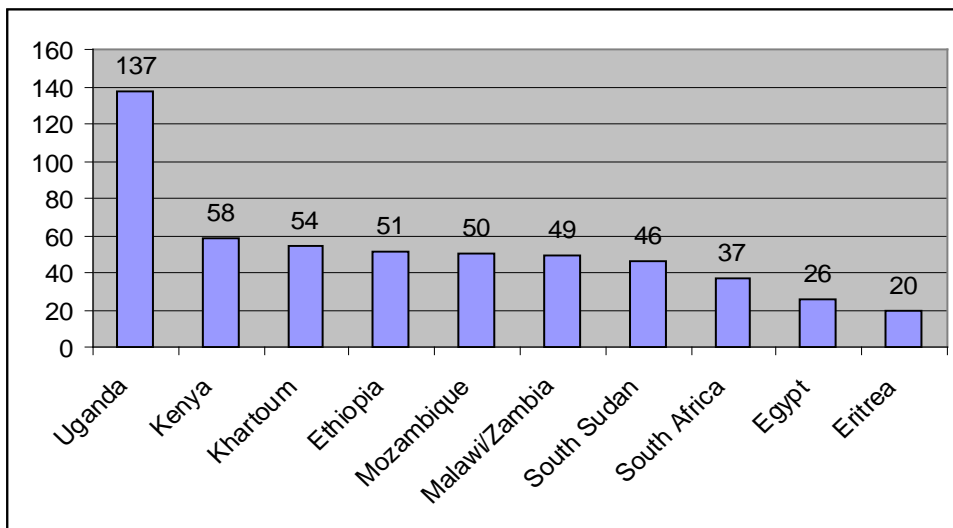
5.4. HIV/AIDS. The continent of Africa is affected by the pandemic of HIV/AIDS which leads to the death of many, creates a large number of orphans and slows down economic development. We, in collaboration with the CMS, CLM and other leading organizations, contribute to the care and support (spiritual, psychological, economic and social) of those affected by the pandemic.

5.5. JPIC and reconciliation. Ethnic conflicts and the widening gap between rich and poor have increased our awareness of the importance of working for JPIC and reconciliation. In difficult situations we have remained with the people as a sign of hope, working with them for a more reconciled society. The forthcoming Special Synod of Bishops for Africa (II African Synod) is a further indication of the relevance of Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation.

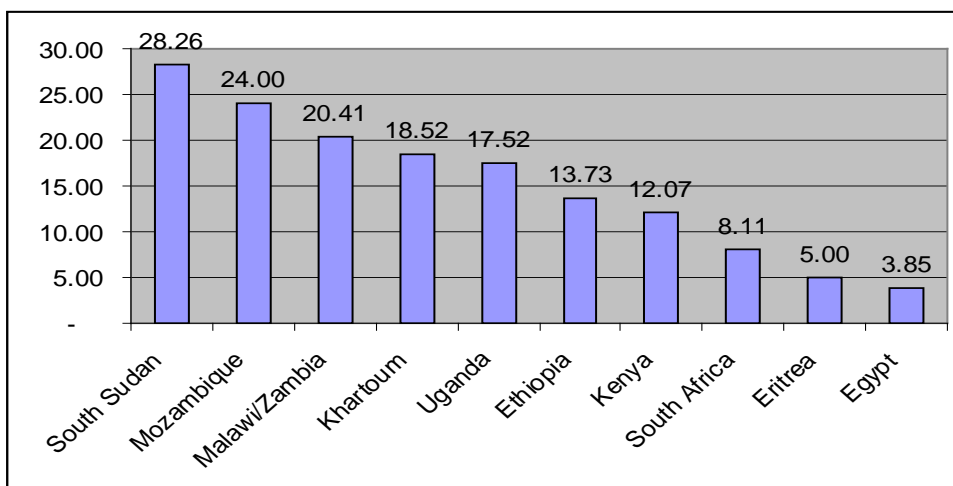
5.6 Islam. Islam is expanding, sometimes aggressively. This is a new element affecting the people we serve in our missionary work. We are already engaged in initiatives to address Islam in its various forms (Dar Comboni in Cairo, work in the schools, courses on Islam and reflection groups). Therefore the knowledge of and the dialogue with Islam have become part of our missionary service and are to be fostered further.

6. MCCJ IN THE SUB-CONTINENT
Statistics on personnel as of the 1st of March 2009

MCCJ according to juridical membership
(Scholastics included)



Percentage of Brothers for circumscription

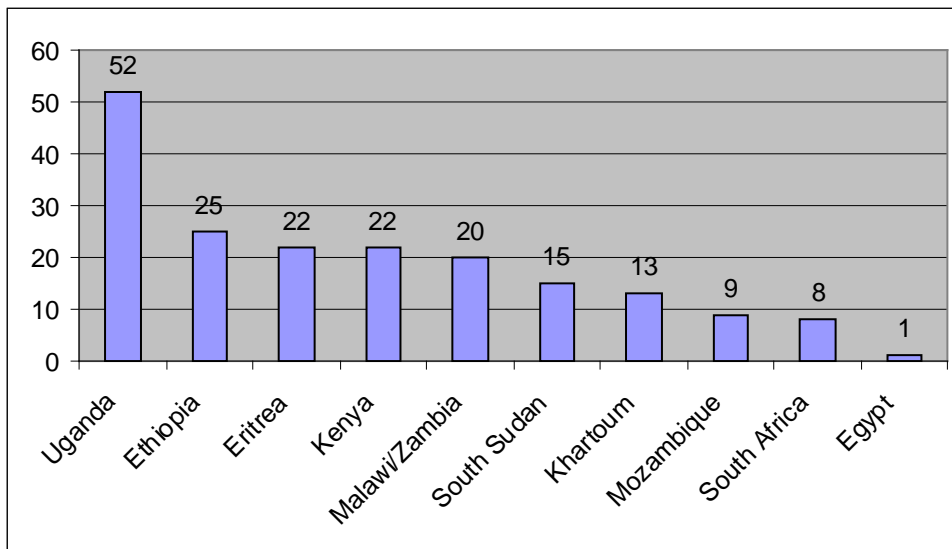


Juridical membership

Country	Bis.	Fr.	Bro.	Sch.	Total	%Bro
Uganda	1	98	24	14	137	17.52
Kenya	0	45	7	6	58	12.07
Khartoum	2	39	10	3	54	18.52
Mozambique	0	34	12	4	50	24.00
Malawi-Zambia	0	29	10	10	49	20.41
Ethiopia	2	31	7	11	51	13.73
South Sudan	2	28	13	3	46	28.26
South Africa	0	31	3	3	37	8.11
Egypt	1	24	1	0	26	3.85
Eritrea	1	13	1	5	20	5.00
Total	8	372	88	59	528	16.76

Radical membership

(Scholastics included)



Radical membership

Circumscription	Bis.	Fr.	Bro.	Sch.	total	%Bro
Uganda	0	33	5	14	52	9.62
Ethiopia	0	13	1	11	25	4.00
Eritrea	1	15	1	5	22	4.55
Kenya	0	15	1	6	22	4.55
Malawi-Zambia	0	10	0	10	20	-
South Sudan	1	10	1	3	15	6.67
Khartoum	1	9	0	3	13	-
Mozambique	0	4	1	4	9	11.11
South Africa	0	5	0	3	8	-
Egypt	0	1	0	0	1	-

Average age

Circumscription	Average
Khartoum	63.03
Uganda	61.82
Mozambique	56.00
South Sudan	53.95
Malawi-Zambia	53.44
Kenya	53.40
Egypt	53.38
Ethiopia	52.63
South Africa	50.6
Eritrea	45.65

Combined average age: 56.30 years

7. CHAPTER THEMES

7.1. Ratio Missionis

7.1.1. The process

7.1.1.1. The mandate of the last General Chapter to work on a *Ratio Missionis* was an inspiration that has shaped to a great extent the life of the Institute and in particular of the Sub-continent. This exercise of self-evaluation regarding our spirituality, identity, community life and missionary service (*RL 99.1*) needs to be addressed during the next General Chapter in order to bring forth fruits of renewal in the way we feel and live as Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.

7.1.1.2. A better understanding of what discernment is, making it the normal method of analyzing realities and making choices, is already an achievement of the *Ratio Missionis* process. One of the causes of the slow renewal of our communities and commitments can be linked to our limited experience in discerning the will of God in the signs of the times and in our own life.

7.1.1.3. All circumscriptions value and treasure the experience made, thanks to the *Ratio Missionis* process. We have also become aware that the *Ratio* was a process of personal and communitarian ongoing formation, and it was not meant to give answers to all our problems. The *Ratio Missionis* process has taught us to exercise a valid type of communitarian discernment in order to plan and act in fidelity to the will of God and to our charism and mission.

7.1.2. Spirituality

7.1.2.1. Our spirituality is based on Jesus abandoned on the cross, whose Heart was wounded for the love of humankind (*cf. RL 2.1*). As people who are trying everyday to identify themselves with Jesus Christ, we are challenged to become contemplatives in action, in keeping with the Rule of Life, personal prayer, communitarian prayer, the community charter, community planning and evaluation.

7.1.2.2. The sources of our spirituality are: the Word of God, the life and *Writings* of our founder, the Rule of Life, the Tradition of our Institute, the life of the people, events and situations of our missionary service.

7.1.2.3. The *Ratio Missionis* process offered the confreres an opportunity to share about the elements of our missionary spirituality and to strengthen them in their convictions.

7.1.3. Identity

7.1.3.1. The identity of the Comboni Missionary is that of a person called by God, consecrated to him for the mission, through the evangelical counsels and according to the charism of St. Daniel Comboni (*cf. RL 10*). However we also recognize that there is a gap between the principles accepted by all and the way the same principles are implemented in our daily personal and communitarian life.

7.1.3.2. One of the enemies of our identity is individualism in terms of methodology, finances, life style and community life. At present the challenge for us is to overcome the dichotomy and live coherently the principles expressed in the Rule of Life.

7.1.4. Mission

7.1.4.1. The Institute of the MCCJ exists for the sole purpose of proclaiming the Good News to people who have never received it, or who are inadequately evangelized, with Africa as a priority.

7.1.4.2. The fact is that the Institute has spread widely in the missionary world, and so different methodologies were developed and the term *mission* took on a variety of meanings, making it rather difficult for the members of the Institute to develop a

common understanding of mission. We need to clarify for ourselves the meaning of the terms *ad gentes*, *ad vitam*, *ad extra* and *ad pauperes*. We ought to be ready to assume challenging mission fields in faithfulness to our charism.

7.1.4.3. Our missionary choices reflect with courage some of the inspirations of Comboni. Our missionary service is for and with the poor. We continue to promote the integral formation of our leaders and youth through technical schools, and both formal and informal education. In this part of the continent we had confreres who devoted themselves with passion to the study of local cultures and languages. Today we continue that tradition through translation work.

7.2. Formation

7.2.1. Formation ought to always be based on the model of mission proper of the Comboni Missionaries.

7.2.2. It is necessary to continue to invest in the preparation of formators who are identified with the Comboni charism and capable of applying the model of formation developed by the Institute.

7.2.3. Continental scholasticates have become the norm, albeit with some exceptions. They should be reviewed at the next Inter-capitular assembly, after a period of experimentation.

7.2.4. The Sub-continent accepts to have pre-postulancies in each circumscription and the possibility of having inter-circumscriptional postulancies. Such postulancies would be larger and better equipped with formators.

7.2.5. Many of the formation problems have their source in the type of youth that society (secularized, hedonistic, materialistic, globalized ...) produces today. We need to concentrate more on the accompaniment of candidates before they join the postulancy in order to make a good discernment before admission to the formation house (postulancy).

7.2.6. Each confrere by his coherence of life and missionary dedication contributes to form communities which are formative, ready to welcome and guide candidates through authentic experiences of community life and missionary service. Ongoing Formation creates the groundwork for the Basic Formation of the candidates. The community that engages in solid Ongoing Formation contributes to the formation of candidates and confreres in temporary vows.

7.3. Government

7.3.1. The orientation of the Sub-continent is to maintain the present structure of government.

7.3.2. We also agreed to maintain the present length of the terms of office, but to facilitate the re-election of the Superior General and his Assistants by absolute majority.

7.3.3. The model of amalgamating (*grouping*) circumscriptions has the support of many, since they seem to be too many for a small Institute like ours.

7.3.4. The process of amalgamating circumscriptions is surely challenging and difficult. Therefore it is important to begin by sharing services and initiatives among neighbouring circumscriptions.

7.3.5. The General Secretariats should remain four as at present.

7.4. New proposals

7.4.1. It is necessary to give the incoming Superior General and his Assistants some time to prepare before starting their service. Their period of service should start a month after the conclusion of the General Chapter.

7.4.2. The coordination of Ongoing Formation initiatives should be strengthened in order to help confreres to recover the spirit and motivations of our Institute.

8. TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2003

8.1. Ageing of confreres and new vocations

8.1.1. The above statistics (*cf. chapter 6*) show that the number of active missionaries is decreasing in our Sub-continent. The group of elderly confreres is on the increase while new members enter into active apostolate or ministry later in age than previously. New vocations are increasingly coming from the African continent and give their service and strength to the whole Institute.

8.1.2. The number of vocations to Brotherhood is decreasing alarmingly.

8.2. Balance between personnel and commitments and re-qualification. All circumscriptions have planned and are working hard to balance their commitments with the available personnel. Many communities were closed and commitments handed over to the local Church or to other Institutes.

8.3. Ongoing Formation. The different circumscriptions have carried out the programs of Ongoing Formation according to their own plans with activities such as assemblies of various kinds, the process of the *Ratio Missionis*, spiritual exercises, study of the Deontological Code, courses for treasurers, superiors, and age-group meetings.

8.4. Care of confreres in difficulties. We recognize that the number of confreres in need of special care is increasing. The reasons are many and unpredictable. While at present each circumscription is trying its best to attend to their needs, the Sub-continent should arrive to a common policy.

8.5. Ministry of Brothers. In order to better respond to the challenging reality of our mission, there are groups of Brothers living in the same community, exercising their ministry in specific projects like Technical Schools (Layibi in Uganda, Lunzu in Malawi, Carapira in Mozambique, Chikowa in Zambia), health institutions (Mapuordit in South Sudan) and other mission fields such as JPIC and Mass Media.

8.6. First Evangelization. The circumscriptions of the Sub-continent share a common ministry to groups of peoples not-yet evangelized. There are large groups of peoples, pastoralists and others, who have not yet heard the Good News of the Gospel. Therefore, we reaffirm the Institute's preferential option for Africa (*RL 5.1*).

8.7. Mission Promotion. Some circumscriptions have structures of Mission Promotion and make use of the Mass Media such as magazines, calendars, radio and web-sites. One of our priorities is to help the local Churches to become more missionary minded.

8.8. Inter-religious Dialogue with Islam

8.8.1. In the praxis of the Catholic Church, Inter-religious Dialogue takes place at four different levels:

- a) Dialogue of life: common daily living among believers of both faiths;
- b) Dialogue of action: engaging in projects of social development;
- c) Dialogue of religious experience: sharing about each other's creeds and spiritual experiences at grass-root level;
- d) Dialogue of theological reflection: sharing that happens at a high level and among experts.

8.8.2. In our Sub-continent, we exercise dialogue of life and of action in our daily contact and relationship with the Muslims. But at a higher level especially through Dar

Comboni, we are committed to the dialogue of religious experience and theological reflection.

8.9. Finances and the Common Fund of the circumscriptions

8.9.1. The adoption of the Common Fund of the circumscriptions is a step towards evangelizing our finances. The circumscriptions of the Sub-continent have at present achieved different degrees of implementation of this Common Fund.

8.9.2. Confreres from the South who have less access to financial funds are on the increase, and confreres with access to funds are decreasing. Therefore, we need to start looking for ways to raise funds locally in the circumscriptions of the Sub-continent.

9. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

9.1. Evangelization

9.1.1. The Provinces and Delegations of the Sub-continent commit themselves to share ideas, programs and personnel in addressing the issues of First Evangelization and Evangelization in the following contexts: Islam; Pastoralists; in urban and *slum* settings; in the dimensions of human promotion; through JPIC and reconciliation; through the formation of local leaders and empowerment of people.

9.1.2. Meetings of confreres engaged in the above mentioned fields would not only provide a regular exchange of experiences but would also help identify concrete forms of collaboration. It will be the task of the Provincial and Delegation Superiors to approve how this collaboration should be defined and developed.

9.1.3. The publication *Missionary Reflections* will continue to be an instrument of theological reflection at the service of the Sub-continent.

9.1.4. The Institute of Social Ministry in Mission will hopefully be under the responsibility of all the circumscriptions of the Sub-continent.

9.2. Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation

9.2.1. The *Ratio Fundamentalis Studiorum* already gives basic guidelines for Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation (postulancy). We recognize that the directories of the various circumscriptions allow for some differences in the stages of formation from the postulancy onwards that cause some concern. There is therefore the need to have common criteria for Vocation Promotion and formation in the stage of the postulancy. The objective is to achieve a sub-continental directory for Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation. Sharing of resources, expertise, materials (printed or otherwise) is part of the collaboration.

9.2.2. *Postulancies for candidates to the priesthood.* It is necessary to study the feasibility of having inter-circumscriptural formation houses, in particular postulancies (M/Z-RSA-MO; KE-UG-SS...).

9.2.3. *Postulancy for candidates to the Brotherhood.* Greater attention should be given to the promotion of vocations to brotherhood. It is necessary to analyse the history of the formation of Brothers in our circumscriptions and to identify the obstacles hindering the development of this vocation. The Provincial and Delegation Superiors want to identify one or two common postulancies for Brothers in the Sub-continent.

9.2.4. *Novitiates.* The novitiates of Namugongo and Lusaka are structures at the service of all the Provinces and Delegations of the Sub-continent (except for Eritrea due to its special political situation at the moment). While having slight differences in the organization of the Novitiate, we must ensure the present consistent journey of formation and an evaluation which guarantees the desired assimilation of religious missionary values. Novice masters with the assistance of the sub-continental Secretariat of Formation will see that these objectives are achieved.

9.2.4.1. The novitiates of Namugongo and Lusaka are going through a time of experimentation in which each novitiate has one group of novices for two years; the novitiates alternate the intake of first year novices. The journey is valued positively by formators and Provincial and Delegation Superiors.

9.3. Formation of Formators

9.3.1. The formation of formators in our circumscriptions is being carried out. Care should be given to the proper formation and training by making use of the schools and courses available in the Sub-continent.

9.3.2. As for the choice of formators in the inter-circumscriptional formation houses (scholasticates, novitiates and inter-circumscriptional postulancies) we see that a wider consultation among Provinces and Delegations is needed.

9.4. Ongoing Formation

9.4.1. The Rule of Life emphasises that the privileged place of Ongoing Formation is the local community. The Provincial and Delegation Superiors recognize that there are special moments of Ongoing Formation that need the support and collaboration of all the circumscriptions. Some of them are: assemblies of confreres working in specific fields; the exchange of material and programs of Ongoing Formation; the preparation of animators on a given topic of Ongoing Formation common to all, such as in pastoral ministry; the formation and training of confreres appointed to be in charge of investigation in cases of abuse as foreseen by the Deontological Code, and in specialized services (psychology, sciences of education and Canon Law); the ongoing formation of confreres according to age groups; attention to confreres in difficulty and the care of elderly and sick confreres.

9.4.2. Since it is almost impossible for a single Province or Delegation to give proper assistance to confreres in difficulty and to elderly or sick confreres, Provincial and Delegation Superiors will continue reflecting on these challenges and search for possible solutions.

9.5. Mission Promotion

9.5.1. There exists a tradition of collaboration in the field of Mass Media. Nevertheless better cooperation and coordination of our magazines, media and websites should be developed. It is also necessary to involve and animate all the confreres to make better use of the material offered by the Media Centre and to be active in the distribution of the magazines *New People*, *Leadership* and *Worldwide*.

9.5.2. Assemblies and workshops for confreres working in the fields of Mass Media and Mission Promotion will ensure inter-circumscriptional collaboration and help in sharing experiences and forming those who are assigned to this field of work.

9.6. JPIC. Each circumscription shares in projects of JPIC undertaken in cooperation with the local Church. The newly founded centre of JPIC in Kampala, where the Ugandan Province is one of the stakeholders, could become a centre that helps to propose and coordinate the activities of JPIC at sub-continental level. It could also coordinate and lobby with international organizations.

10. MAIN POINTS FROM EACH CIRCUMSCRIPTION

10.1. EGYPT

10.1.1. Priorities

10.1.1.1 Dar Comboni (Institute for Arabic and Islamic studies).

10.1.1.2. Refugees (Sakakini for the Sudanese and St. Joseph Zamalek for the Eritreans and Ethiopians).

10.1.2. Commitments

10.1.2.1. Educational commitments at H elouan School for Egyptians and four School Centres for Sudanese Refugees.

10.1.2.2 Dialogue with Islam: Dar Comboni is now a Pontifical Institute and has developed in effectiveness over the last few years.

In communion with the local Coptic Church, there has been a long and outstanding collaboration in teaching at the Coptic Catholic Seminary, in the Theological Centre for lay people and in the National Catechetical Centre.

10.1.3. Mission Promotion

10.1.3.1. The Delegation has developed an effective collaboration with the Comboni Missionary Sisters, and also with the local Coptic Church.

10.1.3.2. Summer camps, participation in the diocesan Coptic Catholic meetings in Upper Egypt, Alexandria and Cairo, our bulletin ('Asdiqa Komboni') for young people, and the website.

10.1.3.3. The parish of *Cordi Jesu* is being developed as the centre for Mission Promotion.

10.1.4. Presence among the African refugees and the most destitute people in Egypt

10.1.4.1. Sakakini. Four centres for Sudanese (schools, pastoral activities) and addressing the violence among the Sudanese boys and girls.

10.1.4.2. Zamalek. Afternoon classes for Eritrean and Ethiopian children and adults, and Pastoral commitments (the majority of people coming to Zamalek parish are foreigners).

10.2 ERITREA

10.2.1. From independence in 1991 to the border conflict with Ethiopia in 1998 Eritrea achieved praiseworthy progress in re-building the socio-economic infrastructures (schools, health centres, etc.), especially in remote rural areas.

10.2.2. Some moves towards democracy were the election of the National and Legislative Assembly in 1996, the introduction of the Nakfa as the local currency, the election of the Constitutional Assembly in May 1997 and the drafting of a democratic constitution that has never been implemented.

10.2.3. Since the 1998-2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, which cost both countries more than 100,000 lives, the situation of Eritrea has deteriorated bringing unimaginable suffering to the population. The political and economic infrastructures began to be centralised and monopolised. On the 18th of September 2001 the so called G15 reformists were detained and the private press was abolished. The Unending national military service was introduced, keeping the youth in trenches or doing free labour, with

a token salary of 20 US \$ per month. A total of 21 expatriate Catholic missionaries, including 4 MCCJ, were expelled in November 2007, June 2008 and March 2009.

10.2.4. Detention without trial (there are more than 20,000 prisoners), corruption, favouritism, torture and mass immigration of the youth are prevalent. Shortages of foodstuff, grain, flour, dairy products, medicine, spare parts, construction material and fuel are common. Inflation is more than 1000%. A family is given a ration of 10 kilos of durra per month. Only 32% of the vehicles of the Catholic Church are allowed to move.

10.2.5. Despite its relentless efforts, the regime did not manage to subdue the Catholic Church, as it did with the leaders of other religious denominations. The Catholic Bishops keep the unity of the Church and take important decisions together with the CMRS. The Bishops with several letters, not published for fear of repercussions, challenged the authorities' malpractices and lawlessness.

10.3. ETHIOPIA

10.3.1. Economic-social- political highlights

10.3.1.1. Notwithstanding the Country's notable economic growth, salaries are not keeping pace with the growing inflation on basic goods. This represents a heavy burden to the common people.

10.3.1.2. Due to the conflict created in the aftermath of the previous National Elections (2005), there is a certain preoccupation about the forthcoming National Elections (2010).

10.3.1.3. Although Ethiopia is not involved in any armed conflict within or outside its boundaries at present, there is a common concern about the fragile political instability affecting the Region of the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan).

10.3.2. Issues relevant to the Comboni Missionaries in Ethiopia

10.3.2.1 Recently a Comboni Missionary was consecrated Bishop and appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Awassa (South Ethiopia).

10.3.2.2. The Province has geared a good part of its energies towards the first evangelization of a group of people (the Gumuz) that has remained isolated in a remote area bordering Sudan.

10.3.2.3. The lack of perseverance of our candidates in Basic Formation remains a challenge to our Province.

10.3.2.4. The Province is coming to a conclusion regarding the modality of a pre-postulancy.

10.3.2.5. Re-qualification: at present the Province is about to divide one parish and hand over one of its specialized commitments to the local Church in the Vicariate of Awassa (Catechetical Centre, Vicariate Administration or Major Seminary). In this way our presence of first evangelization among the Gumuz can be strengthened with a second community.

10.4 KENYA

10.4.1. The violence of 2008 affected our communities of Kariobangi and Korogocho (Nairobi). The Provincial Assembly was postponed and substituted with a two-day meeting during which the Comboni Missionaries tried to understand the socio-political situation of the Country.

10.4.2. There is a lot of reconciliation work to be done among the various ethnic groups.

10.4.3. Our missionary priorities are: the pastoralists, urban and slum apostolate.

10.4.4. Due to the cultural variety present in the Country, one of the main challenges missionaries find is the diversity of languages that poses problems for internal rotation. Yet, inspired by our founder and by the good example of our predecessors, learning the local language is a must, and one of the essential means by which the missionary can come to know the culture of the people to whom he is sent.

10.5. KHARTOUM

10.5.1. The political situation is still very uncertain and the war in Dar Fur goes on. The possibility of war starting again in the South cannot be excluded. Clashes between Southerners and Northerners still occur from time to time and also among different tribal groups, often fuelled by the Government of Khartoum. A consequence of this is that the displacement of Southerners in the North is prolonged. The Northern politicians are reluctant to accept any political change from the *status quo*.

10.5.2. The risk that the Southerners, Christians included, become Muslims is greater than before. Pastorally a great effort is needed to form Christians strong enough to withstand the challenge and be witnesses of Christ in the Islamic environment. In this context catechesis and education at all levels, university included, are of primary importance.

10.5.3. At present we experience a crisis of vocations, for both the MCCJ and the local Church. In recent years seminarians and priests have left, attracted by the possibility of well-paid jobs. The workload increases, while the workers decrease. Khartoum Diocese is amalgamating parishes to cope with the situation. We too, as Comboni Missionaries, are becoming fewer and older and find it more and more difficult to keep our commitments. We already left nearly all the commitments we had at national and Diocesan levels [responsibilities in the seminaries and in the pastoral departments] to be able to carry on with the work in the parishes entrusted to us. The situation is difficult indeed.

10.6. MALAWI- ZAMBIA

10.6.1. Zambia is seven times bigger than Malawi. Both countries have a population of about 12,000,000 inhabitants each and are in the process of consolidating multi-party democracy. There is social peace, freedom of worship and of expression. The people are friendly and peaceful.

10.6.2. The local Church is young, alive and growing. The number of the local priests and religious is gradually increasing. The SCCs are well established and relevant in the pastoral life of the parishes, although the local Church is still very far from becoming self-supporting, self-ministering and self-propagating. The main problems are generalized poverty, unemployment, corruption, HIV-AIDS, and orphans.

10.6.3. The Province is in the process of implementing the Six Year Provincial Plan (2005-2011). At present we are involved in the following pastoral areas: first evangelization, outskirts of the city, leadership formation, youth, Mission Promotion, Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation. The ministry of the Brothers plays an important role through the projects for the youth in Lunzu and Chikowa. The Common Provincial Fund has created an environment of sharing and communion among the confreres. As Comboni Missionaries we collaborate with and feel part of the local Church.

10.6.4. These are the main challenges that we face, as Comboni Missionaries in the Province: deepening our Comboni missionary identity; improving community life and our apostolic methodology; keeping alive the spirit and practice of the Common Provincial Fund; commitment to the sectors of Mission Promotion, Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation; commitment to JPIC (fight against poverty, development, empowerment of women, formation of youth and of Christian leadership); collaboration with the local Church, with other MCCJ circumscriptions, with the CMS, with the CLM, and other religious Institutes; and the promotion of local CLM.

10.7. MOZAMBIQUE

10.7.1. The decreasing number of confreres and their increasing age make it difficult to give continuity to all our activities and commitments especially in the field of first evangelization. It is a challenge to find a way to tackle the problem.

10.7.2. We shall continue to reduce the number of commitments, strengthen community life, and foster collaboration and team work with lay people and other religious personnel, especially the CLM and the CMS.

10.7.3. We need to strengthen our commitment in the field of JPIC.

10.7.4. In spite of an incipient effort made by the Province to be involved in dialogue and meeting with Islam and other religions, we are still far from our aim.

10.7.5. A presence in slums or in the outskirts of towns is envisaged in the Provincial Plan, but the actual situation of personnel did not favour its implementation.

10.7.6. We want to continue to give our contribution to the formation of pastoral leaders and people involved in parish work through our presence in Diocesan Pastoral Centres.

10.7.7. We shall make an effort to improve Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation as important elements of our missionary life.

10.7.8. Collaboration with others MCCJ circumscriptions at the regional and sub-continental level. It is necessary to overcome parochialism if we want to improve our presence and work, with new ideas, new proposals and new solutions.

10.8. SOUTH AFRICA

10.8.1. High population growth, the influx of immigrants and refugees from other African countries, Europe and Asia, rapid urbanization and unemployment (at

approximately 40%) increase many concomitant evils: crime, drug abuse, alcoholism, promiscuity, prostitution, abuse of women and children, human trafficking, and the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis, etc.

10.8.2. The percentage of Catholics has diminished in recent years and stands at around 6% of the population. Nevertheless the local black clergy, a good number of *Fidei Donum* priests and men and women religious from other African countries are making the Church's leadership more African.

10.8.3. The MCCJ are responsible for five parishes in rural areas, two *ad personam* parish commitments in mixed areas (rural and urban) and five parishes in cities and townships. There are many areas of first evangelization where thousands of people do not attend any Church at all, in spite of the presence of many churches and an enormous variety of different sects.

10.8.4. The English-speaking session of the Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation started in South Africa in October 1997 and is being hosted every second year. The international scholasticate started in the middle of 2002.

10.8.5. The Worldwide Media Centre publishes *Worldwide* (2,700 copies), the Comboni Friends Newsletter (1,100 copies) and the yearly Liturgical Missionary Calendar (30,000 copies). MCCJ are also involved in teaching in major seminaries, Bible translation, the ongoing formation of priests, religious and lay people, and they collaborate with the local Catholic Churches, with ecumenical and government structures and NGOs, on issues such as HIV/AIDS, immigrants and refugees.

10.8.6. The Province will continue to reduce and re-focus its commitments, by finding a balance between its involvement in rural and urban parishes, assuming specialized ministries, such as in pastoral centres, and strengthening Vocation Promotion, Basic Formation (pre-postulancy and postulancy) and Mission Promotion.

10.9. SOUTH SUDAN

10.9.1. January 2005 was a turning point in the history of Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the government of Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). South Sudan is generally at peace, except for frequent attacks on civilians by the Uganda rebel group LRA. Inter ethnic clashes have disrupted the dream of refugees wishing to return home and there have been battles between government and SPLA troops in disputed border areas.

10.9.2. New roads, schools and hospitals are being built, but not at the expected pace. Towns are growing fast, but there is no running water or sewerage. Widespread corruption and tribalism are undermining the legitimacy of the South Sudanese government.

10.9.3. The Church is respected by all for having shared the difficulties of the people during the war. It had also a prominent role in mediating the peace process. It is now reorganizing itself, but the ecclesial structures are over-centralized and Small Christian Communities have not taken root.

10.9.4. Our presence in South Sudan is mainly in the field of first evangelization among pastoralists. The parishes are huge and require more personnel than the available one. Most of our missions run schools. The hospital of Mapuordit in Rumbek Diocese is a point of reference for the health network of the country. We run a project in the field of JPIC consisting of a network of FM radio stations. The impact on the promotion of peace and reconciliation is very positive. Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation have undergone some setbacks and are being reshaped.

10.9.5. The Provincialate has been moved to Juba, but the house in Nairobi is being retained at least until 2011 when a referendum will decide whether the South becomes a new nation or remains united to Khartoum.

10.10 UGANDA

10.10.1. The discussions between the government of Uganda and the LRA that started in 2006, although they broke down recently, achieved real peace and the great majority of people are re-settling in their traditional areas. The process is not without tension and conflicts.

10.10.2. There is an effort in the field of JPIC to make people aware that the common good must have priority over the interests of the individual, clan and tribe. Uganda is also experiencing the influence of the globalisation of culture and new ways of life. There is a high rate of population growth and land is becoming scarce resulting in land grabs and wrangles. The breakdown of the family, clans, and regional ties is generating new types of social tensions and deviant behaviour. Traditional values are being lost without being replaced with new ones. The militarization of Karamoja has brought about security but also a break down of the traditional tribal order and tradition. The whole exercise is geared to exploit the mineral recourses.

10.10.3. The Province is becoming more and more international with the presence of the radical members slowly increasing. Most of the confreres are committed and dedicated to the service of the Gospel in close collaboration with the local Church.

10.10.4. The Province as a whole may not seem to be growing older, but the fact is that 50% of the confreres are over 70 years of age; the next provincial plan will have to adjust itself to this reality.

10.10.5. Vocation Promotion and Formation: the changing cultural values in the country will require new motivations, deeper discernment, attentive accompaniment, and focusing on the sacrificial love of God, the poor and the Kingdom of God.

Lusaka, May 18, 2009

FRENCH SPEAKING AFRICA

AFRICA – FRANCOPHONE PROVINCES
REPORT TO THE 17th GENERAL CHAPTER
LOME 2009

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Looking at... an empty chair!

Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus
AFRICA - FRANCOPHONE PROVINCES
REPORT TO THE 17TH GENERAL CHAPTER
Lome 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

Search for common feeling

We the capitulars of the four Francophone Africa Provinces met in Lome from 4th to 14th May 2009 for our sub-continental Assembly in preparation for the 17th General Chapter, entitled “*From Comboni’s plan to the comboni missionaries’ plan: re-qualification of mission, formation and government*”.

1.1 Present at the Assembly were: Fr. Giovanni Zaffanelli and Fr. Giorgio Aldegheri (Central Africa); Fr. Eliseo Tacchella and Fr. Joseph Musanga Mumbere (Congo); Fr. Manuel João Pereira Correia and Fr. John Kofi Tasiame (Togo-Ghana-Benin); Fr. Miguel Navarrete Arceo and Fr. José Gabriel Martínez Torres (Chad); and Br. Genesio Maroso (Delegate for the brothers). Fr. Odelir José Magri (general council) and Br. Daniele Giusti (pre-capitular commission) were also in attendance. In all, 11 confreres participated in the Assembly.

1.2 We all shared the reports from our provinces in the mood of mutual sympathy and attention, aimed at having a common vision of our sub-continent and thus integrating our common feelings as well as differences. As a sign of our desire to integrate diversity in a positive way, we wish to point out that our Africa francophone provinces also include Ghana which, with its Anglophone characteristics, constitutes a potential wealth for our sub-continent.

2. LOOKING WITH PASSION

The socio-political, economic and ecclesial situations

“I have observed the misery of my people... I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters; indeed I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them...” (Ex 3, 7-8).

As we look at the reality of our continent, we contemplate on the solidarity of God who is still suffering with His people enslaved by numerous situations of exploitation and misery. We could also note that the fire of divine Charity is still burning in the hearts of many of our confreres who are generously dedicated to the Mission by solidarising with the “least” of their brothers even at the peril of their lives.

Our look at the reality on our continent is a look full of PASSION, the passion of the God of Exodus, of Christ whose heart was pierced and that of Comboni. What we share here are our sufferings, BUT also our joys as we see the seeds of hope that the Spirit, quite unexpectedly, is sowing in the midst of situations of death and suffering, reinforcing our confidence in the final victory of life.

Elements of suffering and signs of hope

2.1 The political situation prevailing in all the countries in which we have been working remains quite instable. It is characterized by the reality of conflicts and wars involving insecurity and violence perpetrated by armed groups which continue to terrorise the population. Unfortunately human rights are often ignored or trampled upon. This was the case in Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad.

Added to these are widespread corruption in every sphere of public life, connivance and complicity of local authorities with certain political and economic players of the international community. Consequently we are witnessing a progressive deterioration of infrastructures and the social set up, increasing poverty among the population but above all traumatism and profound laceration of the souls of the people, all these accompanied by discouragement, resignation and a sense of hopelessness.

AND YET, there are also signs of hope. In Ghana and Benin, there is a positive evolution of a progressive consolidation of democratic governance and some amount of improvement in the living conditions of the people. We note with joy the emergence and the growth of the people's resistance to the culture of war and oppression. Arrest warrants and eventual arrest of some leaders and heads of state recently arise more awareness that there are no more "untouchable" people.

2.2 The economic situation in all our countries is not rosy. In spite of the potentials of their natural resources, there is little improvement or progress. Rather the misery of the majority of the people does not seem to bother their leaders. The looting of surface and underground wealth by multinationals through signing of leonine contracts with governments continues. It has been realized that there is a growing increase in the wealth of a small group that is solely concerned with profit and private interest to the disadvantage of the common good.

AND YET, here too there is evidence of an incredible capacity of the people to battle and fight for their daily survival under extremely disadvantaged conditions. Our people are not discouraged in the face of misery and the scarcity of the barest necessity of life and often surprise us by their creative ability to "manage" things, empower themselves and to find alternative solutions to apparently impossible situations.

2.3 The social situation is characterized by great economic cultural and intellectual misery. In countries like DRC, CAR and Chad we witness the dramatic situation of persons displaced by war, sexual violence against women, deterioration of infrastructures, education in the family, in schools and universities. The family itself is in deep crisis, reflected by the disintegration of cultural, ethical and moral values that were sustaining it. The cultural environment is suffering very much from the influx of western models propagated by the media which greatly destabilized our society through their capacity of being fascinating. Relationship between the young and the old is particularly affected by this "modernity". It is sad to feel the frustration of the youth who don't see any ray of hope before them and make every effort to go and try their luck elsewhere through illegal immigration.

A defective health system promotes the AIDS pandemic. Malaria continues to kill thousands of vulnerable and poor people.

AND YET, great improvement is seen in communication, with the advent of mobile phones even in the villages. Mass media gives a great deal of contribution in the creation of awareness regarding inhuman social realities. The role and testimony of

some associations (NGOs and other groups) are indeed praiseworthy, not forgetting human right activists and journalists who risk their lives in denouncing the violation of the peoples' fundamental rights.

2.4 The ecclesial situation is characterized by the difficulties faced by the local churches in their growth. Sometimes the church has some tendency of isolating itself and losing its apostolic and missionary zeal, a fact that leads to the loss of identity and lack of lucidity in its prophetic ministry; this brings about division within the church and between pastoral leaders. Unfortunately we are forced to realize with great pain that there are certain situations of counter-testimony among the clergy which is a source of scandal for the faithful. The challenge posed by sects is sometimes faced with indifference and passiveness. This reality within the local church seems to bring out the superficiality of evangelization, with many baptised people but few converted, as well as lack of church leadership.

AND YET, we note a particularly great thirst for God. People await a word that consoles and feeds their hope in a better future. The church is a strong sign of hope and plays crucial role in social life and community development (see its commitment to education and health). The church lives and celebrates its faith with enthusiasm and exuberance. Many lay faithful are committed to caring for the church with generosity and combined responsibility. We note with joy that in spite of all the difficulties mentioned above, the local church is growing in strength. This explains the abundance of native vocations as sign of the moment of grace for our churches. Finally, convening a second synod for Africa ("The church in Africa at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace") within a period of 15 years is a sign of the attention and care for Africa by the universal church.

Challenges for our charism

2.5 As comboni missionaries working under this socio-political, economic and ecclesial context, with its dark and bright sides, we feel particularly challenged by:

- The need to pay constant attention and give priority to situations of **first evangelization** and to the formation of communities, as well as their leaders.
- The necessity of a "pastoral of encounter" between **Christians and Moslems** by facilitating a life dialogue through activities carried out together for the common good and search for peace.
- The urgency for us to engage in justice and peace, reconciliation and conscience building. The **social dimension** of announcing the good news requires of us a greater spirit of prophecy, denunciation of injustice and serious human rights violations and to be the voice of the voiceless, to join efforts with the people and to evangelise our way of living and managing the economy.
- The importance of cultivating the principle of "**saving Africa through Africans**" through continual review of the style of our presence in order to abandon progressively our role as protagonists and a type of missionary service that needs great economic and material means ("doing with, doing together").
- The need to engage more in **Mass Media**, as tools of social education, of announcing the gospel and of missionary animation.
- The necessity of cultivating the **brotherhood vocation** in the institute as a constituent element of our comboni charism.

3. 172 HEARTS FOR THE MISSION

Presenting the comboni situation

Looking at the figures of the personnel in our provinces, and noting their continuous decline... we sometimes experience the perplexity and anxiety of Gideon when God reduced his army from 32,000 to 10,000 and finally to a handful of 300 men, in order to show clearly that the glory of Victory belongs to God alone (Judges 7). We are less than that: 172. In any case we renew our confidence in the power of the finger of God and wish to whole heartedly live the Mission He has entrusted to us.

3.1 Statistics (1.7.09)

	RDC	RCA	TGB	CHAD	TOTAL
1. Confreres of radical incorporation to the province	84	38	76	28	226
1.1 Confreres posted to the province (n° of brothers)	67 (11)	31 (4)	47 (7)	27 (2)	172 (24)
a) Residing in the province	58	27	40	22	147
b) Outside the province	8	4	7	4	23
c) Outside community	1	0	0	1	2
1.2 Scholastics + brothers of T. Vows of the province in formation	15+2	7	29	0+1	51+3
a) Scholastics in formation (scholasticate)	9	6	23	-	38
b) Scholastics in missionary service (n° outside the province)	6 (3)	1	6	-	13
c) T. Vows brothers in formation at IBC + in province (for studies)	1+1	-	-	1	3
2 Confreres of radical incorporation (n° of priests + brothers + scholastics)	50 (26+9+15)	12 (4+1+7)	66 (27+10+29)	3 (2+1+0)	131 (59+21+51)
2.1 In the missions (n° of priests + brothers + scholastics in miss. serv.)	17 (11+3+3)	3 (2+1+0)	20 (12+8+0)	-	40 (25+12+3)
2.2 In the province (n° priests +brothers + scholastics in missionary service)	20 (12+5+3)	3 (2+0+1)	22 (14+2+6)	2 (2+0+0)	47 (30+7+10)
2.3 In formation outside the province (n° of priests + brothers + scholastics)	13 (3+1+9)	6 (0+0+6)	24 (1+0+23)	1F (0+1+0)	44 (4+2+38)
3. Number of communities	18	8	12	8	46
3.1 First evangelisation communities	10	6	7	8	31
3.2 Basic formation communities	4	1	4	0	9
3.3 Missionary animation communities	1	-	1	0	2
3.4 Communities for other services	3	1	-	-	4

	RDC	RCA	TGB	CHAD	TOTAL
4.1 Personnel involved in: Evangelisation	37	16	23	20	96
4.2 In formation and teaching	11	2	10	-	23
4.3 In missionary animation and vocation promotion	8	2	4	-	14
4.4 In human development (health, social development...)	3	2	1	-	6
4.5 In provincial administration	3	4	2	2	11
4.6 Studies, ongoing f., sabbatical leave	4	1	4	1	10
4.7 Others (absent, ill...)	1	4	3	4	12
5.1 Communities with less than 3 confreres	0	0	0	2	2
5.2 Average of members per community (*)	3.4	3.5	3.9	2.8	3.5
5.3 Average age	55	52	51	45	52
5.4 Number of nationalities	8	7	12	14	-
5.5 Ration of native/foreign confreres (*)	20/67 (30%)	3/31 (10%)	22/47 (47%)	2/27 (7%)	47/172 (27%)

(*) By including scholastics in missionary service.

Figures speak for themselves and appeal to us. What is their message? We have tried to interpret them in the following lines.

3.2 About our personnel

- a) Personnel, “our first wealth”, is also a constant source of worry and difficulty. In the first place we shared the **difficulties** that make their management problematic:
- The imbalance between responsibilities and available personnel.
 - Instability of personnel due to emergencies, unforeseen age related conditions, sicknesses, rotation and departure.
 - Lack sometimes of a provincial project, failure to keep to programmes, as well as individualism.
 - Under qualification of our personnel.
 - Management of multiculturalism and interpersonal relationship in our communities, as well as age differences and vision of mission.
- b) We realize that the **physiognomy** of the personnel is changing rapidly in our provinces with significant increase in the number of nationalities and local personnel (see especially TGB and Congo) and this is given us some **challenges**:
- Closing our ranks around a common project at the provincial and the continental levels, with a vision opened towards the changing future.
 - Polishing up community life and interpersonal relationships.
 - Appreciating our international and multicultural composition and dialogue in order to live and accomplish the mission in the respect of diversities.
 - Investing in the preparation of fellow members for qualified services in the various sectors of our missionary work.

- c) Over the past years, a good number of our personnel have been engaged in the PV and basic formation (9 out of 46 communities!); this is because we are living a **special moment in vocation promotion**. In fact, recently one third of the vocations of our institute come from our sub continent. This grace poses too some challenges:
- Investing “generously” in the promotion of vocations and formation.
 - Discerning the vocational motivation of our candidates well.
 - Preserving the international composition of the formative teams in assuring them of adequate preparation and ongoing formation.
 - Guaranteeing a good and personalized accompaniment of the candidates in formation.
 - Promoting brotherhood vocations and polish up their formation by integrating professional qualification into missionary consecration.
 - Fostering enculturation and contextualizing our formation more by paying attention to family and cultural backgrounds of candidates.

3.3 About our communities

- a) Looking at the present **feature of our communities**, we notice certain characteristics that our presence on the continent is assuming:
- A humbler and more discreet presence (and this also explains the reduction in number of presences in some dioceses) and a greater insertion into the local church (as we try to offer a missionary answer to its needs).
 - A courageous presence in difficult situations and in risky and isolated areas.
 - A simpler and provisional presence trying to move forward a new style of living the mission (see the adoption of the provincial common funds).
 - A multicultural and internationally faceted presence which is becoming a testimony for the local church.
 - A presence which is moving towards new areopagus like those in the capitals to accompany the population influx but also for a greater impact in our evangelization.
- b) Looking at the development of **the number of communities and their commitments**, we also note some important changes:
- A much bigger diversification of services: from an almost exclusive commitment in the first evangelization, in a not too distant past, we have moved today towards other commitments like missionary activities, mass media, promotion of vocations, basic formation, JPIC, training of comboni laity, specialized pastorals, etc.
 - On one hand, this has led to an increase in the number of communities devoted to these new service sectors (13). On the other hand, it has led to a decrease in communities dedicated to first evangelization (31).
 - This situation also demands a better qualification and specialization in our services, something that is becoming a great challenge for our provinces.
- c) On the whole, a second look at the changes that have occurred in our communities also shows a **strategy** of presence and missionary commitment:
- Faithfulness to our charism, to the “Nigrizia” situations, to the “difficult mission” where we are more needed.
 - Presence in new areopagus, where we can influence opinion: mass media, internet etc.
 - Maintenance of a certain balance between our presence in rural and in urban areas.

- Move towards a more specialized pastoral, one that is attentive to special groups or areas (pygmies, Islam, etc.).
- Development of the different aspects of our charism and missionary service (first evangelization, missionary animation and formation) as far as possible.

4. A VISION AND A PLANNING PROJECT

Assessing the continental plan

And they shall be one in my hand, says the Lord God to his divided people through a prophetic sign of Ezekiel (EZ 37:19).

Even if we do not envisage the regrouping of our provinces (at least in a near future), our four provinces are moving towards a much bigger communion and unity as we try to “overcome provincialisms” and to aim at “the good of our institute and of the comboni mission” (Cf. letter of GC of 15-11-08).

4.1 Towards a continental plan

For some years, the provincials have regularly come together to share and programme some continental collaboration initiatives (see their report “our journey towards a continental plan” - Rome 2008). Without strictly speaking of a “continental plan”, the list of proposed initiatives is long. Here are some of the points:

- a) Missionary Animation: *Afriquespoir* Centre (magazines and publications), formation sessions for animators, exchanges about the training of comboni laity (friends of Comboni), collaboration with the Comboni sisters...
- b) Vocations and formation: Cotonou inter-provincial novitiate, the scholasticate of Kinshasa, the Lome brothers postulancy (which is opened to other provinces), sessions of training for promoters and formators, a missionary formation centre (CeForMi)...
- c) Evangelization: JPIC (training of operators), Islam-Christian dialogue, pygmy project...
- d) Ongoing formation (OF): GRAF (Francophone Africa Reflection Group), regular sharing of OF material, project of OF and counselling centre, Ratio Missions reflection, formation sessions, programme for specializations...
- e) Economy: provincial common funds, training of bursars.

4.2 Evaluating these objectives

In our evaluation, we have noticed that some initiatives have been adequately transmitted to and shared with the “base”. Some of them have been “forgotten” somehow and others are still at “draft level”.

- a) Here are the initiatives in which collaboration seems to have “**worked well**”:
 - Mass media (magazines, books and other materials) with the CAE, *Afriquespoir* centre (NB: in Ghana, *New People* for the Anglophone Africa).
 - Formation sessions organized at the continental level for missionary animators, JPIC operators, vocation promoters and formators.
 - Work on the Radio Missions.
 - Basic formation, particularly at the level of inter provincial novitiate.
 - Ongoing formation (sharing of materials).
 - Journey towards the provincial common funds.

- Knowledge and mutual aid among the provinces.
- b)** In other areas, collaboration was **short** of the proposed objectives:
- GRAF (Francophone Africa Reflection Group): at one point seems to have been running out of steam.
 - Postulancy for brothers: the small number of candidates puts into question its survival.
 - Centre for ongoing formation and counselling: despite the initial enthusiasm and the conviction that the project is needed, it still remains on paper for the meantime.
 - Missionary formation centre: still under construction.
 - Personnel exchange: remains a.... “wishful thinking”.
 - Joint programmes for the specialization of confreres: seems to have been forgotten.
 - Animation and training of bursars: another beautiful thing that remains to be done!

5. CRY FROM THE HEART

What each province cherishes most!

5.1 CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, “at the heart of the continent, at the heart of the comboni charism”, a province characterized by what is defined as “difficult mission”, typical of a comboni missionary, is asking the Chapter for:

- 1) **More attention**: many confreres do not know this province and consequently few “opt” for Central Africa in their preferences, making it difficult to have personnel.
- 2) **More courage**: to have a true discernment of our commitments in the institute and to redesign our presences.

5.2 CONGO is expressing some special concerns as follows:

- 1) **Economy**: defining an economic policy of the institute which should meet the challenges of the world financial crises and aim at self-sufficiency.
- 2) **Evangelization**: giving priority in Africa to the commitment in justice, peace and reconciliation by following the directions that will be given in the second synod for Africa.
- 3) **Comboni methodology**: assessing our comboni methodology of “saving Africa with Africans” in order to know how far we have come with this charismatic project of our founder.

5.3 TOGO-GHANA-BENIN draws attentions to three themes:

- 1) **Vocations:** we are eagerly working to provide our institute with “many and good vocations”. A special attention is also expected from the institute so that the “delivery” of new members may take place in favourable conditions. See for instance the situation in the novitiate!
- 2) **Brotherhood:** lack of candidates and low awareness in the institute for brotherhood vocations requires more attention. We suggest that our provinces should study the possibility of creating an inter-provincial human development project to emphasize the comboni brothers’ vocation.
- 3) **Ghana:** confreres advocate for acknowledgement of their specificity and ask to be accepted in their diversity, as richness and opportunity. The new scholasticate of Cape Coast ought to be taken as “belonging to all of us”.

5.4 CHAD also presented three topics:

- 1) **Priority mission:** in our effort to redesign our commitments, we should not apply the same criteria everywhere and univocally. The province wants to be considered as a priority area for first evangelization.
- 2) **Personnel:** it is not just a question of “quantity” but also of “quality”. The province wants to maintain its multiracial characteristics while wishing for a better balance (of origin and age).
- 3) **Personal accompaniment:** the spiritual support for the confreres has proved to be a real necessity but we lack personnel for this service.

6) LISTENING

Other subjects suggested to the Chapter

6.1 Comboni brother

Within these past years, we have noticed a significant “decrease” in the number of brothers in the institute and the small number of new candidates. On the other hand, we have noted certain uneasiness on the part of brothers concerning the prevailing clerical sensitivity in the institute and in the church, which does not help the development and growth of this vocation.

Therefore, we suggest (9/9 votes) that the Chapter should look into the case of the comboni vocation for brotherhood in the institute, in order to deepen the dimension of ministry, sustain the vocational promotion of brothers and give guidelines for their formation.

6.2 Comboni laity

Our provinces are quite well committed to the creation and formation of a native comboni lay people. But we think that this new way of living the comboni charism is insufficiently developed in our institute. We feel that this is the opportunity for the Chapter to clarify, give guidelines and promote the comboni laity (LMC, friends and collaborators).

We suggest (8/9) that the Chapter should revive the commitment of the institute in the promotion of a comboni laity which shares the comboni charism with us.

6.3 Insertion communities

We welcome the suggestion made by a group of confreres on “insertion” as a life and mission style (“mission: living and working with the poor at the borders - urgency for a renewed commitment”). We consider it important to lay more emphasis on the privileged beneficiaries of our missionary service while thinking of our mission *ad pauperes*. This reflection can help us increase the dimension of “reaching up” with the poor.

We are asking the Chapter (6/9) to take this suggestion into consideration and discuss the subject of insertion.

6.4 Election of the provincial superior

During the election of the provincial superior, it happened that more than a province went through a delicate situation because the choice of a candidate was promoted by confreres of temporary vows or who were residing outside the province and consequently had a partial knowledge of the realities of the province.

We suggest (6/9) that the Chapter considers this aspect and finds a voting modality (or opinion poll) which will promote real discernment in the choice of the provincial and his council.

6.5 Giving priority to Chad for first evangelization

Considering the current situation of Chad, we propose (5/9) that the Chapter may give priority to the posting of personnel to this province, following the example of the 2003 Chapter in favour of Sudan (cf. CA’ 03, 133.4).

7. TURNING TOGETHER TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Future prospect

Inspired by the “dream” of our founder who was already contemplating “a bright future” for Africa, knowing our weaknesses and also our responsibilities at this moment of grace because the Lord “has placed before us an opened door that no one can shut” (Ap. 3,8), we look into the future with optimism and confidence. As we wait what the Chapter will tell us about the “plan for the comboni missionaries”, we have tried to discern, from the reality on the ground, what could be the components of a future continent program.

7.1 Evangelization

- Prioritize certain situations for first evangelization.
- Carry on the reflection on the comboni methodology.
- Maintain certain urban presences for missionary animation.
- Exchange qualified personnel in the various areas for a punctual service delivery to other provinces.
- Create an inter-provincial human promotion project in order to assess the vocation of the comboni brothers.
- Qualify our personnel and give priority to the training of leaders.

7.2 Missionary animation

- Draw up a continental Charter for A.M.
- Improve upon the mass-media sector of the CAE (publication, radio, internet...) particularly in favour of our missionary promotion.

- Open a CAE branch in Lome.
- Together implement the project of the missionary training centre (CeForMi).
- Carry on the training session for our animators.

7.3 Pastoral vocation and basic formation

- Give priority to the PV, where it is advisable, with trained and fulltime personnel.
- Plan the changeover and the training of formators over a long period (at least 6 years).
- Reopen the second francophone inter-provincial novitiate at Sarh (Chad), with the alternation of groups of novices (following the example of Namugongo-Lusaka);
- Maintain, as much as possible, the international identity of the formative teams.
- Pay more attention to the monitoring and personal accompaniment of candidates.

7.4 Qualification of personnel

- Programme regular periods of ongoing formation for vocation directors and formators following the example of the Cotonou 2007.
- Entrust some qualified confreres with the service of organizing the ongoing formation for formators.
- Open the centre for ongoing formation and counselling, in collaboration with other ecclesial institutions.
- Promote and plan specialization in various sectors.
- Re-launch the GRAF (Francophone African Reflection Group) by involving the grass-root in the reflection.
- Contextualize the “code of conduct” taking into consideration local legislation.

7.5 Economy

- Continue our commitment aimed at making all confreres understand and apply the provincial common funds.
- Animate and train local bursars: in this regard, organise training sessions either at the provincial or the continental level.

8. CONCLUSION

Looking at... an empty chair!

We conclude our assembly on the feast of Saint Matthias. The Word makes us look at an worrisome empty “chair” that Peter (in a... “Chapter” with 120 delegates!) would like to see occupied by a new witness of the resurrection and so “make” the group 12 again (AC. 15-26).

We too are watching a number of situations that worry us, that remind us of our weakness and our poverty. We want to face them with courage, humility and confidence during the next Chapter. In order to do this, we undertake to prepare it together with the confreres of our provinces so that it may become a grace-filled event, the grace of a charismatic renewal of our apostolic group. May Daniel Comboni intercede for us!

Lome, 14th May 2009

Capitulars of the francophones provinces of Africa

Fr. Giovanni Zaffanelli, Fr. Giorgio Aldegheri, Fr. Eliseo Tacchella, Fr. Joseph Musanga Mumbere, Fr. Manuel João Pereira Correia, Fr. John Kofi Tasiame, Fr. Miguel Arceo Navarrete, Fr. José Gabriel Martínez Torres, Br. Genesio Maroso
Con Fr. Odelir José Magri e Br. Daniele Giusti

AMERICA AND ASIA

THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES IN AMERICA/ASIA

1. REPORT TO THE 17th GENERAL CHAPTER

The Comboni Missionaries have been present on the American continent for 71 years and in Asia for 20. Currently we have 448 members spread over 15 countries. During these years we have journeyed with the people and the Church of these continents with the intent of serving them from the richness of our charism, through evangelization mission promotion and formation.

The Delegation of Asia works in full communion with the provinces/delegations of America. It shares with us some realities and concerns, but it also has its specific dimension. For this reason, at the end of this Report, it will add its own.

1. Socio-political and economic situation

The countries where we are present share many things: democratic systems, some cultural aspects, great economic and social contrasts, a constant process of change and transformation, a Christian background. They are also affected by globalization at all levels, including the current economic crisis. At the same time, they are very different one from the other. Each country has its own reality and dynamics, its advances and its setbacks. Migration is a phenomenon that affects the entire continent with its positive and negative aspects, both in the countries of origin and in the receiving countries.

- During these last few years **the socio-economic situation of the United States (USA)**, has been greatly impacted by the growing number of immigrants: 44.5 millions of Latin origin of which 20 millions are illegal; 13 millions of Asian origin. On the other hand, there are also 30 million people of African descent with a long history of slavery and segregation. With the election of Obama, the first president from a minority, we are experiencing a time of great hope, which is changing the image of the USA both within the country itself and internationally. The serious crisis of the economy and of the financial system affects all the levels of society. In spite of all this, during the last six years, the NAP has given to the General Administration (GA) and to the provinces 20 million dollars.
- **Mexico** is going through a period of political growth, both macro-economically and socially. There are signs of hope: the democratic process is moving forward; the critical knowledge of the people and freedom of expression are on the increase; there is more co-responsibility in the decision making process over national issues, there is an increasing pluralism of opportunities at all levels; in general civil society is better organized. All of the above notwithstanding, the country is suffering through a situation of violence and insecurity caused mostly by the narco-trafficking cartels. Mexican society is experiencing a change of values, unfortunately to the detriment of family and of the traditional cultural background. Locally, the serious worldwide economic situation has caused such a recession that many workers and migrants have lost their source of income. The rural and indigenous populations are always the most vulnerable. There is a patent manipulation on the part of certain political groups, who gain from the poverty of the people, through populist proposals, or by establishing high technology systems that benefit only a few privileged people.

- **In the countries of Central America** we realize that the greatest richness is to be found in the people: the great values of hospitality, respect, zest for life, the desire to learn more, the desire to grow. Just the same, there is no lack of violence and criminality to darken the social picture. There are democratic structures, albeit weak, but very often they are crippled by corruption and impunity. This is why at the present time, people look to the future with little confidence. The migration of many Centro-Americans to the USA ensures the livelihood of their families, since job opportunities in some areas are few and unskilled labor is not paid according to justice.

On the other hand, Central America is rich in natural resources, land and climates that constitute a great potential for industry and tourism that could generate lots of jobs in the region.
- **Colombia** has 45 million inhabitants, including 10 million people of African descent and 1 million indigenous. It is a well established democracy, even though violation of human rights is rather frequent. There is a large internal displacement of people (three millions) and external migration is also extensive (five millions). Violence, the product of armed groups and drug traffickers is a major problem. On the other hand, we are witnessing an ever growing awakening in civil society which, in spite of continuing persecution, shows the richness of its fiber and of its commitment to peace in the country. Colombia also enjoys a legislation which is favorable to the Afro and to the indigenous population, who are at this time going through a period of self awareness and social involvement.
- **Ecuador** particularly feels the impact of migration and the influence of the armed conflict in Colombia. The privatization of natural resources and deforestation are also a source of concern. On the positive side, the Afro population and the indigenous people are more present in civil society. The Afros, with whom we work, number about 800 thousand and live mostly in two large cities - Guayaquil and Quito – and in the provinces of Esmeraldas, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas and Imbabura. According to the latest census, the indigenous people make up 43% of the population. During these years the Afro pastoral, located in the two centers of Guayaquil and Quito, has fostered the formation of leaders, the Brotherhood of Afro Missionaries has increased and so have the Afro popular evangelizers and the promoters of JPIC in various provinces.
- **Peru** is currently run by its second APRA government under the leadership of Alan García. Following a disastrous first period (1985-1990), it is now trying to make it up to the people by strengthening the institutions and avoiding the same mistakes of the past.

Just the same, there is a certain authoritarianism in some of his decisions, making it difficult to have a true political opposition. There have been attempts

to pass laws that would dissolve NGOs that can have concrete impact and control. In some cases, people who defend the environment have been likened to terrorists of the radical left. There have been attempts to buy the media and to use government money for private expenses.

Among Garcías merits we count the respect for the economic policies of his predecessor, which has allowed a growth in the economy and monetary stability during the last seven years, making Peru the most stable government in the region, thanks to its good macro-economic growth. It is a fact that poverty has decreased various digits, even though social inequality is still evident and the benefits do not yet reach the poorest.

At the beginning of this year, the *Defense of the People*, one of the institutions that enjoy most credibility, pointed out more than 200 points of conflict in the country, mostly related to the excessive exploitation of natural resources. In the same line, the increase in violence connected with narco-terrorism and the insecurity which people feel, are a source of great worry.

The situation in **Chile** is very different from the reality of Peru. Chile is a country that has developed greatly during these last few years and enjoys social, economic and political stability.

- **Brazil** is a country of continental dimensions with 191 million inhabitants. Of this total, 85 millions are of African descent, victims of racial, economic and religious discrimination. There are also more than 700 thousand indigenous people. Many of their 605 territorial claims have been invalidated and more than half have not yet been legally recognized. This is the environment where we find the missionary presence of Comboni communities.

Brazil is a country of huge economic, social and technological contrasts. On the one side, we have a minority that controls production of goods and of the media. On the other side, we have a large majority of poor people, of which 30 millions live in extreme poverty. There is also a corrupt legislative body and an ineffective judiciary, contributing to an increase in violence and in drug trafficking. Both the deforestation of the Amazons and the movement “Sin Tierra” which advocates an agrarian reform are ongoing.

On the other hand, Brazil has such an economic potential, that it generates many expectations and a lot of hope in the people. President Lula has tried to give the country a different direction through policies of assistance that have allowed 18 million poor people to improve the quality of life. However, even this has not succeeded in changing the situation. Many people are disenchanted and social movements have been weakened. The social and political awareness of the people is on the increase, as well the demand for respect of human rights, live and dignity for all.

2. The Ecclesial Situation

- During more than 50 years, the Churches of Latin America have been making an effort to journey together. The last milestone in this journey has been the 5th Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, celebrated at Aparecida (Brazil), during which the double vocation of each baptized person as both disciple and missionary of Jesus Christ was re-discovered. The gathering proposed a Continental Mission, which had been launched during the Third American Missionary Congress / Eighth Latin American Missionary Congress (CAM3-COMLA8). However, the mission outside the continent is weakening every day more. On the occasion of this Congress we, Comboni Missionaries, have committed ourselves to be part of this Continental Mission in order to promote the mission *ad gentes*. On their part, the Churches of the United States and Canada are continuing on their own journey, searching, however, for closer ties with the Church in Latin America, mostly in view of the large presence of Latin Americans in these northern countries.
- **The Church in the United States** is very much alive: lay people take active part in the life of the Church and are no longer mere spectators; many ministries and administrative responsibilities are entrusted to lay men and women. The Church faces the challenge of ministering to the large number of immigrants. It is also a Church that, due to sexual abuse perpetrated by some priests and religious, is now facing persecution. Furthermore, there are people who want to gain from this situation. All this has generated mistrust toward the Church. Our work as missionaries has become more difficult, including the economic aspect. The work of people involved in vocation promotion suffers for this situation and, even more, for the rise of very conservative religious groups that draw the attention of many young people.
- **The Church in Mexico** has various religious groups and movements (particularly, of consecrated life) committed to a ministerial pastoral closer to the people. In spite of all its faults, the Church in Mexico is undergoing a process of renewal. Its strength continues to be the authentic faith and the simple religiosity of its people. We sense within the institutional Church an inability to dialog with the current reality which is changing at a very fast pace. At the same time, we perceive a return to attitudes that seemed to have been relegated to the past, such as sacramentalism, clericalism (an exaggerated concern for cult and for power control), a spiritualistic syncretism, an inadequate language in dealing with the young. We also see a diminished concept of mission, an exclusive interest in internal needs. We also note less generosity in choosing to go much further than one's borders and in the willingness "to give from our poverty." The near future of the Church looks difficult, and there is a strong effort to delegitimize it.

- **Central America** offers a wide range of religious experiences. On the one side, we have groups that are seriously committed, while on the other side there are ultraconservative and spiritualistic groups. There is also a great desire to deepen one's formation. As an institution, the Church is credible, but it is often silent, it does not involve itself openly with the fate of the people. It is an established, defensive Church. In this ecclesial context, it is of particular significance the participation of the lay people, who without much difficulty take upon themselves duties in their communities. We are happy to note also an increase of mission awareness in the local Churches, the result, for the most part, of the contribution of Comboni Missionaries through the mission promotion activities of these last years.
- **Colombia** exhibits a traditional religiosity. In the past the Church had a great influence on society, but this is changing. The Church is well organized, but the distribution of clergy is not evenly balanced, since in the areas inhabited by the Afro and by the indigenous population there are few priests and the presence of the institutional Church is very limited. All of this notwithstanding, there are 2 thousand Colombian missionaries abroad and there are many individuals and ecclesial communities very much alive, committed to the poor and working toward a just and peaceful Colombia.
- **The Church of Ecuador** has lost some of its prophetic bishops, among them Bishop Proaño and Bishop Bartolucci, beacons of light for the indigenous and for the Afro world. Many of today's bishops come from rather traditional ecclesial movements. On the one side, there are still some church groups committed to the social and, on the other side, there is a growing number of groups that embrace a disemboweled spirituality, at the expense of a committed type of faith. Just the same, the Church is an important part of society, in spite of some of the scandals of these last few years. In the majority of Christians one sees a great separation between faith and life. The last CAM3-COMLA*, celebrated in Quito in 2008, has shown the lack of opening to the mission *ad gentes*, not only in the Ecuadorian Church, but throughout the Continent. The launching of the Great Continental Mission *ad intra* of the American Churches shows even more the crisis in prophetic stances and in opening to the world. The Great Continental Mission could become a true *kairos* for the Church in Ecuador, if it accepts the task of being in a constant state of mission.
- **Peru** shows a serious commitment of religious people to the poorest and the neediest, who are found in difficult places, as a witness of the Kingdom of God. These options are a source of conflict with some shepherds and people in other sectors of the Church who do not recognize their work. We have a growing number of people, including bishops, who are connected to the most conservative sectors of the Church, who are a cause of disagreement and tension in the pastoral work. The **Church of Chile** is not very open to the topic of

mission *ad gentes*, but is very sensitive in backing various initiatives within the country.

- **Brazil**, at the Church level, is suffering through serious change which is giving it a new face, different from the one it held for a long time. The great majority of the clergy is sacramentalist, there is great opposition to social pastoral involvement, there is an increase of charismatic movements and neo-Pentecostal Churches are growing. However, there is also a bright side: a strong stand of various popular ecclesial sectors on behalf of life, justice and the creation of new ministries. Many Church organizations believe and invest a lot in the formation of lay people. In the local Church there is a growing missionary awareness. There are 1800 Brazilian missionaries serving abroad. Twinning between dioceses, especially with the Amazons, with the Missionary Project in East Timor, with Angola and Mozambique is also on the rise.

3. Comboni Presence

3.1 Statistics

Currently there are 448 Comboni Missionaries in America/Asia, 53 of them being brothers. We have 96 communities so subdivided in their respective jurisdictions:

- NAP: 32(31+1) in 8 communities
- Mexico: 80 (66+14) in 18 communities
- Central America: 33 (30+3) in 8 communities
- Colombia: 20 (14+6) in 4 communities
- Ecuador: 46 (36+10) in 9 communities
- Peru/Chile: 56 (51+5) in 15 communities
- Brazil South: 60 (57+3) in 15 communities
- Brazil NE: 44 (35+9) in 13 communities
- Asia: 20 (19+1) in 6 communities

Following is the number of candidates

a) Scholastics and Brothers in formation

- Mexico: 9+2
- Central America: 10+3
- Colombia: 4
- Ecuador: 3
- Peru/Chile: 5
- Brazil South: 4
- Brazil NE: 1
- Asia: 3

Total 44

b) Novices

- Mexico: 1
- Central America: 2
- Peru/Chile 1
- Brazil NE: 1
- Asia: 1

Total: 6

c) Postulants

- Mexico: 14
- Central America: 6
- Colombia: 2
- Ecuador: 4
- Peru/Chile: 8
- Brazil South: 6
- Brazil NE: 2
- Asia 8

Total 50

3.2 Revision and Provincial Plans

We are currently involved in planning better cooperation between provinces and delegations (one novitiate for the American Continent, magazines, exchange of personnel...) and we are working along the following priorities: Mission and Vocation Promotion and Formation, preferential option for the Afro population, indigenous people and the urban slums, with JPIC as a transversal axis.

All the provinces and delegations have the three dimensions of our charism: evangelization, mission promotion and formation. All of them are in the process of revising their commitments, with six year plans listing objectives, means and steps to be taken. As a matter of fact very concrete steps have already been taken:

- **The NAP** has made the following changes: 1) In Canada we have moved from having only a center of mission promotion, to running a parish with a mission center connected to it; 2) In Chicago we have accepted the parish connected to the Peace Center (evangelization/pastoral among Afro-Americans); 3) in 2007 we handed over one of the parishes in Blue Island, IL (Seven Holy Founders) and we are in the process of handing over the other one in 2010. They were significant commitments, but we have to do it for lack of personnel.
- **In Mexico** during these 6 years we have handed over the parishes of Bahía Asunción (BCS), San Felipe Usila (Oaxaca), Bahía Tortugas (BCS), San Ignacio (BCS). At the same time we have closed the minor seminary of Guadalajara (it has been turned into Oasis San Daniel Comboni for the elderly and the sick), and the brothers postulancy in Monterrey (it remains as a mission promotion center).
- **In the Central American Delegation** we have opened three new places: a mission among the indigenous people in Guatemala; a parish in an urban slum situation in Costa Rica and a Center of Mission Promotion in Managua, Nicaragua.
- **In Colombia** we have given back to the diocese the parish of Aguachica in a rural area in order to start a new parish in the outskirts of Tumaco, at the far end of the country, with a population entirely Afro. At the same time, we left a large mission promotion structure in a wealthy section of Cali in order to go to an Afro barrio on the outskirts of the same city.
- **In Ecuador** we closed the parish of La Catorce in order to increase the work of the Afro Pastoral in the North of Esmeraldas and Mission Promotion.

- In **Peru** since 2003 we have handed over the following communities: Ambo and Huariaca (2003); Yanahuanca (2004); Villa Alhué, Chile (2005); half of the parish of Trujillo (2005); María Misionera de Renca, Chile (2009) and Pozuzo (2009). In 2009, in line with the option of working with the indigenous people, we opened the community of San Martín de Pangoa (indigenous of the Peruvian Amazons). We have also strengthened our presence among the Afro population (in Chincha).
- The **Province of Brazil South** since 2003 has handed over to the dioceses: a social structure in São José do Rio Preto, São Paulo; the parishes of Conceição de Barra and Pedro Canário in São Mateus, Espírito Santo; the parish of São Sebastião in Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro; the parishes of Ouro Preto and Cacoal in Ji-Paraná, Rondonia; the parish of Taguatinga in Brasília and part of the parish of São José Operário in Carapina, in Victoria, E.S. We will further hand over to the diocese of São Mateus the parish of Nova Venécia. We have also closed: two communities of mission and vocation promotion in Lages, Santa Catarina, and in Ouro Preto, Rondonia; the community of the magazine Sem Fronteiras y Aló Mundo in São Paulo; the novitiate of Nova Contagem, Minas Gerais, the “propedeutico” in Curitiba and the community of Carapina, E.S.

During this same time, following the provincial priorities of the six year plan and the orientation of the General Chapter, we have opened four new communities: one in São Paulo for the activities of JPIC; one for mission promotion in Indaial, SC; two in the North of Brazil, namely, Boa Vista in Roraima and Manaus in the Amazons, to work with the indigenous people in the Amazons.

Totally, we have closed 12 communities and opened four. At this point the province has achieved a balance between personnel and commitments. Keeping in mind the mature age of the group, we have also decided to remain in some more traditional places where we have been active for a number of years.

- In **Brazil NE** the province has elaborated a plan that places as the focus of its missionary presence the work of Justice and Peace and the integrity of Creation. Within this methodological option we have chosen as a first step the analysis of the social, economic and religious situation by creating a data bank, identifying existing potentials and weaknesses in the context of our situation. Each community, starting from the provincial focal point, has elaborated a plan, choosing its specific reality (socio-environmentalism, human rights, the indigenous people, the Afro population, the youth) to be addressed in a biblical, catechetical, social and pastoral dimension.

3.3 A Continental Plan

For years there has been within the Continent a tradition of meetings of provincial/ delegates and of the various sectors of our missionary service (evangelization, Basic Formation, Vocation and Mission Promotion, Economy, etc.) to deal with points of common interest.

Starting with the inter-capitular assembly (Mexico 2006), in order to better address the current needs of the Institute, we proposed a meeting of the General Council with the provincial/delegates of the Continent to firm up the points of a continental plan

which, based on the discussions of that time, could be used to formulate a global Plan for the Institute. The other continents thought it useful to hold similar meetings.

During the February 2007 meeting in São Paulo, priorities were formulated that would serve as guidelines when defining our presence on the Continent. Reacting to the analysis of the General Council over the state of the Institute and to its invitation to reflect on it, we again felt the need to propose possible groupings of jurisdictions for a better use of personnel and in order to offer a more qualified service. They gave as an example the possible fusion of the two provinces of Brazil and of Ecuador-Colombia. We strove to study, with the help of competent confreres, what could be the common points in a continental approach to work with the Afros, the indigenous people, mission promotion, JPIC, etc.

At the July 2007 meeting in Chicago we evaluated what had been done up to then and the process to be followed to make it work. In particular, we underlined the importance of involving, first of all, all our confreres, in order to have a consensus; we agreed to inform/educate the grassroots and to start looking for possible areas of cooperation by regions. It was recommended that the provincial/delegates promote an exchange of ideas by zones (Brazil-the Andes-the North). In fact, later on the regions of Brazil and of the North met.

During the meeting of delegates to the Chapter, held in Quito in May 2009, at various points we reaffirmed the urgency of a Continental Plan that will express the new way to do mission in cooperation. To this end we have elaborated some concrete proposals. Among them, the following:

- we choose a path of cooperation
- we reaffirm the preferential options
- we back the strengthening of the Delegation of Asia
- we back the OCPH
- we prefer a non-juridical type of grouping: we would rather rely on mutual support and team work in various areas.
- we set the Intercapitular assembly of 2012 as the time to evaluate the journey and propose a Continental Plan.

3.4 Spirituality, community life, attention to the person

The process of the *Ratio Missionis* has been a time of grace for the evaluation of our community life, our spirituality and our being Comboni Missionaries. It has helped us to form more fraternal communities.

This discernment has given an incentive to each province and delegation to continue to take concrete steps that will help them clarify their identity, the way to be Comboni Missionaries, in the context of our continent and of the current situation.

All the provinces/delegations have plans and activities of ongoing formation to help each confrere to experience a human, spiritual and pastoral growth. We feel a strong concern to ensure, within the Continent, a professional hand to the confreres who need special help.

Various provinces have already opened centers for the elderly: Guadalajara (Mexico), San Jose de Rio Preto (Brazil South), Teresina (Brazil NE) and Covina (NAP).

Every other year, the Continent also holds in Mexico the Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation.

3.5 The Economy

Renewal is reflected also by the journey that each jurisdiction is doing in order to establish a Total Common Fund. Some already have it: Central America, Colombia, the NAP. We are also striving to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

3.6 Fields of action

Mission and Vocation Promotion

Mission Promotion is fundamental to the service we are giving to the Continent, since it is a specific contribution of our Comboni charism to the local Churches. It is one of the priorities of our Continent. Our very presence is already a stimulus to the local Churches in becoming aware of their own missionary vocation.

- **The activities** and means we use in our Mission Promotion are many: magazines, radio and TV programs, CDs, DVDs, web pages, blogs, books, pamphlets, mission appeals, cooperation with the mission organizations of the local Church, retreats, meetings, networks of friends and benefactors, Golden Age missionaries, courses of missionary formation, etc. We are currently reflecting over new ways and means of doing MP that will be in tune with the times.
- Within this large field of mission promotion we carry out an intense **vocation promotion** among the young, but with very unequal results. Some provinces are more fruitful than others. In general, we can say that we are living through a difficult moment that makes us revise the methods we are using, so that they may better address the situation of today's young people on this Continent. There were years when we had many candidates, but in today's situation they are few. We hope the situation will improve.
- **The young** are the largest category and they are also the most dynamic with much potential, albeit quite frail. For them we have invested in education and formation programs. On the one side, we are trying to create a culture of peace, while on the other side we are proposing a clear choice of a Christian and missionary vocation. Some provinces/delegations have youth movements: America Misionera in Ecuador, Colombia and DCA; Jupaz (youth for peace) in Brazil NE.
- The Continent (New York) also has an office of **Africa Faith and Justice Network** and VIVAT, to advocate, together with various NGOs, Churches and other religious institutes, on behalf of the poorest countries.

a) Formation

These are the formation structures we have: an American novitiate in Sahuayo, Mexico and another in Manila, Philippines; three scholasticates, one in Lima, Peru, one in São Paulo, Brazil, and one in Chicago, IL; we also have an inserted scholasticate in Nova Contagem, Brazil, and a CIF in Bogota, Colombia. Beside this, each province has some formation structure at the level of postulancy, at times in an inserted community. At this point almost all the provinces/delegations have a preparation program of varying duration. Some provinces and delegations are working diligently in preparing courses of ongoing formation for educators. A great difficulty we encounter in this field is finding personnel. As a consequence we cannot count on a sufficient number of educators.

c) Evangelization

All the provinces/delegations, each within its own history, context and possibilities, are undergoing a process of discernment in order to redefine their commitments in line with the continental options: the Afro population, the indigenous people and the urban marginalized, with JPIC as a common background that will give a particular style to our evangelization. We believe

that our Comboni charism is finding a field where to grow and expand by remaining faithful to its roots and by answering the cry of these populations historically marginalized, both in society and in the Church and with little contact with the Gospel.

For various decades, our confreres have been doing a very significant and valuable job, with activities in the field of human rights, our inculturation, religious dialog, the creation of communities that will live by the Gospel as a freeing force that will lead people to live life to the full. We believe that the core of our evangelization must be justice and peace aimed at promoting a more dignified life for our people.

Along this line we have four Comboni Activities of Human Promotion (CAHP) in varying degrees of organization in Ecuador, Brazil NE, Mexico and Colombia.

3.7 Comboni Lay Missionaries

Various provinces/delegations have groups of **Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM)**, both national and foreign, in their own different situations.

- The **NAP** has 7 CLM abroad: 4 in Peru (2 couples with children), 2 in Kenya and 1 in the DCA. It hosts one from Mexico, who works with immigrants. There are 4 in formation (2 couples without children). So far, 30 CLM have completed their mission assignment and now cooperate in various ways in the activities of the province (Mission appeals, mission promotion, bulletins).

- In **Mexico** there are five groups of CLM for a total of 45 members. There are quite a few who have completed their service *ad gentes* inside and outside the country. Currently, there are 5 women in mission: 4 in Peru and 1 in the USA.

- **Central America** is currently going through an organizational phase in Guatemala and in Nicaragua. It also has a CLM from the NAP.

- The **Delegation of Colombia** has chosen to form a Movement of CLM with the objective of involving in the missionary process various mission minded lay activists. The formation program for the CLM with 8 candidates is situated within this framework.

- The **Province of Peru-Chile** values the presence of CLM. Currently the following are serving in Peru: 4 from the NAP in Trujillo; 4 from Mexico in Baños and in El Carmen; 3 from Spain in Arequipa and El Carmen; 2 from Peru-Chile in Baños.

- **Brazil South** has 8 CLM (6 working in Brazil and 2 in Mozambique).

- **Brazil NE** has 3 CLM: a Spaniard, a Portuguese and a German. The first two work in the technical training of young farmers while the other works in the outskirts of São Luis where she advocates for the rights of children and adolescents.

4. Prospects for the Future

In America and Asia we, the Comboni Missionaries, have a great opportunity to fulfill our missionary charism, faithful to the rich inheritance we have received and to be creatively open to new possibilities and challenges. We think that we must reaffirm and improve our mission promotion, in order to make an impression in the life of the local Churches.

We also want to sharpen our methods of vocation promotion and of an inculturated formation, keeping in mind the concrete situation of the young and the missionary challenges of the Institute.

As far as Evangelization is concerned, we are taking clearer decisions in favor of the Afro population, the indigenous peoples and the disadvantaged urban areas, keeping the focus on JPIC, with the object that these peoples may enjoy life in abundance and may find in Jesus Christ this life that we are all looking for.

To be faithful to this vocation and to this mission, we are aware of the need for constant renewal of a strong spirituality, growing fraternity and better organization, by increasing cooperation between provinces and delegations.

5. Proposals

5.1 DCA TO BECOME A PROVINCE

During this past six year period the DCA has consolidated its presence, its organization and its strength in the communities, as well as achieving a greater financial independence. We believe that the time has arrived to move on to making it a Province, following the advice of the Chapter of 2003 (See CD 2003,135).

5.2 COMBONI PROJECTS OF HUMAN PROMOTION (CPHP)

- That the provinces/delegations of Brazil NE, Ecuador and Colombia include these activities in their six year plans.
- That CPHP be taken up as continental plans of cooperation in the specific lines adopted by the continent.
- That the center of Bogotá be recognized as the liaison and support (FP) of the activities of the brothers on the continent.
- That the provincials/delegates of the continent, together with the GA, ensure the presence of 7 brothers dedicated to these activities, without excluding the priests.
- That Mexico continue its process of discernment over its CPHP.

5.3 THE AFRO POPULATION: A MISSIONARY OPPORTUNITY

That the provinces on the American Continent take up concrete commitments (organizations, projects, communities) to help the Afro population. This activity – in forms and manners that may vary from place to place – should include the following dimensions:

a) The spiritual aspect, namely, the treasuring of the experience of God typical of the African Peoples. Within this dimension one must emphasize the importance of a specific reading of the Word of God, based on the concrete reality of the Afro Population and of their presence in the Bible.

b) The anthropological-cultural aspect, namely, the appreciation and the re-creation of the cultural identity of the Afro-American People in the context of a globalized society, an absolute prerequisite in order to fully affirm its dignity.

c) The socio-political aspect, as the struggle for the achievement of the full citizenship of the Afro-American People and for the full recognition of their individual and collective rights, against any form of disenfranchisement and discrimination.

II CAPITULAR TOPICS

1. Ratio Missionis

The Comboni Identity in America/Asia Our Mission in the 21st Century

Called by the Spirit of Jesus, heirs of Comboni, we feel called to live to the full and to be bearers of life, like Jesus the Good Shepherd, in order to give life in abundance and be messengers of credible hope for all peoples.

As Comboni Missionaries we feel called and consecrated to live and share the life of the most abandoned and marginalized, in order to be for them the sign of the love and closeness of the God of life. Each province/delegation – in harmony with the Institute – discerns where these human groups can be found in each place and time, beginning from their history and their social and religious situation. From this principle, we, the Comboni Missionaries of America/Asia, have opted for the Afro population, the indigenous people, urban realities and the Chinese world.

We carry out this mission for life along three basic dimensions:

1. Proclamation of the Word of life. We believe that the people of our world await a Word that will be true, enlightening, consoling, freeing – a word that will make them look at themselves as God sees them, namely, as children who are loved and called to live in communion. And we believe that this Word finds a specific “incarnation” in the Scriptures read from the perspective of life and with an opening to the Spirit. Within this dimension, we Comboni Missionaries feel specifically called to give priority to the proclamation and the witness of this life-giving Word. We reaffirm our decision to give priority to those human groups that are beyond the frontiers of the Church and that are not receiving the gift of the Word made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth (first evangelization)

2. Service. Enlightened by the Good Samaritan, we dedicate ourselves with joy and generosity to the service of the poor, by performing “messianic signs” (signs of the presence of the Kingdom) that will show God’s closeness. In this perspective, at the present time we consider a strong activity on behalf of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation to be a necessary service.

3. Communion. We believe that humanity is one single family of the children of God, whose fullness of life is achieved in brotherhood. For this reason we promote communion and participation, processes of reconciliation, by creating or re-creating communitarian textures of solidarity in a more just and fraternal world, without oppressors and oppressed. With the communities of disciples that the Spirit is creating, we celebrate the sacredness of life, the beauty of being brothers and sisters, the hope in a new world. We feed frequently on the bread of the Word and of the Body of Christ. In this dimension, we favor intercultural and inter-religious dialog, as well as the mission awareness of the Churches, promoting communion and cooperation between Churches and peoples.

Methodology

We, the Comboni Missionaries of America/Asia wish to carry out our mission following the Comboni principle to “save Africa with Africa.” At the present time this is what it implies for us:

1. **Insertion** that is social affective and cultural as a means of reaching the poor with whom we share our lives. Each province/delegation and community must discern the ways, times and conditions of this principle.
2. **Listening** with care to situations, people and the signs of the times, in an attitude of respect and with a critical sense.
3. **Discernment** as community and as individuals as an operating method and in order to take decisions.
4. The creation of small **Christian Communities**.
5. Formation of society and Church **leaders**.
6. Reaching **way beyond the frontiers of the Church**, to include the creation of missionary activities not limited to a parish.
7. **Mission Promotion** so that our Churches will open to mission “on the other shore” (Aparecida 376) through the mass media, personal witness, with a presence in the organisms of the local Church, cooperating with other social institutions, etc.
8. **Vocation promotion and formation of new missionary disciples**.
9. **Internationality**. We live our vocation-mission as a community of brothers coming from different places and cultures, a fact that enriches our answer to the call we have received.
10. **Variety of ministries**. Following the intuition of Comboni, in our Institute we live our mission through a variety of ministries, as priests and brothers, opening up to lay ministries and to the entire Comboni Family. This principle shapes as well our evangelizing and pastoral activity.
11. **Cooperation**. As bearers of life, we cooperate with any person or institution that works in favor of life, especially among the poorest.

Spirituality

Our spirituality is marked by the same elements as our identity-charism-mission (The Good Shepherd: the Word, Service Communion) in tune with the inheritance of Comboni and lived in the daily reality of our lives. We identify with Jesus Christ.

- The Good Shepherd who seeks the lost;
- The Samaritan with a compassionate heart for the marginalized, the sick, the lost, those who are denied life.
- Word of the Father, who gives meaning and light to the fragile human quest
- Son, who creates brotherhood.

2. Formation and Vocation Promotion

In the course of many years the Comboni Institute has been engaged in a journey that we see mapped out in documents, as the fruit of Assemblies, meetings and personal experiences of people who have served in mission, from the sector of formation and of vocation promotion. We think it is important to take advantage of the knowledge collected during this time, while staying open to the action of the Spirit and answering the current challenges we find today, as we follow our candidates. In view of all this, we offer the following proposals:

1. The Continent of America/Asia restates its trust in the **integration education model*** doing what is possible to find confreres with a positive and personal experience of God and of Comboni, confreres with passion, joy and enthusiasm for mission and for the Comboni vocation, open to the poor, being brothers to the young, walking with them, to accept them, accompany them and love them. People who are ready and dedicated. To these, the vocation promoters, and

formators we offer the necessary means for an adequate preparation to their task before and during their service.

Furthermore, to inform and to give to this didactic method the attention it deserves, we propose that provincial and continental formation meetings for these educators (vocation promoters and formators) continue to be held, that all the necessary material be made available and that all the members of the province/delegation know this material, so that all the communities be formation houses, co-responsible in this endeavor to form the future missionary disciples and to foster a vocation culture (See Aparecida 276 ff)

2. In all the provinces/delegations of America/Asia we are committed to offer a formation that will answer to the new needs of a mission demanding that we live life to the full (Jn 10,10) and that we defend it in all of its dimensions, inspired by the Gospel (Jesus, Good Shepherd, Samaritan, and Son: Word, service, communion) and by the priorities of Comboni: the Heart of Jesus (RoL 3), the mystery of the Cross (RoL 4), the poorest and most abandoned (RoL 5), saving Africa with Africa (RoL 7), a Cenacle of Apostles (RoL 39). Also, we must keep in mind the instructions of the *Ratio Studiorum Fundamentalis* and the conclusions of the various assemblies (Pesaro, Limone, Palencia...) while making an effort to contextualize all these values in each situation. In this sense, priority will be given to the educators on their own continent, taking advantage of what the local Church and the Institute itself have to offer.
3. During the Intercapitular Assembly of 2012 we will evaluate the current missionary service and the duration of the existing formation stages. In the same manner we will review the practice of continental formation and the experience of students of theology inserted in Comboni communities.

NB The objective of this model is humanization, understood as an answer to the gratuitous love of God, by way of a process of human and spiritual integration of the person so that it may give a more committed, a freer, more responsible, able and generous answer to God's call.*

3. The Governance of the Institute

a) The Continental dimension

Drawing from the reflection that we, the America/Asia continental group, have been doing during the last several years and in particular during this assembly of delegates to the General Chapter, we believe that the RoL gives us the fundamental elements that allow the service of authority to perform its two charismatic functions: support of the person and coordination of our missionary activity.

We also believe that the renovation of our Institute needs to entail more co-responsibility, dialog and subsidiarity, attention to the process of integral growth of the confreres-communities that will give them a stronger loyalty to one's Comboni missionary vocation.

We think that today it is urgent to implement dynamics of continental coordination that, in harmony with the Institute, will allow a permanent interaction and cooperation between provinces and delegations, in order to give an effective answer to the missionary needs that the contextualization of our charism demands.

To achieve a continental coordination we underline the following elements:

- All the provinces/delegations of the continent commit themselves to elaborate a continental Plan that will define priorities, goals and strategies, between now and the inter-capitular assembly.
- The continental assemblies of provincials and delegates will have a deliberative character rather than consultative, always respecting the competency of the General Council and other instructions.
- The General Council will call a yearly meeting with the provincials/delegates of the continent in order to carry out a serious process of evaluation and planning.
- The continental provincial coordinator will be invited to take part in the Consulta in Rome whenever there are matters that will demand his presence.
- As a continent we are looking for a type of grouping of circumscriptions that will not be juridical, but rather a means of mutual rapprochement and cooperation in all possible areas, always in view of a revision of our commitments.

b) The Superior General

Having realized that six years are not sufficient to acquire the necessary knowledge and closeness with the provinces that the situation of the Institute requires, and to implement the directives of the Chapter, we propose that the period of governance be extended to 8 years without the possibility of reelection.

NB If the General Chapter does not approve this proposal, we suggest that in the ## 155, 156 of the RoL the norm of the majority of two thirds needed for the reelection of the General and his council be amended.

c) The General Council

Drawing from the experience made during these last years on our Continent (America /Asia) with regard to the counselors and general secretaries of various sectors, we deem necessary a change in the structure that will:

- Simplify the way they serve the Institute;
- Facilitate the amount of time they need in order to be of practical help to the jurisdictions assigned to them;
- Foster the communication and the relations between the provincials and the GA.

To reach these objectives we propose:

Increase the number of councilors from 4 to 6. They will take over the general secretariats of:

- Basic Formation
- Mission Promotion
- Evangelization and JPIC
- The Commission of Ongoing Formation

Note: The Vicar General would not take up any secretariat.

d) Secretariats

Keeping in mind the experience of other institutes, conscious of the value of and the attention to the person that previous chapters have acknowledged in practice to be a complex matter, where it is difficult to give adequate answers, we believe that this is the time to create a Secretariat of human resources. This secretariat could give to the Institute:

- A realistic knowledge of the members of the Institute with their potentials, talents, options and limitations.
- Concrete parameters to ensure a better care of the person in general and of those who show a need for special attention in particular.
- Tools of ongoing formation.
- Multi-disciplinary consultation for the formation and the integral health of the person in the Institute.

e) Others

- Change the norm of the beginning of the mandate of the new Superior General and his Council. That the mandate begin 60 days after the conclusion of the Chapter.
- The terms of the Provincials/Delegates and their councils be changed from 3 to 4 years, if the term of the general is extended to 8 years.

ATTACHMENT III

The Delegation of Asia

1. Introduction

The opening of the Comboni Missionaries to Asia became a reality 20 years ago with its primary objective of first evangelization in China. Our presence in the Philippines is necessary for a logistical approach to China, besides offering the possibility of contributing to help the local Church with mission and vocation promotion.

2. Socio-political and economic situation

The Comboni Missionaries are present in three countries of Asia.

The People Republic of China has a population of 1,300 millions. After decades of isolation that followed the surging of the Communist Party of Mao Tse Tung in 1949, during these last few years, China has begun to open up in view of achieving technological and economic development. In practice, the government holds strict control over political and religious activities.

In China we are present in **Macau SAR** (Special Administrative Region) which is one of the smallest and most populated enclaves in the world: it numbers 18,800 inhabitants per skm, the majority being immigrants from mainland China. Macau suffers and benefits from the presence of large casinos that have contributed to its development and to its rapid economic growth. At the same time, society has experienced growing individualism and a loss of moral values with the family problems that follow it. Macau has been part of China since 1999.

The Philippines is a country of great economic and social contrasts. Several cases of corruption have produced a growing lack of confidence in political leaders. Economic difficulties have given rise to a large migration of over 10 million workers (10% of the population). The family is the institution that suffers most from this migration: while it does improve the financial situation, this happens at the cost of broken or separated families and of children growing without any parental influence.

Taiwan has a population of 23 million, with the majority being Chinese. Taiwan lived through moments of great tension with China, but in reality the government is searching for ways of promoting closer ties at the economic, cultural and communication levels.

Taiwan enjoys a stable and growing economy based on technological development with low inflation and unemployment. Just the same, the current economic crisis has an impact on the life of simple folks.

3. Religious and Ecclesial Situation

The Church in the **People Republic of China** is growing within a context of control on the part of civil authorities. The years of isolation are making it necessary to give a serious formation to the pastoral agents. In reality, the major challenges consist in going beyond some internal divisions, fostering a better social involvement and taking up a task of evangelization within Chinese society and even beyond their borders.

On the other hand, **Macau** has historically been a center of missionary activity. Catholics are 3.6% of the population. The Church enjoys the esteem and respect of the government due to its contribution to education and social services. Diocesan priests are few and the median age is rather high.

In the **Philippines** Catholics are over 80% of the population and the Catholic Church has played an important role in the social and political life of the country. The Church still has a voice albeit somewhat weakened. Its current task is to come nearer to the disadvantaged and the lost: the poor, nominal Christians, other Churches and religions (the Moslems above all). Evermore we feel the need for formation, catechesis and promotion in view of a greater opening to mission in a Church which is often introverted, too clerical and sacramental. Slowly, lay people are taking up their task of being evangelizers of their own people.

In **Taiwan** Christians are 3% of the population, Catholics numbering only 1%. The country enjoys religious freedom. The great challenge for the Church and for missionaries consists in sharing the Gospel in a society which is highly modern, consumerist and centered on work and production.

4. The Delegation in Numbers

The Delegation has 20 members: 19 fathers and one brother, divided into 6 communities.

In Basic Formation we have 3 scholastics, 1 novice and 8 postulants.

Within the Delegation we speak four languages (English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Tagalog).

5. The ground covered and the growth of the Delegation since the last Chapter a. Consolidation of a missionary presence in Asia

During these last few years the Delegation has journeyed towards a strategic consolidation of our presence in the Chinese world and towards a presence of mission promotion in the Philippines. The difficulties of working in China and the experience gained over the years lead us to state that the consolidation of our missionary presence in China needs a minimum of three communities (already established):

1 – The community in the Parish of San Joseph the Worker. It is a presence of evangelization in a parish context. Our cooperation in the diocese of Macau ensures the support we need in order to move more easily within mainland China.

2 – The community in the Parish of Ren Ai in Taipei (Taiwan) works in the fields of pastoral and of first evangelization. Beyond that, it affords opportunities to learn and practice Mandarin (China's official language) in a Comboni environment and in a pastoral context which ensures an adequate preparation for the apostolate in mainland China.

3 – The Community of San Zhao in Macau has as its primary objective the work and the projects in mainland China. This community is in charge of the Feng Xiang (FX) project, dedicated to the formation of pastoral agents for the Church in mainland China and, at the same time, to promote and carry out projects of human promotion in cooperation with the local Church.

On the other side, in the **Philippines** we have renewed the physical structures of the community on Roosevelt, the current residence of the Postulancy and of the Novitiate. The Comboni Mission Center, besides housing the magazine World Mission, gives a significant contribution to mission promotion.

We have also moved ahead towards a new presence in the South of the Philippines, but the establishment of a community is currently on hold due to lack of personnel.

b. Community and personnel

The cultural and social situations in Asia present a challenge for community life and for pastoral work. We acknowledge the fragility of some of our communities due to the reduced number of members in some cases and to individualistic attitudes in others.

c. Carrying on the mission

- **Evangelization.** The communities in the parishes of Macau and Taipei contribute significantly (within their limits) to the evangelization in their context and are the basis for the apostolate of the Comboni Missionaries in mainland China. The confreres who work in China are well prepared because earlier on they spent years in these communities and parishes.

- **Mission Promotion.** This is our main contribution to the Church in the Philippines through our magazine, World Mission. We notice that it is well received, even though it is a challenge to hold and increase the number of subscriptions. There are also other forms of mission promotion: pastoral and vocational activities, a presence in diocesan missionary organizations, etc.

For a long time the group in the Philippines has felt the necessity of a concrete pastoral commitment, which, besides involving us in a concrete situation, would increase our credibility and impact on the local Church.

- **Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation.** The promotion and formation of vocations for the missions is one of the major concerns of the Delegation. During these last six years there has been a decrease in the number of candidates. Up to the present the effort to find candidates from mainland China has not given any result.

- **The economy.** In the Delegation the communities share 15% of their profits.

6. Notes on our presence in Asia

- The first evangelization commitments in Asia are the expression of the missionary identity of our Institute. In the context of Macau and Taipei the parishes are the appropriate place for the instruction of new catechumens, for the formation of the Christian community and for inter-religious dialog.

- The mission in China is particularly difficult, because long periods of time are needed (4 to 5 years) to study the language and to progressively enter into the culture.

- The Filipino confreres are involved in some of the tasks of the delegation. We hope that in the future they will take even more responsibilities. This may turn out to be a long process since some of the Filipinos of the first groups (7) have left the Institute or are in the process of incardination.

- The fact that in the same Delegation there coexist two realities so different is at the same time a blessing and a challenge, especially when it comes to moving personnel within the Delegation. While those working in China can easily be moved to the Philippines, the opposite is not true because of the long process of preparation.

- During these last six years a goodly number of confreres have left the Delegation for various reasons and there has not been an equal number of confreres assigned to Asia. The group working in China has been reduced to seven missionaries spread out in three communities. Two confreres with the necessary preparation for working in the Chinese world were assigned (by necessity) to the postulancy and to administration in the Philippines.

7. Prospects for the future

Looking at the future with optimism, we are confident that in the future the Delegation will have stable and numerically viable communities. Being realistic, we know that this will be possible only if the General Chapter and the General Administration will give a decisive support to the mission in Asia.

We are conscious of the fact that communities will grow as agents of evangelization if they are turned into places where the members grow together, support each other and live the joy of their consecration to mission. This calls for a personal and community commitment to prayer, ongoing formation and it shows in brotherly sharing and common planning of their activities.

The evangelization of China is a task that challenges us as a missionary institute. To carry it out we need to own it and to commit ourselves with capable personnel. At this time,

- We affirm once more the validity of the presence of the Comboni Missionaries in Asia in general and in the Chinese world in particular. Our presence in Asia enriches our missionary and Comboni charism, besides helping the institute to keep focused on reaching those peoples where the Word of life has not yet been proclaimed.

- We realize that the evangelization of China is tied to the presence of a group of confreres prepared for this mission. It is necessary that the Institute invest in it because preparation for this mission requires time.

At this time the Delegation feels the necessity of effective support shown by a generous and suffered sharing of what we are and hold as a missionary Institute and by allowing that the mission to Asia enrich us and contribute to the renovation of our Institute

EUROPE

**COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART
CONTINENTAL REPORT of the EUROPEAN PROVINCES**

**for the
XVIIIth GENERAL CHAPTER**

INTRODUCTION

Following the work completed in each European Province, the Continental Assembly for the preparation the General Chapter was held in Pesaro (April 14th to 24th). The present continental report, which is the result of that Assembly, shows the sense of communion and the journey made together as Comboni Missionaries in Europe.

In spite of the differences between the Provinces and the difficult reality we are each living in, we are called to answer the huge challenges that European society and the Church present us with optimistically and with enthusiasm. The conviction that the Spirit will guide our steps in the XVII General Chapter fills us with hope to go on working and being witnesses of Christ Kingdom, sure of our vocation and missionary contribution in Europe.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALITY

The European Circumscriptions (Curia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, LP and DSP) must be considered within the socio-political and economic system of the European Union, sharing as they do in its strengths and weaknesses.

Nation-Groups such as those that make up the G20 are concerned with maintaining capitalism and neo-liberalism. Urbanization, migration and globalization are three phenomena strongly influencing life in Europe. After a period of economic growth, our countries are now seriously affected by the present global economic crisis which is resulting in increased conditions of poverty. Many families are suffering due to rising unemployment. People search for comfort and adapt to the situation, trying to make the most of it continuing where possible the hedonistic and consumerist life-style favoured by the media and promoted by publicity.

We live in a fast changing world. The times of sustained economic growth have attracted many immigrants, especially from Africa, Latin America, Asia and the countries of Eastern Europe, bringing about a great increase in ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. This diversity, together with the recent economic crisis and the uncertainty of steady employment, has increased racism and xenophobic attitudes and strengthened the idea of “Fortress Europe”. Similarly social acceptance and the concession of residency permits have become more difficult to obtain for those who come from the Southern hemisphere.

In the political field, we notice that people don't trust politicians, who are believed to use politics for their own interests and are not concerned above all with promoting the common good. The sense of responsibility for public service has diminished. Attention to one's public image and personal and financial interests have replaced the sense of trust and faithfulness to one's conscience. The traditional strength of Trade Unions has gradually been weakened. Most governments seek to privatise the diffusion of social benefits and nationalise large-scale private debt.

The increased number and strength of Muslim communities exercise a great cultural and religious influence in many European societies. After “September 11th” and terrorist attacks in various European cities, Muslims have started to be looked upon as dangerous people and are made the object of discrimination as possible agents of terrorism and a threat to European security. Often they are considered ‘invaders’ of the continent.

CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS REALITY

Faced with secularization, militant atheism and the presence of other religious traditions (Islam, Orthodox Christianity and Oriental religions) within the Continent, it seems that the Catholic Church has not yet found the proper way to respond. The number of people who take active part in the life of the Church appears to be decreasing rapidly especially among the youth and this even in countries with a strong Catholic tradition such as Italy, Ireland, Spain and Portugal. Clericalism still prevails with little protagonism on the part of the laity, while on the other hand where lay people are directly involved in pastoral initiatives Churches do show a positive degree of vitality.

Generally speaking, the Church shows little creativity and tends to be inward looking with a certain tendency to return to traditional practices and its centralized pyramid structure. Society appears suspicious of the hierarchy while on the other hand shows high regard for Church-based initiatives such as Caritas and other mission-minded bodies.

The mobility of populations has contributed in shaking the traditional parish-setup in favour of new ecclesial movements which are experiencing significant increase. In some local churches great pastoral benefit is achieved through the animation work of Christian youth belonging to ecclesial movements and religious Institutes. They really surprise us because of their Christian vitality and apostolic creativity. Indeed, the world of youth is today a great challenge for all our Provinces - not only in finding new ways of gathering them together but also of offering them the challenge of a missionary vocation *ad vitam* in clear terms.

The local Church tends to identify mission *ad gentes* with “new evangelization” or with third world commitment. On the other hand, in certain dioceses, mission *ad gentes* is given only secondary attention. At the same time, local Churches are growing in their awareness of being ‘the subjects of mission’ and therefore lay missionary volunteers are on the increase, either organized by the Dioceses, by Missionary Institutes or by other Catholic organizations.

Over the past few years all the social and ecclesial transformations that have taken place have forced us to re-think the meaning and concrete ways of our presence, especially in our missionary action, pastoral and vocational animation, formation and evangelization. These changes challenge us because we must recognize that we are not living in a Catholic society any more. Things that were obvious in the past are not so any more. On the other hand, situations of *ad gentes* have been opened up for us today.

COMBONY REALITY

	Total	Fathers	Brothers	Sch/CIF	Average	> 70	< 50	Communities	Postulants
DSP	61	39	21	1	67,4	28	0	8	1
Italy	256	203	47	5 / 1	71,1	154	23	23	4
Spain	38	34	4	0	58,8	2	5	6	2
LP	18	18	0	0	65,6	7	0	6	0
Portugal	41	31	10	0	54	5	17	6	3
Poland	21	11	1	9	42,7	0	8	2	3

From the above statistics we can draw a few conclusions characterizing our presence in Europe:

Aging:

Average age is, generally speaking, very high; this fact questions and pushes us to look for new ways of presence for the future. 86% of European Confreres are over 50 years old.

Elderly and sick confreres:

The number of elderly and sick confreres is constantly growing and, in circumscriptions such as Italy and DSP, it influences the life of the province and limits its activities. Other provinces, such as Spain or Portugal, have started thinking about those confreres who need special attention due to advancing age or health concerns.

Brothers:

Some circumscriptions, such as LP or Poland, have no Brothers. In Spain there are only 4. Most of them are aging and the number is decreasing.

Formation and youth vocation promotion (FYVP)

The number of candidates in formation has decreased dramatically. There are very few postulants and at present no novices. The theme of vocation promotion is our biggest challenge and concern. We must look for new paths.

Internationality:

Most provinces noted their lack of internationality regarding it as an issue to be tackled urgently. They see it not just as a matter of survival but rather a qualifying of our witness in front of the faithful and would help us share personnel among provinces. This implies a degree of mutual preparation both from confreres coming from other provinces as well as for the host provinces.

Structures:

We still have large buildings which served past needs well but which are no longer necessary. Practically we leave them empty and they represent a burden both in personnel and finance.

Our life:

With few exceptions, our communities are properly constituted in terms of the number of members. Confreres show a good sense of belonging to their communities and provinces. In spite of individualistic attitudes, we are able to implement a certain kind of community life. Monthly retreats and community meetings are organised everywhere even if it is true that our sharing is more at work level than at the level of general life.

The *Ratio Missionis* has been of great help. Its evaluation in general is positive. Most provinces remark the necessity of strengthening the sense of Comboni missionary community.

The lack of a 'common fund' in some provinces and in some of the larger structures marks our life style significantly and makes it difficult to share life and material means.

OUR ACTIVITY

Our "doing", the way we respond to our needs in Europe, depends very much on what we "are". Our way of understanding and seeing *Mission* marks our work and our being 'Comboni Missionaries in Europe' clearly. However, from the provinces' reports it emerges that we are searching for a new identity.

We are called to work and collaborate within the local Church. We ask ourselves how to get involved and what kind of presence and activity we may carry out so as to insert ourselves in the local churches enriching them with our specific charism.

Missionary Animation

Traditionally this activity has been the first priority of our provinces even though we are at present aware that it has become difficult to define the difference between missionary animation and evangelization. We realise that it is not enough to talk of missionary animation only in terms of missionary activities - we should speak today of missionary presence, which includes animation, but emphasizes just as much our life style and our way of being. The agenda of our presence and missionary activity in Europe is marked by listening to the needs of today's world, by reading the signs of the times and by responding to the cries of the poor. Some feel that evangelization goes hand in hand with our way of being present in any place at any time, while others believe that evangelization in Europe is the local Church's responsibility.

Many of our confreres feel they are not well enough prepared to answer the new needs and requests of our local churches. The places and methods of our missionary animation have evolved much both in content and language. We know that we are an integral part of the local Church, offering to it the gifts of our particular charism and missionary experience.

Missionary presence and animation offer us channels of collaboration with other organisations (other missionary societies, NGOs, missionary centres, dioceses, PMOs, etc...). The most effective means of MA remain our magazines and other much appreciated modern media initiatives. Special mention must be made of the annual assembly of directors and people working in the media to share, evaluate and plan their work together. These meetings have been very positively assessed. At present, the fact that the number of subscriptions to our magazines is steadily decreasing is a reason for

concern. There are, however, a number of concrete ways to do missionary animation: pilgrimages, peace caravans, school talks, youth gatherings and so on. With all our limitations and considering what has been said previously, a Comboni voice in the field of European media (magazines, the internet, audiovisual productions, museums, exhibitions...) needs the professional training of those in charge as it becomes a very useful tool both within and outside the Church.

Evangelization

Herewith are included all the activities that we carry out in the field of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), immigrants and CLM (Comboni Lay Missionaries), all aspects that our provinces consider priorities for our presence in Europe.

Immigrants:

All the provinces are aware of this issue and some of them have already assigned personnel to it. It is a serious social concern and calls for an answer from us as Comboni Missionaries in Europe. There has been neither communication nor meetings at European level, this is something lacking and which must be tackled.

Justice and Peace:

All the provinces are involved in this field, each works according to its possibilities. It is a very long road and much work is to be done. It is a very important field of our work and presence in Europe and we have to get involved in it much more. A new vision of mission transforms itself into global action and offers a new spirituality based on a fundamental option for the poor.

Some provinces have commissions and personnel dedicated to JPIC in collaboration with other Religious Institutes, the local Church and associations involved in justice and peace issues and have started taking further JPIC options e.g. ethical banking, review of life style, etc...

Our social media are a good means of direct involvement in JPIC and a privileged instrument for raising awareness within and outside our communities. Some provinces sent confreres to the recent World Social Forum and Comboni Forum in Brazil.

A few years ago the Italian province started an experience of insertion at Castelvoturno and Naples, where the confreres, sharing simple structures, work with the poorest and marginalized of society. The LP has two confreres working in a parish in the south of London serving immigrants and asylum seekers.

CLM:

The movement is present in most provinces even though the degree of identity and growth varies from one province to the next. Some groups are further along the road to autonomy in terms of both organization and finance. They have already held meetings at European level which have fostered better coordination.

Vocation Promotion and Formation

Quick change challenges us. The youth in general follow trends and lifestyles which keep them at a distance from traditional family life and regular social and institutional structures. We must be aware that the youth represent the future of missionary endeavour and personify all possible ways of carrying out Youth Ministry/Vocation Promotion (YVP) in an appropriate fashion. Indeed, presently our major challenge in Europe lays in trusting and gathering youth for mission.

Convinced that this field is vital for us today, we firmly believe that suitable personnel should be allotted to it. We feel the need of integrating missionary animation activities with those of youth ministry/vocation promotion much more. All our activities should keep formation and youth ministry/vocation promotion to the forefront of their attention.

All provinces are committed in the field of youth ministry/vocation promotion through various activities: meetings, working groups, community experiences, missionary activities, pilgrimages, etc. All provinces, furthermore, offer follow up services to youth sensitive to mission.

We must collaborate more in youth ministry/vocation promotion at continental level. We must plan activities and implement them together (e.g. pilgrimage to Santiago, experience at Limone, youth meetings at European level...).

Each Comboni community should be a centre for the youth. In each province there should be a formation community and a vocation community (small and inserted in the midst of the people) that communicate the spirit of the missionary vocation through living testimony so as to feed both the youth and those in formation with the missionary vocation and spirit.

To make this happen it is necessary that the members of such communities be properly trained and prepared to work in this field. The majority of the provinces recognize the vocational value of small and welcoming inserted communities animated by a life style that bears witness to our missionary identity, presence and commitment.

Concerning formation, we notice a need for renewal in our formation structures, to adapt them to present realities. We must look for common guidelines and a common path to achieve a certain unity before the admittance of candidates to the novitiate (a novitiate for the whole continent). Some provinces have studied and are implementing different ways to introduce youth to Comboni missionary life (communities inserted, formation communities...).

Ongoing Formation

The journey of the *Ratio Missionis* has required a great effort in all the provinces. It has been a great instrument of Ongoing Formation and has helped us to discover a much deeper sense of belonging and to rediscover our vocation. It has produced good results in most provinces. Almost everywhere the *Ratio* has allowed us to manifest a vision of togetherness in the Institute.

Each province has organised a variety of meetings and initiatives of Ongoing Formation: spiritual retreats, formation of superiors, of formators, animators etc...

The work of GERT (European Group of Theological Reflection) has been valuable. However, we realize the difficulty that exists of finding valid ways of bringing its work to the notice of most of the confreres. In Europe the various sectors (Mission Animation, Formation, On-going formation, Finance...) have organized meetings that helped us reach a broader vision, to know each other better and to build and deepen a common understanding.

Confreres in special situations

Some provinces have dealt with this issue. There are confreres in need of special help and they should be treated with understanding and confidentiality. Collaboration among the provinces could help. Although good progress has been made on this issue, especially through the Ongoing Formation Commissions, it is still necessary to improve this service.

Finance

The way we handle money and goods is of paramount importance for our witness to others. We are still a long way from evangelizing our finance.

The global financial crisis has led us to question our life style and many communities have opted for a more sober life style. Some provinces have introduced the Common Fund, others are still no nearer to it even if they are beginning to turn in that direction.

A deeper and more focused formation for bursars - at local and provincial level - is becoming crucial. We need to have counsellors able to invest our funds properly from both the ethical and financial points of view.

Some provinces have increased the help given to the Comboni Brothers working in foreign missions.

Various assemblies of administrators have been held in each province as well as gatherings of bursars at European level.

All the European circumscriptions share the inalienable assets system established recently in the Institute. This initiative, though, has raised perplexities and doubts in some provinces.

Other issues

Care for the sick and aged

Even if it is not felt in all provinces at the same level, it is a matter that needs our attention. In Italy and in the DSP it is a pressing issue. Other provinces, such as Spain and Portugal, have started to think about how to face this same issue which will arise soon enough (personnel and structures).

It is very difficult, nowadays, to find Comboni personnel ready and with the necessary skills to look after elderly and sick confreres.

Rotation:

It concerns all of us. The present policy makes any possibility of specialization, insertion in the communities and implementation of programs in most of the provinces

difficult. Rotation and qualified service should go together. The present system of rotation is not the best: it creates conflict and bad feeling among those involved in it. This issue has to be faced by taking into consideration the way European provinces might collaborate among themselves. The Chapter should study the issue so as to help the provinces maintain a balance between openness to mission and the handling of our presence in Europe.

We experience a sort of 'double standard': we are missionaries when we leave for traditional mission countries and not when we are in Europe. Some confreres refuse or express their regret when asked to come to work in Europe and, on the other hand, other confreres have the same attitude when invited to leave for work in foreign countries. This way of thinking about and understanding mission makes insertion more difficult for those who come back and weakens the initiative of those who work here dreaming about leaving as soon as possible.

Collaboration with the Comboni family

Our collaboration with the Comboni Missionary family (Comboni Sisters, CLM, Seculars....) is carried out in various ways in the different provinces. Collaboration takes place especially in activities of mission animation and youth ministry/vocation promotion.

Limone

Limone is at the heart of the Institute and belongs to all the provinces: it should therefore be run by an international team.

What mission in Europe?

Ad gentes in Europe

Introduction

*Being aware of our own reality as Comboni Missionaries in Europe and having in mind the real context in which we are called to fulfil our missionary work, we have tried to give an answer to this question: **What is our mission as Comboni Missionaries in Europe today?** We present below the fruit of the reflection made in our provinces.*

As Comboni Missionaries in Europe, while we are called to offer our services beyond the continent's boundaries, we are at the same time aware that the missionary commitment in our own continent is no less significant. We need to create a new mentality that helps us to work in Europe joyously and enthusiastically.

In the past few years the European provinces have discussed and identified the criteria and fields of work which, as Comboni Missionaries, we feel we ought to assume. Keeping in mind that our charism pushes us to be always present at the frontiers of Church and society, the priorities of our work in Europe today should be the following:

- 1.-** To animate the local Church in regard to the mission outside our countries/*ad gentes*, mobilizing material and spiritual means, included the search for new vocations, with a special commitment to the youth.

2.- To be present in places and situations of first evangelization in the context of the great cultural, linguistic and social diversity of Europe today.

3.- To be committed to JPIC in order to become the voice of the voiceless and to empower the powerless so that their voice may be heard:

3.1.- Through the media.

3.2.- By serving the weakest of society, among them the immigrants, promoting their acceptance into society and respect for their human dignity.

3.3.- Integrating evangelical service in distant countries (promoting and increasing equal relations among peoples) and struggling to eradicate the roots of poverty which are present in our own continent.

Relation with local Church

We are an integral part of the local Church and, while we are in Europe, we want to collaborate with it through our own charism which may enrich the Christian community through the missionary experience we bring from outside. We must also share with the local church the richness of international communities which stimulate it to open itself to other realities. Such commitment will at the same time prevent us from justifying any avoidance of taking up work in frontier situations.

The concrete ways of implementing collaboration with the local Church are:

1.- To animate it to keep alive its missionary spirit *ad gentes*, stimulating the growth of a global missionary movement through the formation of local animators and the establishment of missionary groups.

2.- To sensitize it about 'frontier situations' and take up a common commitment to get pastorally involved in them.

3.- To be bridges between the churches of the South and of the North; to be the voice, in the European Church, of the young churches which have more difficulties. To be Church in Europe today implies the sharing among churches of personnel and resources.

4.- To be aware that we work for a better world hand in hand with people of good will and without prejudice concerning their religious affiliation.

Respect for the local Church and the complexity of the contemporary world require a qualified service. Thus we must be ready to: have some confreres contributing in the formation and theology centres of the local Church; update our language and methodology; offer ways of re-qualification and to give adequate formation to our personnel.

Our life style

Knowing that 'the means is the message', we are aware that our life style reveals to others what we are. Our way of living should reflect our international and missionary nature and so we consider it essential:

1.- To have international communities in which mutual esteem and collaboration among the members may be a reality, confreres who live in fraternity and radiate an authentic missionary spirit wherever inserted.

2.- To have a sober life style in the handling of money, of material commodities and the use of means.

3.- To renew our commitment to adapt our structures to the new reality, reducing expenses and favouring a witness of simplicity. Some houses can be used with more creativity to put them at the service of the people: immigrants, associations that share our values, etc...

Our life style and meaningful presence in the field of evangelization will make visible our missionary identity; besides helping the local Church to open itself to the *ad gentes* dimension, it would make our missionary animation more significant and help our candidates in their identification process.

Chapter's Themes

In this section some of the reflections of the European provinces about the three topics proposed for the General Chapter are included: Governance, Formation and Ratio Missionis. This synthesis is enriched by the reflection which took place during the continental Assembly in preparation for the Chapter in view of preparing this report.

GOVERNANCE

1.- Introduction

The service of authority as it is presently carried out at the different levels of the Institute causes some uneasiness for the confreres due to the changes transforming society, the signs of the times and the present set up of the Institute. On the one hand we acknowledge a need for greater decentralization, subsidiarity and dialogue; on the other hand, it is clear that change in the structure of government does not in itself guarantee a solution to the problem of the rotation of personnel. It is requested that the priorities and the duration of service in the different works and responsibilities of the Institute be well defined in order to facilitate adequate planning.

We feel the need for unity and a healthy spirit in the Institute to be preserved. When we consider our structure of government, we can not avoid starting off from the basic question: what kind of mission do we envisage?

We feel the need of evaluating the way in which the General and Provincial Councils operate and look for a clarification of their tasks (decisions about personnel, rotation, closing of houses, etc...). What has resulted from our discussions is the need of deeper reciprocal collaboration and dialogue between the General Council and Provincial Councils.

2.- Concrete proposals for government

2.1.- Some provinces (E, I, DSP) do not see the need either of changing the present system of government or of increasing already existing structures.

2.2.- The LP prefers, with some appropriate adaptations, the 3rd model, stressing much more the functions of coordination, communion and subsidiarity. Portugal, instead, prefers rather the 2nd model.

2.3.- To value the indications already present in RoL, the General Directory, Provincial Vademecum, etc... more, especially concerning subsidiarity, cooperation, co-responsibility and dialogue.

2.4.- The Institute in Europe is decreasing in number. Active personnel are often not enough to cover the basic needs of the different sectors of work. There are some communities, for instance, where the same person is superior and bursar. We will have to entrust certain jobs to lay people.

3.- General Secretariats and Other alternatives

3.1.- To foster better contextualization, some provinces are of the idea of keeping the Secretariats of Economy and Formation at the General level and those of Missionary Animation and Evangelization only at continental level. The continental secretary of Mission Animation and Evangelization, who would reside in his own juridical province, would be chosen among the secretaries of the different sectors of each Province, leaving to the continental provincials the official nomination.

3.2.-One province suggests that the Secretariats be left as they are, because they guarantee faithfulness to the general guidelines lines and to the activity of the whole Institute. Another province chooses the alternative model; namely it suggests that the secretariats of Missionary Animation and Evangelization be assumed by the GC, given that the number of General Councillors would be increased to six members.

3.4.- Finally, a number of confreres in the Italian province propose two different Secretariats: a General Secretariat (uniting the present ones) that could discuss and deepen issues and offer the GC concrete proposals for action. It would also guarantee the memory of the past and continuity between one mandate and another; and a Secretariat of Personnel which would keep a global vision on the situation of personnel and of the needs of the Institute, would plan a program of rotation and promote ongoing formation and specializations for the different sectors.

4.- The continental coordinator, his competences and authority

4.1.-The introduction of the continental coordinator is considered a positive element who animates the confreres (meetings, collaboration among the provincial secretaries, etc.) but this figure has to be better defined at juridical and operative level (AC 2003, 137ss).

5.- General Council and Provincial Superior duration of service

5.1.-The majority of the provinces choose to keep the present six-year model because society changes at a great speed. The GC should encourage more decentralization, communion and subsidiarity. The RoL should be changed giving the General Superior and Councillors the possibility of being re-elected with an absolute majority.

5.2.- The importance of guaranteeing a certain continuity between the administrations has been stressed. It could happen in various ways: increasing the time of mandates, re-electing some of the General Councillors, organizing an appropriate time of

communication in the handing over of responsibility between the outgoing and the incoming GC, or through the Secretariats. The same holds for the Provincial Superior and his Council from one mandate to the other.

5.3.- The province of Portugal suggests a mandate of eight years for the GC and four years for the Provincial Councils.

6.- Merging of Provinces

6.1.- There is a favourable opinion concerning the need of a gradual process of merging provinces; this implies first of all the definition of common criteria, for instance, if it is only at territorial and geographic level or also at the level of the sharing of responsibilities. Undoubtedly the merging of provinces requires a change in the Institute's perspective.

6.2.-The union of provinces would simplify structures and foster subsidiarity and independence. It would help to tackle the biggest challenges with common and adequate strategies.

FORMATION

1.- General remarks

1.1.- The document sent to the provinces for discussion describes the present model of formation and does not open new ways. It does not offer a methodology for our time; it reflects the same mentality of the past. In general terms it is positive, even if does not offer a concrete evaluation either of achievements or failures in the last six years. The validity of the *Ratio Studiorum* is affirmed even if some elements should be updated (for instance, the maximum age for a candidate to be admitted to the postulancy).

1.2.- It doesn't give enough consideration to the diversity of the real social and cultural backgrounds that the candidates come from. We are all aware that the vocation geography has changed.

1.3.-It talks neither of vocation promotion nor of the requisites necessary for candidates to be accepted.

1.4.- Among the reasons that explain the limits and failures of Basic Formation we should stress the life-style of many of our communities, characterized as they are by individualism, little sharing and incoherence.

2.- Do you think the Comboni formation model with its four levels (postulancy, novitiate, scholasticate and missionary service) and four dimensions (human, Christian, spiritual and missionary) responds to the needs of today's mission?

2.1.- The formation model in its theoretical content must be considered valid and it describes properly how the candidate is followed in the various phases of formation. On the other hand, the ecclesial and communitarian aspect is not sufficiently emphasized. Attention is centred on self-knowledge and the development of personal projects and

thus it runs the risk of hindering candidates from testing themselves in their capacity to relate with the others, with community life and the complexity of reality.

2.2.- To implement this model of formation is not an easy task. The entire journey of formation is a process of initiation and of growth that has its stages, among them:

- Help is given to identify and clarify motivations.
- Discipleship and following the footsteps of Christ is particularly stressed.
- Some values are specially considered: quality of relations, soberness, austerity, and love as self-giving, sacrifice... all of them are elements of our formation tradition. More attention should be given to these elements.
- A strong ecclesial sense must be cultivated so that candidates may insert themselves in the Comboni missionary family learning its history so as to mature in a proper way a sense of belonging and identification with it.

2.3.- The missionary dimension is fundamental: a formation that drinks from the fountain of mission, that emphasises the specificity of the Comboni mission and, eventually, the preparation to a specific ministry to which the candidate may feel called.

2.4.- The period of missionary service during the journey of formation, different from the time of academic preparation, must be understood and lived as an integral part of the basic formation journey. Its aim must be better defined; the scholastics who go through it must be prepared and accompanied.

Some doubts have been aired concerning the most suitable moment to offer this experience of missionary service; rather than at the end of the theological studies it would be more suitable to carry it out at the end of the postulancy.

2.5.- It is necessary to promote more contextualized (inculturated) and personalized itineraries of formation, considering the degree of maturity and the age of the candidates; a formation which may be based upon the reality of the candidate, not only upon abstract schemes.

3.- *Do you think that fragmenting the formation journey into different socio-geographic contexts and with different formators may be negative for the growth of the people in formation? If so, what do you suggest to avoid this limit?*

3.1.- The formation cycle is too fragmented and lacks continuity. A too frequent change in formators and cultural scenery during the basic formation journey is negative. Many times it is also followed by a big cultural and linguistic leap in the first missionary assignment. Therefore, it is important nowadays that the formation journey be carried out as far as possible at continental level.

3.2.- *Postulancy:*

- Postulancy must be given fundamental importance - it is the base and foundation of the entire formation journey. It must have the characteristics of a catechumenal journey. The academic effort should not overshadow other values and educational dimensions.
- Its duration should not be linked to the academic journey, but to the formation process and to serious vocation discernment.

3.3.- Much more should be done for the training of formators for the postulancy which is a crucial formation stage. If we don't find sufficiently skilled formators, houses of formation should be reduced. There are too many formation houses for the inadequate number of formators.

3.4.- Care over the selection of candidates, formation process and rotation of formators:

- Formators should work in equipe and in communion, should be able to guide candidates in their self-knowledge, be capable of discerning the personal problems of those in formation and contribute to their solution at this stage of formation rather than postponing it to some following stage.
- There are various possible human gaps that formators should be aware of: psycho-diagnosis undergone before entering the postulancy, affectivity, sexuality, relation to authority, ability to relate to others, loneliness, lack in some basic human qualities, etc.

4.- Knowing that the quality of our missionary witness may affect our candidates' formation positively or negatively, what aspects of our personal and community life should we change in order to favour the journey of growth of our candidates?

4.1.- Our personal and community witness of consecrated and missionary life has a decisive influence in the formation journey. It is necessary to foster the opening of formative and vocational communities made up of confreres well identified and coherent, who know how to live out and pass on their own values enthusiastically.

The witness of elderly confreres who still live their missionary vocation fully and serenely is a positive element and to be valued fully.

5.- What do you suggest to contextualize our formation programme in Europe?

5.1.- We are convinced that in Europe there are still some young people called to the mission and ready to look for God's will by choosing to follow our formation journey. We must identify new ways and new modalities to challenge today's youth to consider our missionary proposal.

5.2.- Periodically we must organize formation courses for formators at continental level. It is important to promote the specialization of confreres in theology and missiology so that they may teach in the institutes frequented by our candidates and others.

5.3.- We must encourage the opening of vocational and formative communities, small and inserted, marked strongly by the witness of missionary vocation, closeness to the people and a concrete pastoral involvement.

5.4.- A thorough study must be carried out to better assess how to carry out the work of youth ministry in Europe - fostering youth meetings, stressing the importance of concrete experiences in mission areas, organizing appropriate initiatives.

6.- Other suggestions (from some Provinces).

6.1.- To re-think the set up of the postulancy:

- A period similar to a Catechumenate, introducing candidates to a 'discipleship journey'

- A journey of formation in the candidate's own family but with a personal follow up and a serious preparation prior to entering the noviciate.

6.2.- As a consequence, the noviciate could be re-structured to include a first stage of 'immediate preparation' which would also contemplate the study of the local language if needed.

6.3.- We encourage the implementation of a continental scholasticate; we confirm the validity of the missionary experience (already implemented) and reaffirm the importance of 'inserted scholasticates'.

6.4.- Special attention must be given to the passage from one stage of formation to the next and to the first assignment to a mission community.

RATIO MISSIONIS

Introduction

In working on the *Ratio Missionis*, we took as a basis the synthesis prepared in Maia in June 2008, the latest inputs from the provinces and the work of the European Assembly preparing for the Chapter.

In presenting the journey of each province during the stage of discernment, we stress the following elements:

- The difficulty we have in community life often generated by individualism and activism.
- A weak sense of belonging and identity.
- The tendency to focus our activity as missionaries in the South of the world, in the 'traditional' mission, not feeling the same way in Europe.
- We have developed very different spiritualities.
- We find it difficult to identify what is 'specific' to the Comboni Missionaries in Europe.
- The introductory explanation of the topics proposed in the working papers of the Ratio has been perceived by many as too negative.

Spirituality A

"Comboni spirituality is centred in Jesus the Good Shepard as source of his life and mission"

Previous verifications

At general level, we feel the necessity of a change in today's European context marked as it is by strong and rapid transformation, a change that may help us deepen and revitalize our Comboni missionary spirituality.

Suggestions

At continental level:

- to embrace again a spirituality incarnated in the new reality that the European continent is living.

- to preserve or assume concrete commitments locally as an expression of our being missionary. Most of all we must not keep ourselves hidden at home.

At Institute level:

- To give more importance to Ongoing Formation so that it can become a natural continuation of Basic formation.
- To increase the potential of the house in Limone as a centre of Comboni missionary spirituality for the whole Institute, a “sanctuary of ‘Comboni’s mission’.
- To continue implementing and strengthening the CYOF and the Renewal course in Rome.
- To offer some confreres the opportunity to specialize in spirituality, psychology and discernment in order to serve us in these fields.
- To adopt the methodology used in the RM for other occasions of reflection within the Institute and in the various provincial meetings and assemblies.

Spirituality B

“Cenacle of apostles: evangelize as community”

Previous verifications

The answers show that we feel the need for a fraternal life in communities in which “BEING” may be more important than “DOING”, communities in which individualism may give way to being and staying together.

Suggestions

At continental level

- To look for and deepen forms of collaboration among the provinces in the various fields in which we work in Europe (MA, formation, media, justice and peace...).
- To have more ‘international communities’.
- To enrich our local churches with the small community experience that we bring from the mission.
- To be aware that the elderly and sick confreres are a richness for the whole Institute. To give them the special attention they deserve and need.

At Institute level

- To set up a time of specific formation for Provincial superiors.
- To increase the human techniques that help us live together and overcome personal and community problems.
- To insist more strongly on the exigencies of basic formation. This implies the need to formulate common criteria for the assignment of formators.
- To keep a balance between the needs of consecrated life and the concrete commitments of the communities both in terms of personnel and the amount of work demanded. Special attention must be paid to this when rotation is planned.

Identity A

“Comboni’s Mission and the Sacred Heart of Jesus - essential elements of the charism”

Previous assessments

We synthesize here the more important suggestions that have emerged and were accepted by all confreres.

Suggestions

At continental level

- To overcome the pessimism that we have regarding VP and MA. To do this, we have to trust more in Christ and the Spirit than in human techniques and we must revitalize the resources we have already.
- To renew thoroughly and deeply the entire journey of formation.
- To renew and strengthen the concept of authority and the ways to relate to it.
- To make ourselves available to the local Church so that it may be missionary in its own territory, living together the “*ad gentes*” passion.
- To establish groups of theological reflection at continental level to discuss and deepen our Comboni missionary spirituality and charism.
- To assign confreres from other continents to work with us in Europe.

At Institute level

- To encourage the Institute (GC) to offer clear guidelines for understanding our Comboni missionary identity.
- To entrust more responsibility to the Secretariats so as favour decentralization.
- To unify criteria in Basic Formation centred especially on the values which are specific to the Comboni missionary identity.
- To choose the hardest mission context - among the poorest and more marginalised - using simple material means.
- To deepen the theology of the Heart of Jesus, especially in the aspect of mercy and reconciliation and to build communion and fraternity.
- To encourage the superior to be the one who helps the community to better understand the Comboni missionary identity and foster a greater sense of belonging.
- That the concept of “Nigrizia”, as an expression of the poorest and most abandoned, be the authentic criterion to communicate the charismatic options of the Institute.
- To value the Christological perspective of our charism: our own name (MCCJ) is in itself a programme.
- To asses where and how to free ourselves from obsolete structures.

Identity B

“We are religious missionaries ad gentes – ad extra – ad vitam – ad pauperes”

Previous assessments

At present there is an identity crisis in the Church and in religious life that also affects our Institute. So far we have failed to identify clearly the elements that make up our Comboni missionary activity. Some provinces ask the Chapter directly for guidelines and orientations that could help us discern this.

Looking at the suggestions that have emerged we see that DOING is the dimension that mostly influences our identity. All provinces consider the taking up some pastoral commitments, especially among the most marginalized in society (immigrants, refugees, poor...), basic to any manifestation of our identity. What guidelines, orientations and concrete commitments must we take to feel fully Comboni missionaries in Europe?

Suggestions

At continental level

- Our charism asks us not to limit ourselves to MA but to value the possibility of other styles of missionary presence.
- We must re-define the meaning of “*ad gentes*” and “*ad extra*” keeping in mind the challenge of immigration and working in collaboration with the local Church.
- The meaning of “*ad gentes*” and “*ad extra*” to those confreres born in the traditional ‘mission countries’ also must be redefined.
- We must take up pastoral commitments in Europe. This would help us to insert ourselves into the local Church and to help it open itself up to the new challenges that face it.
- The European provinces must collaborate among themselves in the work with immigrants, youth ministry/VP and MA.
- We must also foster and increase collaboration with other missionary institutes.

At Institute level

- To believe that these elements (“*ad gentes, ad extra...*”) are essential keys in the process of vocation discernment. They must also be essential elements in the revision of commitments.
- To formulate a “Comboni missionary mysticism”.
- To revise n. 13 of the RoL especially clarifying the meaning of “not enough evangelized people”.
- To finish the commentary to the RoL started years ago.
- To look again into the present rotation system keeping in mind the “*ad vitam*” dimension so that it could be respectful to the mission.
- To study these key elements again in the light of Comboni’s original inspiration.
- To insist on these aspects at the level of ongoing formation. To clarify them from the biblical and evangelical point of view and to live them out following the guidelines of our documents.

Mission/Evangelization A

“We announce and give witness to Christ and his mission with generosity and boldness”

Previous assessments

Our presence in Europe should not be reduced to traditional MA even if this is still important and necessary. All the provinces have underlined that we must give concrete answers to certain mission situations, especially immigrants and refugees, committing ourselves in fields such as justice and peace and collaborating with other institutes and bodies that work in this field (Caritas, Missio, AEFJN, Amnesty International...).

We underline that the difficulties we experience in Europe (lack of vocations, elderly and sick confreres...) must not discourage us. On the contrary we must live our today optimistically looking for new ways of presence and work. To obtain this, it would be very positive to promote internationality because the resource of young people coming from the southern hemisphere represents a new richness for us and for the churches we work in. It is important also that we give more responsibility to the laity.

Suggestions

At continental level

- To look for answers to the changes that are taking place in Europe. What must we do?
- Not to limit ourselves to MA only. To reflect on our missionary presence in Europe, to make a significant plan in this regard.
- To dialogue with the religions and cultures of Europe; adequately preparing

ourselves for such a dialogue.

- To unify, share, coordinate our work with immigrants and refugees in the different European provinces and outside of it.
- To trust and hope more in the young Comboni confreres coming from the traditional 'mission countries'.

At Institute level

- To avoid being overly concerned/anguished about the survival of the province or the Institute.
- To evangelize our finance and our way of using money.
- To insist less on structures and more on formation.
- To reject projects that do not include local participation or that are exclusively "personal projects" not supported by the community. Making sure that the management of those projects be done in collaboration with lay people.
- To re-qualify our commitments having the poor as the reference point.
- To make use of the means, structures and resources we already have rather than multiply them.
- To make evangelization the basic reason of our being. To be inspired in our work by our Comboni values and tradition.
- To give equal attention to the different forms of our ministeriality (priests, brothers, lay Comboni missionaries...).
- To recover the Plan of Comboni with fidelity to the Founder's original intention and inspiration, renewing it according to the reality of today's world.
- To recover the values that guided significant figures of the Institute.
- To re-qualify our presence by inserting ourselves in places more significant for us and on the frontiers of mission.
- To foster collaboration and co-responsibility with lay people.

Mission/Evangelization B

"The mission that characterizes us is the one that favours the protagonism of the people in different places" ("To save Africa with Africa")

Previous assessments

The social and ecclesial contexts have changed. For Comboni Missionaries this has caused a change in attitude to and relationship with the reality we share and the people among whom we live. In Europe we live in a multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic environment. It has become extremely important to integrate, to understand, to be open to others and to appreciate such variety.

The European provinces feel that to give a Comboni missionary service, renewed, qualified and according to the signs of the times, it is necessary to undergo a conversion and a change of attitude in our way of being; to increase our listening capability, our collaboration, our sharing and co-responsibility.

Suggestions

At continental level

- To know better the mentality and values of today's youth so as to adapt our missionary proposals to their reality.
- To create groups, MA and Vocation Promotion centres.
- To reflect more on the model of Church that we believe in and want to promote.
- To become animators of diversity and not of uniformity in the Church, respecting pluralism and cultural differences.

At Institute level

- To avoid the building up of costly structures that cannot be taken over and properly run by the local Church.
- To count upon and appreciate the local Church and the laity.
- To opt for more communities in inserted situations.
- To enhance the role of women, above all in Africa.
- To promote from the start of Basic Formation the skill and spirit of the self-financing of projects and commitments.
- Having in mind that the majority of our confreres in the near future will be non Europeans, to favour the self-sufficiency of the Comboni missionary provinces (in a gradual process - from the seed to the plant).
- To strengthen the identity of the Comboni Brother as a real 'community animator' and promoter of human-social development .
- To favour and help young churches acquire a missionary spirit and dimension.
- To invest energies, personnel and money in the human and Christian formation of local pastoral agents so that they be the protagonists of their own evangelization.
- To continue the journey of the Institute in collaboration with the CLM establishing – as far as possible - common points for the formation journey and missionary methodology.

Aspects that must be stressed

We see the concern that exists in our provinces to find new ways of presence and work. We are going through a period of rapid transformation at all levels (social, ecclesial, cultural, religious...). We are thus challenged to search for new ways of being present in Europe.

We see that the way forward must be marked by collaboration among the European provinces. To reach this goal, the internationalization of our communities at European level could be interesting and might help.

Contacts and communication between the different sectors of activity (MA, YVP, media, JPIC, Immigrants...) would help greatly towards collaboration at continental level. The experience of the magazine directors which started a few years ago (annual Assembly) is a very concrete and positive example.

We see the need of greater collaboration not only among our provinces but with the laity too. Much has been said about it and has also emerged in the discernment of the RM. Collaboration with the laity is an urgent issue, a new challenge and a necessity that we feel. We must follow on this path.

We are finally concerned both about the Basic and ongoing formation. This issue has come up almost everywhere.

During our continental Assembly in preparation for the Chapter we decided to stress as major priorities the following aspects:

Basic elements of SPIRITUALITY

1.- We have noticed a strong desire for a return to a deeper Comboni spirituality to inspire the vision of mission that we want to realize in the future.

Aware of the limitations of our European provinces, we feel challenged to cultivate and live out an incarnated spirituality, based on the dimension of *kenosis*, with the person of Jesus Christ at the centre; cultivating a strong personal union with Him and with God's Word.

Such spirituality implies: to acquire humility, listening, prayer and the acceptance of others, emphasizing our BEING rather than our DOING, our listening and appreciating the others more than looking for protagonism; sharing life and commitment with the poorest rather than showing off powerful means and material efficiency.

2.- We mean a spirituality incarnated and lived in a Comboni community. A community loved by the Founder as a Cenacle of Apostles and understood not as a closed group that turns in on itself but as an open family involved in the concrete reality of today's Europe.

3.- This is envisioned as a renewed spirituality based on humility and a sense of realism and that favours insertion into the local church as a Comboni missionary presence; a spirituality expressed through a simple life style in small, inserted and welcoming communities, close to the disadvantaged and capable of liberating itself from obsolete structures to give more coherent witness to gospel values.

Basic Elements of IDENTITY

1.- We underline the work of GERT as a very important means to help us re-discover our Comboni missionary identity. We feel the need of reviewing the *ad gentes, ad extra, ad vitam, ad paupers* dimensions of mission in the light of more recent theological and missiological contributions, especially in terms of defining how to insert our activity into the context of the global mission. As a consequence, we recognize that our Rule of Life must be updated in the light of these new inputs.

2.- We consider it very important to deepen the theology and spirituality of the Heart of Jesus, especially in its aspects of mercy, reconciliation and the compassion of God for humanity, which guides us to greater communion, brotherhood, solidarity with the poorest and helps us to build a more just society.

3.- The activity of the Comboni Brothers must not be considered in the same way as the work of NGOs. We have to recover the identity and the peculiarity of the ministerial service of the Brothers as living signs and expression of concrete brotherhood *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

Basic elements of MISSION/EVANGELIZATION

1.- Our reason for being and staying in Europe is to animate the Church and society, through our Comboni charism, to open up to the universal horizons of brotherhood. We have underlined that we have to give concrete answers to specific mission situations, particularly immigrants and refugees, committing ourselves in fields such as justice and peace, collaborating with the local Church and with different institutes and bodies that work for the same aim.

2.- We want to elaborate a plan for Europe to gradually implement common initiatives in Vocation Promotion, Formation and Justice and Peace.

- communicating what we do to each other
- planning common initiatives
- sharing personnel and opening ourselves to internationality.

Pesaro, 24 April 2009