

COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

XVII GENERAL CHAPTER



REPORTS FROM THE CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS

English Versions

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Distretto della Curia

Report of the Curia District at the Generalate to the XVII General Chapter 2009

Introduction

Juridically speaking the Curia District is not a province or a delegation as such but a legitimately constituted structure, recognised by the Institute's tradition and the RL 103.3. To the Curia District belong the communities that are housed in the headquarters of the Generalate in Rome (Curia Community, Community of Fathers/Brothers students, Community of the Renewal Course) or linked to it (Community of the Comboni Year, Paris community and the two communities of Warsaw and Krakow in Poland). This 'belonging to' refers, in a special way, to the communities in Rome.

The Polish community, the Paris community and the community of the Comboni Year will present their own reports.

REPORT OF THE CURIA DISTRICT

1. Personnel situation on 1st March 2009

- 1.1 Total number of confreres belonging to the Curia District: 60 (Rome 38, Poland 21, Paris 1)
- 1.2 Total number of priests: 42 (Rome 29, Poland 11, Paris 1)
- 1.3 Total number of Brothers: 10 (Rome 9, Poland 1)
- 1.4 Number of confreres according to their nationality:
I=28, PO=13, E=5, P=4, T=3, M=2, BS=1, CN=1, DSP=1, ER=1, LP=1
- 1.5 Number of scholastics: 9 (Poland)
- 1.6 Number of Brothers in CIF: 1 (Poland)
- 1.7 Novices: 0
- 1.8 Postulants: 2 (Poland)
- 1.9 Communities: 6
Rome 3: Curia, Fathers and Brothers students, Renewal Course
Poland 2: Warsaw, Krakow
France 1: Paris

2. Basic aspects of our being missionaries

The Curia District's communities have tried to live their missionary vocation in line with the capitular indications.

The specific role of the Curia community, namely that of being at the service of the whole Institute and in particular of the General Council, is undoubtedly a strong motivation to live the Comboni charism with authenticity and dynamism but, at the same time, is a challenge to go beyond the local context in order to be open to the Institute's situation in its complexity and diversity. In this sense there has been a growth in sensitivity and

attention, even if at times greater enthusiasm and personal involvement in our welcoming and service would have been required.

The canonisation of our Founder, which marked the beginning of the six-year period, was an occasion for reflection, sharing and prayer for all: Comboni 'saint' has evidenced the need for renewal in our life and has guided the community to review its commitments according to the Gospel and the requirements of mission.

Collaboration with the General Council, the general secretariats and the various offices has been a good motivation for living out in a personal way our missionary consecration. Contacts with so many confreres passing through and news from our missions in various parts of the world have helped the Curia community to feel close to the apostolic work of the Institute. Attention to world events, the many contacts with people responsible for the Church, the ecclesial service we have carried out, have helped the community to feel in a special way the missionary spirit of the whole Church and of the Institute, whose part it is.

3. Journeying with the Institute and the Church

As a community, we have done our best to carry out projects and initiatives that the Institute had planned for this six-year period, in particular with regard to the process of the *Ratio Missionis*.

Following the indications of the GC and of the secretariat for evangelisation, we organised workshops and meetings that saw the active participation of a good number of confreres, offering in this way our contribution of ideas and life experiences. These occasions helped the confreres to improve communion and mutual appreciation.

In preparation for the General Chapter 2009, the reading and sharing of the ad hoc documents (*Ratio Missionis*, Formation and Government) helped us to deepen important themes with some liveliness and enthusiasm.

On the occasion of Synods and other meaningful events in the life of the Church, the community became involved by organising meetings of reflection and study and by inviting speakers and experts (for instance, Comboni Bishops, participants in the Synod on the Eucharist and on the Word of God). Through these motivating experiences the communities of the Curia made an effort to look at the real situations and problems, to review them and to identify practical ways to better implement collaboration and communion.

4. Community life

Concerning community life, the communities of the Curia have somehow improved, even if we still need to improve in our community spirit and to strengthen collaboration and co-responsibility among us.

The year planning was always an important occasion to review and re-qualify our community life. The orientations and basic aspects of community life were set down in our Yearly Community Project, which also contained the priorities for each year. Furthermore, in this six-year period we have worked together to review and revise the Community Charter (2006): it was an important time to deepen and renew fraternal life.

The community rhythm is well organized and intense (prayer, community councils, meetings and conferences of ongoing formation, Comboni celebrations, times of sharing and fraternal life...). The presence among us of different nationalities and cultures has underlined the need to grow in interculturality and inculturation.

In general we have experienced a basic serenity: tensions have been faced in a spirit of fraternal confrontation. The planning of the confreres responsible for the various communities of the Curia and services is carried out in a spirit of subsidiarity and availability, though the coexistence of different communities under the same roof may be a source of tensions inherent to the structure and not always easily ironed out.

The lifestyle of the community is basically simple. In spite of the complexity in the running of the house, there has been collaboration in order to encourage participation and to witness poverty and simplicity in our lifestyle and economic sector.

Also our community life is affected by the usual problems of large communities, namely the tendency to monotony and routine to the detriment of spontaneity and creativity. In our community councils we have tried to positively respond to such challenges. The effort has to continue so that, especially for the Curia community, the structure does not weigh too heavily on community life.

5. Spirituality and prayer

Prayer is the heart of our life as missionaries. The daily, weekly and monthly rhythm of prayer is practiced in a regular manner and with creativity: at least there has been a constant effort in this direction. The community celebration of the Eucharist, on Wednesdays, and the sharing of the Word are important moments in our life.

It would be desirable at times to show better participation and sharing. We have also experienced, for some time, a weekly *Lectio divina* on the Word. Some confreres today regret the fact that it has been interrupted.

The service the community provides for the good of the whole Institute helps us to live and celebrate the important values of Comboni spirituality with great intensity.

The example and witness of personal prayer are important.

6. Mission and mission promotion

* Various confreres arrive and depart for the mission, stopping over at the Curia. It is always an occasion of welcome, joy and prayer, of interest concerning the various places we are.

* For the Curia community it is becoming clearer and more meaningful our presence in and collaboration (mission promotion) with the local Church (San Vigilio's parish, diocesan mission centre, Vicariate, Conference of Missionary Institutes in Italy - CIMI, Presbyteral Council...).

* Collaboration with the Comboni Sisters is rather good at the level of celebrations together (especially for Comboni celebrations), at the level of exchange of services (retreats, meetings, Eucharistic celebrations...) and at the level of reflection and assessment (General Councils).

* In the Curia community what is missing is a true and real mission promotion in the area of Rome. We only have sporadic requests to give talks on specific occasions. Mission Sundays are very few, also due to the lack of a confrere in charge of this sector. There is a very intense work in keeping contacts with the benefactors of the house and of the missions. For a number of years we have started the experience of the GIM, animated by the Scholasticate (even though it has moved to Casavatore) and in collaboration with the Comboni Sisters. We are open to prayer groups and to groups of young people for retreats. We make our hall and rooms available for meetings and panel discussions for

people who are associated with us. The celebrations and homilies in the Chapel of the Curia are an effective way of mission promotion among the many people who come to us. We could improve and coordinate the various initiatives to better care and make missionary spirituality grow especially among laypeople.

* Two confreres work for the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, carrying out an important service: one as Rector and the other as Spiritual Director of the Collegio Urbaniano. One confrere is the dean of PISAI in Rome and another is the secretary of the Union of the Superiors General.

7. Ongoing formation

In our yearly planning we choose one or two themes as points for community reflection through the year, to be abreast with the journey of the Institute and of the Church.

The specific work the majority of the confreres of the Curia community are doing in the service of the Institute requires constant update, personal reflection and commitment to steadfastly live one's missionary life.

8. The moving of the Scholasticate to Casavatore

In 2006 the GC decided to move the Scholasticate from the Curia to Casavatore. The change appears to have been a positive move for the life and journey of the scholastics. As the Curia is concerned, on the one hand it has missed the lively and meaningful youthful presence; on the other hand it has required a revision of our commitments and presence, involving more participation and collaboration from all.

9. Projection for the future

* The Curia community is already showing in a practical way the specificity of its service to the Institute by a more international presence of confreres: it is good to continue in this line.

* We have to see that the structure does not overburden the experience of the cenacle of the apostles and that there always is the opportunity of renewal of people and of initiatives.

* It is necessary to discuss again with the Italian province how to organise mission promotion in the area of Rome.

Asia

DELEGATION OF ASIA Report to the XVII General Chapter

“... The purpose of the Institute is to carry out Christ’s command to his disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations, and so to continue the apostolic ministry through which the whole world has been given a share in the indescribable blessings of Christianity”
(Rules of the Institute, 1871. Ch I)

1. Introduction

The opening in Asia became a reality 20 years ago as a new fruit in the tree of the Comboni Family and as an expression of the dynamism of the missionary zeal of Comboni and his Institute. The original decision of the Chapter in 1985 for the opening in Asia was confirmed by the subsequent Chapters of 1991, 1997 and 2003. The mission in Asia has indeed been the subject of scrutiny at different levels and its validity has been repeatedly affirmed.

First Evangelization is the primary purpose of the presence of the Comboni Missionaries in Asia and especially in the Chinese context. China presents a great challenge to the missionary heart of the Church as countless brothers and sisters live without the joy of meeting Jesus in their lives. The present situation in Mainland China does not allow for an open and steady presence of evangelization in the country. However, the communities in Macau and Taipei are already reaching out to mainland China as well as being involved in pastoral activities and works of first evangelization in their own contexts.

The Philippines offers the right venue for the Mission and Vocation Promotion in the context of Asia. It also provides some support to the communities in the Chinese context as the Delegation structures are based in the Philippines and some of the confreres assigned to work in China have studied English in the Philippines.

In the Asian context the results of the missionary work are not easily measured. It is really hard to know how much good you do when you do good. However, it is also true that some results may be countable... in terms of Asian members in the Comboni family, in terms of achievements and also in terms of failures and lack of results. Daniel Comboni taught us that it is the presence of the cross that puts the stamp of authenticity to God’s works. The mission of the Comboni Missionaries in Asia is not an exception; it progresses through the experience of the cross.

2. The political, social, economic and ecclesial situation

The Comboni Missionaries are present in three Asian countries: China (Macau), Taiwan and the Philippines. Each country has a long, rich and distinct history and has been related with the ones at different moments of their history.

An introduction to each of the countries can be found in the APPENDIX 1.

3. Presentation of the Delegation. Some figures.

This is the situation of the personnel in the Delegation on May 15, 2009.

Confreres in the Delegation:

There are 23 Comboni Missionaries assigned to the Delegation: 20 priests, 1 brother and two 2 scholastics in Missionary Service.

Out of the 23 confreres, 1 is waiting for assignment after the study of the language, 2 are Scholastics in a temporary assignment (Missionary Service), 4 are in especial situation and 1 is studying in Rome.

At present there are 14 priests and 1 brother who are full-time in the different ministries.

12 Comboni Missionaries are working in the Philippines while 6 are working in the Chinese context.

Nationality: 9 Filipino, 4 Italians, 4 Portuguese, 1 Mexican, 1 Congolese, 1 Costa Rican, 1 Brazilian, 1 Peruvian, 1 Spanish.

The average age of the confreres is 43.5 years old.

The Delegation counts with 17 Filipino radical members: 13 priests, 2 brothers and 2 scholastics. In other mission countries there are 8 Filipino confreres: 1 in South Africa, 1 in Sudan, 1 in Zambia, 2 in Kenya, 2 in Uganda and 1 in Central America There are 3 Filipino priests in the process of incardination in the Philippines and 1 in Canada.

Communities

There are 6 communities in the Delegation: 3 in the Philippines, 2 in Macau and 1 in Taipei.

Basic Formation

At present there are 2 scholastics doing their Missionary Service in the Philippines, 1 novice assigned to Nairobi after profession and 1 pre-novice. There are 9 postulants.

Languages spoken in the Delegation: English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Tagalog (and Cebuano).

4. Path followed and developments since last Chapter

Inspired by the General Chapter of 2003 (CA 133.5) which called for a “*gradual consolidation of the presence of the Comboni Missionaries in Asia, assigning enough personnel at least to maintain the commitments taken on*”, the Delegation took time to work on a Six Year Plan (SYP) that was finally approved on 2006. The SYP for 2006-

2011 takes into consideration the diverse realities and challenges of our presence in the Chinese context and in the Philippines.

a. Structure of the Delegation

Our SYP calls for Strategic decisions aimed at the consolidation of our presence in the Chinese context as well as in the Philippines. The SYP reads: *“The Mainland China apostolate remains the main focus of our presence and missionary service among the Chinese”* (SYP #5)

The **consolidation of our presence in China** calls for a minimum of three communities.

1 - The community at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Macau was the first one opened in the Chinese context. It is a presence of first evangelization in a parish setting. The involvement of some confreres working in Macau for the Local Church also ensures the support of the diocese needed for moving into mainland China. Macau has historically been, and still is, strategically important for an easier access to China.

2 - The community at Jen Ai Parish in Taipei is also involved in first evangelization and pastoral in a parish setting and it plays a key role in our apostolate in mainland China. It offers the venue to learn Mandarin based on a Comboni community, but above all it provides an environment to practice Mandarin in a pastoral setting, so that the confreres can be properly prepared and equipped for the future apostolate in the Mainland.

3 - The community of Zhao Rong, based in Macau, has as its main focus the work and projects in Mainland China. The Zhao Rong community carries on the Fen Xiang Project (FX). This is a project of the Delegation and *“aims at fostering the formation of pastoral agents for the Church in Mainland China and at the implementation of projects of human promotion”*(SYP#7) in collaboration with the local Church. The projects are a small contribution to the great challenge of the formation of evangelizing agents in China by means of seminars, workshops, recollections and sponsorships.

In the Philippines there has been a structural development and reorganization in the Roosevelt Compound, the place of the first community since 1990 and of the Postulancy since 1991. It hosts now the Novitiate and the Postulancy.

The Cebu community, opened *as a new presence in the South of the Philippines* (SYP#15.4) will be temporary suspended for lack of personnel.

Indeed, the present situation of personnel in the Delegation is leading to understaffed communities while still striving to keep up to the commitments taken. At the moment three communities in the Delegation have only two members while the formators of the Postulancy and the Novitiate are joined in the same community.

b. The communities and the persons

Asia is a challenging context from the community and pastoral/work point of view. The confreres are most of the time giving the best of themselves for the sake of the mission. Yet, we struggle to carry on the different commitments taken and the improvement in the quality of the community life is still a challenge.

The weakness of community life is reflected not only in the irregular composition of some communities but also in the presence of certain individualistic attitudes. Our communities will be evangelizing and formative communities when they become places where we grow together, support one another and joyfully live our consecration for mission.

c. The Secretariats

Our SYP fosters the reorganization and revitalization of the Secretariats as tools to organize unify and consolidate the works in the different areas and sectors in the Delegation.

The **Secretariat of Evangelization** animates and coordinates the initiatives in this sector. In the Chinese context the focus on the apostolate in Mainland China is never to be lost of sight while on the other hand both communities of St. Joseph in Macau and Jen Ai in Taipei are serving in the dioceses in context of first evangelization as well as supporting the mission in Mainland. The confreres working for the apostolate in China (Zhao Rong community) are prepared to do so because of their previous preparation and involvement in the pastoral settings.

The **Secretariat of Mission Promotion**. The promotion of mission is an important contribution of the Comboni Missionaries to the local church in the Philippines. World Mission Magazine (WMM) is our main tool for Mission Promotion. The magazine has grown in acceptance in the Filipino context as also shown by receiving one Catholic Mass Media Award during the year 2007 and two more on 2008. This acceptance has not been directly reflected in an increase in the number of subscribers. Indeed, the greatest challenge today is to keep the number of subscribers. The negative impact of the present economic crisis is already being felt

Mission Promotion take different forms: promotion of WMM, collaboration in pastoral and vocation ministry, holding the Mission Office (in the diocese of Parañaque), etc. The need for a concrete pastoral commitment has often been expressed in order to anchor our presence and make it more relevant to the local Church.

Vocation Promotion and Formation Secretariat. The promotion of vocations and the formation of candidates for the missions is an important concern in the Delegation. In the last six years however, there has been a decrease in the number of candidates for the Novitiate and the Scholasticate. The presence in Cebu (soon to be suspended) has given a boost to the Vocation Promotion in the South of the country. The openness to accept candidates from Mainland China is another significant development even if the fruits are few.

The promotion of vocations has become more challenging in the recent years. Some reasons are certainly external and are beyond our control, due to the new social context of the country and the families, the presence of numerous religious congregations, etc... There has also been instability both in the Vocation Promotion and in the Formation structures in the last years. The lack of formation teams and formative communities is affecting our basic formation.

The Secretariat of Finance is helping to improve the performance of the community bursars by offering clear guidelines. At the same time the communities share the 15% of their income with the Delegation as an expression of communion and sharing.

5. Relevant and specific themes of the Province

- The Comboni Missionaries have commitments of First Evangelization in Asia. This keeps us in touch with the very core of our identity as Institute. We are missionaries “ad gentes” and the communities in China give a simple but significant contribution to the evangelization of the Chinese people. The service in the parish setting offers the venue for the formation of catechumens, the development of Christian communities and for dialogue with peoples from other religions.
- The mission in China is particularly challenging since it requires a long period of preparation (3 to 5 years) due to the difficulty of the language.
- The Filipino confreres have already taken some commitments in the Delegation and it is our desire and hope that little by little the different services in the Delegation will be taken by the radical member. This may take longer than expected since a good number of the Filipino confreres from the first groups have left the Institute.
- The existence of two distinct realities in the Delegation is both a blessing and challenge as far as the movement of personnel within the Delegation is concerned. The reason being that while a confrere assigned to the Chinese context can be assigned to the Philippines the opposite is not possible due to lengthy preparation needed for the mission in China.
- In the last six years and for several reasons, the Delegation has seen the departure of several confreres and not enough new personnel has been assigned. The Chinese group is reduced to a minimum of six confreres in three communities. Two confreres of the Chinese group had to assume the works of formation in the Postulancy and administration in the Philippines.

6. Future perspectives

We look forward to stable and complete communities with a minimum of three members. A realistic approach tells us that this may come only by way of a decisive support from the General Chapter and the General Administration assigning enough number of confreres. The consolidation of communities will lead, with God’s grace to an improvement in the quality-life of the communities. Such improvement springs from faithfulness to personal and community prayer and on-going formation and is manifested in the fraternal sharing and communitarian planning of work and activities.

First Evangelization in China is a challenging task that calls for commitment, investment, preparation, etc... At this moment,

- We affirm the validity of the presence of the Comboni Missionaries in Asia in General and in the Chinese context in particular. Our presence is enriching the charism and helping the Institute to keep the focus on the evangelization of non-Christians.

- We also realize that our contribution to the evangelization in China is linked to the existence of a group of confreres prepared for the task. This calls for a long term investment since it takes years before one is prepared for this mission.

For several reasons, already mentioned in this report the Comboni mission in Asia is a challenge to our Institute. The need for effective support is really felt. As we look at Comboni we are certain that he would not be discouraged by the difficulties, rather the challenges of the evangelization in Africa led Comboni to a deeper and more determined giving of himself.

We need to share what we are and to allow the mission in Asia to renew and enrich the Institute.

APPENDIX 1

People's Republic of China

China has a population of over 1.3 billion people. One of the world's cradles of civilization, China has a profound and ancient religious tradition. Daoism and Confucianism date back to the 5th century BC. A form of Nestorian Christianity had entered China at least by the 7th century. The Catholic Church, after the first contacts in the 13th and 14th century, began to make inroads into China when the Portuguese established relations with China in the 15th century. Since then, the missionary efforts met different waves of persecutions alternated with periods of peaceful evangelization.

THE COMMUNISM AND THE CHURCH

In 1949, with the victory of the Communist Party under Mao Tse Tung, China entered a period of religious repression. In the 1950's China formed several "patriotic associations" to control religious activity and severed all ties between religious organizations in China and foreign organizations. During the "cultural revolution" from 1966-1976, religion and religious figures suffered severe persecution and repression. In the 1980's, as the Chinese government sought to improve its relationships with the West and embark on a course of technological and economic development, China began a policy of allowing the rebuilding of churches, temples and mosques. A religious revival ensued which has continued to the present day. Religious membership far exceeds the membership of the Communist Party. Exact figures are unknown because of widespread unofficial religious activity.

Although the Chinese Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, there is, in fact, very little religious freedom in China today. According to the Constitution, "religious bodies and religious affairs are not to be subject to any foreign domination". In practice, the government recognizes five religions which it monitors through "patriotic associations:" the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Catholic Patriotic Association, the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the Chinese Islamic Association and the Chinese Daoist Association. Foreign missionaries are prohibited to work in China.

THE RELIGIOUS POLICY IN THE LAST DECADE

China's religious policies result from several factors. The ruling Communist Party perceives unregulated religious activity as a threat to its power. They are alarmed by a growing association between many pro-democracy dissidents and underground churches. Since the 1980's, China has been seeking to maintain a policy allowing greater economic freedom for the sake of economic development while, at the same time, maintaining political control. In fact, in the recent years, China experienced several destabilizing forces, now aggravated by the recent economic crisis. The rapid growth of the economy combined with a cutback of some government programs gave rise to sectors of unemployment, rising inflation and income disparities which were new to China. As a part of measures to face a changing society, the Government have been seeking to bring religion under control. The cornerstone of the policy has been to ensure that all religious activity is registered, that unregistered religious activity is brought to an end and that the registered religions teach and practice in ways which are in accord with government social, educational, economic, and political policy which emphasized the themes of "national unity," "patriotism" and "social stability", themes which emerged with great power in the Olympics Games of 2008.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

The tension between the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, recognized by the government, and the underground Catholic Church which refuses government control, has been the main theme of the Letter that the Pope Benedict XVI to the Church in China in 2007. In order to try to reconcile the Local Church and especially the hierarchy, the Pope called on underground bishops to seek official government recognition and on official bishops to overcome their fear and publicly acknowledge their ties with the Pope so that bishops and the faithful alike can become reconciled. He especially urges the Chinese Church as a whole to go beyond the defensive mode persecution imposed on it, and increase instead the effort to evangelize the Chinese society, Asia and the whole world by giving itself the necessary means—bishops' conference, pastoral councils and diocesan administrations—that the task entails. Because of the isolation and the political control that the Church has suffered in the past decades, there is the great need of formation of the evangelizing agents and to build contacts between the Local Church with the Universal Church: these are the main task of the Missionary Congregations working in and for the Church of Mainland China. Since the gap rich/poor, urban/rural is widening, projects of human promotions to help the Local Church to reach out those who are left out of the economic progress are also needed.

The Republic of the Philippines

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

The Philippines is a country formed by more than 7.000 islands spread in the China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The islands, originally populated by different native groups have been visited and colonized by different peoples, among them groups of Muslims from the South, Chinese merchants, Conquistadores from Spain, North America and Japan... Each group has left their print in the history and in the present reality of the country. The

Filipino people are often described as Asian by heart, American by education and Catholics by faith.

The Philippines got its Independence from the Spaniards in 1898. World War II had a great impact on the country as the Japanese colonized it and showed extreme cruelty even against civilians. Fighting together during WWII reinforced the friendship with USA which kept military bases in the country until 1991. The present dependence from the USA is quite notorious in many ways. Thousands of Filipino have settled there and many more have relatives in USA territory.

POLITICAL SITUATION

The country has been ruled by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo since 2002 when she became the President of the nation after former President Joseph Estrada was ousted through a popular revolution which has come to be known as EDSA II. President Arroyo has trusted the economic powers to carry out her policy and has been at the eye of the political storm several times under accusations of corruption and misuse of government funds where members of her family have been involved. The present administration has thus lost credibility and at present there is political instability as the 2010 elections draws near.

SOCIETY

The gap between the rich and the poor keeps on widening. The financial pressure along with lack of proper investment in the local structures has led many Filipino, especially health professionals: nurses, physiotherapist and doctors to leave the country. There are more that 8 million Filipino workers in the Middle East, North America, East Asian countries, Europe, Australia and also in Africa... The remittances from this OSW (Over Seas Workers) are a major contribution to the gross income of the country. They also have a big impact at the grassroots level as many families have seen their standards of life improved and more young people are able to finish their studies thanks to the help from the family members working abroad. However, the social cost is also high in the basic Filipino institution: the family. Family members do not live together and often children grow up without one of the parents.

CHURCH

In a country where more that 80% are Roman Catholics the Church has always played a role in the social and political life of the country. The institutional Church still makes efforts to side with the poor and speaks out whenever some of the political movements will go against Christian morality. Her voice, however, is not as strong and convincing as it used to be in the Marcos period or the years after EDSA I. This is due to the fact that a good part of the institutional church is leaving far from the poor even though trying to help them.

The challenge for the Church is to reach out to different groups of people: the poor, the nominal Christians, other Christian churches, the Muslim... There is more and more a need for formation, catechization and awareness for mission in a Church closed in itself, highly clericalized and with a pastoral focused on the Sacraments.

Macau Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China

GEOGRAPHY & POPULATION

The Macau SAR territory consists of the Macau peninsula and two small islands. Macau is one of the world's smallest and most densely populated territories. The population of Macau at the end of 2008 was 549,200. This is enormous in proportion to the land mass of Macau. There are over 18,800 people per square kilometer. The majority of the inhabitants are migrants from China and the foreign nationals are a minority. The official languages are Cantonese and Portuguese however, the population of Macau speaks various languages like Mandarin, English, Filipino, etc.

A research report on poverty in Macao mentioned that about 66,000 among the population are living below poverty index.

HISTORY

The Portuguese settled in Macau between 1554 and 1557 and Macau boomed with the virtual monopoly on trade between China and Japan and between both nations and Europe.

In 1841, the British settled in Hong Kong, an island 40 miles Northeast of Macau and the economic importance of Macau declined as Hong Kong developed into one of the world's major commercial centers. In the early 1970's the gaming industry was introduced thus making Macau a gambling haven drawing tourists and funds into the enclave thereby causing a rapid economic recovery and development.

Macau was also a center of activity for Catholic missionaries, as it was seen as a gateway for the conversion of the vast populations of China and Japan. The Jesuits had first arrived in the 1560s and were followed by the Dominicans in the 1580s. Both orders soon set about constructing churches and schools. The first Jesuits missionaries to China went through Macau and these included Fr. Matteo Ricci who studied Chinese in Macau. In 1576, Macau was established as a diocese and in 1988 the first Chinese bishop D. Domingos Lam was installed followed by the current one D. Jose Lai in 2003.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Since its handover from Portugal to China in 1999, Macau is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), operating under the 'one country, two systems' principle as in Hong Kong. Macau has stronger political affiliation to mainland China now but also has a very considerable autonomy, as does Hong Kong and is governed by its own people.

The Chief Executive leads the Macao SAR Government and is accountable to the Chinese Central People's Government. He is appointed by the China Central Government after being selected by an Electoral College comprising of a small number of Macao residents who are nominated by the Central People's Government.

ECONOMY

Macau is a fast developing and highly industrialized city in China with a capitalist economy. The revenue derives mainly from tourism and the enormous casino industry, receiving 30 million tourists in 2008 alone.

Some textile and Chinese goods factories are still present in the territory, mostly produce for export and employ large numbers immigrants from China.

SOCIETY

The present day highly market oriented and commercialized society of Macau, with an economy largely based on gambling in a unique way, not only induces a culture of hyper individualism and a crisis of ethical values but also creates serious problems for society, family and education. Ironically the gambling industry is also source of income for a great number of people who otherwise would be chronically unemployed. The very high number of immigrant workers (mostly from mainland China and The Philippines) in recent years because of the booming entertainment industry has brought in new issues and problems of coexistence in a tiny and tightly networked society as Macau.

Issues of social justice are also widespread with exploitation of workers, human trafficking, gambling related problems, prostitution, juvenile exploitation, delinquency and drug addiction.

THE CHURCH

A recent estimate of the number of Catholics gives a figure of some 3.6% of the population. However the Catholic schools in Macau provide education for some 39.8% of the student population.

In recent years also an influx of Filipino migrants increased the Catholic population of the territory by at least 10,000 units.

In today's de-colonized Macau, the Catholic Church is not enjoying any particular status or prestige as in former times but still holds a widespread educational presence with many Catholic schools as well as social interventions through Caritas-Macau and social/pastoral centers run by the diocese and religious orders. Such endeavors still give the Church the esteem and respect of many in the enclave as well as that of the present government.

The pastoral work and evangelization is mainly determined by a number of parishes (6) and quasi-parishes (3) in the small territory. The Comboni missionaries have been entrusted with a quasi-parish (St. Joseph the Worker church) that has been established only 10 years ago in the northern most densely populated, least evangelized and poorest district of the territory. We also assist another rear by quasi-parish in Mong Ha.

The diocesan clergy is dwindling and the few local diocesan priests are well above 60 years of age most of them in their 70s. Foreign missionaries are helping with the pastoral work in the parishes. Every year little over 100 adult neophytes join the Church through the sacraments of initiation. Evangelization is a strenuous task given the background, nature and culture of the enclave as well as a lack of coordinated diocesan pastoral planning.

The local Church besides working within its boundaries also concerns with evangelization and its role towards mainland China. Foreign missionaries sponsored by the diocese can be granted permanent residency in Macau after 7 continuous years of stay, this also facilitates the acquiring for multiple entry visa in China for up to two years. Ethnic Chinese residents have no travelling restriction between Macau and the PRC and they can be the agents of evangelization in Macau and in China as well.

Taiwan, (Republic Of China)

Taiwan has a population of 23 million inhabitants, 98% Han Chinese, less than 2% aboriginal). Most of the Chinese population are descendants of fishermen coming from Fujian -the province on the opposite coast of China- who in the past centuries progressively settled down in the island. However, the first inhabitants of the Taiwan were aborigines of Austronesian descendants. After the Second World War, a large group of Chinese Mainlanders following the Kuomintang government defeated by the Communist also settled in the island.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Taiwan has been for centuries a remote province of China; then, from 1895 it was colonized by Japan. After the WWII, the Nationalist government and military retreated in this island, de-facto cutting all relationships with the Mainland.

In the past decades, a growing awareness of the political identity of the island has led to a strong confrontation with China who considers Taiwan a renegade province bound to be reunited with the motherland. Only a handful of States recognize Taiwan as an independent Nation: because of the opposition of China, Taiwan has no seat in the UN or in any other international organization. Last year however, due to corruption and the growing concern for the economy, the Democratic Progressive Party which supported independence, badly lost the elections, and the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) regained power. Since then, the relations between Taiwan and China are getting better, and the Government is actively promoting more economic, cultural and transport links with the Mainland. The concern is that the growing dependence from China will undermine the open democratic system and the human rights enjoyed by the Taiwanese people in the past 20 years.

ECONOMY

In the past decades Taiwan had a stable and growing economy based on technology and financial services, with a low inflation and unemployment. However, the recent crisis and the growing outsourcing of production to China, is badly influencing the economy and especially the life of the low-income part of the population.

RELIGIOUS AND ECCLESIAL SITUATION

The majority of the Taiwanese people follow a popular religion which puts together elements of Buddhism and Taoism and is centered on the veneration of the ancestors and on the protection of one's well-being, even though pure followers of these two religions are also quite numerous. Christians are around 3% of the population, and the Catholics less than 1%. This percentage does not include the great number of Filipino overseas workers (around 250,000), most of them Catholics, who are present in Taiwan.

In spite of the fact that Taiwan is enjoying religious freedom, to evangelize a society which is deeply rooted in Buddhism and Taoism is not easy. However, the main difficulty of the Church is to understand how to evangelize a society which is modern and consumerist, and centered on "work". Especially in the cities, people have a lot of pressure coming from work and studies, with little time to dedicate to spiritual matters. The challenge is to be able to present the Gospel in a way which is relevant to highly educated, modern... and busy people.

The Taiwanese Church has a special vocation to be a "Bridge Church" between the Church in Mainland China, which is not allowed to be free, and the Universal Church.

Contacts and different forms of support are going on between the Taiwanese Church and the Church in Mainland China. Also, Taiwan can be also considered an important study field to understand the difficulties the church in Mainland China will face once their society will become more affluent and politically free. With few local vocations, aging priest population, and a decline in conversions due to the fast modernization of the Country, the Taiwanese Church is still in strong need of foreign missionaries to support the local church.

This Report of the Delegation of Asia for the XVII General Chapter was presented to the Delegation Assembly on May 7, 2009 and approved by the Delegation Council on May 13, 2009.

Noted by: *Fr. Miguel Angel Llamazares Gonzalez* (Delegate Superior); *Fr. Paolo Consonni*, *Fr. David da Costa Domingues* (Councilors); *Fr. Víctor Manuel Tavares Dias* (Delegate to the Chapter)

Brasil Do Sul

COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS SOUTH BRAZIL PROVINCE OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES.

A.- Provincial report.

1. Introduction

The mission in south Brazil, in these 57 years, was started by the invitation from church and developed in the perspective of announcing Jesus Christ the Saviour and Libertator.

Since Medellin, the church action in Latin America has its connotations, it partes from the God of the poor, the church communities, the way of justice. The institute of the Comboni Missionaries puts itself in this perspective, followig the footsteps of the local church and the directives from the Episcopal Confereces. We are always sollicitated to take pastoral work in the areas which are socially poor and more abandoned in the sense of faith.

In this half milenium, there are times of great undertakings and strong testimonies from the Combonians. Tha natural crises and abandonement of the mission by the significante group was not missing. Also the great effort in the field of formation did not give the expected results due to internal and environmental causes. The nature of Comboni and Combonian Missions marked the Brazilian Church, and there is still a space for further development. This is the time for the redifinition of our mission, having in mind the evolution reality and scarcity of our efforts. Today, you may see that the calling of the church and the society is different. Another aspect is the configuration of the Combonian group. For that reason, the necessity to requalify the mission, the formation and the governance.

2. The political, economical and eclesial realities

Looking at the Brazilian reality, as the disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ, there are mixed moments of light and darkness. The great changes “afflicts us, but do not confuse us”. That is, they challenge us to discern the signs of the times in the light of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, Comboni and Combonian tradition, to put us in the service of the kingdom of God, anounced by Jesus who came so that all may have life in abundance.

Social reality

Crescent fragmentation for the reference sense and relativization of values, gerenerating multiples and partical criterias in the consideration of the life realities, in the religious relationship among the people. The sense of crises, anxious and frustrated people. The crisis and misfit acquaintances.

The globalization, inspite of its positive aspects- high production and circulation of the material goods, communication facility, tecnological progress-prevailing of the public opinion provokes increament of economic disequality, increased riches to the few people, climatic catastrofies as agressive consequence to the environment. Increase of violence and terrorism to all.

Before the uncertainties and the risk for immediate satisfaction, the desire of consuming, market ardent. The illusion possibility that controls the distant worlds and also the illusion when all the desires can be satisfied by the products that have efficient and messianic character. In the private sector dominates the mentality that each one judges himself or herself as the owner of the actions, not accepting fully the orientation of the society, even the elementary ethical imperatives.

The generalized conviction that negates intrinsic connection division between faith and moral. It increases the logic of individualism and uncertain future.

The search for happiness, personal realization, that in themselves are legitimate Christian aspirations, taken, however, as absolutes. The culture of individualism, disassociated from ethical values is generating the culture of death.

On the other side, our way of faith looking and hope, also affirms positive aspect of this cultural change. The fundamental value of a person: his liberty, search for the meaning of life, the rights of each person, fight against discrimination, promotion of the women rights, preservation of the environment, defense of the cultural rights and specific ethnics. The search for the social justice and other possible world.

Economic reality:

The dynamic of the market absolutizes the productivity; as the regulatory values of the human relations. It leads to the concentration of the physical resources, monetary and information, producing exclusion of all who are not sufficiently capable and informed, increasing the inequality and maintaining many people in poverty.

In the crowd of the poor, we locate the concrete faces of the migrants, the sick, the drug addicts, children and adolescents in risky situations, the prisoned, exclusion for the question of gender, ethnic and social economic situation. It is not just a question of dealing with poverty, but a new social exclusion, those who are exploited and rejected. The lack of job opportunities, shortage of manual work destroys the dignity of the millions of the people.

The profit scandal of the rich financial institutions, the great extractive and agro industries that do not respect frequently the rights of the local population. The rural population that suffers the consequences of poverty, due to lack of access to land, finance and general condition of worthy life.

Political reality:

We affirm the weakness of the current political and cultural changes. The increment of the economic power of great economic groups that imposes its decisions, substituting the instant politics, with the risks of democracy. The deterioration of the corruption in the public sphere in the three powers, also in the private sector. The rest by the public politics. The inexistence and abandonment of the state of public security.

On the other hand, we affirm the increment of the political conscience, the political link that demands the rights.

The religious reality

We affirm the tendency of the inversion of the meaning of religious experience. The religion is not thought of and lived on as a form of recognition, adoration and surrender to the creator, obedience in faith, service to God and the living community. It is linked with the utilitarian eye to offer for the internal good, therapy or cure for the evils, success in life and in business, as it appears in the so called the "theology of prosperity"

It makes present the increased tendency, in some sectors of the society, to admit the religious practice only in the private sector, in the base of the laical society, criticising church manifestations in the matters of moral and her public presence in the political life.

There is equally, in new religious expression, generalised tendency including the influence of certain type of psychology, affirms without the innocence of the individual in the way that no one must feel the sinner or blamed.

There is, however, autonomous religious movements, through the proselitism, they cheat with the so called “theology of prosperity” consequently, nobody feels responsible to correct what is wrong in the society in which they live, strongly, high religiosity and criminality, search for God and injustice.

We perceive the church, that still depends on the priests. Delays in the commitment with justice and peace, liberation, to support the great movements. Little openness to the missionary reality.

On the other hand, we have the challenge of city-outskirts, especially in the great cities, the amazon, the problem of violence, search for justice and peace.

We have the urgent necessity to live in the church, the passion that is devoted to the life of Jesus Christ: The kingdom of God, source of grace, peace, justice and love. For this kingdom, Jesus gave life.

The conference of Aparecida asks from us the personal and structural conversion so that we may be the house of communion, a place of welcoming, to rethink the small christian communities, we are called to be a samaritan church.

Combonian reality of the members of the province- statistics- personnel and communities - personnel

Situation of personnel in 30 of april 2009	
Members	64
Retired Bishop	1
Priests	56
Brothers:	3
scholastics:	4

Novices	0
Postulants	6
Age	
From 30 to 39:	5
From 40 to 49:	9
From 50 to 59:	8
From 60 to 69:	9
From 70 to 79:	25
From 80 to 89:	8
Total:	64
Mean age in the province	63,35

Nationalities	
Italians	44
Brazilians	10
Portugueses	4
Spanish	1
Ugandans	1
From Austria	1
German	1
Costarica	1
Togolese	1
Total	64
Activities	
Evangelization (traditional parishes 4 - city-outskirts 6)	23
Scholastics -	4
Formation -	5
Missionary animation	5
Pastoral especific (JP, indígenous, DDHH, Afros)	8
Provincial coordination	2
Ederly and sick	15
Others	2
Total	64

Note: looking at the statistics, 52% of the members of the province are above 70 years old. Of the 64 members, 33 of them are aged, 4 Scholastics, 1 is absent from the community, 1 works outside. Below 70 years, we are 25 members

3.2. Communities

COMMUNITIES		
BOA VISTA	1	Indigenous pastoral
CARAPINA	1	Missionary animation/ parish (city-outskirts)
CONTAGEM	1	Formation. parish(city-outskirts)
CURITIBA	1	Postulancy/ parish(city-outskirts)
DUQUE DE CAXIAS	1	parish
GURIRI	1	House for the elderly- parish
INDAIAL	1	Missionary animation/ parish
MANAUS	1	Parish (city-out-skirts) indigenous pastoral
NOVA VENÉCIA	1	parish

COMMUNITIES		
PORTO VELHO	1	Parish (city-out-skirts)
SÃO JOSÉ DO RIO PRETO	1	House for the elderly/ parish
SÃO MATEUS	1	parish
SÃO PAULO 1	3	Provincial house
SÃO PAULO 2		Scholasticate/ parish (city-out-skirts)
SÃO PAULO 3		Mooça/ specific pastoral
TOTAL COMMUNITIES	15	

THE FLOW OF PERSONNEL IN THIS PERIOD	
Destined to the province	26
Left the province	21
Left the institute	8
Died	3

4. Our journey in the period between 2003-2009

The South Brazil province is committed to, since 2003, in a wide process of revision and requalification of the commitments. In which, all the communities participated through the provincial assemblies, meetings in the zones. As the results of the process, many commitments were left out.

4.1 They were handed over:

To the local churches one social work project and one parish in the diocese of São José of Rio Preto, São Paulo, the parishes of Conceição da Barra and of Pedro Cenário in the dioceses of São Mateus, in Espírito Santo, the parish of São Sebastião in Gramacho in the diocese of Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro, the parish of Ouro Preto and of Cacoal in the Diocese of Ji-Paraná, in Rondonia; the parish of Taguatinga in the diocese of Brasília and part of the parish of Carapina in the archdiocese of Victoria. We are in the phase of handing over the parish of Nova Venécia in February of 2010.

4.2 They were closed:

The communities of the missionary animation and vocational promotion in Lages, SC, and Ouro Preto in Rondonia, the community of the magazine "Sem Fronteiras" and "Alô Mundo" in São Paulo, the Noviciate of Nova Contagem, the propedeutic in Curitiba and one community in Carapina, Espírito Santo.

4.3 We opened:

In this period, for the function of the internal movement, four new communities, in line with the priorities of the province in this period and from the orientations of the general chapter, one in São Paulo for the work of justice and peace, Missionary animation in Indaial, SC. One in the extreme North, for the work of the indigenous people (Boa Vista/ Alto Alegre/ RR and one in Manaus as the presence in Amazon reality and the indigenous problematic.

In this moment the province of South Brazil reached a certain equilibrium between our efforts and the commitments. Today, we can account for the work done. Considering the advanced age of more than half of the group, we also opted to remain in some traditional places.

In the requalification of the commitments

They were closed 12 communities

They were opened 4 communities

4.4. Priorities of the province in this period

- To requalify the commitments
- Articulation of mission promotion and vocational promotion
- Permanent formation and
- Basic formation
- City-outskirts
- Commitment with justice and peace commission
- Opening in Amazon
- Indigenous pastoral

4.5 The process of requalification

The reflection process and discussion was wide and highly participated. Each place and experience were put into discussion. Each work was reflected parting from a specific Combonian. That permitted the group to recuperate habit of missionary dynamic.

4.5.1 Missionary animation and vocation promotion:

After trying various times to create centers for the missionary animation a place of reflection and experience of Missionary work, MA, J \$ P, pastoral and the centre for the articulation of the Missionary animation and vocational promotion inserted in the realities of the parishes whose results are being positive.

As a perspective of this sector we would like the missionary animation that is not only turned to the collection of material resources for the province, but may conform to the continental reflection a “ministry” that brotes from the church and helps her to be open to the world. The problem of misery and injustice from of the people within and outside the continent are challenges to our fraternity and solidarity. The demands of the globalised world (principally on the theme of justice and peace) should not remain outside the perspective of the church reality. We want missionary animation that helps the church to be significant in the world of today.

One specific aspect of missionary animation is promotion, the care taking and accompaniment of the vocational dimension.

In the formation level, we made a workshop about the missionary animation: the participation of the Combonians in the missionary organisms of the local church (Comina, Comires, Comidis).

4.5.2 Basic Formation

In the field of basic formation, there is an effort from the part of the province so that the postulancy may be accompanied closely, be it by the provincial council or the whole province. There is incentive for the formation of the formators, be it in the level of the institute (courses for the continental formators) also in the courses of formation to the formators from the religious conference of Brazil, one Combonian is preparing himself in the field of psychology. In the view of the future, to prepare the Brazilians in the field of provincial work.

4.5.3. Permanent Formation

The province has been realizing the combonian week, with the themes related to the life of the institute.

- The provincial retreat
- Workshop on formation, about the missionary animation
- Ratio missionis
- Group meetings
- Semestral meetings of the zones (the province is divided in three zones)
- Specific meetings of justice and peace commission
- Evangelization forum.

4.5.4 Evangelization

In this period, there was, from the part of the province the participation on discerning and the requalification of the commitments. We closed 12 communities and we opened 4, conforming our priorities of the province.

There was also from the part of the provincial council, the preoccupation of looking for the new fields of action, the revitalize the group. We credit that the opening of Roraima and Manaus, in the first moment was not understood by many. It is turning to be a place which makes us to reflect and continue to discern before the great challenges of the church in Brazil, also for the future of our presence in Brazil.

The way of ratio missions in the province, despite of not being the commitment of all, helped us to be accountable of whom we are, however, we also perceived that our spirituality is scarce and imprecise, this means that our life and missionary work are not sufficiently rooted in Jesus Christ.

We recognize a weak community life, we have little sensibility to the confreres and an individual lifestyle/ competitive. The elements of the charism are not deeply assimilated. The interpretation of the charism is a personal question and not communitarian. Generally, our mission is based on projects that requires a lot of money to be financed. Our style of mission work is more of personal protagonist than the people, and we distance ourselves from the reality.

In these last times, we also started initiating the realization of the evangelization forum. The space of sharing, reflection to help the whole group and the provincial council the elaboration of the proposal work as Comboni missionaries in Brazil.

The second Comboni forum in Belem, with the theme. "A new Combonian mission is urgent and necessary, for us, is the important moment of going on ahead. It stimulates us to look on our style of mission, to rethink our missionary project having in mind the work of justice and peace as the transversal axis.

One of the points which was underlined is the necessity of more involvement in the social field of our missionary action, we are more sensitised as the provincial council, to organize the secretariat of evangelization to access us to elaborate the project in the provincial level within the theme of justice and peace.

The challenge of the forum encourages us to put more our initiatives in the social field, indigenous pastoral, to be involved concretely in the popular movements of our Christian communities in the city-outskirts (CEDECA, CDS, MST, CPT, Pastoral Afro, pastoral dos Carrilheiros). To support the action of Mooca and to continue deepening our theological reflection in this field.

5. Sharing of the resources and the lifestyle.

Besides the project, there is common fund for the communities, not in the provincial level, for the provincial fund (that responds to the coordination work, formation and missionary animation), they share 20% of the personal income, and 5% from the projects. There is spontaneous sharing from the communities that puts at disposition their surplus funds.

The province has not yet adapted the common fund considering it not necessary because the sharing may be excessively bureaucratic. The province insists that there may be a total common fund at the community level and sharing among the communities. With that, we admit that it may safeguard the fundamental values presented in the rule of life. Only a few confreres resist this type of proposal.

After the meeting of the bursar in Pesaro last year, 2008, we are starting the process of reflection so that as a province we may reach at the proposal and the communion of the material goods.

6. Difficulty in impleation of the provincial programme

The great difficulty is in the fact that there is already the elderly group that does not renew itself and has obvious difficulties of recycling itself. The loneliness of some has weakened the dimension of the group. Insisting very much on the community aspects -

The community project. There is an effort from the provincial council for the betterment of the communities, but the difficulties continue.

7. The relevant themes of the province

7.1 The elderly:

Looking at the statistics of the province, many of the confreres are above 70 years of age. The accumulated wisdom, the life experience is a grace for all.

On the other hand, it is the same group that has been for the mission in Brazil, and a few of them had gone for rotation.

The preoccupation of the province is to accompany the confreres and help them to live this stage of life with happiness and sincerity. On the other hand, we should invest quietly in our missions and find out the ways so that all may fall well. Evidently, the province will have to be preoccupied to offer the adequate condition to the elderly and the sick, due to their increased number.

7.2 Missionary Animation and vocation promotion

We looked for a missionary animation that may not be an isolated work done only by the confreres in this field, “the present animators” in various places to put the dynamism to all the pastoral actions. This offers to the missionary animation an indispensable church ground to that she can become the dynamic force/energy for the mission.

We would like the type of missionary animation that does not turn only towards the institute or the simple collection of the resources of the province, but may be according to the continental reflection a, “ministry” that brotes from the church and helps her to be open to the world. We would like the missionary animation that helps the church to be significant in the world of today. Our missionary service should maintain alive the church spirit of ad gentes, in the local churches.

One of the dimensions of the missionary animation is the vocation promotion. We admit that to give our contribution to the institute and also to have new forces in the church and in the province, we would like to invest in this field with personnel, through the formation work of the Brazilian missionaries and the combonians.

7.3 Mission project for southern Brazil province

As a province, we would like to live the mission, parting from the community project, overcoming personal limits, promoting the style of simple life that facilitates the major insertion in the reality. To live the spirituality that admits in the justice for the kingdom of God and leads to the commitment for the transformation of the society.

Within the suggestion of Belem forum and the theme of the chapters “to requalify the mission, formation and governance”, we would like to give the continuity to the reflection of our commitment on justice and peace as the axis of all our missionary action. To give continuity to the process of reflection and discernment of our presence in Brazil. To elaborate the project of combonians redesigning the map of our presence, of our priorities and actions.

Together with the comboni sisters and the comboni lay missionaries to reflect and forward the proposed work done together in the problematic indigenous in Amazon.

The Amazon border in the province is the place by which the church in Brazil calls for the missionary efforts. In Amazon, there are regions and dioceses which are abandoned. There are bishops who are actually acting in extremely difficult situation. The episcopate invites the congregations to help. The mission in Amazon is still difficult due to isolated and distant conditions and lack of services to the population.

7.4 Permanent Formation

The people are great resources and great problems. Many are frustrated and wounded. The institute, with its instants of coordination is not able to respond to the demands of the people who are disgusted by the mission.

It is urgent to confront the situation, so that when dealing with the people, the responses may be quick and the solutions may be effective, for that case, as a province, we would like to elaborate the proposal in the personal and community level, we may have communities where fraternal testimony and the style of life, may be according to our way of being missionaries.

To confront the urgency of personalising and interiorizing the comboni charism, to reformulate a great sense and transparent belonging to the institute, and the new dynamic of our missionary spirituality

7.5 In the relationship between personnel and commitments

Without any doubt, there is necessity of adquating the works taken by the real available efforts in the province, so that there may be no continuous calling in the incase of emergency state, it is necessary to see our presence and give conditions to the group, to respond to the appeals of the mission appeals, when one remains for a long time in one place, there is loss of missionary dynamism. There is bulk of structural acumulation that impedes the progress.

In the province of south Brazil, there are confreres who are looking forward to do mission in a more radical and committed way, that leads us to learn the equilibrium that must be looked not only among the people and the commitments, but above all, between the institution and the profecy.

8. Future Perspectives

The future of the southern Brazil province points out to a diferent presence. In the formation: Vocational promotion, missionary animation, also the significant missionary work like (indigenous afros, city-ouskirts, justice and peace comission) besides also having the place for the aged.

8.1 The mission as the centre

Even if we recognize the importance of nourishing fundamental values of the missionary work (personal santity), it is the mission that must be put as a reference of all the choices. The mission is not ours, but belongs to God, the church and the institute. The explicit announcement to the people that we are sent to.

The mission of the church and the communities as point of reference, a ministerial perspective, committed with history and liberation of the poor, ecumenism, service, the martyrdom, more of testimony than teachings.

We should be profoundly marked by the political love (that looks for the causes of the evils), commitment to the kingdom of God, that today is simbolised by justice and peace comission (justice, peace and intergrity of creation).

This characteristics of justice and peace is essentially combonian identity, must orient to the vocational promotion, the basic and permanent formation so that we may take with generosity this urgent demanding call. Thus fidelity to comboni identity requires a revision of the structures and the programme of the congregation and the province.

We commit ourselves also to put in practice the invitation of FSC to deepen the elaboration, with the comboni missionary sisters, the lay comboni missionaries, above all, in the projects of justice and peace.

Also we underline, that our mission, that has the origin in baptism, be inserted in a great mission, in which they participate men and women of the time and all places of the world that invests its energy in the construction of the just world, equality and fraternity. That is, the need to establish the agreement with the personnel and the social movements that fights for the better future world, this demands calls for conversion.

The mission, always being new is a great challenge, taking into account, among other difficulties, our history, rich in stimulus and limitations, but also in the tension, not only confronted with realism, respect and historical patience, we would like to discover a new spirituality, inspired by the new mission.

Before certain discouragement and the tendency of realizing a personal mission, we intend to take the commitment of journeying together to the direction of “common thinking” cultivating a major availability to the calling of the mission today.

May the Spirit of God, the passion for the kingdom and the example of Comboni motivate and sustain us to be missionaries of the gospel in this kairos plenty of God’s sign, with the concrete responses of the poor and abandoned, the planet is a common house to all.

8.2 Continental Plan.

The south Brazil province continues to credit in the opportunity and the importance that, in Brazil, we may have a group of combonians who may strengthen and articulate well some common lines (principally the missionary animation, the formation and specific challenges- city-outskirts, afro, indigenous, justice and peace commission).

The difficulty of reaching at a common way of thinking and acting together between the two actual provinces in Brazil reveal the prevailing personalism individualism among the combonian groups. Let it go the process, and start to define the unity, presence praxis of the combonian missions in Brazil, signifies not understanding the instancial movement. Is also the task of general chapter to go ahead of the historical process.

The problem of “continentality” is seen by us not as such on the side of the governance, but principally on the side of the specificity of the mission in this continent. We credit that each continent must define well its type of mission conforming its reality and existing challenges, so as to define more our oportunes.

We are oriented, recently, by the directives of the latin american conference of Aparecida, where they are defined the objects of the mission in the continent, when it talks of the necessity of the mission ad extra.

São Paulo, 10 of May, 2009.

Fr. Alcides Costa
Provincial

Fr. Vanderlei Bervian
Vice provincial

Brasil Nordeste

RELATION OF THE BRASIL NORDESTE PROVINCE TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER ROME, SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

This relation, by its synthetic character, does not obviously reflect the totality of the rich experiences regard the missionaries practices and the challenges lived by the Brasil Nordeste Province over the last six years. For this reason, in order to complement these informations, we call on others Documents such as the Six Years Plan and the different provincial reports which, as the Chapter approaches, have already been sent.

Despite the shortage of personal, which has directly affected the fulfilment of the Six Years Plan, the Province has made an effort to give continuity to the missionaries commitments that the current and the previous provincial coordination have taken on along their three years exercise.

We wish to highlight here the existence of a general good atmosphere of serenity, communion, and convergence of options and methodologies that has prevailed amongst the members of the Province over the last the six years.

2. INTRODUCING THE SOCIO-POLITICAL-ECONOMICAL AND ECCLESIAL REALITY

2.1. The Economical Context of Northeast and of Brazil

It is quite difficult, in the current conjuncture, to make an analysis, the less objective the possible, given the economical-financial crisis that affects all the countries bringing a lot of uncertainties regards its outcome. Nevertheless, we can verify that the economic Brazilian growth, which was increasing in the sequence of 5,5% in 2008 and was expected to grow 4,4% in the beginning of the crisis, and has now been corrected to nearly 0%. Studies and projections point that the crisis in Brazil will not be as strong as it is in other countries from the North hemisphere, but the signals of graves proportions that this crisis is causing can already be seen in the numerous demissions, suspension of contracts and investments, and decreasing importations. If, on the one hand, it is true that the social programs of the government have contribute to bring down the indices of poverty, on the other hand, it is also true that the income distribution continues extremely concentrated and unequal and the salaries progressively loose their buying power.

We are aware of the gravity of the economical indicators, the bad income distribution, the regional inequalities, etc., but we also acknowledge that Brazil has an enviable potential, both in terms of material row and in technology, industrial park,

and infrastructures. Besides this, we cannot ignore that the labourers' fundamental rights as well as their purchase power have reasonably been respected. The insignificant income transference via social programs of the government did not avoid numerous young people to enter into the job world or begin small business allowing them a better life condition. Thanks, finally, to a rigorous cambial and interest policy, the monster of inflation has been kept under control.

2.2. The Social Context

Also in this field Brazil has come forth with alarming social indexes. Everyone knows that in the world classification of life quality, which is measured by the Human Development Index (based on new adopted criterions which are more completed), Brazil has not advanced so much despite the efforts the Federal Government has made. The country takes today the number 65 on the rank and stays behind of most Latin-American countries. Amongst the main structural problems Brazil is called on to give an urgent answer is unemployment, which is today pointed by 35% of the entire population as the main problem. In second place comes violence with 21%; in 1996 only 2% of the population pointed it as the main problem! In third place comes the lack of health with 10%. Official data follow proportionally the growing perception of the population regard these problems:

- Today 56% of the employed earns up to R\$ 460. Only 5% earns around 10 minimum salaries. The black labourers earn proportionally less than the white labourers. The same happens with the black women. In the Northeast Region only 34% of the employed earn the 13^o minimum salary while in the rest of Brazil the average is of 45% of the labourers. Slave work continuous to be a social plague. Despite the changes made in the legislation annually thousands of people found in situations similar to slave work are set free.

- The big cities have become chaotic and unsafe: assaults, robberies, kidnapping, homicide, increasing drug dealing, and organised crime. There is a truly constitution of a parallel states-armies. São Paulo, for example, is today the world's third more violent city. The number of murders has increased over the last eight years in 29%. Amongst the young people, from 14 to 25 years old, the homicide rate went up 48%. 60% of the Brazilians are for capital punishment. And, in Brazil, every 8 minutes, a child suffers violence.

- In education, in spite of the measures and massive investments, there is a very big deficit of teachers and technical staff in the official educative sector. In the states of the Northeast Region the illiterate indexes are still higher than in the rest of the country.

Despite all these problems and challenges there are numerous well succeeded experiences of alternative economy (*economia solidária*), active participation in county and state councils, all kind of associations showing the emerging of social movements. If, on the one side, there is a discredit with formal politic, on the other side, there is the rising of a new consciousness saying that the organised civil society, whether with participation of the State or not, can and should take the responsibility of guarantying peace, justice, and social equity. In this sense, the popular pressure and in part the formal justice itself has shown more attention and rigor in punishing corrupts administrators signaling that a new society can be built and based on honesty and transparency.

2.3. Ethnic-Environmental

It is universally notorious the fact of Brazil being considered one of the major destroyers of native rain forests, but this does not explain everything. The paradoxical in this field lies in the fact that Brazil has currently one of the most advanced environmental legislation of the planet, but it is only partially applied and so it is not capable to stop the growing deforestation. The government does not have (or not want) infrastructures for vigilance and protection of the biological reserves, parks, pre-Amazon and Atlantic rain forests, and the indigenous areas. This is also because the government suffers pressure from the big wood industries and agro-farms that want to increase the limit of their areas for deforestation and agribusiness.

Particularly in the states of Maranhão and Pará, besides the wood-cutters activities, small companies, that supply the siderurgical activities with vegetal charcoal, operate in the southern areas of these two states and are becoming ever more daring and ignoring the indigenous resistance, that are the minority, their allied and also the federal government.

The process of charcoal production is done in a rudimental way at a low cost and cheap salaries often employing child or semi-slave work.

The existent indigenous areas in Brazil would deserve a particular chapter. They count about 650 indigenous areas, but only 48% are delimited and homologated. Despite this, both the demarcated and the areas simply indentified, are suffering invasions, destruction, and all sort of deforestation. Besides threatening the ethnic-cultural and physical survival of about 650.000 indigenous that belong to 210 indigenous peoples, the environmental degradation that occur in indigenous areas have contributed to reduce the forest coverage of the indigenous areas changing, thus, their original eco-systems and provoking harmful alteration, conflicts and violence of all kind.

Despite all these problems, which are so obvious, we must not forget to mention the positive steps taken in this dimension: a) A greater sensibility toward the socio-environmental issues, including them in the school curriculum and with the numerous experiences of rubbish selective collect. b) The government itself has offered courses of 'popular environmental agents' form north to south. These agents have been capacitated to survey the environmental areas and to promote respect for them. c) A meaningful number of Projects of Laws to improve the environmental legislation and a more rigorous action of the Court of Justice demanding environmental licenses and punishing those who commit infractions. d) A growing mentality that says that Brazil with its richness and bio-energetic diversity has a lot to offer to the humanity. e) A growing acknowledgement that says the multiculturalism (indigenous, afro-descendents, and others) is richness and not a hindrance to the country. These issues have become obligatory part of the curricular school grade both in public and private schools.

2.4. From an ecclesial point of view

The Church in Brazil has been going through meaningful changes that print in it a new face that is quite different from that of 10 years ago. There has been a

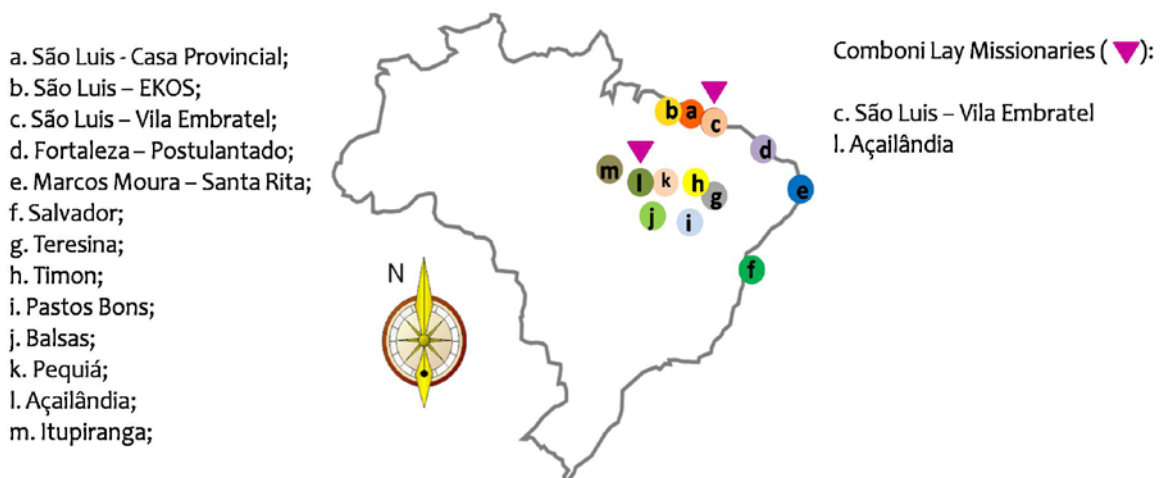
migration of Catholics over the last 10-15 years to other Christian denominations – evangelical and Pentecostal churches -; it is also true that this process has not occurred in the proportions that many have thought and published. Catholics continue being the great majority and the Catholic Church continues being one of the institutions people trust most, despite its contradictions.

But this does not say everything about the ecclesial life in this country. We have been watching, on one side: 1. To a strong tendency to the strengthening of the rites religion, liturgies out of the reality, imitation of the evangelical methodology. 2. The tendency, on the side of the clergy, in administrating/governing technically the ecclesial life with little concern about with the evangelising, pastoral, and transforming dimension of people’s life. 3. Creates aversion to the social pastoral with alienating and spiritualist preaching. 4. Tendency to centralisation, clericalism, sacramentalisation, and to the canonical jurisdiction in the ecclesial life with no valorisation of the role of the laity, the ministerial dimension, participative and ‘charismatic’ of the base ecclesial communities. 5. Little missionary attention to the socio-ecclesial regions-realities that need most.

On the other side, we verify: 1. The firmness of various sectors of the popular church in believing and working on behalf of the base ecclesial communities as expression of a church based on communion and participation of all the faithful. 2. The insistence of many communities and dioceses in motivating and promoting the presence of Christian to take part in an active ecclesial and political life, in the promotion of new ministries, in the assumption of responsibilities based on a consciousness that says the Church must be yeast, salt, and light. 3. In the insistence and firmness of numerous ecclesial communities and organisms that believe in the integral formation of the laity, in the critical consciousness, in the commitment with justice and peace and human rights issues.

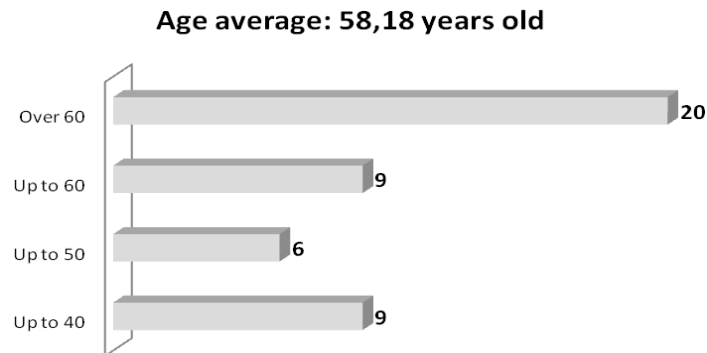
3. PRESENTATION OF THE COMBONI REALITY

3.1 Communities. We have 13 communities spread along 06 states: Bahia (f), Ceará (d), Maranhão (a, b, c, h, j, k, l), Pará (m), Paraíba (e) and Piauí (g).

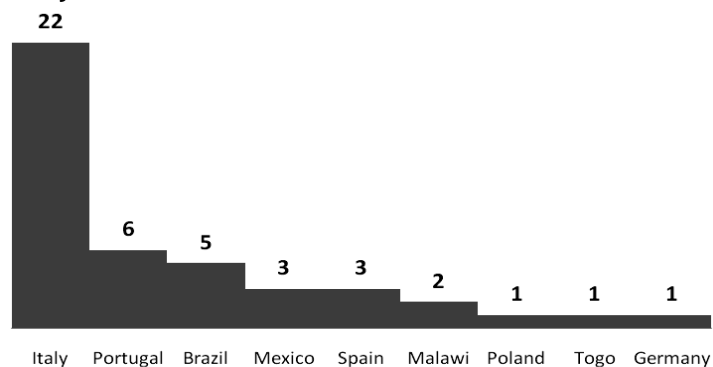


3.2 Confreres. The Brazil Nordeste Province is composed of 44 religious: 35 priests and 09 brothers.

3.2.1 By age:



3.2.2. By nationality:



3.3 In basic Formation: 01 scholastic, 01 Novice and 02 Postulancies

4. A GENERAL VISION OF THE ROAD THE PROVINCE HAS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST CHAPTER

4.1 Evangelization/JPIC

Taking as the starting point the historical experiences accumulated during decades of missionary presence in the Brazil Nordeste, the Province has enlarged the concept of evangelization/mission. It is now understood not only as *“a formal and explicit announcement of Jesus Christ, but as an entirety of relations, values, ways of being present, and postures that are profoundly humans and sources of hope, transformation, and integral liberation for people, groups, and peoples that are still far from experiencing the fullness of life that was announced and witnessed by Jesus of Nazareth”* (Six Years Plan 2005-2010).

The very fact that Province has chosen *Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and Youth for Peace* as the guiding and agglutinating axis has revealed quite positive for it gives safety and motivation for the missionary work and shows a clear unity of intention as well as of provincial project. The right choice of this guiding axis has allowed us to:

- a) Implementing, since 2005, a new missionary methodology of work in which the analysis of the socio-economical and religious-cultural reality comes in as

basis for our missionary intervention in the Province. Socio-economical and ecclesial researches were carried out in all the communities in order to organize, firstly, a data bank about the macro-reality of the work done by the Comboni Missionaries from which future pastoral choices can be programmed and better manage the human resources.

b) Developing a project that was intended and shared at a provincial level and involving in it a considerable number of missionaries aiming to give an appropriate answer to the socio-political and economical-cultural challenges of the region.

c) The integration and interaction between the various Secretariats and Sectors of the Province: today the provincial counsellors play also the role of secretaries of sectors.

d) The mapping, with support of EKOS (a provincial organism for consulting), of the social capital/potential of the existing services in the various contexts where we work. The biggest effort made was to find associations and Non-Governmental Organisations that would respond to the minimum criterions in the interventions modalities that the province has chosen for a networked action.

e) An ongoing actualisation of the socio-cultural-pastoral mapping.

f) A new and solid vision of the Comboni charisma in the context of Brazil Nordeste which has allowed us a re-qualification of our evangelising service.

g) *The process of collective building, since a Communitarian Project, the Six Years Plan, and the PPP (Pastoral Political Plans) with a relative monitoring in order to 'including' and motivate people to become more efficient our missionary action.*

h) *A bigger involvement of the members of the Province, even though the pastoral axes were not so clear to all of them. Many approve and support it even though they do not feel in total conditions to take it fully. The sense of belonging has increased in the group.*

i) *The coherence between what has been planned and its fulfilment, between the programming and the acting, mainly offering the necessary conditions for the work (means, formation/qualification, confirmation, assessors and support) and the registering of the activities.*

j) *A greater integration and sense of belonging of the members, thanks to the coordination that knew how to give a vow of trusting to the autonomy and to the creativity, although always within the provincial guiding axils.*

k) The continuity of the investment in pastoral practices rooted in the context of the base Christian communities.

l) The investment in the formation/capacitating of laity, from a biblical/ministerial point of view, taking into account the JPIC dimension.

4.1.1. Missionary Animation

Understood as a service done to the local church and to society in general, stimulating both of them to be opened to new ways of evangelisation through the enlargement and strengthening of solidarity and universal communion putting means, people, structures, and values to the service of the most needed churches and social groups (ad intra e ad extra), aiming at their full humanisation.

In this respect we highlight:

- a) A major investment in the mass media believing that they are a privileged space of evangelisation and missionary animation.
- b) A progressive qualification of the provincial web page and the Informative Ecoos (1500 copies sent freely to the parishes, NGOs, and benefactors),
- c) Creation of blogs (some confreres), participation in virtual communities for interchange of information and collaboration with local newspaper and radios.

4.1.2. Youth for Peace

Always within the context of the provincial guiding axis, the Youth for Peace Centre (CEJUPAZ) was opened in Teresina/Timon. This centre has helped the Province to converge human resources and actions in view of one of the most challenging realities in Brazil: the youth and the growing insecurity situation that affects and victimises mostly the young people.

Here we highlight some of the most meaningful conquests the CEJUPAZ has reached:

- a) The involvement of the laity from our communities in the specific work of JPIC with a particular focus on the education, prevention, and intervention together with the young people.
- b) Progressive enlargement of the Circles of Peace (Youth for Peace - Jupaz).
- c) Finding partners and acting networked, particularly with organism of the civil society such as schools, public universities, etc., developing researches and long term projects.
- d) Promoting Culture of Peace amongst young people and the Christian communities especially the Mystic of Non-Violence Active, conflict mediations, claiming for the rights of youth, and socio-environmental education.
- e) Annual meetings at a regional level for young people who are committed or identified with the promotion of a Culture of Peace.

4.1.3. Specific Sectors and Others

In this field we highlight:

- a) The implementation and continuation of the campaign “Justice on Railroad” that has revealed quite positive specially after it was effectively embraced as a provincial project and reached a national and international dimension which made it to be understood not as a punctual action, but as way of missionary animation in today’s reality.
- b) The organization of the Comboni Social Forum II which in its preparation and realisation confirmed and reinforced a journey we are making together as province, particularly in regard the socio-environmental issues, networked actions involving qualified laity from the civil society in the discussion, planning, execution, and evaluation of the meaningful actions.

d) Continuous accompaniment of the indigenous and afro-descendent realities according to the specifics demanding of these groups with particular focus on the struggle for collective rights, the anthropological values, and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

d) The growing involvement of confreres with the defence and promotion of collective and human rights with regard to the most vulnerable groups of the Brazilian society: accompaniment to the incarcerated, children and teenagers, families in need, and specialised assistance to the psychologically needed people (communitarian therapy and psychotherapy).

e) Welcoming, accompaniment, and insertion/integration of the Comboni Lay Missionaries proceeding from other provinces (particularly from Spain, Portugal and Germany) into projects that reinforce and enrich the provincial commitment with JPIC and the ministries.

Looking ahead: we need to review the ministerial preparation of our candidates and the relation with the local churches in a reviewing perspective, better qualification, and a vision/practice more prophetic before the local and global ecclesial context that questions the parish institution as it seems inadequate to face the numerous challenges of today's reality.

4.2 Formation

4.2.1 Basic Formation

There is an optimistic mood when we think of the future for formation, although statistics show that we have few candidates present in our formation houses. Between the commitments and actions taken in this sector, we highlight:

a) The strengthening of the vocational animation team in order to offer a more qualitative discernment of the candidates.

b) The building of an integral human formative road to help the candidates to acquire competence and ability to respond to the new challenges of today's Church and society. We are talking about a learning process that becomes the strength to mobilize the intellectual and emotional energies of the candidate in the building of his knowledge.

c) The insertion of the content and dynamic of justice and peace and integrity of creation in the 'formative process' of both basic and permanent formation has been a positive factor. The freedom and spontaneous mood that is experienced in the dynamic of small groups in the inserted formative communities has favoured a good discernment in the decisions taking process. Besides this, there has been elaborated a provincial Plan for Vocation Animation involving the majority of the communities.

4.2.2. Permanent Formation

The main objective of the permanent formation is to favour the confreres a human and spiritual maturity of their own missionary vocation besides the acquisition, maintenance, and increasing of the technical abilities necessities to

assimilate, take on, and push forward the provincial priorities. There have been done the following activities:

- a) Seminars to inform and sensibiliser about the Six Years Plan's guidelines. On some occasions some activities were done together with other organisations: Human Right Defence Centres of Açailândia and Fortaleza, Universities, Trade-Union, Caritas, and Popular Movements.
- b) Formatives courses for confreres who want to deep specifics subjects related to the provincial activities: courses on human, social, economic, and environmental rights highlighting their legal, historical, and biblical-theological aspects; alternative economy; urban and youth pastoral. The Province has also favoured the participation of some confreres in courses offered by the Ecumenical Centre for Services of Evangelisation and Popular Education (CESEP) of São Paulo and of the Secretariats of the Brazilian Bishops Conference.
- c) Formatives moments: by age (up to 40 years old, from 40 up to 60, over 60) in the provincial retreats and sectors meetings.
- d) The houses of São Luis and Teresina have been adapted to become spaces of reflection, resting, and revitalisation (to have a better life quality, health treatment, etc.).

4.3. Community life

The communities of our Province continue facing the challenge of conjugating the great desire of autonomy and claiming for individual rights and the qualified expression of values such as fraternity and the cultivation of a mystic/spirituality that may give support to their missionary action. Nevertheless, we point out as positive signals expressed on the journey over the last years:

- a) A good participation of all the members in the retreats, assemblies, and sectors meetings of the Province.
- b) Openness and cooperation in order to come to a consensus regard vital issues for the Province life.
- c) The inexistence of great conflicts and the circular and direct communication between the members of the communities themselves and of them with the provincial coordination.
- d) The elaboration, by the communities, of the Pastoral Political Project.
- e) The cultivation of a mood and spaces for spirituality and contextualised prayer.
- f) Respect to the sensibility/personal rights and the acknowledgement of potentialities/abilities of each one.

4.4 Economy

The Province has made a good journey towards the sharing of goods and in its ways of coordinating. In this sense, we put emphasis on the fact of making to coincide the role of provincial counsellor with the secretaries of sectors. This has

given more consistency to the missionary work and to the meetings of the Provincial Council. Synthetically, we present some of the steps taken in the economical dimension:

- a) The separation, in the economic field, of the role of the secretary of economy from that of the provincial bursar.
- b) In the Province the confreres share 50% of the offerings they receive. The fruit of the 50% is distributed into funds for provincial expenses, basic and permanent formation, Brazilian confreres in mission abroad, support to the communities and missionary animation, provincial fund for the sick, and fund for supporting specific activities of JPIC.
- c) Besides the 50%, each confrere pays a month 10% of two minimum salaries (basic value of reference) to support the 'Provincial Fund for the Sick', which ought to refund what is spent with health care (doctor and medicine). It is a way of solidarity that allows the communities to share what is spent with health expenses so that no one feels like a weight for their community.
- d) The specific projects are taxed in 5%. When a confrere is directly involved in a project, he gets two minimum salaries as a way of collaborating with the local community.
- e) The communities have made an effort for their self-maintenance. At a provincial level we began to promote raffles (campaigns) to raise funds.
- f) The creation of an "emergency fund" which has given certain stability to the Province.
- g) The norm of law for all the properties (buildings) of the Province has been re-structured.
- h) As a stable patrimony of the Province was chosen the provincial house.
- i) An effort has been made to educate ourselves for sobriety applying ethical criterions in the economics activities.
- j) To continue studying and promoting experiences, at a local level, of consistent ways of self-maintenance.
- k) To continue moving forward in the perspective of creating a Common Fund.

5. OTHERS RELEVANTS THEMES FOR THE PROVINCE

We are aware that it is urgent to improve the institutional relations and the policy of administration of personnel, aiming:

- a) To base the institutional relations (between the Province and the GD) more on the principle of a open and sincere dialogue, communion, subsidiarity, and negotiated resolution of conflicts, thus avoiding delays and difficulties in the implementation of the Six Years Plan.
- b) To promote the exercise of dialogue, respect, and valorisation of people's project of life in the dynamic of rotation, thus avoiding the lack of perspective, the des-motivation, and desertion.
- c) To facilitate/make it possible to the new comers in the Province the previous knowledge of the context, the ecclesial and missionary lines, and the provincial guiding axis.
- d) To deal with the issues related to the members of advanced age and/or sick more in line with a phenomenon that demands a wider and qualified

knowledge of this reality as an investment in the perspective of prevention/provision.

6. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In a perspective of continuation of the journey made up to now, we would like to point out some challenges and agendas to be worked on over the coming years:

- a) To think of efficient and real ways of consolidating and enlarging the qualification of missionaries for the exercise of their mission, especially in the perspective of the struggles in favour of the defence and promotion of collective rights and to deep the commitments in line with the socio-environmental care.
- b) To promote the articulation and concretize the realization of interprovincial thematic forums.
- c) To create methodological instruments to measure, verify, and value the specifics points of the project.
- d) To re-initiate the dialogue with Brasil Sul Province about the need to begin to 'share/take' together paradigmatic missionary works without 'burning stages' in the formal process of unification of both provinces.
- e) To continue the reflection, search, and effectiveness of the formative process of a more inserted basic formation, particularly with regards to the Postulancy.
- f) Before the shortage of priestly and religious vocation, to invest more 'pro-tempore' in the laity.
- g) To encourage and promote mechanisms of interprovincial solidarity in an effective way through a more equal sharing of resources and goods between the Northern and Southern provinces of the world.

Fortaleza, 15th May 2009.

Luigi Fernando Codianni
Provincial Coordinator

Gustavo Covarrubias Rodríguez
Vice-Provincial /Counsellor

Claudio Bombieri,
Counsellor
Capitular Delegate

Franco Pellegrini,
Counsellor

Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos,
Counsellor

Centrafrique

COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

CENTRAL AFRICA PROVINCE

Toward the Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION

Our faith in the Lord, is reminding us today about this country, Central African Republic, which is going on through darkness and light, distress and hope, activism and passivity, disillusion and new perspectives. The Charisma of our Founder help us to share in the spirit of solidarity the situation of our brothers and sisters, who are struggling for a human and decent life, and also for a better future.

In front of this situation, our mission is to announce a Good News of Jesus, and work for human promotion.

2. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

2.1 *Statistics data*

622.985 Km square

Population: 4.500.000

Capital City: Bangui (700.000)

Religions : Catholics: 25 %; Protestant Churches: 25%; Animists: 35%; Muslims: 15%

Languages: French and Sango

Form of Government: Presidential

2.2 *Country's situation*

Geographically situated in the centre of the African continent, Central African Republic is landlocked and has to struggle against discouragement. Having many problems because of his geographic situation, the country has to fight against discouragement and passivity, which are the cause of poverty and violence. Rebel groups are flourishing in the North of the country. There is a lot of insecurity especially in the rural area. The economic is down in spite of his natural resources. Life expectancy is below 40 years and 11,5% of children died before reaching 5 years. Today, 95% of the population is living under poverty, compare to the year 2000 which it was 67%. The majority of the population is illiterate. HIV Aids is destroying the population, the official figure is between 30 and 34%, they are about 140.000 orphans because of Aids pandemic in the country.

A part the negative situation of the country, there are some also some positive aspects: Construction of roads, mobile phone companies are covering all the country, there is an effort to promote the dignity of woman, the youth have a desire to study and work with consciousness.

2.3 *The local Church*

The local Church is young, dynamic, but is sick. <<The society doesn't have an orientation.>>.

During his visit in Central Africa in November 2008, the Secretary of the Congregation for Evangelization of people His Excellency Bishop **Robert Sarah**, said: << The situation of the Church in Central Africa is worrying.>> We are expecting the reduction of pastoral agents following this assessment. In front of that situation of crisis, they might request some help from us Comboni Missionaries to take some responsibilities.

Our local Church is presenting fragilities: the local clergy has lost his identity. Out of 9 Bishops only 3 are Central Africans. The local Church is taking some commitments by constructing schools, health centres, and making effective human promotion. We can hope and put our trust in the Lord in spite of all difficulties the local Church is going through.

2.4 Family

Because of polygamy, many families are facing problems, there are many single mothers, and problems related to witch-hunt etc... The Church is giving priority to the formation of youth, to the Christian couples, and families. The small Christian communities are sustaining and encouraging our Christians to live according to the Good News. The Church has to be prophetic.

3. COMBONI MISSIONARIES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

3.1 short story of our origin:

The first Comboni missionaries who came from Sudan and arrived in Central Africa in Bangassou Diocese (Eastern part of the country). With them were Sudanese refugees who flee because of civil war, it was on the 15th of August 1966. In 1973, the General Administration decided to consolidate our presence in Central African Republic. We were entrusted the care of some missions in Bangui Diocese.

3.2 Our current presence.

Communauté	Commitments
1) Bangui Diocese	
Comboni House	Provincial Seat Provincial bursar Welcoming confreres
Our Lady of Fatima	Parish Mission animation
St Joseph postulancy	Formation and vocation promotion
Mbaïki Diocese	
Boda	St Michael Archangel parish
Mbata	St Peter and Paul parish (Mbata) St Georges parish (Mongoumba)
Kaga-Bandoro Diocese	
Dékoa	St Anne Parish

Bambari Diocese	
Grimari	Our Lady of Liesz parish Pastoral Centre
Bangassou Diocese	
Tokoyo-Bangassou	Christ the King parish

3.3 Confreres belonging to the province (01-07-09)

	First name and names	Nationality	Assigned C A
	Fathers		
1	Aldegheri Giorgio	Italians	1999
2	Balzarolo Aurelio	Italians	2009
3	Béka Jonas Tita-Oléma-Mbéko	Central Africans	2007
4	Bungama Théodore	Congolese	1999
5	Berti Gianantonio	Italians	2007
6	Brisacani Giuseppe	Italians	2006
7	Brunelli Adelino	Italians	1988
8	Casale Euro	Italians	2003
9	Ceccato Gilberto	Italians	2000
10	Chanda Isaac Chabu	Zambian	2008
11	Cosentino Giovanni	Italians	1991
12	Fazion Stefano	Italians	2006
13	Frattini Lorenzo	Italians	1996
14	Giupponi Benedetto	Italians	2005
15	Indacochea Q. Pedro Jimmy	Equatorian	2006
16	López Marín José Luís	Mexican	2004
17	Mattiazzo Luigi	Italians	2000
18	Murillo Tongo Víctor Hugo	Peruvian	2002
19	Ndjadi Ndjate Léonard	Congolese	2006
20	Sc. Nyebate Paluku Lazare Denis	Congolese	2009
21	Peña Sanchez Héctor Manuel	Mexican	2009
22	Perobelli Gabriele	Italians	1990
23	Ríos Hernández Ambrosio	Mexican	2002
24	Ruiz Molina Jesus	Spanish	2009
25	Sc. Siadouwa Moïse Eddy	Central Africans	2009
26	Songho Hugues-Sylvain	Central Africans	2006
27	Terlimbacco Franco	Italians	2007
28	Zaffanelli Giovanni	Italians	1998

	Brothers		
29	Aguilar C. Alfredo de Jesús	Costa-Rican	2002
30	Cordero B. Hermenegildo	Mexican	2001
31	Matarese Sergio	Italians	2004
32	Visintin Alberto	Italians	2001

	Scholastics CA		
33	Billo Junior B. Chrisostome	1	Nairobi (2/5)
34	Lemoungo Géraud-Léger	2	Nairobi (2/5)
35	Gamendé Aubert	3	Kinshasa (1/4)
36	Kpata Gessland	4	Lima (1/4)
37	Ngbouando Parfait,	5	Lima (1/4)
38	Padji Gaëtan	6	Kinshasa (1/4)

Novices

We have one in first year

Postulants

We have 14, two will start the noviciate in Togo (Lomé)

3.4 Nationalities

Italians	17
Central Africans	9
Mexican	4
Congolese	3
Spanish	1
Peruvian	1
Equatorian	1
Zambian	1
Costa-Rican	1
Total	38

3.5 Our current communities from 01.07.09

Communautés	Confrères	Services	Notes
Maison Comboni : Maison Provinciale Accueil des confrères	P. Zaffanelli Giovanni P. Casale Euro P. Berti Gianantonio Fr Matarese Sergio	Supérieur Provincial Supérieur – Proc. Int. Econome provincial Procure Mbaïki	
Bangui : Paroisse notre Dame de Fatima	P. Perobelli Gabriele P. Terlimbacco Franco P. Ndjadi N. Léonard <i>P. Songho H. Sylvain</i>	Supérieur + Curé Econome + pastorale Pastorale des jeunes Anim. Miss. + ministère	ACFC 2009-10

Communautés	Confrères	Services	Notes
Bangui Postulat Saint Joseph	P. Giupponi Benedetto P. Ceccato Gilberto	Supérieur + formation Econome + formation	
Boda Paroisse Saint Michel.	P. Brunelli Adelino P. Lopez Marin Luis Fr. C. Aguilar Alfredo Sc. Moise Siadouwa	Supérieur + Curé Econome + pastorale Entretien mais. Service missionnaire	
Mbata Paroisse St Georges de Mongumba et Paroisse Saint Pierre et Paul de Mbata	P. Mattiazzo Luigi P. Rios H. Ambrosio Fr Cordero Hermenegildo	Sup. + Curé Mongumba Econome + Vic. Mbata Entretien maison	
Dekoa Paroisse Ste Anne	<i>P. Bungama Théodore</i> P. Brisacani Giuseppe <i>P. Murillo Victor Hugo</i> P. Ruis Molina Jesus	Supérieur + Curé Econome + pastorale Pastorale Stage de langue	ACFP 2009-10 F. P. 2009-10
Grimari Paroisse Notre Dame de Liesse	P. Aldegheri Giorgio P. Béka Jonas P. Fazion Stefano Fr Visintin Alberto	Supérieur + Curé Centre form. Pastorale Pastorale Econome	
Tokoyo Paroisse Christ Roi	P. Cosentino Giovanni P. Indacochea Pedro P. Chanda Chabu Isaac	Supérieur + Curé Econome + pastorale Stage de langue	

3.6 *Waiting for assignment*

Fr. Chanda Chabu Isaac
Fr. Pena Sanchez Hector Manuel
Fr. Ruiz Molina Jesus
Sc. Nyabate Paluku Lazare Denis
Fr. Balzarolo Aurelio
Fr. Frattini Lorenzo (Studies)

4. From the last Chapter to our Day

4.1 *In the World with the eyes and the heart of Daniel Comboni*

- . Some reflections suggested to the communities by the secretary of on going formation.
 - . Personal reflections, at community and provincial level on **RM**
 - . January 2004: Provincial Assembly <<Chapter Acts>>
 - . January 2006-2007: Provincial Assembly **RM**
- Regular visits of the provincial superior to the communities

4.2 Comboni Mission Today (AC 31-50)

- . We are doing our missionary activities in a context of social and political instability. We are giving our contribution to reduce poverty by helping in school and health field.
- . What we have not implemented
Our personal project, community project, community charter. We still have a long way to go.

4.3 On going formation (AC 51-68)

Provincial Assembly on ongoing formation every year in January.
Every two years: Comboni spiritual retreat (2003,2005,2007,2009)
We have organized two weeks of reflection on theology (2006-2008), in order to improve our way of doing mission.
Together with the superiors of other Institutes, we have organized a workshop for new comers assigned to the country, in order to give them the possibility to know the country Central African Republic, and the local Church.

What we have not implemented

Lack of continuity in putting into practice our community charter.

Spiritual direction

Our various secretariats have not met regularly to discuss and to present some suggestions.

4.3.1 Basic formation and pastoral of vocations

We have now a new charter about the pastoral of vocations.

The formator team is completed

In 2007, our vocation's animator took part in a meeting on vocation in (Cotonou) Benin.

We are working in collaboration with the brother postulancy of Lomé (Togo)

We are wish to keep the collaboration with the postulancy of Tchad.

We have now a centre for vocation promotion.

4.4 Comboni community as gift and way (AC 69-96)

From 2003 to 2005, we have left some pastoral services in 3 parishes, in Mbaïki Diocese (Safa Loco, Boganangone, Ngotto). Leaving this commitments, we had the possibility to improve our pastoral work in two other communities.

Internationality being a value, we have to live it with the spirit of brotherhood and inter cultural attitude.

Positive results in programming our commitments and keeping our inter-personal relationship.

We have tried to keep the stability of personnel in all our communities.

We are collaborating spiritually and intellectually for the formation in major seminary.

What we have not implemented

Lack of putting into practice our common projects

Some of our communities are working with an implicit community project.

4.5 Renewal in our Comboni missionary methodology (AC 97-132)

4.5.1 Evangelization

Priority: Evangelization (formation of lay, catechesis), and education in all level.

Some of our communities in the province are engaged by promoting education, we are also collaborating with ECAC (Catholic Association of schools in Central Africa) Being near to our small Christian communities, and forming our lay, and the youth.

What we have not implemented

Creation of a Comboni spiritual centre in Bangui (Capital city)

Difficulty in choosing our priorities. We feel the need to implement our commitments but is not easy to have a common view.

4.4.2 Comboni Brothers

Together with our brothers in the province, we have tried to direct our effort on education, health, human promotion etc... We have tried also to initiate a team of a common project. We couldn't implement it for various reasons.

4.5.3 Comboni Lay Missionaries

The Comboni lay missionaries continue doing their missionary activities in Mongoumba in collaboration with Portugal province, Central Africa province and Mbaïki Diocese.

4.5.4 Mission and Economy

January 2000: We started a provincial common fund . The provincial commitment is to establish a clear economic policy.

In November 2006: We had a workshop about Mission and economy with Fr. Lwanga Guarda our General bursar.

In April 2009: We had another workshop on evangelization, projects and economy.

What we have not implemented

lack of a real animation on economy from our provincial bursar. (workshop with our community bursars, how to keep the accounts, how to giving the financial reports, and how to prepare the annual budgets etc...)

we have not seen a common participation of the community members in elaborating an annual budget.

The confreres were not doing enough to get fund for their subsistence.

4.5.5 Missionary animation and Mission.

We continue publishing Afrique Espoir magazine, and books from our Media centre in Kinshasa.

We organized some workshop and mission animation in collaboration OPM.

We are also animating the local Church on missionary childhood, World day on mission, some workshop for missionary animators in the parishes and in some Dioceses (Mbaïki, Bouar, Berbérati, Bambari).

Annual retreat in Kaga-Bandoro Diocese

Consolidation of animators team. In Our Lady of Fatima parish, we have started St Daniel Comboni Brotherhood.

5 Perspective of Future

In our provincial plan for the coming 6 years, we will send some of our young confreres for specialization in various fields: Justice and Peace, catechesis, and Islam.

We are planning for the next provincial Assembly to invite the Bishops of the Dioceses here we are working to share with us their expectancies in relation with our missionary activities.

A close collaboration with the local Church.

We have to be open to the requests of the local Church:

We have also to commit ourselves by forming the local clergy (Ongoing formation), the youth and the lay.

We have to welcome the local clergy.

Commitment for Human promotion.

By promoting Justice and Peace

By being ready to go and work among the pygmées.

By investing more effort in education.

Missionary animation

We will continue publishing our magazine Afrique Espoir and other books.

We decided to increase our effort, to help the local Church on missionary vocation.

We have to prepare our young confreres: In specific fields: Mass media, Islam, catechesis and economy.

Community and Mission

Our mission in Central Africa is <<Difficult>> It is a mission according to the Charisma of our Founder: We wish and request more attention from our Institut to help more our province. Central African Republic has more challenges and difficulties.

We must plan our missionary activities <<together>> by collaborating with the local Church, with other religious Instituts and with the lay.

To qualify more our missionary presence in Central Africa, it is very important to improve our community life by encouraging the stability for his members.

Three suggestions from Fr. Teresino Serra to continue

Improvement of community life: We have to evangelize as community <<Community Life is by itself a proclamation, an announcement of the Gospel, for the Kingdom.>> **AC 03,84)**

Giving priority to the prayer: It is the foundation of Mission. <<A missionary can't do anything without Christ who sent him. We all know that the spreading of the Gospel must be related to prayer. Without prayer our missionary activities will not bear fruits, Prayer is a daily bread of a missionary.>> **(RV 46.1)**

It is very important to make an effort, so that in our prayer and reflection, the voice of Africa may be heard and welcomed as an authentic prophecy for the Comboni Institut today. Let us continue asking the Holy Spirit through the intercession of our Founder to accompany us, in order to be able to live according to our Charisma.>> **(Sup G and his council) Roma, 15-11-08.**

Bangui, April 2009.

Delegación de Centro América

Report of the Delegation of Central America (DCA) to the 17th General Chapter September 2009

In this report we wish to include something of the history of our Delegation of Central America (DCA) by remembering the journey we began thirty years ago and up to the present day.

We want to look at our presence in the context of the fascinating and challenging reality of the four countries where we are active, where we endeavor to be signs of a missionary presence according to the charism of San Daniel Comboni.

We are aware of the fact that in this reading of reality we are skimming over many aspects that are important and that would require more details and more precise data. However, our intention is not to produce information loaded with statistics, but rather to share with the members of the 17th General Chapter some of the more significant aspects of our journey as Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus in these Central American countries.

Our Delegation

On February 6 of this year we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the arrival of the first Comboni Missionaries in Costa Rica. On this date began a Comboni missionary venture that has been growing with the passing of time.

From the very beginning our presence has been justified above all by the work done in the fields of mission promotion, vocation promotion and formation of future missionaries, even though there has always been an interest in the field of evangelization.

The year 1989 saw the beginning of our presence in Guatemala with Casa Comboni, which became a center of mission promotion and helped us consolidate the missionary activities that had begun in the parish of Our Lady of Miracles (Nuestra Señora de los Milagros).

Later on, in 2005, we took charge of a mission in the Vicariate of Petén as an answer to the desire of the Comboni Missionaries as a group for a significant involvement in the field of evangelization among the indigenous people.

In 1992 we entered in El Salvador. There, from the parish of Cuscatancingo, we have tried to join the activity of mission and vocation promotion with our contribution to the pastoral activity of the archdiocese of San Salvador.

In the four countries where we are present, the task has always been to make known and to share with enthusiasm the Comboni charism.

The results have been positive and, thanks to the efforts of many confreres who have worked with enthusiasm during these years, we see that the local churches of Central

America have been acquiring a greater and livelier awareness of their missionary responsibility.

One of the fruits of these years has been the number of local Comboni Missionary priests and brothers who have accepted the call and have allowed themselves to be touched by the charism of San Daniel Comboni.

In 1998 we were looking for a location in Nicaragua as well and, even though the primary reason was mission promotion, we started by accepting the parish of Casares, on the Pacific coast. There we have been helping the small Christian communities that for too many years had lived in isolation and abandonment.

In 2006, in order to have a pastoral environment where our postulants could know and experience missionary life, we took charge of the parish of the Miraculous Medal (Medalla Milagrosa) in Barrio Cuba of San José, Costa Rica.

Finally, half way through 2008 we opened a small community in Managua, where two members of the community of Casares live, in view of starting a project of mission and vocation promotion which, during all of these years had been pending in Nicaragua.

Looking at the work done by our confreres during these years, we can say with gratitude that the Lord has been good to us, has blessed us and continues to challenge us to answer the needs of the Central American society of today.

The first years were marked by great and bold initiatives in order to introduce our mission.

Just as it has happened in many of our missions, activities and structures have arisen supported by the great faith and trust of our brothers in the Lord and by the good will and generosity of many benefactors who never tire to give us a helping hand.

Today we realize that we have lighted a spark in these countries and that the missionary fire has been growing. This compels us to keep alert in order to understand what the Church is asking of us and what we can offer with our meager resources.

The reality of Central America

Central America exhibits a complex reality individually differentiated in each of the countries that make up this section of the American continent. We see here concentrated, it seems, all the great and the small contrasts that we see in the world at large.

In these six countries one can see the marvels of the people, of nature, of resources, of faith and of a desire for life. By the same token, one sees all over the absurdity and horror of poverty, insecurity, violence and death.

Nonetheless, in the midst of these contradictions and of this confusion, we cannot ignore that the best of Central America consists in seeing the joy of these peoples, who do not give in to fear and continue to take risks in favor of the values of generosity, hospitality, simplicity and an opening to God's values.

It is no lie that in these countries we find "the soul of the earth," a sliver of paradise or more simply the joy of realizing that what happens here is "pure life."

Many are the signs of hope and of nobility of these populations who have suffered through decades of violence, internal struggles, exploitation at the hands of the great powers and who have witnessed the pillage of their own land and its riches.

We live in a reality which believes in the possibility of a different future, despite the fact that now it must shoulder the cross of suffering.

The Social Situation

Speaking in general terms, we can say that Central America is living through one of the most critical moments in its history. Up to recent years the values of family, solidarity,

hospitality, togetherness, religious traditions, a sense of respect and of good manners were taken for granted and beyond discussion.

Today, the situation has changed dramatically. The disintegration of the family, lack of opportunities of formation and education, lack of means to satisfy even the most basic needs of health and housing, the dearth of jobs, the insecurity and the disregard for life have created a climate of instability and of impoverishment at the social level.

The clearest consequences are an increase in crime, insecurity, the rise of organized crime, the loss of moral values, drug trafficking, the neglect of small farmers and indigenous minority groups.

In many places one has the impression of living in a reality which is reaching its limits and where the danger of an explosion is not a figment of one's imagination but rather a menacing and worrying risk.

The fundamental nucleus of society, the family, has been the most affected. The number of broken homes is increasing, the conflicts generated by alcoholism, family violence and abandonment are the wounds that affect many children and young people, who end up living in an environment which is neither safe nor educational.

In many instances migration, into which many people in Central America are pushed, is the cause of disruption of family life and of much suffering for those who go and for those who stay behind.

On the social level, one senses a feeling of preoccupation in people, because they cannot look at the future with serenity, they feel quite powerless to face difficulties, tend to disregard the need for a greater involvement and easily fall into the trap of consumerism, hedonism, resigned to live day by day hoping that tomorrow will be less cruel.

However, not everything is darkness and hopelessness. There are many people in society who, from their own small world, are trying to get involved in transforming this reality. It is uplifting to see the eagerness of young people and of adults to learn how to grow. And in spite of all the difficulties, we can say that there still exists a healthy underlying social structure, which bodes well for the future of these societies.

The great challenges consist in the ability to invest in the formation and education of the new generations. Much will depend on whether these populations will be able to organize themselves completely around the values that gave them an identity.

The Political Situation

We live in a political situation marked by fragility. Following many years of a degree of political instability, with some exceptions, the nations of Central America define themselves as democratic systems. Indeed they are, but it is not difficult to realize that we are dealing with democracies that still have a long way to go.

At times, what is most worrisome is the inability of those in power to put an end to customs and traditions that do not do a good service to the institutions.

Corruption, impunity, the slow pace of the justice system, the confusion between a concept of power as service to society or as service to oneself, the weight of bureaucracy are some of the evils that beset the political reality of our people.

Recent history has fostered the formation of a better political conscience among the people of Central America, but we see a lack of commitment, certainly due to the disenchantment over the powerlessness of the institutions and the large number of scandals that have involved politicians.

In Central America, as in the rest of the continent, there is a lack of interest in the political commitment, especially if we compare it with the experience of past decades.

This lack of interest easily opens the way for unscrupulous individuals to take advantage of the trust people place in them in order to gain their own benefit and look for personal

interests. These interests in turn are at the bottom of many conflicts that spoil the peace and harmony of society.

Certainly, the most urgent task is the education of new political leaders, who will break with those traditions that have turned out to be inefficient and dangerous to the common good, and whose actions will show a serious commitment to the society that has called them to be servants, who will watch over the underprivileged in a special way.

The Economic Situation

The people of Central America are known as great workers. In the course of time, they have dedicated themselves mostly to agriculture and cattle raising, but little to industry.

The Central American area is rich in natural resources, mineral deposits and raw materials. It has a variety of locations and climates, forests and lakes that have great potential for the development of tourism.

In spite of its riches, one of the evils impacting this region is the contrast and the inequality between those who have a lot and those who have nothing. The chasm between rich and poor has been deepening and grave world crises have very worrisome repercussion in this area.

The economic situation in some of our countries is desperate. This is all the more evident in the infrastructures of communications, health care, industry, and social wellbeing.

However, one should not generalize by placing all the countries of this region at the same level.

There is a significant difference in the economic situation of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, just to name the countries where we work. In some of them there are more opportunities and one sees a steady progress, even though in other countries poverty seems to go from bad to worse with the passing of time.

While it is true that in these last five years we have witnessed a certain degree of economic stability in the region, yet there is reason to worry about the crash of some banks, the lack of funds to take care of the institutions, the neglect of some sectors for lack of money, the dependence on help from abroad, the lack of economic transparency of some governments, unemployment and migration both internally and to the United States and Europe, the dependence of many families on money coming from abroad.

The necessity to enter into a global economy has not always benefited these small countries that are obliged to sell their raw material in order to buy the manufactured products from foreign commercial powers.

The ruling economic system, like everywhere else, is a model that benefits the stronger and chastises the weaker. This characteristic becomes a real scandal when the abuse of our local reality is at the hand of foreign interests. By way of example suffices to mention the inequalities in the free trade treaty, the exploitation of oil fields and mines, the banks and financial groups that control with credit and interest the economy of our small countries.

The opportunities for decent and well paid employment are diminishing every day. This opens the door to *maquiladoras* and to employers who find in these countries cheap labor which is unable to demand respect for its rights.

In the light of the current economic crisis which is enveloping the world, one does not have to be a diviner to understand that the economic future of this region will most certainly have to weather many storms.

The Religious Situation

One of the things that make an impression on a first time visitor to Central America is the religious spirit of the people. Christianity has been an experience that has deeply

impacted on the culture, the customs and the idiosyncrasies of the population of these countries.

We inherit it not only through other people, but also through the legacy of their architecture, their traditions, their associations, fraternities, guilds and through their lively and dedicated Christian communities.

In these lands faith is still fairly connected with life and the experience of God is something tangible that Central American people search for.

In the same vein, there is an innate respect for the sacred, for the Church and for its ministers.

Everywhere, or almost everywhere, there is a felt need on the part of many people who want to be informed and formed in order to take up some commitment in their communities and in the Church.

Lay people play a very important part and, in many places, they are the ones who ensure the functioning and the continuity of the structures that priests cannot attend to. For a long time, the catechists, the community coordinators, the elected ministers, the custodians, the *fiscales?* have been the cornerstones of the pastoral and evangelizing work of these churches.

Religious life has been present for many years among the poor and, in a certain way, it has been a more prophetic voice than our Church, when the time came to denounce situations of injustice and of abuse.

In this picture the resulting shadow is a certain discrepancy between faith and life in our people. In too many cases, Christian formation has been superficial, favoring a popular religiosity which, albeit rich in values, runs the risk of stopping at a folkloric and devotional level.

The lack of a deeper knowledge of the values of faith, of a feeling of belonging to Jesus, of identity with the Church, has resulted in the fact that many Catholics leave the Church to join protestant groups or sects that have proliferated in this areas.

In some countries that were traditionally Catholic, today close to 50% of the people belong to other churches. The problem of the sects is very worrisome, also because in many cases those who join them eventually leave them, losing in this way all connection with any church and with the practice of religion altogether.

The official Church, notwithstanding its limitations such as a certain material contentment and a tendency to look inwardly, still continues to be one of the most credible and respectable institutions. The bishops' gathering in Aparecida, Brazil, and its conclusions have been a very important moment in the life of these Churches.

As for its missionary dimension, the awakening we have witnessed during these years has been significant. It seems to us that missionary awareness, both *ad intra* and *ad gentes*, has been increasing. In this field the work of the Comboni Missionaries has been important and has been acknowledged and appreciated by the local Church. The project of the Great Continental Mission, fruit of Aparecida, will be the next big challenge.

Missionaries have been present in Central America since the early beginnings, however mission promotion to raise a missionary awareness *ad gentes* has been a much more recent phenomenon.

Our experience as Comboni Missionaries shows that from the very beginning of our presence people reacted in a very positive way to the mission information we had to offer. From there came groups of people, who got involved in activities such as the distribution of missionary publications, the formation of prayer groups and support groups to help our activities in a very consistent way, especially in Costa Rica.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to ensure continuity to many of these activities, at times because they were started or maintained thanks to the gift of some individuals.

What we lack is a community plan that will ensure the future of our activities, especially as mission promoters.

Today, the people who have come to know us and have opened themselves to mission ask to be formed and accompanied to take up more serious commitments with a greater vision reaching even beyond our borders.

Our Delegation in the context of the Comboni presence in this Continent

From the very beginning the Comboni presence in Central America has been very discrete. It This presence has increased in time thanks to the work and the dedication of many Comboni Missionaries, who have believed in and gambled on the importance of mission promotion, seeing it and living it as a fundamental aspect of our Comboni charism.

In the context of our continent we realize that we are a small presence, but we feel that we are something significant and enriching for the Institute, which finds in this region the opportunity to develop a full missionary activity.

The opportunity of developing an intense activity of mission promotion, as much as we want, opens for us many possibilities of sharing our charism with young people who are ready to consecrate their lives to the missions. Thanks to God, we have seen how during these years the number of Central Americans has been increasing significantly.

In the fields of evangelization and pastoral care we have the opportunity to answer our missionary call, because we live in areas and with people who can truly be counted among the poor and most abandoned.

The indigenous world has been a priority we consider essential in what could eventually become a continental plan. In Central America we can count on a vast mission field where to fulfill this goal.

While at one time the Comboni Missionaries could have considered Central America a secondary presence, it seems to us that today it could play a determining role in our being and in our activity as Comboni Missionaries in this continent.

If during the general administration that is about to end there were reasons for not following the mandate of the 16th General Chapter that had decided to erect the CDA as a province, we think that such a decision should be taken in the near future. We think it is a legitimate request.

Considering the reality in which we live, the opportunities we have and the challenges that face us, we think that the Comboni presence in Central America will have to go through a process of evaluation and revision of the commitments we have taken up during these thirty years and of those we have at present.

The situation of the Institute shows us that we have to adopt an attitude of retreat. However, if we want to be honest with ourselves, we must acknowledge that some of the commitments can no longer be justified as expressions of our missionary charism. It is not so much an abandoning, but rather a matter of relocating and accepting what are truly missionary situations within our possibilities.

We feel that our presence in this part of the continent, in order to be in harmony with the other provinces and delegations of this continent, should be characterized by a committed and serious presence in the fields of missionary promotion, vocation promotion and formation, and by a serious commitment to the indigenous world.

We realize that, within the dynamics of the Institute even in our continent, we will be called to consider evermore seriously the necessity of inventing ways of better cooperation in all the sectors that are relevant to our missionary activity.

The journey of these last few years

We can truly say that, during the period from January 1, 2005 to the present day, the Delegation of Central America has grown in a significant way. Consequently, we have been able to consolidate our presence and the service we are giving to these local churches.

During these years we have witnessed a growth in personnel and we have taken up new pastoral commitments: one in Guatemala and one in Costa Rica. We have also opened a new residence in Managua in order to do mission promotion in Nicaragua, staffing it with personnel from the pre-existing community.

It has been possible to set up communities with a minimum of three members each and to live almost always in a spirit of serenity, cooperation and a serious commitment to our mission.

We are very grateful to the Lord because, in spite of difficulties and challenges we had to face, we have been able to live out our commitment to mission with serenity and in a climate of brotherhood.

We have tried to put into practice the plan we had developed for these years and concretely we see that we have achieved positive results. Much, however, remains to be done.

Personnel

For a long time it was said that the DCA was made up mostly of older Comboni Missionaries. Today's reality is a little different. We have also grown one third during the last 5 years.

Today in Central America we have 30 priests and three brothers from Italy, Spain, the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, the Philippines and Peru. This diversity of nationalities and cultures is the source of our strength and we experience the challenges of reaching a true communion.

The increase of personnel notwithstanding, we feel conditioned by the numbers and we realize that the margins for movements and for reorganizing our communities are very small. For certain, this fact will oblige us to revise and reconsider the possibility of continuing with some of our commitments.

Communities

Currently, our Delegation is made up of eight communities and one of them is divided into two locations.

Two communities are involved strictly in mission and vocation promotion. Two are involved in both evangelization and mission/vocation promotion. Two more are involved strictly in evangelization and one is dedicated to the formation of postulants.

Because of their challenges and needs, we believe that the communities of San Luis in Guatemala and of Casares in Nicaragua are the most significant contributions to evangelization that we have in the delegation: One because of its location in the indigenous world and the other because of its poverty and neglect.

However, the other three commitments to evangelization are in line with the missionary challenges that are proper to us. The community of Barrio Cuba in Costa Rica is located in an area where the social and economic situation of this parish is a true challenge to us as missionaries. The parish of Our Lady of Miracles (Nuestra Señora de los Milagros) in Guatemala is a Comboni presence that has been developing and fostering the growth of a Christian community in an area on the outskirts of the city and with a significant indigenous population.

In El Salvador, the parish of the Immaculate Conception was organized to favor the work of small communities. From the very beginning we have seen a community which is full of life, committed and able to assume its responsibilities.

In view of the priorities that justify our presence in Central America, we feel that the centers of mission promotion in Guatemala and in Costa Rica must have a determining role. We feel the urgent need to take time to reflect and to elaborate a common plan of action, at least in the broad sense, which will favor a better cooperation between the individual communities where there are activities of mission promotion.

During these years we have made a valiant effort to establish communities of at least three persons and, at least numerically, the results have been satisfactory. It remains to be seen what has been gained in the style of life, sincere communion and ability to build a system shared by all of us as a Delegation.

Our communities seem to be fairly serene environments, even though in some of them there have been moments of conflict and tension.

In some cases, changes due to rotation or to other unforeseen events have given us reason to worry over the future of some of our commitments.

Generally speaking, we can say that the prevailing atmosphere in our communities is positive, committed to the missionary task and enthusiastic about the future.

The Sectors of Our Mission

Mission Promotion

From the very beginning, mission promotion has been the task that justifies our presence in Central America. We have labored in this field with intensity, enthusiasm and trust.

Our contribution to the awakening of missionary awareness in these local churches has been significant and we are known and appreciated for what we have done specifically in this field.

We have offered many meetings of missionary formation, visits to parish groups, retreats for the clergy and the laity, cooperation in mission congresses, distribution of missionary publications, mission days in the Comboni tradition, the formation of prayer groups and of support groups for our missionary activities.

Out of all these activities there has been emerging a group of people who sympathize with and support the missions in general and our Comboni Missionaries activities in Central America in particular.

The benefactors and friends in the four countries where we are present are like members of a family where they recognize and live by the Comboni charism with great dedication.

In the field of mission promotion we find ourselves in an environment where we can do whatever we want. The doors of many dioceses, parishes and groups are open to our missionary activities.

In spite of these openings, we realize that we have not always taken advantage of the opportunities they offered. Today's mission promotion in these lands demand that we move from information to formation.

There are many people who ask to be formed so as to take up a more active role in the missionary activities of these local churches.

The work we have been doing has been positive and to the point, but at times we have not been sufficiently serious about it especially concerning continuity. Several activities seem to have been dependent on the gifts or creativity of some individuals without thinking of the future to ensure that all the good we have been able to accomplish may not disappear.

The type of promotion we have inherited and known so far must be adapted to the new times, especially because today's people are more demanding when they listen to our invitation to be part of our missionary activities.

Comparing our history in Central America with the reality in which we live, we feel that mission promotion continues to be the primary reason for staying in these countries, especially because we think that this is the time when these populations are being called to open up to mission.

Vocation Promotion and Formation

Vocation promotion and formation of candidates to the missionary life have been among our main concerns and activities. Since our arrival in these lands we have gladly accepted many young people who showed a desire to live according to our charism. Thus, little by little, the number of Comboni Missionaries from Central America has been increasing. During the last few years we have encountered some difficulties due to the decreasing number of aspirants and candidates to our missionary life. However, year after year, we have been grateful for new vocations and for the perseverance of our postulants, novices and scholastics.

At the present time, we have a small group of postulants originating mostly from Guatemala and El Salvador, but we see that also in Costa Rica there are young people who are showing a readiness to meet us.

We have three novices, two from Guatemala and a brother from Costa Rica who, God willing, will take his vows in May 2009.

The DCA has 12 scholastics, two of them being brothers, in various scholasticates and CIFs. Two of them are about to complete their missionary experience.

In order to strengthen vocation promotion we have appointed four fathers and a brother full time to look for and to accompany young candidates.

During these last five years it has been difficult to consolidate the work of vocation promotion, partly due to changes of personnel, lack of continuity in the presentation of a vocation, lack of commitment on the part of some promoters, the inexperience of those recently assigned to this task, lack of formation on how to do this type of pastoral, the temptation to get involved in pastoral activities that are not strictly youth and vocation oriented, the lack of a common plan at the Delegation level.

In the postulancy we have survived with a team of educators who must also shoulder activities of administration and the search of funds for the upkeep of the religious community and of the young people in formation.

In the field of formation we have had to face various difficulties and situations that were far from easy. There have been various changes of formators, we had to look for a better school of philosophy for the postulants, we have had to invest a lot of time in guiding young people who come to us with serious wounds or with very complex personal histories.

We have lived through rather tense moments when faced with emergency situations, especially in the search for formators.

Evangelization

Currently, our presence in the field of evangelization has been taking a prominent place, if we take into account the number of people involved in pastoral work in the Delegation.

The Delegation has taken five commitments in evangelization: two in Guatemala, one in El Salvador, one in Nicaragua and one in Costa Rica. These commitments stand out for being situated in places that are poor, abandoned, at the outskirts of society and not evangelized.

The work we have undertaken in San Luis de Petén, Guatemala, was the result of discernment done throughout the Delegation as an answer to the deep desire to be present in the indigenous world, especially in Guatemala, where the indigenous population is the majority and where it is also the most abandoned.

If we look at each one of our commitments in the field of evangelization, we will find sufficient reasons to remain where we are even for a long time. However, in each case we realize that we will have to take steps that will allow us to reassess our presence.

For certain, we will eventually have to think of some handovers in order to assume more significant commitments, if we can afford it.

We can also say that the commitments we have taken up in the field of evangelization have caused the arrival of some confreres new to our Delegation. This has made it possible for the others to keep on working in their missionary service.

The Economy

For years the Delegation of Central America has embarked on a search of how to deal with the use of temporal goods, money in particular, that are placed at our disposal for our missionary activities.

At the assembly of 2004 some important decisions were taken that invited the entire group to take the first steps towards the establishment of a common fund both as a style of life and as economic administration. Since then, we have developed guidelines for such a fund and in 2006 and 2007 we began to put them into practice. By 2008 we were already completely involved in this system of a common fund.

This experience, even though it is appreciated by most of the membership of the Delegation, has been and continues to be a step by step journey of gradual acceptance during which we continue to learn and to discover the best way to ensure that all that we receive be put at the service of the mission entrusted to us in these lands. However, we still have a long way to go, especially in creating a better sense of responsibility and co-responsibility in the use and in the search of the means that the mission needs.

We realize that one of the benefits of the common fund is that it has helped us to think of mission as a responsibility that we as a whole hold and embrace. We are in the process of elaborating a better organization of our budgets and we feel more responsible towards the work of the others.

Thanks to God, we can say that in financial matters Divine Providence has been good to us. The generosity of the Central American people and of our benefactors from outside the Delegation has been significant and has allowed us to live according to our vocation and service with serenity.

We have also been able to take care of administration with responsibility and with transparency thanks to the efforts of all the community treasurers.

We still need a better formation of individuals for this service in our communities and we see the need to assign personnel to specialize in this sector of our missionary service, so that they may acquire the professional knowledge they need.

Challenges and Opportunities

One of our challenges consists in consolidating our Comboni presence in Central America as a group that lives in depth the Comboni charism clearly and resolutely, in order to become instruments of cooperation with the local churches, so that they will better appreciate their vocation to the mission *ad gentes*.

We must do some serious discernment over where and how we want to establish ourselves as Comboni Missionaries. The re-qualification of our commitments, albeit always painful, must enable us to give a more qualified service.

We believe that our interest and our commitment must be concentrated in what helps us be missionaries in a spirit of greater communion among ourselves, of solidarity with the people with whom we share our lives and of openness to the signs of the times and to the motions of the Spirit.

We must continue to work towards the elimination of an individualistic vision of mission. We must grow in a spirit of cooperation at the Delegation level and in all the areas of our service.

Our communities must be more open, welcoming and involved with the poorest. Our being missionaries calls us to live the values of availability, service, austerity, solidarity and joy in giving one's life for the proclamation of the Good News.

We also face the challenge of improving our activities of vocation promotion and formation in order to ensure the growth of future Comboni Missionaries who will live joyfully the consecration of their life to the missions.

We must be careful not to let slip by this moment of grace which is coming our way.

Limitations and Difficulties

As it is true everywhere, we also recognize our limitations and our difficulties in concretizing what we carry in our hearts.

One of the limitations is the personal situation each one of us lives. For some it is the weight of the years, for others it is the inability to open up to what is new, or the inability to cooperate or to involve others in our projects, ideas and work. Some continue to fight with their immaturity, their dependencies and attachments, their vices and their forms of slavery.

Other limitations come from the cultural, political, social, economic and religious diversity of the four countries where we work. To live in these realities while keeping unity and community within the Delegation is difficult, even though it might not end up being a problem.

Most certainly we will continue to live with the difficulty of ensuring the existence of a formation team that will be stable and that will ensure this service for a reasonable amount of time.

Future Projections

With regard to vocations, we think that Central America is going through a time when much could be done. The percentage of young people is high and the opening to a possible life commitment to mission is something that finds a response.

We think that our contribution in the field of evangelization will need a few changes, above all by evaluating our present locations. Some of our parishes could be handed over to the local clergy without many difficulties.

We would like to be more creative in the production of material for mission promotion and in the service we can render in the formation of lay people who will take up a larger role in their responsibility for mission.

It will be important to firm up the experience of the common fund, by making the necessary evaluations and adjustments we will think necessary in order that it may be an authentic instrument of service to the mission and, at the same time, that it may help us live in a spirit of greater brotherhood and communion as a missionary group.

It will also be necessary to invest more in ongoing formation and in the professional training for some services to the delegation, especially in the fields of vocation promotion and formation, in the economy and in mission promotion.

We are also interested in taking greater care of how we relate with the Comboni Missionaries who belong to our delegation and are currently doing missionary service well beyond our borders.

And finally, we believe that we will need to treasure all that will help us create bonds of communion and cooperation with the other provinces and delegations of our continent.

Our Personnel (at the end of 2008)

Name	Age	Activity
1.- Andrés Miguel Pedro	50	Evangelization
2.- Balbiani Mario	78	Mission Promotion
3.- Bragantini Salvatore	64	Evangelization
4.- Bragotti Joseph	71	Evangelization
5.- Castillo Matarrita Víctor Hugo	45	Formation
6.- Cordioli Enrico	67	Mission Promotion
7.- Curci Carmine	51	Evangelization
8.- Chacón Huamán César	36	Vocation Promotion
9.- Del Toro Rodríguez Alfredo	51	Evangelization
10.- Estrada Santoyo Gabriel	50	Mission Promotion
11.- Fuentes Murillo Marvin G.	46	Evangelization
12.- García Oviedo José Manuel	48	Evangelization
13.- Girau Pellicer José Antonio	59	Formation
14.- Leandro Araya Leonardo	43	Vocation Promotion
15.- Lix Costop Agustín	40	Evangelization
16.- López Pastor Luis Filiberto	38	Vocation Promotion
17.- Marín Artavía Ignacio Enrique	42	Studies
18.- Miniero Pasquale	48	Delegation Treasurer, MP
19.- Moschetta Giuseppe	73	Mission Promotion
20.- Murillo Guerrero L. Gardenio	34	Evangelization
21.- Noventa Franco	67	Evangelization
22.- Panis Vela Rómulo	44	Mission Promotion
23.- Pascual Garrido Ramón	58	Evangelization
24.- Pérez Tortajada Jesús	56	Evangelization
25.- Piccinelli Giacomo	80	Evangelization
26.- Piu Pietro Gianmaria	81	Mission Promotion
27.- Romero Arrieta Carlos Luis	48	Vocation Promotion
28.- Sánchez González Enrique	50	Delegate
29.- Sánchez Ortiz José Manuel	45	Evangelization
30.- Turri Vincenzo	75	Mission Promotion

Name	Age	Activity
31.- Villotti Alberto	80	Evangelization
32.- Zanatta Emilio	67	Mission Promotion
33.- Zárate Quiróz Baltazar	66	Mission Promotion
Scholastics		
1.- Barrios Morales Candelario Romeo		Kinshasa
2.- Calderón Vargas Juan Diego		Missionary Service NAP
3.- Castillo López Nery Javier		Lima
4.- Chacón Rodríguez Guillermo		Lima
5.- Dubón Chávez Jaime Roberto		Missionary Service DCA
6.- Marroquín Morales Luis Guillermo		Sao Paulo
7.- Mora Masís Adrián José		Innsbruck
8.- Najarro Morales Oscar Anibal		Sao Paulo
9.- Arévalo Jorge Alberto		Casavatore
10.- Castro C. Luis Manuel		Casavatore
11.- Rodríguez Barrios Oscar Hiram		CIH Bogotá
12.- Sánchez Hidalgo Roger		CIH Nairobi
Novices		
Bro. Alberto Mora		Second year
Hugo René Solares A.		First year
Juan Yaxcal C.		First year

Our Missionaries outside of the DCA

Fr. Ignacio E. Marín A	Studies in Roma
Fr. Homero G. Ramírez R.	México
Fr. Víctor Manuel Aguilar	Asian Delegation
Fr. Efraín Camey	Ecuador
Fr. Carlos Humberto Rodríguez	Dem. Rep. of Congo
Fr. Henry Dunn	Brazil
Fr. Juan José Hernández	Egypt
Bro. Gilbert Pettersen	Malawi-Zambia
Bro. Alfredo Aguilar	Central African Republic

Our Communities

Casa Comboni Guatemala

*(headquarters of the Delegation,
mission and vocation promotion)*

Fr. Gabriel Estrada

Fr. Juan Ma. Piu

Fr. Mario Balbiani

Fr. Pasquale Miniero

Fr. Luis Filiberto López P.

Fr. Enrique Sánchez G.

Parish of Nuestra Sra. del Milagro Guatemala

Fr. Salvatore Bragantini

Fr. José Manuel Sánchez

Fr. Marvin Fuentes

Parish of San Luis

Petén, Guatemala

Fr. Joseph Bragotti

Fr. Pedro Andrés M

Fr. José Manuel García O

Fr. Agustín Lix C

Bro. Jesús Pérez T

Parish of Inmaculada Concepción Cuscatancingo, El Salvador

Fr. Santiago Piccinelli

Fr. Rómulo Panis

Fr. Vicente Turri

Schol. Jaime R. Dubón

Parish of Santa Cruz

Casares, Nicaragua

Fr. Carmine Curci

Fr. Ramón Pascual

Mission Promotion Center Managua, Nicaragua

Fr. Enrique Cordioli

Fr. Carlos Romero A

Postulancy

San José, Costa Rica

Fr. José A. Girau

Fr. Víctor Hugo Castillo

Fr. Leonardo Leandro

Bro. César Chacón H.

Parish of the Medalla Milagrosa Barrio Cuba, San José, Costa Rica

Fr. Alfredo del Toro

Fr. Franco Noventa

Fr. Alberto Villotti

Bro. Luis Gardenio Murillo

Misión Promotion Center San José, Costa Rica

Fr. José Moschetta

Fr. Baltasar Zárata

Fr. Emilio Zanatta

Colombia

REPORT OF THE DELEGATION OF COLOMBIA TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER

1. Colombian reality

1.1 Social reality

- a) Colombia is a country of 45 million inhabitants, mainly racially mixed, but with a great presence of **Afro-descendants** (at least a 25% of the population) and a significant indigenous minority (more than a million).
- b) It is well-known for a strong and prolonged presence (48 years) of different armed groups (the FARC, ELN, Paramilitary), even though Colombia has for years been a rooted democracy. As a consequence, there are hundreds of kidnappings, large amounts of money are invested in combat operations (Plan Colombia), with the support of the United States, with corruption the military establishment, including horrendous murders of innocent people, even, only to justify supposed military successes and others **Human Rights violations**.
- c) The illicit drug culture and **drug trafficking**, powerful and omnipresent are considered the source of all Colombian evils, in particular of the corruption. The fumigation of territories to eradicate illicit crops, creates many and serious problems for the farmers.
- d) The economic structure is strong enough, for a developing country, but it is characterized by a strong **social inequality**. There exists a few very rich and a majority of poor people.
- e) The previous factors have produced mass emigrations to the cities, where 70 percent of the population now lives.
- f) Many of the emigrants which number near 3 million are, in fact, forced **displacements**, mainly afro-Colombians.
- g) The Migration to other countries numbers five million people.
- h) The current president, Alvaro Uribe Vélez, has a policy of **democratic security**, the aim of which is to terminate the armed groups. The Colombian people elected him for a second term and currently there are discussions on the possibility of re-electing him for a third term.

1.2 Church reality

The Church of Colombia is a rich and diverse reality, of which we emphasize some elements:

- a) Colombia has an inherited tradition of a **Catholic country**, in that the Catholic Church had a social and strong moral prevalence. The Episcopal Conference is a well organized body, with a membership of more than 90 bishops.
- b) Today a process of cultural and religious change exists, with an increasing secularization of the public institutions and an increasing relevance of other Christian Churches.
- c) There are dioceses that continue having a strong social impact, abundance of clergy, multiple social activities (education, health, human rights, etc.).
- d) There are dioceses with good social presence, but few clergy.
- e) There are dioceses and vicarages located in the periphery of the country and the Church, with very few clergy. In these places **the natives and the Afro-**

descendants abound, although the emigration and displacement are changing human geography.

- f) From a missionary point of view, the Church of Colombia is well organized: It has its own Missionary institutes, a well organized PMA, a National Missionary Council and a Department of Missions in the Joint Secretariat of the Colombian Episcopate, collaboration between Dioceses, annual course for missionaries *ad gentes*, the sending of missionaries outside the country (about 2,000), etc. A lot has been accomplished, but a lot still remains to be done. As in other places, we are in a time of ambiguity as far as the mission fields: the missionary dimension of all the Church, Sister Churches, mission *ad gentes*, *ad intra* and *ad extra*, new evangelization, etc.
- g) The relation of the Church with society and politics is complex as is its action relating to the armed conflict. Historically, the Hierarchy had a strong political influence, common to catholic countries, with many privileges and the facility to realize important social services (the education of the indigenous people, for example, was in its hands), but without capacity to criticize. In the last few years a greater Church - State separation has taken place and the Church has had to pay a strong tribute of blood to the armed conflict (including the assassination of two bishops); at some moment the work of the Church in favour of a peace accord with the different guerrillas was very important, but its role has lost relevance since the Security Policy of the current president began.

2. Combonian delegation in Colombia

2.1 Situation of the personnel

Priests:	11
Brothers:	07
Scholastics in missionary service:	01
In Ongoing Formation:	01
Scholastics in formation:	04
Novices:	00
Postulants:	02
Number of communities:	04
Colombians in missions outside the country:	02
By nationality: Italian (7), Spanish (4), Portuguese (2), Mexican (2), Colombian (1), Togolese (1), South African (1), Ecuadorian (1).	

2.2 History of the Delegation

The Comboni Missionaries have already been present in Colombia for 28 years. The Comboni Missionaries arrived in Colombia from Ecuador, the province to which they belonged until seven years ago, when the Delegation was constituted. The first presence began in Cali, a city relatively near Ecuador, with a strong Missionary Animation presence, including the magazine *Iglesia Sinfronteras*.

From Cali we went to Bogota, where two communities settled in: the International Brothers Centre and a Missionary Animation Centre, to where the seat of the magazine *Iglesia Sinfronteras* would later be transferred and, where later, the publication *Aguiluchos* would begin.

The Postulancy also began in Bogota but later would be moved to Medellin, only to return once again to Bogota, renting out the house in Medellin.

Later a pastoral presence in Aguachica was opened (North of the country), that was handed over to the Diocese three years ago.

Finally a parish in the periphery of Tumaco was opened; a city of the south of the country inhabited by Afro descendants, and the community of Cali was transferred to an Afro suburb of the same city.

2.3 Priority of the Fraternal Life

- The Delegation of Colombia has at the moment four communities, including the “Formation House”, which lodges the Postulancy and the International Brothers Centre. Two communities are in Bogota and the other two are in Tumaco and Cali.
- For a long time the Delegation of Colombia has been looking to give priority to the internal life of the communities, with the conviction that God calls us, in the first place, to a life according to the criteria of the Gospel and that the testimony of a fraternal life is the first missionary method.
- The Assembly of January 2008 marked as an orientation the following: “Evangelize as a Cenacle of Apostles. Witness of Personal / Community life in a process of conversion: strong spirituality, close proximity and fidelity to the poor, austerity of structures, solidarity”.

According to this principle we propose:

- To face a radical renovation of structures, with a view to a better Community Life and to missionary commitment closer to the poor.
- To adopt an attitude of “assertive dialogue” within the community.
- To elaborate together a Life Project which is faithful to the rhythm of prayer according to the RL and more austerity at all levels.
- We can say that, within the limits of our human reality, our communities are seriously advancing according to plan, although certainly much is left to be done:
 - In general, all the communities maintain a regular rhythm of prayer
 - In all the communities there is a desire to maintain respectful and comprehensive dialogue
 - We have advanced a lot in living in closer proximity to the poor and in welcoming greater austerity. Two of our four communities (Tumaco and Cali) are now inserted in outlying areas with a mainly Afro-descendant population; these communities do not have employees or a car and live in rented houses.
- One of the elements of this search for a fraternal life was the adoption of the Total Common Fund, as a way to live our economy.

Certainly, there is much room for growth, in particular with a capacity to dialogue, acceptance of the other, a combined search for the will of God, etc., but we thank God for the privilege of being called to live fraternally according to the Comboni charisma.

2.4. Importance of the Brothers

The Delegation of Colombia enjoys the privilege of having a considerable number of Brothers, in addition to the three who are in formation. This gives us specific values and makes us appreciate a lot the fraternity as a mission style.

2.5. Mission: Missionary Animation, Evangelization, Vocation Promotion, Formation

The Delegation of Colombia originated for the Missionary Animation. But with time it has been completing the spectrum of its mission, looking to be in Colombia a small but significant seed of the Comboni charisma.

More and more this charisma has been unfolded in its diverse potentialities, moved by the reality of the country, the necessities of the Church and the charismas of the confreres who have been sent.

At this moment, the Delegation mainly has two communities dedicated to “evangelization” and other two dedicated to Missionary Animation, Vocational Promotion and Formation, although it is difficult to make a clear separation of these different dimensions that are complemented and interwoven.

2.5.1 Missionary Animation

The Comboni Missionaries in Colombia have already done a prolonged and effective activity of Missionary Animation. Thousands of parishes, schools, groups have been visited regularly, although with ups and downs. Sometimes the work has been more methodical, sometimes more irregular, depending on the availability of personnel, who have fluctuated a lot. In concrete the activities that are now being done are:

- a) **Basic Missionary Animation:** Every Sunday, at least in Bogota, one or more parishes are visited, for the classic Missionary Day; although we have closed the house in Medellín, we move there with certain frequency to do M.A. In Cali this same work has been done for years. We are now in a process of change and reorientation. Schools and other groups are also visited with certain frequency.
- b) **America Misionera**, a movement of young people. Two years ago the youthful movement *America Misionera* was started, currently there are four groups which are regularly followed up.
- c) **Collaboration with the local Church.** A Brother is director of the PMA in Tumaco. In Bogota we collaborate regularly with the National Council for Missions of the Episcopal Conference. Also in Cali we collaborate with the diocesan M.A. activities.
- d) **Radio Programmes.** Every Sunday, a live program is broadcast on *Minuto de Dios* a radio station in Bogota; in Tumaco two programmes are broadcast each week on the diocesan radio station *Radio Mira*, along with other programme collaboration.
- e) **Book Publishing.** The MAC of Bogota regularly publishes some books, pamphlets and other instruments of M.A. along with items of popular spirituality.
- f) **Magazine AGUILUCHOS for children.** For eight years the magazine *AGUILUCHOS* has been published for Colombia and Ecuador. The magazine has had much acceptance and, even though we do not have specifically dedicated personnel for its promotion, it currently has a monthly distribution of 11,000 copies.
- g) **Magazine IGLESIA SINFRONTERAS.** With more than 25 years of existence, it has been rooted as the great missionary magazine in Colombia and Ecuador. And, in a certain sense, it is even more than that: At least in Colombia, it is “the” catholic magazine *par excellence*. Currently it has a monthly distribution of 16,000 copies and its importance in the ecclesiastical reality in particular in Colombia, is undeniable.
- h) **Digital presence.** Around the magazine *IGLESIA SINFRONTERAS* we have initiated an extension into the digital area: A web site, Internet, DVDs, etc. There are great possibilities; however we must be contented with the few people we have.
- i) **Benefactors and friends.** In Colombia we already have an important network of friends and benefactors, who identify themselves with the charisma, they support us with scholarships, donations and other activities, including a growing amount of donations for the mission in Africa and other parts.

The personnel dedicated to all these activities are really few. Only two Combonis are dedicated fulltime to these activities: a Director of the magazines and an Administrator. The rest of activities are a collaboration by Combonis that have another main job, such as formation or vocational promotion.

We believe that the work of Missionary Animation that God allows us to realize is precious for the Colombian Church.

2.5.2 Evangelization

In Colombia we believe that all our presence and activity are evangelizing, in as much as it is witness and proclamation of the Gospel, Good News for all. Our magazines, our books, our Missionary Animation in general are evangelizing. On the other hand, the challenging reality of the country (violence, millions of displaced people, millions of marginalized Afro-descendants, etc.) has moved us to a greater direct evangelizing commitment. Although we are few, we believe that we cannot be indifferent, like Comboni was not indifferent faced with the call that came from Africa. The challenging reality corresponded with the fact that many of the Comboni Missionaries arriving in Colombia felt strongly questioned by the missionary necessities of this country.

At this moment, the Delegation has made **a specific option for the Afro-Colombian world**, which has led to the following concrete commitments, small, but significant:

a) TUMACO: INSERTION IN AN AFRO SUBURB

In this town on the outskirts of Colombia (South Pacific), we are in the periphery, with one community and two presences: Three brothers inserted in a suburb, look to start up the parish “The Resurrection”, inhabited 99 percent by very poor Afro-descendants. In the territory of the same parish, forming part of the same community, but in another suburb live two brothers, who collaborate with the previous ones, but look for another type of presence and evangelization, “less sacramental”, which includes remunerated work, permanent contact with the neighbours, groups of social action, biblical groups, etc.

b) CALI: INSERTION IN AN AFRO SUBURB

The community of four confreres, living at the moment in a small adjoining house to the chapel of a marginal suburb (*Charco Azul*) inhabited by 80 percent Afro-descendants. The idea is to be near the people and to see with them, what is possible to do. We hope that from there it will be possible to collaborate in the attention to Afro-descendants who live in other suburbs. We also hope to do some type of Missionary Animation.

c) BOGOTA: SUPPORT TO AFRO PASTORAL

In Bogota our communities are dedicated mainly to Missionary Animation, Vocational Promotion and Formation, however they also have a considerable activity in support to Afro Pastoral.

- In the first place, a Comboni is totally dedicated to the support of the Afro Pastoral at national level.
- The brothers of the International Brothers Centre conduct their pastoral activity in a suburb with a displaced Afro population.
- Our magazines act as a spokesman and means of expression for Afro problematics.
- A long time ago we formed a team of Afro Pastoral in Bogota.

2.5.3 Vocational Promotion

One of the high-priority objectives of the Comboni presence in Colombia has been always to propose our institute as a path to the accomplishment of a missionary vocation for the Colombian youth.

The task has been more difficult than envisaged. We have had many aspirants, but few who persevere.

At this moment, we count on a small but excellent group of Colombian Combonis: Three with perpetual vows (a brother and a priest and one in missionary service) and four with temporary vows.

As far as aspirants, we are in a period of drought, but the Vocational Promotion is looking how to organize itself in a new and serious way, following a more organized procedure.

Within the difficulties that we have had and that we share with other institutes, we think that it is worth the trouble to preserve, to enhance our work, to improve our witness and to trust more in the Lord of the harvest. The Colombian youth who have made their vows strongly believe in the vocational possibilities of their country.

2.5.4 Formation

In Colombia we have two formation stages, one international and the other national.

a) The International Brother's Centre (IBC).

There are three brothers in formation at the moment. Their formators collaborate with other activities of the Delegation (Vocational Promotion, Missionary Animation, Administration, Afro Pastoral, etc.). We believe that this formation centre is moving in the line of small formative communities. It seems to us that it would be possible to advance in two directions:

- To an inserted formative community in a popular suburb.
- To integrate some theologians (scholastics).

b) Postulancy

For more than 10 years there was a Postulancy with a proper seat in Medellin. But the vocational difficulties and the lack of a formative team forced the Delegation to transfer the Postulancy to a part of the house occupied by the IBC. The house is big and can lodge both groups.

The experience has been quite positive, even though there are difficulties. The great advantage is the collaboration of the formative team. The formator of the postulancy finds support in the formators of the IBC, one of which is also the Vocation Promoter. If the vocational promotion gives more abundant results, we will have to see how to organize ourselves.

In the future we would like to see the IBC and Postulancy form a joint formation team, inserted in a popular suburb but with sufficient access to educative institutions, with two simple, separated, but contiguous small houses, so that collaboration will be facilitated and the autonomy of the formative stages respected.

2.5.5 Economy

The Delegation has made the option for the Total Common Fund and wants to improve the exercise, considering several principles: austerity, solidarity, self-financing, missionary service, etc.

2.5.6 Comboni family

The Comboni Missionaries collaborate extensively with the two communities of Comboni Missionary Sisters that exist in Colombia. We also collaborate with the Secular Comboni Missionaries.

With regard to the Lay Missionaries, there have been many lay people that at one or another stage have been members of the LCM group. But we are experiencing difficulties in finding a suitable procedure.

3. Towards the future

Facing the future, we see the possibility of a small but significant Comboni presence in the following fields in Colombia:

- a) **Missionary Animation.** The Combonis are making a very significant contribution in this field, especially with the magazines. It would be ideal to develop a good Missionary Animation Centre in Bogota. This Centre would have to have at least three people: A Director, an Administrator and Distributor. With the help of lay people, this team could, not only continue the important work that is being done, but extend it to new realities of the Mass Media and new geographic and social realities.
- b) **Afro Pastoral.** At the moment, the Comboni presence is already significant in this field. At the level of Colombian Church we are recognised for this charisma, which marks a style, guidelines and, in particular, a clear option for a population historically marginalized. All that we can realize in this regard will be valuable for the Colombian Church. This pastoral would be for us a way to involve ourselves in one of our Comboni core issues: Justice and Peace.
- c) **Vocation Promotion.** It is the hour to trust and to continue sowing with faith, with the help of the first Colombian Combonis, until we find the suitable method.
- d) **Fraternal Communities in simple structures.** We want to continue deepening in the direction of a more a fraternal life, close to the poor, witnessing the life project that Jesus Christ proposes for all people. This implies:
 - A strong spirituality
 - An atmosphere of joy, mutual respect, dialogue and mutual acceptance
 - Simple structures that do not distance us from the poor and make self-financing easier.
 - A clear option to serve the poor of the country.

Fr. Antonio Villarino

Superior of Delegation

Fr Gordon Paul Rees

Vice-Delegate

Bro. Marco Binaghi

Secretary - Delegate to Chapter

PROPOSALS OF THE DELEGATION OF COLOMBIA TO THE CHAPTER

Proposals discussed and voted in or last Assembly:

1) Look for the stability of the local communities.

(with the objective to save the continuity of the apostolic work, to qualify our missionary presence, to allow a greater depth in the communitarian life, to give more attention to the personal way and process of incarnation)

In favor: 20; against: 0; abstentions: 0

2) The comboni missionaries will have 8 days of annual spiritual retreat.

That the this rule is put in practice, beginning by us, in Colombia.

In favor: 15; against: 0; abstentions: 4

3) To begin to think about the possibility of transferring the DG to a popular zone:

In favor: 12; against: 0; abstentions: 7

4) On the regrouping of provinces

The following question was put before to the assembly of Delegation: “If they asked to us if we are in favor of the unification of provinces, which would be our answer? The voting, after a discussion, was the following one:

In favor: 1; against: 16; abstentions: 3

5) On the government form

After a presentation of the different alternative models of government, the assembly paid attention to the possibility **to change number 155 of the RL**, in the sense to make the re-election of the General Council easier. The voting was the following one:

In favor: 15; against: 1; abstentions: 4

Congo

Report not available in English

Deutschsprachige Provinz

Report of the German Speaking Province of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus for the XVII. General Chapter - Rome 2009-03-28

Introduction

In October 2008 the Community of the Comboni Missionaries could look back on 100 years of their presence at Graz-Messendorf (Milland-Brixen was founded already in the year 1895); it is therefore one of the oldest communities of the whole Institute. During the special celebration on October the 12th the former bishop of Graz, Johannes Weber, in his address took a look at Daniel Comboni, who tells us: "I had to endure a lot, but the Gospel again and again has put me up" and "Again and again I can start anew even if I have come in bitterness and shame or with defeats". These words sum up also the task of our Province: To bring the Gospel to our time with all its lights and shadows as well as with its challenges. That is also the task of the whole community of the Comboni Missionaries as well as of each and every single member of it in the German speaking area. The rich legacy of a generous missionary commitment is today for us an obligation to live our charism also in other more difficult circumstances.

2.1 General Overview of the Socio-Political and Economical Situation

Germany:

Total population 82.117.000 (July 1008)

At the end of 2006 there were **6, 7 Mill foreigners** in Germany: from Turkey 1.739.000, from Italy 545.000, from Poland 362,000, from Serbia-Montenegro 317.000, from Greece 304.000, from Russia 188.000, from Austria 176.000, from Bosnia-Herzegovina 157.000, from Ukraine 129.000, from the Netherlands 123.000, from Portugal 113.000, from Spain 107,000, from France 104.000, from the USA 99.000, from Great Britain 97.000, from Vietnam 83.000, from China 76.000.

Austria:

Total population: 8.353.200 (December 2008), at the end of 2008 there were 870.500 foreigners in Austria: 297.600 from the former Yugoslavia, 110-500 from Turkey, and 462 from other countries.

South Tyrol:

Total population: 496.435 (June 2008).

Among them: German speaking 69, 15 %, Italian 26, 47. Ladin 4,37 %.

There are roughly 28.400 foreign citizens (2006), about 5.8% of the total population. The biggest groups of foreigners are Albanians, Germans and Moroccans.

In Germany - and this can be said in a similar way for Austria as well - the "Social Market Economy" has been undermined more and more in favour of a neo-liberal System.

Big parts of the production of Germany (Germany is one of the biggest exporting countries in the world) were moved to the so called "cheap salary countries", e.g. Eastern Asia or Eastern Europe. The present financial and economic crisis has shaken very strongly the confidence into the capitalistic system. For some time in the former GDR (Eastern Germany) there has been certain nostalgia for the former system. Already under the chancellors Kohl (CDU, 1982 - 1998) and Schröder (SPD, 1998 - 2005) politics were handled in a rather pragmatic way. Social concerns got less and less attention, so that neo-liberal positions and the power of the shareholders always prevailed.

According to the latest reports of the government on poverty and riches of May 2008 the social gap in Germany is becoming ever deeper. In the meantime one among four Germans is considered poor or has to be kept out from poverty by the State. A special problem lies in the fact that the number of "low income persons" is increasing and they are in danger of slipping down into poverty. "The scissors between poor and rich have continued opening". Even if poverty in Germany is relative and cannot be compared with poverty in Africa and in other countries, those affected by it are poor, because they are excluded from a society that is there only for those who are better off.

In general in Germany there has developed a so-called fun society that looks mainly for possession, enjoyment and fun. In this context solidarity is disappearing in the society. Since 2005 the government is formed by a grand coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, headed by Chancellor Mrs. Angela Merkel, also in Austria there is a grand coalition of Socialists and the Austrian People's Party.

The high proportion of foreigners in the population causes also a big potential of conflicts. The difficulties to immigrate in Europe are becoming ever bigger, and the procedures to get a permission of residence become ever more complicated. Hostility towards foreigners is occurring, especially among the youth.

2.2 Situation in Church and Religion

Germany

Distribution of religious denominations:

About 31% of the German population belong to the Catholic Church; the same percentages (31%) belong to the Protestant Churches. Both the anti-church attitude of the GDR (former East Germany) and the growing secularisation have contributed that today 32, 5% of the Germans - and that means about twice as much as in the international average - don't belong to any religious community. According to a study of the Bertelsmann Foundation of the year 2007 68% of the East Germans and 15 % of the West Germans don't belong to a religious community. While the two big churches experience a steady loss of members, Islam on its various forms is gaining becoming more important through immigration of Turks and Kurds from Turkey (about 1, 76 Million) and through Muslim immigrations from other countries. 9, 2 % of all children born in 2004 have Muslim parents, 10% of those born in 2005 have a Muslim mother. One guesses that the number of Muslims is about 3.200.000.

Austria

Distribution of religious denominations:

5.603.000 of the Austrians are Catholics, about 370.000 belong to the Protestant (Evangelical) Church, about 175.000 are Orthodox and about 50.000 belong to other Christian communities. About 340.000 belong to non-Christian communities (among them about 340.000 follow the Islam), over 960.000 declare that they do not belong to any religious group.

South Tyrol

Distribution of religious denominations:

The members of all language groups in South Tyrol are in their majority Roman Catholic. Towards the end of 2004 there were in the diocese of Bozen-Brixen 461,184 baptised persons.

The reunification of Germany in 1989 caused great changes as far as church and religion are concerned. As the great majority of citizens in the new (formerly Eastern) states is without any religious ties the proportion of those without religious ties rose to 22, 4%. But also in the nineties the loss of members in both churches increased in both parts of the country, so that in 2003 those without religious ties counted already 31, 8% of the whole population. Meanwhile the group of people who consider themselves as non-believers is equal to the number of people who belong to the Protestant or Roman Catholic Church.

An inquiry in „Religiöse und kirchliche Orientierungen in den Sinus®-Milieus 2005“ (inquiry into church and religious orientations) showed that the Catholic Church in Germany is very widely known far beyond its own environment (100%), but at the same time there is the problem that people see the church ever less meaningful in their life.

In Austria an inquiry said that relatively large groups participated in the praxis of the church or considered themselves as members of the church, but their membership had no consequences for their system of outlook on life or of values.

As a result one must see that the Church has lost a meaningful influence. The passing on of the Christian Faith to the new (next) generations has been interrupted.

On the other hand there are new religious initiatives; in fact people are looking for religion. It is "in" to speak about God, but this does not lead to believing. The outcome is often a "patch-work" religion "light", this means, you choose from the different religious "stores" what suits you without joining a religious community (church). One rather looks for a religious experience in one of the so called "independent churches".

Looking at the whole missionary task of the people of God in 2004 the German Bishops' Conference drew up a text „Allen Völkern Sein Heil“ (His salvation for all peoples), continuing with this the document „Zeit der Aussaat“ (time of sowing) of the year 2000. It should open up the horizon towards the Church in the whole world and promote the sensibility for the mission in the whole world. Many dioceses and parishes have special relations (partnerships) with "mission dioceses", countries or communities. Of great significance are the works like Misereor, Adveniat, Missio or Renovabis. But there is the impression that the Bishops count less and less with the mission congregations neither consider them in their planning.

The mission personnel of the Church in Germany comes mainly from the mission congregations. In 2007 there were 2.499 persons from Germany in the missions worldwide, and the majority comes from the mission congregations (2.237), among them 1.343 religious sisters, 695 religious priests and 199 religious brothers. Add to this 168 Fidei-donum priests (from German dioceses) and 94 lay missionaries (men and women).

42,3 % of the mission personnel. i.e. 1.057 persons are working in Africa, 40,1 % (around 1000 persons) are in Latin America, 15,5 (387) are in Asia and 2,2% (54 sisters, religious and diocesan priests) are in Eastern Europe. In Austria there are major tensions between the mission congregations and the direction of the pontifical works.

Situation in the Pastoral

In 2006 there are 12.905 incardinated priests in the German dioceses, irrespective whether and where they are (still) actively working. 7.889 (61.1%) of them are actively working in the pastoral (the year before 62, 4%). i.e. two of five priests are already retired. Since 1990 the number of diocesan and religious priests actively in pastoral work has shrunk by 4228 (27, 9%) (Katholische Kirche in Deutschland - Statistische Daten 2006, Arbeitshilfen 221).

Often a priest is put in charge of several parishes, by joining them together big parishes are created, but there is the impression that these are only strategic measures without a pastoral concept (Pastoral care units).

Situation of the personnel of the religious communities in Germany:

During the last thirty years the number in the male religious orders has gone down from nearly 10,000 to about 5.000 (2008: 5.204). From them (priests and brothers) are

- 45% are younger than 65 years
- 55% are older than 65 years

Hardly 3.500 of them are priests. That means the religious priests are about 20% of the priests in Germany. With the women religious the situation is still more serious. From 1994 to 2008 they decreased by 23.183 members. 81% of all women religious are over 65 years old.

This situation forces many of them to close communities, give up certain works or to transform them to unite provinces etc. The DSP experiences the same development. In spite of a slight increase of new entries in some communities no change of the trend can be seen. The drop in the birth-rate and an environment in families and society not friendly to vocations render vocational animation extremely difficult.

There are many good analyses about the situation of the Church in the German speaking area but few approaches to new ways. Various decision in Rome (Vatican) like the lifting of the excommunication of the four bishops of the followers of Levebre (brotherhood of Pius) or some bishops' nominations have contributed to a greater feeling of uneasiness within society and in the church.

3. Situation in the German Speaking Province (DSP)

3.1 Personnel

The DSP has 62 confreres (1.3.2009), with an average age of 67, 4 years, including the four confreres from other provinces. 41 confreres are over 65 years old.

Radically 94 confreres belong to the DSP, with an average age of 67, 5 years (1.3.2009). One scholastic is doing his "missionary service" and one is beginning his postulancy to be a missionary brother. On 1.3.2003 there were still 110 with an average age of 64, 3 years. In the year 1965 there was the highest number of members: 240.

Change of personnel with other provinces since 2003. Members in Rotation from 2003 to 2009

To DSP

Br. Nährich Günther	2003 from Uganda
Fr. Knapp Josef	2003 from South Africa
Fr. Hounaké Timotheé	2004 from Togo
Br. Mischl Linus	2004 from the Curia
Fr. Sierra M. Aldo	2004 from Mexico
Br. Eigner Hans	2005 from Kenya
P. Kibira Anthony	2005 from Uganda
Br. Schwingshackl P.	2005 from Mexico
Fr. Hofmann Günther	2006 from South Africa
Fr. Gimpl Herbert	2007 from Peru
Br. Niederbrunner P.	2007 from South Africa
Fr. Pezzei Paul	2007 from Peru
Fr. Zeitz Michael	2008 from South Africa
Fr. Riegel Bernhard	2009 from South Africa
Br. Haspinger Bruno	2009 from Brazil
Br. Tremmel Friedbert	2009 from Kenya

From the DSP

Fr. Hopfgartner Sebastian	2004 to Italy
Fr. Grabmann Günther	2005 to Kenya
Fr. Peinhopf Karl	2005 to Brazil
Fr. Pellegrini Giampietro	2005 to Peru
Br. Ritterbecks H. Dieter	2005 to South Sudan
Fr. Fuchs Otto	2006 to Spain
Fr. Körber Markus	2006 to South Sudan
Br. Pezzei Jakob	2006 to Peru
Fr. Eder Alois	2008 to the Curia
Br. Tremmel Konrad	2008 to Uganda
Fr. Goicochea Juan	2009 to Peru
Br. Nährich Günther	2009 to Uganda

For the province the presence and collaboration of members of other provinces is very much appreciated because by this the internationality and the missionary dimension of the congregation is easily to be seen. Further internationalisation is desired and shall be fostered.

Local communities:

There are eight local communities in the DSP.

Bamberg (Germany)

It is the residence of the Provincial and a centre of missionary animation "Werk des Erlöser" ("Work of the Redeemer"). The fathers are involved in various pastoral services.

Ellwangen (1) (town) (Germany)

Here you find the Administration, the mission procure, the provincial archive and also the centre for the older and sick confreres of the DSP. Besides that a large part of the "Work of the Redeemer" is looked after from here.

Ellwangen (2) (Josefstal)

For many years it served as a centre of formation of the Brothers. Today the farm (buildings, fields) are rented out. A small community of younger confreres is busy in missionary animation and Vocation Animation. According to this different groups are received in the house. Also the preparation of lay people "Missionary for a period of time" (Missionary ad tempus) (Comboni Lay Missionaries CLM) takes place here. A missionary minded active community of lay people meets there regularly for church service and other meetings of church and community matters (community of the way).

Graz-Messendorf (Austria)

It is a centre of mission animation. A part of the house serves for offices of Missio Styria. At the same time it is a kind of "parish centre" for Messendorf. The "Afrika Haus" (Africa House) (the old house of the community) offers lodging and accompaniment to a group of African immigrants.

Innsbruck (Austria)

Since 1975 it has been a scholasticate of the Comboni Missionaries. Fr. Franz Weber is a member of the community and professor for Pastoral and Missionary Theology at the Theological Faculty, but he lives in the parish of Arzl.

Mellatz (Germany)

Mellatz is a centre for missionary spirituality and offers the possibility to receive groups for courses, retreats or meetings. An active missionary minded community of lay people meets regularly in the house for religious service and supports the work of the Comboni missionaries through financial help and personal engagement (community of the way).

Milland-Brixen (South Tyrol)

It is a centre for missionary animation in South Tyrol. One of the Fathers works in pastoral for Youth and vocations. Also the "Work of the Redeemer" is looked after from here.

Neumarkt (Germany)

The small community is busy with mission animation (Work of the Redeemer).

4. The DSP since the XVI General Chapter.

After the General Chapter 2003 in the DSP a six-years-plan was set up. In connection with the process of the Ratio Missionis since 2005 there has also been a process of reflection and revision of the situation, the areas and the places of work within the province. Through this the situation of the personnel should be taken into account as well

as the demands (expectations) on us Comboni missionaries in our time in the German speaking area. In 2008 this process led to the project „DSP- Grenzen sehen – Aufbruch gestalten – Aus Gottes Geist“ (DSP: Seeing the limits - starting afresh - with the Spirit of God). To occupy ourselves with the Ratio Missionis in the local communities and on a regional level was experienced as an enriching process. The provincial direction together with the heads of the secretariats examined how far the six-years-plan has been adhered to.

4.1 Ratio Missionis

The process of RM was received well by the confreres in the DSP. In the local communities there were days of reflections and sharing about the texts which had been sent by the Central Commission and then there were regional meetings among the local communities following the methods which had been proposed.

All this served the revision of the situation in which we Comboni Missionaries live, work and prepare for the future.

Br. Hans Eigner worked as representative of the DSP in the commission of the European provinces and in that of the Institute. Fr. Franz Weber belongs to the theological group of reflection.

4.2 Structures should be at the service of the commitments.

Within the province the awareness is growing that the structures should help to fulfil the commitments and not the other way round. Therefore to maintain existing structures should not become a major financial burden. However processes of getting rid of certain burdens take their time. It is not easy to sell some of our buildings. In the last years the farm and the workshops of Josefstal could be rented out for a longer term. The house in Nuremberg - which had been inherited - was sold in December 2007. In Milland-Brixen, the oldest place in the German speaking area, the "Ordenshaus" (house of the community) needed a complete renovation. So far no suitable solution has been found for the whole Ensemble set up.

Our community in Halle (with no structures of our own) was closed in 2004. This was the end of the initiative, to be present in the former GDR (East Germany), where the percentage of Catholics is about 3,6% among 74,4 percent of people without any religious ties. There were many causes that led to this decision: First, one had hoped that there would be a new religious awakening in East Germany, this did not happen. On the other hand the province was not able to provide the personnel necessary for the project for the future; neither could one count with the support of the Congregation at large.

4.3 Formation - Ongoing Formation

Together with the Provincial Assembly there are possibilities of Ongoing Formation in connection with the corresponding topic of the year. Many possibilities for Ongoing Formation come from the local Church; some confreres (though not so many as it would be desired) make use of them.

4.4 Administration

Since some years the DSP has been trying to consolidate further the financial situation of the province. Laws of the State require high reserves in order to guarantee the care for the aged confreres. Since 1993 the province has been a member of the Solidarity Work of the Religious in Germany which was founded exactly for his purpose.

Every year the province transmits large sums from donations to missionaries and missionary projects. The financial situation of the DSP has a solid foundation. The congregation has not invested its money in a speculative way, so the community feels the financial crisis of 2008 only indirectly (lower rates of interest). The tax authorities demand every year financial auditing.

At present steps are being taken to get recognised as a corporate body under public law. This would mean less bureaucracy in the administration if once recognised.

4.5 Justice, Peace and Responsibility of the Creation.

The province becomes more and more conscious that commitment for Justice, Peace and Responsibility of the Creation is an inalienable part of our missionary commitment. To work for Justice and to participate in the transformation of the world are for us essential parts of the proclamation of the Gospel and of the Mission of the Church in order to redeem people from every kind of oppression (Bishops' Synod 1971). The DSP is a member of the "Network - Africa - Germany", an initiative of 40 German religious orders that are working in Africa. The initiative is not only a question of information, but it deals also about the influence of our Western lifestyle on the situations of Africa. What is asked for and points to the future are not our own initiatives as Comboni missionaries only but cooperation with other groups.

4.6 Missionare auf Zeit (MAZ - Missionaries for a time)

It is an answer of missionary communities to young people who look for a way of forming their life in a credible way. **MAZ** is an offer to young Christians to spend some time with a religious community, to live together, to work together and to pray together. MAZ with the Comboni missionaries means to meet people in a country of Africa or Latin America and to share their conditions of life, their hopes and their faith.

During a preparation time of 10 to 12 months the candidates for MAZ take part in preparation programme of the Comboni Missionaries (total: 25 days), consisting of seminars, living together in a community, (reflection days, ..etc.). Since the year 2000 there were 65 MAZ/CLM prepared for their commitment and went out, 38 women and 27 men. Two women were in Brazil for three years or longer (BNE, Sao Luis) and two men were for three years in Uganda (Matany Hospital). Others stayed always for one year each.

Countries of Destination

Kenya	31
Uganda	12
Peru	9
South Africa	5
Ecuador	2
Brasil	2
Mexico	1
Ethiopia	2
Egypt (Cairo)	1

So, in total there were 51 MAZ in Africa and 14 in Latin America.

This programme, which is carried out also by other missionary communities, is a good way to get into contact with young people and to foster exchange between the churches.

This project of lay people working in the mission shall be continued and longer periods of commitment shall be stressed. Maybe a group of Comboni Lay Missionaries could grow

out of this who decide to put their entire life into the missionary service according to the Charism of Comboni.

5. Other topics

Limone: The house should be open to all European provinces for Comboni Spirituality and Vocation Animation.

Novitiate for the European provinces: the present location should be reassessed. A structure should correspond to the size and the needs of the group.

Scholasticate in Europe: The closure of the scholasticate in Innsbruck is regrettable.

Missionary work in Europe:

The situation of church and religion in the German speaking area presents a challenge for the Comboni missionaries. We are called to contribute with our experiences from the churches of the South in order to help the local church to pass on the experience of the faith. Mission is therefore more and more becoming an expression of interchange of the experiences of faith. We learn spiritually and pastorally from each other. So it can be seen that the church in Europe is missionary and has become a community ready to learning. Without such missionary impulses to the evangelisation in Europe our charism loses its credibility.

6. Perspectives for the Future

A first analysis in the process of RM showed that the congregation "must undergo an epochal transformation". Therefore some confreres have come together to form a project group in order to plan and to start the corresponding steps into the future. For this process a project manager from outside was found. The aim is to strengthen the perspectives of the future for the DSP, to take the future in our own hands on the basis of our own strength and of the proprium of the MCCJ and to present clearly the self image and the profile of the Comboni Missionaries. The Provincial Assembly from June 9 to 13 approved with great majority this project: "DSP – seeing the limits - starting afresh - with the Spirit of God". It should be completed by December 31st 2010.

Building on a common orientation of our own self image the following project parts were considered.

Tasks - persons - structures

Media and public relations

Missionary conscientisation /collaboration of lay people / Missionaries for a time

Work of the Redeemer (Werk des Erlösers)

Evangelisation

May the Spirit of God guide us in this!

*“Mission is to go out, to walk,
to drop everything,
to come out of oneself,
to break the crust of egoism
that hides us in our “I”,*

*to desist from revolving
around ourselves
as if we were at the center
of both the world and life,
not to let ourselves be shut
in our problems of the little world
we belong to,
for humanity is greater!*

*Mission is always to go out,
but not to devour kilometers;
it is, above all,
opening ourselves to others as brothers
in order to discover and meet them.
And if in order to meet and love them
it is necessary to cross seas
and fly the heavens,
then mission is to go out
even to the ends of the earth.”*

Don Helder Camara

Ecuador

REPORT OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE PROVINCE OF ECUADOR TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER

1. SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND ECLESIAL CONTEXT OF ECUADOR.
2. COMBONI REALITY:
PERSONNEL SITUATION.
The road done by the province after the Last Chapter.
3. Missionary Methodology
4. Comboni Community Life: Brotherhood
5. Mission, collaboration and Dialogue
6. Mission Animation
7. Mission and Sharing of goods.
8. Future Perspectives:

1. SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND ECLESIAL CONTEXT OF ECUADOR

1.1. Social and Cultural Reality

1. We sense the influence of globalization and the way it forces new patterns of thought and ways of living among us. The new culture is characterized by the search for well-being and pervasive consumerism..
2. There is a strong emphasis on the individual freedoms and options with the detriment of the common good, family values and community experience.
3. There are few job opportunities and economic alternatives to the people, these factors cause increasing levels of poverty, thefts, greater migration and despair among the youth..
4. The Colombian guerrilla warfare has caused a humanitarian crisis because of the many people who have poured into our country. The northern provinces of Ecuador are directly hit by the war and its collateral effects, killings, smuggling, illegal trade of weapons and drug related activities. The great challenge to the receiving side is enormous in terms of respect to human dignity and culture. In addition, Ecuador broke diplomatic relations with neighboring Colombia on the claim of serious violations of national territory and the intervention of foreign forces in military attacks against guerrilla camps settled in Ecuadorian territory.
5. Our country is rich in cultural values and diverse nationalities and traditions, as such this represents a great cultural richness. There are efforts to raise cultural awareness of those riches among the people, the contributions of indigenous, afro Ecuadorians, nationalities living in the Amazon jungle, and yet, because of the lack of national vision, those riches are easily manipulated by political groups for their own interests, often causing conflicts and violence. The increasing tensions between these groups reveal a deeper problem, the feeling of marginalization. Even if the new Constitution of the Republic penalize race related attacks and racial discrimination of any sort, there are no few incidents of offenses in this area.

6. In terms of education the situation has not improved, especially in the Coastal and Eastern Provinces of Ecuador. There is a 10% illiteracy rate among the population. But if we analyze the functional illiteracy, that is the capacity of a third grade student to be able to understand what he/she reads and is able to express what he/she thinks in writing, the percentage increases to 30. This is a great handicap to our own development as nation and even to Evangelization.

7. The Public Health situation in our society is alarming because of the upsurge of diseases that had somehow been contained in the past, such as TB, Malaria and Dengue. Due to the incompetence of government administered health structures, there has been a trend toward the privatization of health services, which can only be of benefit to the well to do.

New health policies proposed by government such as free access to maternity care and Popular Health Insurance have brought new hope to the poor.

8. The great increase of delinquency and violence has caused widespread insecurity and a piling of people in jails. This problem is not just to be solved with repression, because it reflects the need to solve deeper social problems such as, crisis of family values, increasing differences between social groups, lack of job opportunities, failure of our educational system, etc.

9. The Mass Media in our country have great influence in the shape of the way of thinking of the majority. Many of them respond to the interests of the few rich people who manage the country at large, of ideologies and ways of living that often contrast with Gospel values.

1.2 Political Situation

10. In this last 25 years our country has not been able to consolidate true democratic participation. People move only during election time.

11. It's only since two and a half years that the new government led by Rafael Correa, an Economist by profession, who is openly aligned with the Twenty First Century Socialism, has vanquished the traditional political parties, in consecutive electoral defeats. It has never happened in Ecuador that a single individual would win five polls in a row and keep his popularity rate above the 63%.

12. The current political system has been unable to give true answers to the real needs of our people. An increasing sense of frustration with the political systems has provoked occasional outbreaks of violence. This dissatisfaction has been well interpreted by the new government who has canalized that demand into the writing of a new Constitution, the creation of a new National Assembly which has replaced the old scheme of Parliament and agglutinate a greater participation of a variety of new political actors and institutions.

13. In the last polls, which took place on 26th April 2009, Correa wan again the Presidential seat, and, his political movement "Alianza Pais" took the majority of seats in the National Assembly though it gathered lesser votes as compared to previous elections.

14. The Justice System in Ecuador has been the weakest point of the political thread where the crisis has made itself more visible. There are too many cases of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. Local prisons are piled with people who remain locked even for years without a trial.

15. We need people who would really work to realize the ideals of the Good Living, as proposed by the new Constitution. Men and women who would have their fellow citizen's needs at heart. The discredit of political administration has provoked distrust and apathy amidst all public instances and institutions. There is a variety of political

proposals from all sorts of groups and tendencies in the country, which rather than unify, seem to fracture even more our society. We lack initiatives that would articulate all those social, political and economic sectors in one single national project.

16. Political organizations of recent appearance have brought many new actors to the forefront. Thus, students, peasants, afroecuadorians, indigenous groups, women, elderly, people in public transport, etc., have moved in protests against government decisions that affect them directly, provoking even their fall.

17. Governments in Ecuador have been ignoring their responsibility to offer basic services to the people. It's only lately, that this government has shown a more positive tendency to strengthen public services. Greater importance has been given to local governments. The Mayors of big and small cities have shown responsibility in their administration and have become very important references in the political life of our country.

18. Often times the attitude of intolerance and imposition of the head of government has created tensions with the press. This has created a climate of fear and disrespect to the freedom of expression.

1.2. Economic Situation

19. In the last decades in Ecuador, economic decisions have followed neo-liberal policies that have strengthened the situation of dependence to foreign credit.

The present Government is taking steps to free itself from that economic model, adhering to the new Socialist System. We do not know for how long we will still use US currency instead of a local or regional currency.

20. Our economy, though, is stuck in a dead end situation. We suffer the impoverishment of local economies, there are no equal terms in international trade, unemployment grows, we cannot manage to couple what we produce for sale with what we buy from abroad.

21. All these evils did not hit so hard in the past due to the salutary effect of high petrol prices, entrance of foreign currency from expatriates, and the availability of credits. But now, due to the present economic crisis world wide, those benefits have ceased to exist, and that has forced the government to remedy this unbalance through the increase of taxes to foreign products, which at the same time has affected the trade of local products abroad.

22. Our huge external debt has slowed down our development, and even a great part of the earnings from the rising prices of petrol have been used to pay it. It's a fact that in the past ten years state debt has found an equilibrium, while private foreign debt has grown tremendously. The service to this debt and the flight of capitals from our own country cause serious problems to our economy.

23. There exist a number of positive experiences of sustainable economy based on solidarity which have grown through the credits given to and the efforts made by small base communities capable of generating production. There is still a long way to go for these to become a true economic alternative.

24. The great geographic, biological and environmental diversity of Ecuador gives plenty of opportunities to develop tourism as a way of making a living for communities and groups of people. To be able to keep those revenues coming in there is need of policies that will ensure the protection of the natural environment and animal habitats.

25. In view of improving the trade of local products and local and foreign tourism there is an orchestrated effort made by government to improve roads countrywide, that in spite of the damage caused by the cruel rainy seasons we often have.

1.3. The ecological Context:

26. During the last decades we have witnessed pathetic changes in a variety of areas of our country, coupled by increasing pollution and the crumbling of natural resources. This evil tendencies have already reached critical levels that affect our present and our future too seriously. Deforestation and the diminishing of clean water resources are quite worrying.

27. We see with great concern the growing tendency to privatize local natural resources, given over to be controlled by multinational companies without a serious commitment to see to it that the investing part do their job to protect the environment from degradation. As it is particularly evident in the case of Petrol companies, we see that the greed for money causes environmental and human damages to the communities that live close to exploitation camps and to the country at large. Our present government is taking firm steps towards recovering those natural resources to local companies with policies that would really protect of environment.

28. In the past years foreign organizations have invested together with local agencies and have worked together to improve ecological awareness in some areas of our country, yet the benefit of such enterprises has perhaps been reduced to some rural areas, living the great cities to the enormous problems of pollution.

1.4. The Church Context

29. In Ecuador, as well as in other Latin-American countries, a variety of expressions of church life coexist. Spiritualist movements are on the increase, and they live close to other Christian groups that are more related to socio-political processes, which try to give answers to people's problems from the grassroots. We sadly witness the decrease of CEBS.

30. The Catholic Church in Ecuador enjoys public respect, but that does not mean that its contributions to human and political reflections would be taken much into consideration both by their faithful and the media at large. This is probably because there are few church institutions really committed with the popular sectors of society.

31. Our Church gets its life and its strength from the lay movements which are characterized by their enthusiasm, popular piety and participation in the liturgy, prayer and care for the poor. Nevertheless, many of the lay people tend to live their Christian call only inside the Church community and dislike to develop their call in the environment of political, economic, social and cultural areas. In such a situation we see how wide is the gap between Gospel and life, between a society that claims to profess a catholic faith and still easily put up with scandalous situations of injustice and inequality.

32. The Catholic Church in Ecuador is losing its social base due to the combined effect of proselytism of sectarian Christian groups and the current secularized tendencies that keep many away from the church.

Evangelicals grow because of the weaknesses of our pastoral work. The increasing secularization and consumerism among the middle and high class decreases the chances for a true living of the Gospel values among the people and the presence of the Church in many areas of life.

33. In a cultural context that privileges the search for immediate pleasure and where moral relativism is fashionable, the Gospel proposal finds a lot of resistance. Our Church has great difficulty to bring the youth into a commitment to their own people and their church. The number of Christian believers without church and those who based their faith on private religiosity are on the increase.

34. Closeness to the world of the poor, and dialogue and with other faith groups help us value the ecumenical dialogue understood as a way of pooling resources together in order to serve the living and peace loving God. Nevertheless, ecumenical dialogue is still incipient here.

35. The Church in Ecuador certainly needs a greater push towards the Mission *Ad Gentes*. The last American Mission Congress (CAM3) celebrated in Quito under the influence of the Document of Aparecida, emphasized the Mission *inter gentes* to the detriment of the *Ad gentes*.

2. Our Reality as Comboni's

2.1. Personnel situation of the Province

1. Total number of Priests, 34
2. Total number of brothers: 8
3. Total number of members of the Province according to their nationalities.
IT: 16+3 / SP: 6+2
MZ: 1+1 / Mal 1 /SS 1/
MX. 1 + 1 / BR 2/ EC 7/ CA 1 / GUAT 1/
4. Average age of the members of the province: 58
5. Number of Scholastics. 2
6. Number of Brothers in CIF 0
7. Novices who are candidate to Brothers 0
8. Novices who are candidates to Priests 1
9. Number of Postulants to priesthood and Brotherhood P 2 - Bro 2

2.2. The road done by the province after the Last Chapter.

Our last General Chapter proposed the elaboration of the *Ratio Missionis*. The Province has assumed with enthusiasm the whole process both as community and zone levels. However, we note little growth in the spirituality of the group at large. The confreres recognize that they give little attention to their ongoing formation and that is why they can not always keep abreast with the developments in pastoral and mission theology.

In this past years our province has improved in the living of the main dimensions of our charism as Comboni Missionaries. However, at the same time some of our weakness have deepened and some of our troubles have got worse. Lights and Shadows go hand in hand in our lives.

Lights:

- Faithful to our Six Year Plan we have kept our commitments with the available forces. Thus, we have strengthened the area of Mission Animation through the set up of a team in Carcelen and another in the Provincial house, notwithstanding the loss of Fr. Cirilo Tescaroli who gave an invaluable contribution to the local church. At this time we have thought it wise to concentrate on the specific role of our Editorial (*Sin Fronteras*) and on the TV Programmes, run by Fr. José Barranco.
- We have also handed over the Mission of "El Paraiso, La 14", to the local Church.

- Another positive achievement has been the good interaction between the confreres during the various zones, age group and area responsible meetings.
- The road proposed by the *Ratio Missionis* has been very enlightening to us.
- Most communities have written or renewed their Community Life Plan and the Pastoral Project for their area of concern.
- Our preparation to the next General Chapter has also been experienced as a moment to reflect on our tasks with eagerness and responsibility.
- Our Comboni Volunteer Program for pre-candidates has continued giving a good service to the youth who have shown interest in our Missionary Family.
- The Afro Ecuatorian Centres existing in Quito and Guayaquil have continued to accompany and animate the process of their growth in faith through a number of activities. They have also published a series of books, booklets, and videos that are used by their groups and have been appreciated in international meetings.
- The Afro Ecuatorian missionaries have been officially recognized by the Archdioceses of Guayaquil as an ecclesial movement and now enjoy good acceptance in the parishes.
- A good number of new initiatives have enriched the process of the pastoral care of the black youth.

Shadows:

- We have found ourselves very much diminished as missionary personnel (because of our numbers, health, physical strength and age) to be able to fulfil the various commitments we have embraced. There were a number of confreres that never showed up in the province even if they were assigned to us last year. We suppose that there was little dialogue with them and with their provinces of origin.
- We realize that due to fears or little interest in ongoing formation and reflection we have not always kept abreast with the changes in our society and in our church. These changes challenge our being missionaries today.
- We feel the need for a more prophetic spirit in our actions and true passion for the mission. We sense tiredness and little motivation, creativity and continuity in the different processes we guide. That is why we experience a lot of difficulties in our common planning and evaluating.
- Even if that is not so omnipresent, some dispersion of energy is noticeable. Some confreres assume commitments that are not in line with our charism. There are some individual protagonists still present.
- Not always are we able to learn from the example of missionaries who have lived with great dedication and wisdom in the past.

3. Missionary Methodology

Lights:

- We evidence the fact that our province has given priority to the missionary work in areas of Mission Animation (that has been strengthened) and Pastoral Work among the Afro Ecuatorians (most of our communities are set in contexts where blacks are present). We have assumed our presence among them as a distinctive mark of our charism. An important aspect of this priority consists in the formation of lay leaders, prioritising on the attention to the youth, etc.
- In our province we follow various models of pastoral accompaniment to the people: Parishes, Lay leaders formation centres, formation of people in specific

areas. As methodology for pastoral work we base ourselves on the guidelines issued by the local churches we serve, thus trying to achieve common goals.

- Fruit of this dedicated work are the birth of associations of lay faithful like the “Pia Asociación del Sagrado Corazón”, in “La 14”, “Lay Missionary Guides” and “Afro Ecuadorian Missionaries”.
- There exists a good level of communication in the province, and a good listening and exchange of ideas among us.

Shadows:

- We regret to see that in many instances we carry out a pastoral work of “maintenance”, which gives preference to the ritual and sacramental services. We feel that many are tempted to settle down on comfortable parish structures instead of opening up in a more missionary way.
- It seems that we give little attention to the challenges of inculturation, JPIC, apostolic movements, and other religious groups.
- We are aware that we do little to overcome this situation, and are too slow to seeking ways to be closer to the people. That is why we have not been able to realize the challenge to open an insertion community among the blacks.

4. Comboni Community Life: Brotherhood

Community life is another essential aspect of our lives that has been dealt with during the study of the *Ratio Missionis*. We understand that we need to be a Cenacle of Apostles and a light in the path for many. The issues that are in discussion are always the attention to the person and the good of the community, be it at the personal as well as at the practical level.

Lights:

- The communities have been enriched by the internationality of their members and the sense of belonging to them. There is a good level of tolerance and reciprocal respect in community.
- The sharing of human and material resources is felt as a responsibility shared by all the members of the community.
- We feel the need to share our prayer life and our work as community.
- There is a felt presence of the Provincial to animate and accompany the communities in overcoming their difficulties.
- It is urgent that each community clarifies their call to the mission and that the building of the Kingdom of God would be a theological focal point where the community members find a unifying centre in the person of Christ.
- The presence and work of the Brothers in the OCPH (Comboni Initiative for Human promotion) in Guayaquil, their work in favour of the Pastoral action among the blacks and the formation of lay leaders is a very valuable contribution to our province and to the Institute at large. Therefore the need to ensure its continuity in time through the appropriate selection of brothers who would continue on this good work.

Shadows

- We sense that at times we lack good family spirit in community. We have suffered the negative effects caused by the frequent changes of personnel in

communities, due to personal incompatibilities, health troubles or planning strategies.

- It is still difficult to find community environments where the faith life experience and a reading of the signs of the times is shared in a deeper way. Our contemplative dimension of life is shallow, and so it is our Comboni spirituality.
- The unfortunate tendency to depend on foreign resources and paternalistic attitudes to solve our pastoral problems persist in some communities.
- We are all convinced on the need to live in true fraternity so as to be coherent with the preaching of the Gospel we do and there is a sustained effort in this regard. Where the trouble comes is when we need to take that into action. The guidelines issued by the Congregation are very enlightening but unfortunately only few of us take them seriously as inspiration and as a way to achieve evangelical perfection.
- Even the Code of Conduct offered valuable aids but has suffered the same fate.
- Our fraternity is sometimes exclusively lived in times of need and emergency.
- We live very joyfully our times of retreats and meetings but these do not always bring the necessary change of attitudes at the personal and community level.

5. Mission, collaboration and Dialogue

Lights:

- In all our parishes we share the work in favour of the mission and try to do our pastoral planning together with lay people, religious, secular missionaries, etc. We eagerly promote the formation of lay leaders and in that way we contribute to the growth of the Kingdom of God. This effort is not exempt of weaknesses and difficulties.
- In most of the parishes where we work there are Parish Pastoral Councils, that under the leadership of the parish priest carry on the various parish activities including the evangelising work.
- The presence of the Comboni's has given birth to lay associations of faithful like the Pias Discípulas del Sagrado Corazón, the Afro Ecuadorian Missionaries, on top of the pastoral care of the various lay movements already present on our communities.
- The Afro Ecuadorian Pastoral Centres of Quito and Guayaquil are giving a very important support in order to keep the memory, traditions, culture and spirituality of the black Ecuadorians through that specific pastoral action. Black pastoral agents have assumed the process and they are now protagonists of their own development. The process of the Apostolate among the blacks has been strengthened in the areas of Pastoral Care of Youth, Afro Biblical Way, family Apostolate, Social Ministry. Yet there is a long way to go especially to achieve a better integration of this group with the rest of the society and the Church in general.
- The Afro Ecuadorian missionaries of Guayaquil are certainly a new and very efficient model of evangelising presence in the cities and rural areas.
- After two years of hard work we have been able to reopen the Afro Cultural centre of Quito, with a new structure and perspectives. In these next months we are also going to finish the building of the new Afro Pastoral centre in Guayaquil that needed urgent attention.
- The Comboni Missionaries continued serving as liaison between the pastoral care of the afro Ecuadorians and the Ecuadorian Bishops Conference.

- All new coming missionaries get the chance to know the communities where we are present in the Province and we try to make them participate in courses of introduction to the social, cultural and ecclesial context of Ecuador.

Shadows

- After more than 500 years of evangelisation our Church in Ecuador has not taken a face that would really reflect the cultural variety of its peoples. Indios, Mestizos, Blacks and Montubios are practically invisible in the church.
- We regret that at the moment the process of the lay Comboni missionaries in our province is stuck. We feel that our lay people in Ecuador are not yet prepared for the mission *ad gentes*. We need to define a formation process to the confreres as well as to the lay candidates for that process so that there would be true cooperation between us.
- The trouble with the pastoral care of blacks as with other areas is continuity of the work done. At the same time there is great need of creativity to face the new challenges.
- We have not yet been able to set up a good team for the Pastoral of the afroecuadorians in Quito. Such service would include: the responsible of the Cultural Centre, the representative to the CEE, and the team directly involved in the Pastoral Care of the Blacks in the city of Quito.

6. Mission Animation

We are aware that consciousness of the mission *ad gentes* in the Church is often a mature fruit of mission animation, and even if according to the Bishops gathered in Aparecida (2007) we are entering into a process of Evangelisation in the Continental Mission that seem to look inwardly, our objective is to ripen that rare and necessary fruit: mission “*ad gentes*”.

Lights:

- The base of our work for mission animation is the Comboni Youth Centre. At the moment the new team responsible is carrying out youth meetings and campaigns in various towns of the country aimed at the regrouping of the youth groups of “*America Misionera*” as a commitment after CAM 3.
- The experience of Missionary Volunteer service for candidates has continued as a phase of discernment for vocational accompaniment whose aim is to favour spaces for a personal encounter with Jesus and his project of life to them.
- As province we have committed ourselves in the preparation of the *Cam 3 Comla 8*, through the different meetings of OMP and CEMINA (National Mission Centre), thus fostering the missionary dimension of our church in Ecuador.
- We have defined more clearly the aims of the Missionary editorial so as to adjust its goals to the specific missionary dimension of our charism. The agreement with the Charismatic Renewal has made it possible that all the material published would come under the responsibility of our editorial.
- Most of the valuable material for radio that has been prepared for many years by Fr. Tescaroli will have to go to archives, because it is time sensitive. We are trying to save the most important material transferring it to CD systems.

- Courses and Workshops for young people on Missionary themes are being conducted both in Carcelen and in the Provincial house with good participation.

Shadows:

- In these past years we have unfortunately experienced a drop in our Mission Animation activities considering the good work that was done for many years in the past.
- We regret to see little interest for the circulation of our own missionary material, such as the Magazine “Sin Fronteras” and the missionary literature among our parishioners
- It is sad to see the lack of consistent pastoral work in favour of the youth in our own parishes and we do not promote the missionary groups among them.
- In these last few months we have experienced serious difficulties to import the magazine from Colombia due to new tax requirements by the government. That is the reason why we have decided to print the magazines here in the country in order not to lose these valuable means of mission animation that no other institute offers to the Ecuadorian church, besides the need to keep the subscribers we have.

7. Mission and Sharing of goods.

The province owns only 3 buildings in Quito and 1 in Guayaquil. We have created a Patrimonial Fund as directed by the General Bursar. This fund generate interests of around US\$ 9000.00 per year.

In spite of the financial crisis, our province is committed to keep 4 provincial funds of US\$ 100.000.00 each. These are the following: Provincial Activity, Formation, Mission Animation and Future Commitments.

The Provincial Assembly of April discussed and approved the creation of three more funds: A fund for the Sick, one for Travelling expenses and one for the Social Security Retirement of our employees.

Lights:

- We are progressing towards a greater and more evangelical type of sharing and communion of goods in the community.
- Our last assembly shed lights that have helped us move toward a total common fund and to realize a better and fuller participation of the confreres in the province’s finance.
- In the zone and provincial meetings the confreres have been motivated to take more seriously the economic aspects of our mission and service. We insist on the people’s participation into pastoral and mission projects.
- Our solidarity has shown up in the contributions to the common fund on the part of the confreres. Some communities have given generous responses to emergency requests.

Shadows:

- We still find that not all confreres strive to get local or foreign support to the sustenance of their communities and mission projects.
- We recognize that the economic movement of some communities is disproportionate as compared to others. Some cannot keep themselves without the help of the province. We lack mutual cooperation and a more equal sharing

of goods. Not all confreres are willing to return the surplus of the year to the Provincial fund as suggested by our Provincial Directory.

- In the last years some local bursars have not been so transparent in their dealings with money. It must also be said that the provincial bursar has neither supervised nor assist sufficiently the confreres to see the right handling of finances.
- We need better preparation for the community bursars. Some are simple book keepers that do not always take into consideration the laws of the land which get ever more complicated.

8. Future Perspectives:

Priorities:

1. **Quality of Life:** We continuously need to insist on the value of community life in order to create mature fraternal relations between us that would avoid personal clashes.
2. **Spirituality:** The document of Ratio Missionis has insisted on the need to develop a stronger and more convinced spirituality, based on the centrality of the Heart of Christ.
3. **Missionary Service:** we need qualified people for the areas of pastoral care of the blacks, Formation and Economy. These have to be fostered.
4. **Afro Ecuadorian Pastoral Work:** we wish to assume a significant commitment of insertion among the blacks (New Opening).
5. **Values to Foster:** personal and Community Prayer, Co responsibility, Koinonia, Mission Methodology, Spirituality, a more Radical and Evangelical Spirit.
6. **Bases to consolidate:** A meaningful community life, common pastoral planning, creativity, Comboni spirituality and methodology in line with the *Ratio*. Fidelity to monthly retreats, the drawing of a personal project of Life, of the Community Project of Life and the Pastoral Plan in communion with the local church.
7. **Ongoing Formation:** Animators of community (Superiors) and Bursars have at least one meeting for their group during the year. We cannot improvise these roles. We need to prepare people for these leadership roles in a consistent manner.
8. **Priorities:** the province will prioritise the areas of Formation, Mission animation and the Pastoral Care of the Blacks according the Six year Plan guidelines. Our evangelising style will put greater emphasis on the formation of leaders, and if this is the wish of the province, there will be a new insertion community among the blacks.

Fr. Claudio Zendron
Provincial Superior
Ecuador

Egypte

Report Delegation of Egypt XVII General Chapter

1. - The actual situation of the personnel:

1.1 Total number of Priests

22 (four of these are students at Dar Comboni and two are out of the delegation)

1.2 Total number of Brothers

1

1.3 Number of confreres of the delegation according to their nationalities

Italy	12
Mexico	2
Uganda	2
Kenya	2
Congo	2
Egypt	1
T/G/B	1
Eritrea	1

1.4 Average age of the confreres in the delegation

52,08 (with the students) and 56.31 (without the students).

1.5 Number of Scholastics of the delegation

None

1.6 Number of Brothers of the delegation in the CIFs

None

1.7 Novices (specifying how many for the priesthood or brotherhood)

None

1.8 Postulants (specifying how many for the priesthood or brotherhood)

1 (Priesthood)

1.9 Number of communities (specifying how many with less than three members)

Six, one with less than three members

1. Assuan: Latin Parish and Missionary Animation in Upper Egypt

2. Cordi Jesu: Comboni Sanctuary, Missionary Animation

3. Dar Comboni: Study Centre and Interreligious Dialogue

4. Helwan: Latin Parish, ministering to Coptic Catholics, School, Missionary Animation

5. Sakakini: Latin Parish and Ministry to the Refugees and Displaced people
6. Zamalek: Latin Parish and Ministry to foreigners in Cairo.

2. PRIORITIES:

According to our six year plan, the 3 main priorities are:

- Dar Comboni (Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies) and Interreligious dialogue.
- Refugees (Sakakini (for the Sudanese and to an extent also St. Joseph Zamalek for the Eritreans)
- Missionary Animation

3. Personnel as actually distributed (as of July 1st 2009):

Cordi Jesu:	P. Spadavecchia Cosimo, D.S,	68
	P. Cruciani Benito-Giuseppe, Rector & italianHospital	73
	P. Verdoscia Luciano	53
	P. Landonio Pierino, M.A	60
		63.50
Sakakini:	P. Barin Victor, pp	62
	P. Jemil Araya Jemil, schools	35
	P. Kakule Muvawa Emery-Justin ass. pp	35
		44.0
Dar Comboni:	P. Richard Kyankaaga, Superior & Director	45
	P. Scattolin Giuseppe,	67
	Fr. Benetti Aldo, Bursar	81
		64.33
Zamalek (with students)		
	P. Achilles Kiwanuka, p.p, Dar Comboni	42
	P. Amoussou Comlan Ghislain	32
	P. Korir John Kipkemoi	35
	P. Ngoma M. Jean Celestin	31
	<i>P. Sanchez Ramirez Luis Alberto (LP)</i>	30
	P. Appap Bonifacio Jr. (Khartoum Province)	35
		34.16
Helwan :	P. Sobhi Atallah, Superior & Director of School	58
	P. Bedin Alessandro, pp, D. Bursar, formator	41
	P. Chesini Sergio,	72
	P. Esti Giovanni Maria, M.A, school	46
		54.25
Aswan:	P. Bianchini Luigi, Bursar	62
	P. Anzioli Angelo	62
		62.00
Others:	P. Simon Mbuthia, (Rome PISAI)	41
	P. Arellano Josè, (Paris, sabbatical year)	67
Average Age for the confreres:	permanent 56.31 , general 52.08	

4. POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS SITUATION

Egypt has an area of 1,000,000 km² with a population of nearly 80 million people concentrated mainly around 4% of the total area with a population density of 70 people per km². Egypt has a Presidential form of government.

4.1. THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

The current president, Hosni Mubarak has a central role in the internal and external politics of the country more especially in the political and economical reforms. Actually, structural changes cannot be realized because the ruling class keeps the jobs almost for life with the consequent absence of new and youthful faces in the different government organs.

4.2. SOCIAL SITUATION

The social life on the country constitutes the link between the citizen and the state. After September 11th, the country suffers from a deep crisis caused by the variability of the market, of economic reforms and the absence of growth in the sector of production, the demographic increase (population explosion) the continuous increases in the cost of living coupled with the high rate of unemployment.

The sectors badly affected are: Tourism, importation and exportation and the crisis of small scale business enterprises. The current economic crisis that has hit the whole globe has adversely hit Egypt as well. However, notwithstanding the efforts made in different fields, many social problems have remained invariable (the youth, education, health etc.....).

4.3. CULTURAL SITUATION

In Egypt, you cannot talk about a unified culture, monolithic, but of a multiplicity of cultures. The means of social communication, however, do not help in the overcoming of this diversity. From such multiplicity gives birth to a challenge of striving to affirm a culture of liberty over the culture of oppression, a culture of tolerance over the culture of fanaticism, a culture of recognizing the other who is different and to join hands in the diffusion of values of social justice.

4.4. RELIGIOUS SITUATION

4.4.1. General Considerations

The religion of the majority of the population is Sunni Islam (ca. 92%). It is however difficult to know exactly the percentage of the Christians because the official statistics speak of about 3 million; the statistics of the Orthodox Church speak of 12 million, other sources however (e.g reliable Catholic sources) we could talk of about 6-8 million of Christians belonging to seven different rites. The Christians of Egypt belong to the same nation, speak the same Arabic language and share the same political history, live in the same economic situation, do not live in ghettos and belong to diverse social groupings. When we speak of Christians, we do not speak of a people representing a cultural minority like the Kurds in Iraq or the Shiites or the maronites, but of people that are part and parcel of the same

Egyptian population. However, we can speak of other forms of the marginalized, like the women, children, the poor, the divorced, the fundamentalists etc.....

The challenge that comes from a country like Egypt characterized by pluralism at diverse levels is the education towards the acceptance of the other as he is and to live together in diversity, working together to build a society where justice and peace reign without the fear of losing one's identity.

In the recent years, the relationship between Christians and Muslims have been characterized by religious conflict and as a matter of fact, Christians are considered second class citizens and it is observed how they are denied the freedom, the right to organization, participation without limit in the political life, and most of them take refuge in the parishes for their different activities where a parallel society is created. The Christians in this way suffer the complex from the complex of persecution, which as a matter of fact can be placed in the general context of the history of the entire Egyptian people.

From the awareness of this kind of situation comes the necessity to free oneself from the system and to take an active part in the analysis of the concrete reality and in finding solutions to problems.

4.4.2 Churches and rites

The religious authorities recognized by the government are: Pope *Shenouda III*, head of the Coptic orthodox Church, pastor *Safwat Al-Baiady*, head of the Coptic evangelical Church and the patriarch Antonius Naguib, head of the Coptic Catholic Church. There are also other small Catholic minority Churches like the Melkite, Maronite, Armenian and Syrian Churches. The Latin Church is not mentioned since it is considered foreign.

Ecumenism between the various churches is lived at the level of mutual respect but each Church considers herself the depository of the TOTAL TRUTH. The responsible of these churches, particularly, the orthodox churches are at the basis of the divisions of the Christians in Egypt because they refuse the other the right to be different.

4.4.3 The Coptic Catholic Church

The Church is formed of the Patriarch, Antonius Naguib, and 11 Bishops with seven dioceses. The total number of Coptic catholic Christians is around 200 thousand living in Egypt and the diaspora. The synod of Bishops meets often to discuss several problematics of the patriarchate. However, the church in general has not succeeded in having national pastoral plan in order to have a common vision in the pastoral service.

The Coptic Church, born as a National Church is still lacking in missionary openness. In the recent years, however, there seems to be a little opening certain missionary experiences outside the confines of Egypt.

4.4.4 Religious Life

Religious life in its monastic form, born in the desert, is the corner stone of the Orthodox Church. From 1994 *P. Kyrilous Tamer*, a Coptic catholic priest began a

reflection on a form of catholic monastic life crowned with the foundation of the Monastery of the Annunciation.

Besides the contemplative life there is a presence of a number of religious congregations of active life (41 female only two of which are local, and 15 Male) and a number of movements of renewal.

5. Path Followed and Developments since last Chapter:

5.1. Ratio Missionis:

5.1.1. Path followed:

- This has been done through Assemblies & Retreats, following the suggested themes of R.M. and we make an effort to implement them through Community councils.
- At the same time there has been a sharing of the implementation of the past Assembly decisions whereby an evaluation of the past achievements or difficulties met in the execution were discussed.
- There has always been a continuous readdress of our commitments.

5.2. Developments since last Chapter on Community life:

- Often times, we have tried to share information on the different commitments of each and all our communities although this needs to be improved.
- Several communities have their community charters well prepared, and implemented although at times revisions are not done on time.
- Most communities have managed to have community councils at least once a month while others have also introduced moments of on-going formation as part of the regular community meetings.

5.3. Educational commitment:

- Helwan School has continued to give a qualified service to the Egyptian society. We are now trying to improve the administration by adding another confrere to the equip.
- We have tried in several areas to collaborate with the Comboni sisters in the education sector. This too however needs to be accelerated.
- The commitment for the refugees' education has been greatly improved during the last years and collaboration with our run Egyptian schools has also been improved especially on the cultural level.

5.4. Dialogue with Islam:

- Dar Comboni is now a pontifical institute and is continuing to develop in efficiency and structures. The teaching method has been assimilated more and there is a large group of students from all over the world (26 nationalities in the academic year 2008/09).
- Workshops on "Islam & Dialogue" according to the requests (Uganda 2007, Eritrea 2006), and the Continental Reflection group on Islam's organization has become part of the activities of Dar Comboni.
- As delegation, a Dialogue committee has been formed and this helps in the organization of workshops and reflection groups within Egypt and outside.
- Fr. J. Scattolin continues with his research and publications and f late has begun moderating thesis of Muslim students in the local Universities.

- In all our activities, be they social or pastoral, we have been attempting to carry forward religious dialogue.
 - in our schools we welcome Muslim students and they are introduced into religious dialogue and respect.
- 5.5. **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 Catechetical Centers.
 - Our collaboration with the Coptic Catholic hierarchy continues in different places.
- 5.6. **Missionary Animation**
- In the recent years, an effective collaboration with Comboni sisters has been developed together also with the local Church through Catholic Church Secretariat for Missionary Animation.
 - Our Delegation bulletin, summer camps, participation in the diocesan Coptic Catholic meetings in Upper Egypt, Alexandria & Cairo, Asdqa Comboni journal for young people, website, Arabic insert in the New People magazine and summer Egyptian Youth experience in Northern Sudan are some of the activities carried out by the missionary animation team.
 - Cordi Jesu is being as the center for Missionary Animation events. We are in the process of transforming the former club into a structure for M.A.
- 5.7. **Presence among the African refugees & most destitute people in Egypt:**
- 5.7.1. **Sakakini:**
- Four centers for Sudanese refugees have been developed for educational support, pastoral activities, women promotion, etc... with the collaboration of several committed lay people.
 - For the first time this academic year, we have adopted in our schools the Sudanese schools curriculum, an effective step for the future of the young Sudanese boys and girls.
 - In the recent years, there has developed several violent groups of young people. Addressing this new phenomenon is being taken as a priority.
- 5.7.2. **Zamalek:**
- there are also afternoon classes for Eritrean children and adults especially in the English language,
 - There has always been a priest assigned to take care of the Pastoral service, however, under the parish of St. Joseph.
- 5.7.3. **Cordi Jesu:**
- Presence among the Zabbalin through the project of Fr. Luciano whereby there are schools for children, workshops for adult collaborators. This is done partly in collaboration with Coptic Orthodox Church that has for now offered its space.

5.7.4. **Ecumenism**

- On a low scale level of ecumenism, there is participation to a monthly Ecumenical Lunch.
- Coordination among different Churches for the uprooted people (Sudanese, Ethiopians, Eritreans, and 'Zabbalin' ...).

5.7.5. **Service to the foreigners:**

- Our two parishes of Aswan and Zamalek have a lot of foreign people coming there for pastoral assistance. The majority of people coming to Zamalek parish are foreigners.

6. **Challenges**

- 6.1. **Language:** The difficulty of the Arabic Language and the preparation for the encounter with the Moslems.
- 6.2. **Dialogue:** The challenge of doing dialogue with Islam beyond the traditional methods.
- 6.3. **Diversity of commitments:** Each community has a special commitment that demands a particular preparation (language, pastoral address, environment, specializations...).
- 6.4. **Rotation:** This is rendered difficult because of the different nature of our commitments.
- 6.5. **Sharing between communities, improve communication:** To create more sharing on our different services in Egypt (challenges, achievements, visions,...), according to the different commitments.
- 6.6. **Social imbalances:** An attentive listening to the results coming out from the 'recession', religious discrimination, injustice,... and support all activities towards social justice.
- 6.7. **Collaboration with the local Church and other agents of evangelization:** A presence more effective and collaborative in the Egyptian society and in the Egyptian Churches.
- 6.8. **Vocation and youth ministry**
- 6.9. **Leadership:** Leadership is challenged by creating common vision and continuity, by taking a pro-active role into the life of communities and individuals.
- 6.10. **Co-responsibility:** in the common fund.

7. **Future perspectives**

- 7.1. To continue the Ratio Missionis process, and promoting a deeper sharing of each activity (challenges, achievements, weaknesses, ...).
- 7.2. To prepare confreres that could collaborate more with the Seminary, the Theological Centre, and the Catechetical Centre).
- 7.3. To continue with the specialization in Islamic Studies.
- 7.4. The delegation should continue to promote Islamic dialogue within and without the Comboni Missionaries especially in the African Continent.
- 7.5. To grow in the appreciation and promotion of religious tolerance and dialogue
- 7.6. To strengthen our presence and service to the Sudanese and Eritrean refugees.
- 7.7. To promote further mission awareness in the local church by a variety of means and activities.

Eritrea

DELEGATION OF ERITREA MCCJ *REPORT TO XVII GENERAL CHAPTER*

O. INTRODUCTION

The Eritrean circumscription was erected to a Delegation in January 2002, after the border conflict with Ethiopia which blocked communication between the two countries. After the election of Fr. Tesfamariam Ghebrechristos as Assistant General, the Superior General appointed Fr. Sebhatleab Ayele to the office of Delegate Superior and his second term terminates in January 2011. This report covers the time span between the previous and the forthcoming General Chapters: XVI 2003 and XVII 2009.

1. Socio-political and Economic Situation

Since the event of the XVI General Chapter the socio-political situation of Eritrea is in regression causing a lot of suffering to the people. Though the official reason is the border conflict with Ethiopia, by now it is clear that the Party (Popular Front for Democracy and Justice) had a hidden agenda of building a communist regime in Eritrea starting from the years of struggle for independence (1961-1991). The border conflict with Ethiopia (1998-2000) unveiled the intentions and the weaknesses of this regime. Here below follows some highlights in a chronological order:

a) From Independence 1991 to border Conflict with Ethiopia 1998

- Well conducted referendum in May 1993 which sanctioned the independence by the United Nations.
- Good progress in re-building socio-economic infrastructures (schools, health centers, potable water, roads, distribution of electricity to rural areas...etc). The target has always been to develop remote rural areas.
- Election of National and Legislative Assembly in 1996
- May 1997 introduction of Nakfa as the local currency
- Election of constitutional assembly and drafting of a modern and democratic constitution in 1997. However, it has never been decreed into law.
- Tense relationship and a small scale conflict with Sudan and Yemen, which eased after some years.

b) From Border Conflict 1998-2000 up to 2009

- Catastrophic border conflict with Ethiopia which cost both countries more than 100,000 human lives.
- Gradual stagnation of democracy and clear signs of centralization and monopoly in political and economic infrastructures.
- Division and friction within the ruling party
- 18th September 2001 detention of the so called G15 reformists and abolishment of private press.
- Gradual isolation from diplomatic and international politics. Tension with regional and international bodies and agencies (AU, IGAD, NGOs, etc).

- Restriction of tourists and movement of UN Peace Keeping force in the buffer zone of Ethio-Eritrean border, which eventually forced them to leave the country in July 2008.
- Unending military/national service which is keeping the youth in trenches or doing free labour.
- Large scale Detention without trial of suspected dissidents and unauthorized religious denominations/sects.
- Expulsion of 21 expatriate Catholic missionaries, November 2007, June 2008 and March 2009.
- Corruption and lawlessness - IDPs and immigration

c) **Socio-economic Situation**

It is the guess of everybody that with similar political developments hinted above no country can have economic progress. The good economic progress between 1991- 1998 was literally aborted. The economic recession was mainly due to the centralized system which put the economy under state control and monopoly. This of course paralyzed economic structures and killed the private sector. Flouring industries and firms were either nationalized or closed. Import-export, business, and construction licences were withdrawn.

Such policy had a devastating effect on the economy: lack of foreign currency, lack of essential commodities, high inflation, deterioration of trade industry, etc. Though the government tries to hide, famine is going out of hand. A family is expected to survive with 10 kilo of durra per month. Prices have reached the peak and there is no increase of salary since 1994. At present the country lacks many essential commodities:

- Foodstuff, grain, flour, diary products, etc
- Fuel is rationed to the minimum, hence little movement of cars. Only 32% of the Vehicles of the Catholic Church are allowed to move.
- Urban and inter-urban transport is reduced to more than 50%
- Medicine, spare parts and construction material

2. Ecclesial Situation

Despite the hardships, the Local Church of Eritrea is carrying on its work of Evangelization with determination. The three Eparchies, Asmara-Keren-Barentu, make part of the Episcopal Conference with Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. The three Eparchies have, as well, their “Council” for common interest. The Local Church of Eritrea is blessed with many vocations both diocesan and religious, in proportion to the Catholic faithful which make up 3% of the total population.

Despite its relentless efforts, the regime did not manage to subdue the Catholic Church under its control, as it did with the higher administration of the other religious denominations (Orthodox, Islam and the Evangelical Church). However, the faithful on the ground and of other sects resist the interference of the government in their affairs. These three plus the Catholic Church are the only denominations authorized to function. The Catholic Bishops made it a point to keep the unity of the Church; and as such, important decisions are taken together with the CMRS.

The Church gives several services: Schools: primary, junior, secondary and Technical (52), Kindergarten (53) health centers (27) and runs, as well, women promotion centers (36) and human development projects. The bishops wrote several

letters to the authorities challenging them on certain malpractices and lawlessness. Many of the letters and documents are not published for fear of repercussions. The Justice and Peace Commission is doing a good job of animation at all levels. The Universal Catechism was translated into Tigrinya and many Church documents are in the process of translations. The Geez rite was also translated in Bilen by the Eparchy of Keren. Several workshops and seminars are organized jointly by the CMRS with the Local Church.

However, the Catholic Church remains the one most targeted by the government because of her level of influence and her nature of Universality which invariably involves international ties and relationships. Some of the main Challenges that can be mentioned are:

- barring young religious from leaving the country for meetings, formation, qualification and missionary service
- barring expatriate Church personnel from entering the country
- Expulsion of 21 expatriate missionaries in the last two years
- Nationalization of some Church property (Gaden agricultural farm, National Catholic Secretariat complex, etc)
- Refusal of initiating human development projects
- Banning Church periodicals and newspapers
- Forced national/military service of candidates to priesthood and religious life, thus closing the pipeline. (As it stands now the national service has no end).

Notwithstanding the difficulties, the Church is conscious of its mission and continues to animate the faithful to accept the situation with a vision of faith-hope-love. Reconciliation between individuals and groups also is a dominant theme of retreats and spiritual exercises.

3) Delegation of Eritrea: Data and Statistics

As stated at the introduction the Delegation of Eritrea was erected in January 2002. At present the situation of juridical members is as follows:

a) Members of the Delegation of Eritrea and their offices

Minor Seminarians	Postulants	Novices	Scholastics	Brothers	Bishop/Priests
Grade 9: 7 Grade 10: 3 Grade 11: 2	2 nd Year: 2 3 rd Year: 2	1 st year: 3 2 nd Year: 2	1 st Year:3 4 th Year: 1 Mission Service: 1	1 st year Religious Studies:1	Bishop: 1 Admnsitration:2 Formation: 4 Evangelization: 5 Arabic Studies: 2 (Animation: part time)
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
12	4	5	5	1	14

b) Members of the Delegation of Eritrea: communities and average age

Total Number of Juridical Members		Communities		Average Age	
Bishop	1	Asmara Bishop's Residence	1	Bishop/Priests	53.07
Priests	13	Delegation House	4	Scholastics	28.4
Brother	1	Asmara Scholasticate	5	Brother	28
Scholastics	5	Dekamere	2		
		Fode	3		
		Delle	2		
		(Residing Outside: Pietermaritzburg – Cairo Khartoum)	3		
TOTAL	20	6	20	Total Average	45.65

4. Journey 2003-2009 of the Delegation

The time span between the two General Chapters can be divided in two halves: 2004-2006 and 2007-2009. The first half was relatively calm and we could implement our plan, though there were already some worrisome signs. The second half was and is still marked by restrictions; suspense, uncertainty and insecurity as the socio-political situation of the country gradually shifted from bad to worse. During the second half our **6 Year Plan** (2005-10) suffered remarkable setbacks

a) Evangelization

Achieved

- Consolidation of personnel in Gash Barka and preparation of new comers. Assignment of more than 2 Eritrean confreres to Gash Barka. Sufficient time is given to study local Languages for newcomers (6YP 40).
- Sufficient formation is given to lay leaders, catechists and youth in the parishes (6YP 42-44).
- Pastoral care to Refugees from South Sudan (6YP 45)

Not Achieved

- Human promotion projects in Keren Eparchy (6YP 37.2 and opening of a community in Keren Eparchy at the end of 2007 (6YP 40.7)
- Upgrading of schools in Gash Barka (6YP 45)
- Clinic and Women promotion center in Fode (47-48)

b) Basic Formation

Achieved

- Train candidates to interiorize values of prayer, consecrated life, community life, freedom, etc (6YP 56)

- Form the candidates with the values of missionary spirit and internationality. Workshops on WSF, Inculturation, Communism, etc (6YP 57-58, 62).
- Regular meeting of the secretariat for formation and report to the Delegation Council (6YP 68-69).
- Several workshops at the Theological Institute,

Not Achieved

- Assignment of a brother to the Delegation (6YP 60-61)
- Internationalization of the team of formators (6YP 58, 62)
- Taking the Postulancy outside the Delegation House (6YP 66)
- Qualification of a radical member in Psychology (6YP 67)

c) Ongoing Formation

Achieved

- Community councils, Charter and monthly recollection are done though not regularly (6YP 79, 81)
- Reflection and study on Ratio Missionis (6YP 78, 82)
- Workshops on Justice and Peace, Islam, Healing, etc, and other with the Local Church or at the level of CMRS (6YP 83).
- Regular Delegation Assembly and annual retreat (6YP 79)

Not Achieved

- Not all the communities update their community charter and hold monthly community council. Not all the confreres are faithful to daily personal prayer and spiritual reading (6PY 80).
- Not all communities organize moments of relaxation and entertainment (6YP 80).

d) Mission Animation and Vocation Promotion

Achieved

- Our part time confrere for VP/MA and a Comboni sister do animation on parishes every now and then and when we have ordinations or religious profession (6YP 93-94).

Not Achieved

- Our missionary animation generally speaking is generic and not specific (6YP 84-87).
- Not all the confreres do missionary animation and vocational promotion in their areas (6YP 91)
- Visit the families of candidates and their parishes (6YP 95).

e) Finance

Achieved

- We are not a rich Delegation and our lifestyle is simple. We have what we need (6YP 96-98).
- Practically we have Common Fund. The few offerings we have, enter to the common pool. (6YP 106).
- We rented a house for the Novitiate for some months before it was transferred to the premises of the Minor Seminary in Dekamere. At the present we are renting a house in Asmara for the Scholasticate (6YP 109).
- Our account are fairly well kept and transparent (6YP 105).

Not Achieved

- At community level not all give regularly monthly report to the members (6YP 101)
- Prepare a radical member for office of the delegation bursar (6YP 104)
- We did not buy a house in view of Inalienable Asset (108).

5. Specific Topics of our Delegation

- a) Expulsion of 4 expatriate juridical members
- b) Novitiate and Scholasticate are in the Delegation
- c) Our Delegation is serving exclusively in Eparchies with Geez rite

6. Future Perspective

- a) When the situation changes, send our candidates to the inter-provincial Novitiates and continental Scholasticates.
- b) When possible, reshuffle the radical members who are in and outside
- c) If and when possible internationalize the delegation
- d) Implement human development plans: education and health
- e) Revise the bilateral convention with Barentu Eparchy

Delegation Superior and the Council

Fr. Sebhat Ayele
Delegate Superior

Fr. Teckie Hagos
Vice Delegate Superior

Fr. Gaim Haileselassie
Secretary

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España

SPANISH PROVINCE REPORT TO THE XVIIth GENERAL CHAPTER

I.- PROVINCIAL REPORT

1.- Brief Introduction

The XVIth General Chapter directives were moulded, at provincial level, in the Six Year Plan 2006-2011, whose preparation had started in 2004. The priorities of the Province were moulded there according to the directives of the Chapter. This Plan was revised, corrected and updated by the new Provincial Council in the Provincial Assembly of the year 2008.

The six communities, of at least three members each, that are in the Province work in the fields of mission animation, media, youth animation and, since the Provincial Assembly of 2004, in the pastoral of immigrants.

The age of the members of the Province has increased since the last Chapter and the same the illness which goes together with the increment of the years. This has its consequences in the Provincial activities too. We acknowledge that those assigned to the Province, after a period of insertion which is not easy, get on well with the new environment and their service depends on their strength, capacities and creativeness. The lost of Christian faith of the Spanish society pushes us to look for new platforms where to open to our society from and irradiate the Comboni missionary spirit.

Another field in which the Province, at personal and community level, has worked with determination and will has been the Ratio Misionis. This work has been realized during the last five years.

2.- Presentation of the political, social, economical and religious reality

2.1. Socio-political-economic-religious reality

- Before the economic crisis which the world and Spain is in, Spain experienced a period of great economic development. During that time of prosperity many immigrants from all over the world arrived, changing not only the cultural aspect of our cities and towns but the number of population too. A great number of infrastructures were created and Spain gained prestige at European and world level.
- Politically the trade unions lost power, employment is at risk and terrorism is still present. The nationalist claims have increased; this creates a certain irritation climate on the part of certain autonomies.
- There is a great economic crisis which favours social differences and the increase of the number of poor people. The way immigrants live in is a painful reality.
- People look for comfort and try to adapt themselves to this new way of living trying to find the best possible profit: hedonism and consumerism.
- The birth rate index is one of the lowest of Europe. The reasons for this are economic: unemployment, and psychological: increase of divorces and lack of believing in the marriage as institution.
- It is very difficult for the youth to find a job and therefore they are forced to

postpone their marriage and to live with their parents longer and longer.

- The media have a great influence on public opinion. Sometimes, manipulate its information and take side against the Church.
- In the religious field, secularization goes on and the moral values do not hold as such any more and for all and are replaced by subjective ones. Relations between Church and State have been damaged a lot. There is a great anticlericalism in the actual Government.

2.2 Ecclesiastical and missionary

- The Church has not found the right way to answer this new secularized situation yet. It is not very creative and tends to fold up on itself, trying to go back to what it is the traditional way of living or looking at things. Its prophetic function is not exercised in society.
- The liturgical celebrations are very short and death. There is still a lot of clericalism and very little protagonism of the laity. There is a remarkable drop of religious education in the educational institutions.
- Nevertheless, there are many parishes where catholic life has recovered a good rhythm and many liturgical, educational and social commitments are found. Church movements of different nature are experiencing a great expansion and laity is improving their Christian commitment.
- In the missionary field: very often mission "ad gentes" is misunderstood with the new evangelization or with the commitment with the third world; everything is called mission.
- In certain dioceses, mission "ad gentes" is given a secondary attention. Its Delegations have interest only in the traditional campaigns: Domund, Missionary Childhood... Because of that the missionary institutes and, most of all the SCAM, are not called in.
- Missionary commitment for life is not seen as an answer yet. A temporary commitment as lay missionaries is more felt. On the other hand, there are youth people who look for a more radical Christian commitment not necessary related with the consecrated life.
- Society more and more distrusts Church authorities even if it values highly institutions such as Caritas and missionaries.

3.- Presentation of the Comboni reality: Statistics about personnel and communities.

3.1.- Statistics. Situation of the personnel of the Province:

3.1.1	Number of Fathers	34	.
3.1.2	Number of Brothers	4	
3.1.3	Number of confreres over 70 years old	2	
	Number of confreres under 50 years old	5	
3.1.4	Number of sick brothers	0	
3.1.5	Age average of the confreres of the Province	58,79	
3.1.6	Number of confreres according to their nationality:		
	Spanish	37	
	Germans	1	
3.1.7	Novices candidates to become Brothers	0	
3.1.8	Postulants candidates to become Fathers	0	
	Postulants candidates to become Brothers	2	

3.2. Life and Comboni mission

- Our presence is affected by the difficulties of the world in which we work: lack of interest on the part of the society and the Church, closure of the traditional channels of MA (Missionary Animation) (schools, parishes...), little answer when calling and convoking the youth.
- On the other hand, the Province gets older all the time and sickness, tiredness and other factors make difficult the exchange (rotation) of personnel assumed positively and a good and speedy updating to the needs, greater each time, of the work to do.
- The actual system of rotation, which on one hand has advantages, on the other hand makes difficult specialization, insertion and perseverance in the work and projects.
- The Ratio Misionis has favoured the feeling of belonging to the Province. It has had a massive and positive interest on the part of everyone.
- We still have a certain prestige in social, Church and political media.
- Our so good and varied experiences are a great richness for us.
- No matter the difficulties, we are looking for new ways and channels for our MA work.
- Our relation with those who are in the missions is very much appreciated (sense of family), and the same has to be said of our relations with the ex-Comboni missionaries.

4.- Steps done since the last Chapter

4.1. In our being

4.1.1. Concrete steps done

- There is a greater sharing and communication in the community councils.
- We revise and update the community chapter annually.
- Community prayer is being done in a better way; community retreats.
- Various communities have been reinforced.
- Generally we welcome each other.
- Discussions are there but we love each other too.

4.1.2. Missing points

- There is still a long way to go so that our communities can be real life and faith communities. Sometimes community life is seeing only as a mean to work and the work we perform pushes us towards individualism and little communication.
- In some communities, the preparation of the community chart is more a formality than a real community life project.
- There is a lack of methodology to overcome tensions and conflicts in the community and to help confreres in difficulties.
- Lack of internationality in the communities of the Province.
- The number of persons in the Province that because of illness, character, and experiences previously lived finds a certain difficulty to get involved in the activities of the community is increasing.
- Every time there are more people who, for different reasons, experience difficulties to come back from the mission.

4.1.3.- Perspectives for the future

- Progressive aging of the Province personnel will mark, without any doubt, the coming years. Time will tell us. Our future will pass, without any doubt, through internationality.

- Need of deepening the Comboni spirituality.
- To deep Comboni writings and spirituality.
- Strengthen the sense of the Comboni missionary community.

4.2. In our doing

REPORTS OF THE SECRETARIATES

4.2.1. Missionary Animation:

A.- Goals achieved since the last Chapter.

- At this very moment there is a person who devotes himself to propagate "Aguiluchos" magazine.
- More personnel working in the museum and temporal expositions, specially, in Madrid.
- A Comboni brother of the Province has been nominated to design and maintain the Web Site of the Combonis in Spain and a Comboni father for Mundo Negro Digital, Edimune, Aguiluchos and museum Site.
- The missionary animation, more often each time, is being done in coordination with different organisms and congregations (SCAM) (United Service of MA). The SCAM directory has been updated.
- The African Museum (Madrid), has started the Summer Workshops and the world cribs expositions.
- The African Museum Daniel Comboni (Barcelona) has started the Bibles Itinerant Exposition, and photography. The Bibles are written in different African languages.
- The MA chart was worked out in 2005 and updated in 2008
- The leaflet called "Third age Missionaries" has been launched.
- The European Assembly on Mission Animation was held in Palencia in the year 2005.

B.- Goals non achieved

- The creation of a "Comboni Platform" made of families, friends, benefactors, etc... that could collaborate in the mission animation in each community.
- Very little impact in the Parishes Mission Animation.
- We were not able to increase the number of subscriptions to our magazines through our communities.
- We were not able to stop the dropping of subscribers. Mundo Negro: 56.000 monthly; Aguiluchos: 27.000 monthly. There is nobody dedicated to their marketing.

C.- Perspectives for the future in MA field in Spain.

To favour a planned rotation in order to assure the continuity of our works. To increase the internationality with youth forces, having in mind the age of our missionaries.

- To continue working with the SCAM as a valid mean of missionary animation.
- Restart the missionary animation in cloister convents.
- To prepare properly those who come back to the Province.
- To look thoroughly for someone who can specialize in media field (journalism, internet...).
- To launch campaigns to get new subscribers to our magazines.

Youth Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation

We witness an “epochal change” which shapes our way of feeling, perceiving and living. The quick changes challenge us. The different youth trends go much more with the transformations than with the habits of the adults and institutions. To become aware that the youth are an opportunity for the missionary service is to recognize that they are the subjects of the Youth Vocation Promotion (YVP). Nevertheless, our major challenge lies on trusting and convoking the youth for the mission.

a) – Goals achieved

The pastoral activity with Aguiluchos has taken place at a good rhythm in our houses of Granada and Barcelona. This activity was stopped in Palencia and Madrid. Madrid and Valencia restarted the Aguiluchos meetings in 2008. The summer activities have been held with success in Granada and Barcelona (Esplai). In Granada there is the adolescent Nkembo group. The children and youth activities entered to form part of the YVP in 2008

The YVP Plan was approved in September 2005. We have maintained a positive and open mood with the youth in the YVP. Our presence has been meaningful in pilgrimages to ‘Guadalupe’ with different dioceses, ‘Javieradas’ with others and one held by us, meetings of different youth pastoral groups at national level and other meetings in colleges and meaningful groups such as “Madrid Rumbo al Sur”. The “Pascuas Misioneras” have been held and lived more in Granada with our postulants and the Comboni sisters’ students. The COV (Vocation Orientation Centre) has maintained exchange of letters with many youth through e-mail and has accompanied a few of them in the process of discerning their vocation. The person in charged has been writing the section “A contracorriente” (against the stream) in our Mundo Negro magazine. The Provincial Assembly of 2008 accepted that immigrants youth who live in Spain could become Comboni missionaries. And to finish off, we want to point out the creation of a team of YVP of three members since the beginning of 2009.

In respect to Basic Formation (BP), the formation team has been strengthened: two members have been assigned to it even if we consider that the whole community is a formation community. A few numbers of youth have passed through the Postulancy. Actually we have two first year postulants in Granada. The atmosphere between the members of the BF and YVP is good; it helps to program activities together: in the Postulancy, with ‘Aguiluchos’, ‘Pascua Misionera’ and summer camp.

A monographic course on YVP is going to be held in the coming Provincial Assembly of this year 2009.

b) – Goals non achieved

Activities with ‘Aguiluchos’ have not continued in Palencia.

Mission meetings and workshops have not been held during the last few years because lack of participants.

c) – Perspectives for the future

Search for ways of convoking youth and enrich the WEB pages.

Go on taking part in pilgrimages, ‘Javieradas’ and youth meetings.

To live and make living the monographic course on the YVP in the Provincial Assembly of 2009.

To program special moments for the youth during the ‘Pascuas Misioneras’.

During summer: to hold the ‘Aguiluchos’ camping, to accompany the youth who ask for a mission experience (this year will be held in Guatemala and Nicaragua), to follow

‘Madrid Rumbo al Sur’, to take part in Limone’s meeting with people who has showed certain signs of vocation and to prepare the ‘Año Compostelano’ 2010.
To encourage the following up of monitors who work with us.
The BF and YVP secretariat will be restructured, including in it the Aguiluchos activities.

4.2.3. Economy. Report of the Assembly of bursars to the Chapter

a) Goals achieved on the economic field during these years:

- The implementation of the Total Common Fund.
- The increment of the provincial aid to missionaries and their projects.
- The increment of the fund for emergencies destined to help provinces in need.

b) Goals non achieved

- We realized that being under the umbrella of the Province do not care much about our expenses especially during this time of crisis. While people are suffering we do not notice it much.
- The number of copies of our magazines is dropping steadily. That should make us aware of the danger there is for our future. ¿Where will our income come for the future mission from?

c) Perspectives for the future:

To help more the missions every time.

Evangelization

A new meaning of the mission is getting through; it sees as fundamental the fight against injustice, the inter-religious dialog, etc...

We have formed this secretariat alter the 2008 Assembly (see Assembly 2008 Report). Laity, JPRC (Justice-Peace-Respect of Creation) and Immigrants put us in front of three signs of the time:

- Service to immigrants: it implies the work of confreres with total dedication, a limited time or occasionally. This service is done together with Diocesan Organisms or associations which are at their service. We collaborate with them in our different communities, welcome them and work with them in the pastoral field.
 - Service to CLM (Comboni Lay Missionaries): the Comboni Fathers collaborate supporting and animating the CLM. The Province has appointed some members to their service: a Delegate and zone followers of the movement. Our desire is that the CLM movement may grow in autonomy in the terms it is walking along.
 - Service of JPRC: there is a growing concern about Human Rights, numerous organizations and associations of the civil society, different campaigns about environment, just trading, ethical bank... and the institutions inside the Church which work on these themes. Justice and Peace of the CEE (Spanish Episcopal Conference), JPRC of the Confer (Religious Confederation).
- All these fields open us to new ways of being present and of work. It is a process where we can learn a lot from.

1.- Goals achieved

Immigrants:

- The dedication of a team (two people) to immigrants in Moncada, and cooperation

with Valencia Diocesan Caritas has been guaranteed during these six years. Our collaboration with the local Church has been very good. In Madrid, we started working with the Delegation of Immigrants in the African chaplaincy of the Archdioceses. We collaborate with Karibu and Apla too.

- The Province has assumed, ratified and taken as a priority this work in the six year Plan (Assembly 2004). Information about the project has been given in all the different Provincial Assemblies.
- Lines of action in the social and pastoral fields are being defined. It is very important the work of sensitization that is being done to the local Church in regard to immigrants. Formation of other pastoral agents and animators of immigrants is being taken care of (Assembly 2006).

JPRC

- It is a priority in the six year Plan. An Assembly was held on JPRC in 2004.
- Sensitization of the Comboni communities, (leaflets, bulletins, documents...)
- Formation of JPRC committee (2007), taking part in groups JPRC (AEFJN, JP Confer...), and other campaigns. Our media magazines show how our Comboni missionary commitment to JPRC is.
- Very little commitment is shown in our ways of living and in our Missionary Animation.

CLM

- The CLM have assumed responsibilities and tasks in the movement. They have been reflecting on it from the year 2003 till 2005. The functioning is good, the members are very realistic, regarding to what they can do.
- The movement has calmed down, and it is growing slowly (6 new members).
- After a stop, there has been new members who have gone to the missions (with greater social guarantees) and greater economic help of the CLM. Total: 36 CLM (5 in missions) and other 8 in phase of discernment
- There is a good collaboration with other provinces (Portugal).

2.- Goals non achieved

Immigrants

- Integration of immigrants in the Spanish Church reality and sensitization of the local Church and society on this matter.
- The house of Moncada is far away and it is difficult to have a full dedication to immigrants from it.
- There has not been any Comboni meeting of Comboni members working on this field.

JPRC

- Little participation in campaigns, shows and social claims.
- Little contacts on JPRC between European Provinces during these six years. Only two meetings (2004 and 2008). There was said that we wanted to work ON LINE on this field.
- Actions with other Spanish groups working on this field are lacking.
- Our economic budgets, structures, houses,... go their way, it is difficult to question them from JPRC.

CLM

- The CLM have certain fears to go to missions (aims). Those fears are economical,

Social Security, relations with the Comboni communities, way of reinserting themselves once they come back home.

- The CLM have had some setbacks towards achieving autonomy. They have to walk towards total economical independence.

3.- Perspectives for the future

Inmigrants

- We want to strengthen our services at Provincial level, in collaboration with the local Church, always having in mind our possibilities with the personnel and continuity.
- To take part at the World Social Forum and at the Comboni Social Forum too.

JPRC

- To think consecrated life from JP dimensions.
- To take part in JP groups, both at social and Church levels.
- To take part in campaigns and activities which are according to our charism.

CLM

- To tend towards a greater collaboration with the CLM advocating for a greater internationalization of the movement.
- To go on thinking about the movement, making the steps necessary so that the MCCJ get to know it. We share the same charism and not only a way of living (consecrated and lay). To be united with the CLM internationally.
- The missionary animation must present the lay vocation.
- The Comboni fathers collaborate in the following up and animation of the CLM.
- The CLM want to be an association of lay people in the years ahead. It will demand from them formation, collaboration and availability.
- We want to collaborate with what is our own (mission, nations of the South...), to be present in the civil society forums, to work on line and be updated as much as possible.
- The CLM is an International movement in the making.

We have the task of preparing our directory of Evangelization; learn to work in a secretariat with groups who present diversity.

Ongoing Formación

1.- Goals achieved since the last Chapter

- In the six years Plan a plan of LF (Lasting Formation) was prepared and followed up by the Provincial Council.
- A superiors' formation meeting is organized annually. This year the CMS (Comboni Missionary Sisters) were invited.
- A meeting for the newcomers to the Province was held.
- Various meetings have been held to prepare and elaborate the Ratio Misionis work in the Province.
- The Provincial Assembly is always preceded by a day of LF on a specific theme.
- Something has been prepared to help us studying themes like: community discernment and St. Paul.

2.- Goals non achieved

- A LF team has not been implemented till 2008.

- It is absolutely necessary to insist on LF of each person, using readings, reflexions, etc... for the personal growth of everyone.
- Even if there is an improvement, spiritual direction is not yet assumed by all.

3.- Perspectives for the future

Provincial program on LF for the years 2008-2011.

Aims:

- To awake personal sensibility of the confreres for the LF.
- To animate Comboni spirituality and religious consecrated life.
- To encourage reflection about world, society, Church and Institute events.
- To help communities' life and relations strengthening and favouring interpersonal and community moments of relaxation and joyous happenings.
- To help aged confreres to know and assumed their own personal reality.
- To understand the new reality of the youth in Spain so that our vocational message to them could be possible.
- To pay attention to special personal situations.

Means

- LF days during the Provincial Assembly.
- The Province organizes the annual retreat for all the members every two years.
- Course for the newcomers. It is customary to take part to a week course organized by the Superior Institute of Pastoral Theology of Madrid and to a weekend to introduce them to the Spanish and Province reality.
- Superiors' Assembly in collaboration with the Provincial.
- Texts for retreats and community meetings on LF (3 or 4 each year)

Themes for these texts: St. Paul, Mission, Third age, Community Project and life revision. Other that can arise in the provincial Assemblies.

¿What mission in Europe?

- We favour and feel the need of internationalizing our Province. At the moment internationality practically does not exist. How to get to it? that is the problem!
- 'Ad gentes': mostly immigrants. Our work should not replace local Church responsibility.
- Instead of having big structures, we should live more in insertion contexts, near to the people.
- The YVP should be one of our priorities in Europe. Ways of collaboration between European provinces should be fostered and strengthen.
- JPRC: It is a priority, but always carried out in collaboration with other organizations more competent.
- Give more importance to MA in theological centres, short courses for youth, seminaries, etc.
- Our mission is to be loud speakers in the local European Church of other young churches more needed than the ones here.

- ***Relations with local Church:***

- We consider collaboration with the local Church having always in mind that we have our charism and should never replace the diocesan clergy. We must be bridges

between young churches and the one here.

- To enter in parishes and colleges is more difficult every day. MA today embraces many other fields and the local Church asks us a more competent and specific service in those fields.

- To encourage collaboration with the local Church in the work with immigrants.

- We should not fall in the same tendency present in the local Churches: sacramentalization. We should not limit our service to celebrating Masses but should bring our charism to the local churches.

- We must make every effort to enter into the local Church, giving our service in whatever we can, hoping to be able to bring, little by little, our charism into our action.

- ***Life style:***

- The image we give does not match with the idea people have of a religious and missionary, over all because of our structures.

- We should rethink the way our structures are at the service of the mission. It does not mean that we have to give up what we have but to direct it to the service of the people.

- Structures are not the problem but the people. One can live in a bourgeois manner in small structures too.

- We acknowledge that it is necessary to have our own structures as a platform for doing missionary animation. It is very difficult to create them, in a stable way, in the parishes.

- Our structures weight on us more and more every day and we should start thinking about getting rid of some of them (for instance, Palencia).

- ***Vocational climate in our communities:***

- We lack power to call and convoke the youth; today's youth is not attracted by offers of vows and consecration "ad vitam". The Comboni missionary is ready to work in this field and, as a matter of fact, various activities are done in our houses.

Other matters

- ***Our collaboration with the Comboni family.***

- Our collaboration with the MSC though it has been cooling down a bit during these last years it is good now. With the CLM, even if at times it is a bit confused, it is good now too. We are open and favourable to collaborate with both of them. In fact it is what we do in a good way in Granada.

- Collaboration with other missionary institutes: it is good; we collaborate especially through the SCAM and in the JP field. The SCAM has its own limits even though new ways are being open.

- ***Attention to the sick and aged of the Province.***

- It is not a problem for the moment.

- There are some people who do not enter fully into these categories, but they need help, respect and attention seeing that their work capacity has diminished and that they have their own problems. The Province must look for personnel to look after them and see that the house of Moncada starts being used for the purpose that was built for.

- The Province needs to look ahead and think of personnel to solve this problem.

- ***Rotation and difficulty of a planned programming.***

- There are key places in the Province that need qualified personnel to run them

and there is the need to ask and convince those persons to come back home. Dialog must be done with all before their coming back to the Province and respect their needs and will. The same is said for rotation at Provincial level and when going back to mission.

- Everyone should be ready for rotation and nobody should be a “sacred cow”. There should not be rush making rotation so that planning of the Provinces may not suffered.

- ***Special situation of some confreres:***

- The confrere with difficulties who is member of the Institute and of a community should be treated with respect, comprehension, charity and confidentiality.

- The Provincial and his Council are competent in this area.

- ***Balance between human promotion and spirituality.***

- ***More effectiveness and union between JPRC and immigrants.***

- ***We acknowledge the value of EDIMUNE.***

- ***The Procura must be a bridge between North and South***

Chapter themes

II- RATIO MISIONIS

Introduction

Highlights:

- Desire for personal and community conversion; it means, to pass from words to deeds, from documents to concrete actions, from head to heart, from individualism to work in common, witnessing with our lives and more human conditions.

- Spirituality and Word of God as moving power and the return to Comboni as source of inspiration.

- Social Church doctrine, human promotion and justice and peace as main elements of our action.

- The steps of the Ratio Misionis have often taken off from a negative point of view and reflect a certain lack of hope.

1.- Spirituality

- Our two main points of reference: Christ Good Sheppard and Comboni. Not only a theoretical knowledge of the Pierced Heart of Jesus Good Sheppard, but a vital mystical experience; Jesus, discover in personal and community prayer and in the most poor and abandoned.

- Cenacle of Apostles: to form communities able to dialog. To be friends trusting each other and work friendly, not looking for rivalry. Not only be humans but friends too no matter the differences of culture, age, race etc. To take and accept the other members of the community from a vision of faith.

- There are conflicts, difficult to reconcile, between the apostolic work demands and community life.

- Spirituality is made and lived in concrete things.
- We are together just to work, program, pray... it seems that all is reduced to formalities. We feel that joyful community dimension considered as something positive and necessary lacks in our communities. Real and important things come out more often in informal relations.... It is then and there when you feel relax and at easy. Simplicity is not our strong point.
- To share more among ourselves our spiritual and faith experience with the Lord. To overcome the fear to be misunderstood. This sharing is the source of knowledge of the members of the community at a very deep level, the level of our consecrated and missionary life.

2.- Identity and Charism

- To identify with our charism. To know the meaning of Ad gentes, Ad pauperes, Ad vitam, Ad extra today; it is not the same as when the time when the Rule of Life was written. To update identity and charism. To go to the most poor, marginalized, spiritually and materially excluded is essential to our identity. To go, meaning, to leave our own country and get near to other peoples and cultures.
- To know better the mentality and values of today's youth to adapt our proposals to their reality, being faithful to the Gospel and to our Comboni identity and charism.
- To collaborate with the CLM, with the MSC and the Comboni Secular branch.
- Our own Comboni communities should be inspired in the simple style of the CEBs, enriching them with the sap of the consecrated and missionary life.

3.- Mission and Evangelization

- We see the need of knowing the social, political and religious reality of our country when we come back from the missions to feel at easy with our environment.
- To collaborate with the local Church in the new social reality in which we live, especially in the fields of missionary animation, youth, immigrants and excluded.
- To strengthen the permanent search and the continuous "walking on" as the criteria that will help us to define our Comboni missionary presence and methodology.
- The wish of having communities that could create a style of life with small structures. Similar to insertion.
- To form lay people without being protagonists. To collaborate with the local Churches and the Comboni family.

4.- Concrete proposals

- To take concrete decisions and to give clear guides for our daily life; to give a clear way for us to walk on and all these said with a prophetic sense and language, according to Jesus, our model.
- That the Capitulars take into consideration the proposals of the base without taking other paths.
- That the Chapter helps us to put into context the mission, to be disciples and missionaries respecting diversity.
- To rediscover Comboni, our martyrs and many other missionaries of the Church and the Institute.
- A more free orientation of the Institute, in line with the Populorum Progressio and the GS putting at the centre God's Kingdom, the poor and the challenges of today's mission.

- More conversion and formation for community work and life, both at the base and lasting formation.
- To make a short document, that gives hope, and shows that we are humans with our richness and miseries.
- To stress attention on the human person and his growing up processes. We are not machines.
- The Chapter must look for and use new ways and images of talking.
- It must have in mind that in Europe there must be another way of being present in a quick changing society. There must be new ways of missionary animation, for instance: the possibility that our youth may go to our missions.
- The Ratio, must put its finger in the wound avoiding going around and around always on the same themes.
- To give us a certain time to put in practice all these and to analyze our work afterwards. Our great risk and worry is continuity.

III - GOVERNMENT

- To maintain the actual model (6 years), with the possibility that the General can be re-elected with an absolute majority (modify the R. of L.).
- It is advisable to unify the Provinces but time has not come yet; we must soak up the idea and unify certain criteria. Multiply bureaucracy diminishes personal to the mission. There should be more sharing between the provinces.
- We agree on keeping the general secretariats of Economy, Basic and Lasting Formation as they are, and make those of Animation and Evangelization at continental level.
- There are forms of acting in the General Direction that gives the impression as if the subsidiary principle has not been assumed. There are differences in the way persons are treated.
- It is necessary more dialogue between General Direction and members of the Institute. Provinces have not sufficient autonomy in front of the GC decisions.
- The government structure is too rigid in a moment when borders are not so important. Would not it be better to distribute the government in areas of competence and activities rather than in provinces, delegations etc.?
- There is not crisis of government but of governors. It is necessary that the concept of authority and Obedience be more evangelical.

IV - FORMATION

1.- Does the model of Comboni formation meet the expectations of today's mission?

- The model, at least theoretically, is valid. In the practice it is more complicated. When you have to evaluate and value a vocation you have to clarify the deep motivations. The aspect of "being" himself (identity) is clear, but the "being" for others (mission), it is not so clear. There is something missing when we try to make possible the following of Christ, the discipleship...
- This method is more complicated when candidates are over 35 years old; in that case new ways of formation should be searched for. The person accepts himself in order to channel all his potentialities. When the person in formation -through the encounters with the formator - accepts himself and feels it is loved by God, then he can love others too.
- We see that some missionaries, young specially, lacks spirit of austerity and

sacrifice when, in mission, have to go far away to attend communities; it can depend on the formation that person has had.

- Discernment at the hour of choosing the formators is very important. Formators must be in good sympathy with the Social doctrine of the Church and documents of the Church on Catholic Education of 1998.
- Too much energy is invested in formation: personnel, changes, fashions...
- Too much is been said about getting into context (enculturation), but very little is done. Those who should have something to say or show us the way are our native confreres.

2.- Are we aware that our missionary life witness has a positive or negative influence in the formation of our candidates?

- Yes, we are aware of that but we don't act accordingly.
- Our witness through our consecrated community and missionary life influences decisively in the formation process of the youth or in the not so young. Where there is not a community living these values it is better not to send youth in formation.
- To influence positively in the youth community spirit, interpersonal relations must change and to know how to cope with conflicts and solve them with dialog must be known.

3.- Suggestions to put in context, at continental level, this formation proposal.

- To create communities-teams to help on the youth vocational formation and animation. This does not mean that all the members of the community are vocational formators or animators but that all of them live and witness their vocation and missionary commitments.
- To invest in the preparation of formators. The course of continental formation is necessary; it can be done once again if any of the formators feels it necessary.
- The Word of God should be the axe of the formation.
- The witness of aged Comboni missionaries convinced of their vocation and with mission enthusiasm at its high is something very good to be present in our formation.
- The missionary experiences are very important in the different stages of formation.
- The Ratio Fundamentalis has still now many valuable things. Others should be updated. The 26 years of age can not be maintained as the maximum limit to enter the Institute.
- The formation communities must be located in areas near the people and with a very well defined pastoral program.
- A positive mission experience is a condition "sine qua non" to be a formator.
- To look for new places where to meet the youth. There must be there a conversion towards youth sensibility. The youth go their own way and we ours.
- To start from them (candidates) and not from our projects.
- To work the youth pastoral at European level (meetings with youth, mission experiences, etc).
- The cycle of formation is very fragmented and there is not continuity, both in the formators and the places. It is necessary guarantee a minimum of continuity to know the person in formation and that the formation work can have a certain guarantee.

Signed:

P. Daniel Cerezo Ruiz, Provincial Superior - Capitular

P. Conrado Franco, Vice-Provincial

P. Francisco José Martín Vargas, Provincial Councillor

P. Ismael Piñón, Provincial Councillor - Capitular
P. Juan Sánchez, Provincial Councillor
Hno. Roberto Misas, Capitular

Madrid, 3rd June, 2009

Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION

The presence of the Comboni Missionaries in Ethiopia can be dated as of 1937 when the Apostolic Prefecture of Gondar was erected. Those missionaries had to leave the country in 1941 due to the ravages of the war and from there the late Mgr. A. Gasparini together with some confreres settled and started the Comboni College in Asmara where previously, as far back as 1888, Fr. Luigi Bonomi (companion of St. Daniel Comboni) and later on Fr. Leo Henriot, in 1894 arrived escaping from the Madhi revolution. Fr. Luigi Bonomi worked until his death in Asmara in 1927.

In 1966 some of these Comboni missionaries moved to the mission of Gondar in the Archdiocese of Addis Abeba. Already in 1971 the first group of novices entered the Novitiate which was established in Awassa. In 1985 the Postulancy was moved from Asmara to Addis Abeba, to the premises of the Provincial House and in 2001 to the new structure in Asko-Gulele while the novitiate in Awassa was suppressed in the same year.

Eritrea, which was a part of the EE Province became a Delegation as of 1 January, 2002.

The Comboni Missionaries arrived in Awassa -Sidamo- in 1964 giving continuity to the previous attempts of evangelization in the zone by the Capuchins and the PIME missionaries who had to leave the missions in 1941. At that time the Sidama Province was part of the Apostolic Prefecture of Negheli Borana under the Apostolic Vicar of Harar. In 1967 Fr. Ceccarini Emilio was appointed Vicar Delegate of this Prefecture and five years later, in 1973 Mgr. A. Gasparini was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Apostolic Prefecture of Awassa and consecrated bishop of the newly erected Apostolic Vicariate of Awassa in 1979.

In the Vicariate of Awassa, the Province worked with the Ghedeo group from 1973 in Arramo and Galcha, at present both them run by the congregation of the Apostles of Jesus, and with the opening of the mission of Qillenso in 1981 the Comboni missionaries established the mission also in the midst of the Gujji people.

The mission of Gilgel Beles, among the Gumuz under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Addis Abeba, began in August 2003.

The main commitments of the Province are: First evangelization and human promotion; mission animation and vocation promotion; and basic formation in the provincial Postulancy.

Out of the many challenges that the social, religious and political situation of Ethiopia pose to our work of Evangelization, we can mention: Ecumenism (a Catholics minority among the Orthodox and an increasing number of Protestant denominations); Inter-Religious Dialogue (increasing expansion of Islam and the presence of African Traditional Religions -ATR-); and Justice and Peace (ever greater gap between the rich and the poor, especially felt in the context of towns).

PRESENTATION OF THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ECCLESIAL SITUATION

"And the Word was made flesh and had his tent pitched among us" Jn. 1: 14

**"Following Christ, the missionary becomes one with the people in their life work and
journey sharing their lot" R.L. 60**

In our journey towards the XVII General Chapter to be held in Rome, during the months of September and October 2009, the Comboni Missionaries in Ethiopia take a time to look at our particular context (R.L. 16.2). Faithful to our Christian vocation and identity, we, Comboni Missionaries pitch a tent among the people God has entrusted to our pastoral care and so that we may proclaim the good news of the Incarnated Word of God in the day to day circumstances among them (Rom. 1: 5), we put our energies at the service of the local Church of Ethiopia.

The Political Context

The Ethiopian socio-political arena presents a complex reality, in relentless change. There are good seeds being sown on the way towards a more democratic and egalitarian society. While these principles of democracy, justice and equality are clearly indicated in the Constitution for the various Ethnic groups and Nationalities of Ethiopia, and serious efforts to bring them about are under way, the practical implementation represents a real difficulty. On the other hand Ethiopian politicians are concerned about the national interests, ready to ascertain a fair give-and-take relationship with other nations, given the geographical strategic relevance of the Country.

Some events have recently affected in a particular way the Socio Political situation in Ethiopia.

- ❖ The National Elections of the year 2005 and other related issues in the aftermath of the Declaration of the Result of the Elections, like public unrest, confrontation, violence, killings, imprisonment of Opposition Politicians, their later release and internal divisions among them...
- ❖ The Celebrations of the Ethiopian Millennium (Jubilee Year 2000) in September 2007. The Millennium celebrations in Ethiopia were inspiring events, moments and opportunities for reconciliation, to promote what has been called the Ethiopian Renaissance and Unity: the release of the main Opposition Leaders, in which the Ethiopian Local Elders played a vital role, gave a beautiful flavour of reconciliation to the political arena.
- ❖ The planned National Elections due in 2010. Both the Governing and the Opposition Parties are active preparing the next National Elections but not

avoiding mutual accusations and counter accusations. After the experience of the last National Elections, some people may feel reluctant to participate.

- ❖ Some opposition groups (OLF -Oromo Liberation Front-, ONLF -Ogaden National Liberation Front...). are engaged in armed conflicts against the Ethiopian Government and other social organizations.

- ❖ The coming to power of the Fundamentalist Islamic Movements in Somalia and the war conflict among the different Somali factions, even after the Military and Political intervention of Ethiopia in Somalia.

- ❖ The unresolved border tension with Eritrea brings instability to the Region of the Horn of Africa.

The Economic Situation

Ethiopia has been recently listed by international organisations and financial institutions among the countries experiencing a relative economic growth. The Ethiopian Government and the nation at large is fighting against poverty and for food security. Their concrete strategies and plans bring positive results. But, at the same time, the rapid growth of the population and the recent Global Recession have their own negative consequences. For example, the remittance from Ethiopian immigrants in USA, Europe, Canada, Australia, Middle East... is decreasing to the detriment of the welfare of many families within the Country. The reduction of certain international aid adds more uncertainty to the already complex economic situation of the Country.

Notwithstanding its rich Natural Resources such as Natural Gas, water for Hydroelectric power, mines... Ethiopia, with a large population above 75 Million people is listed among the poorest countries in the world, with a good number of people in some parts of the country depending on food aid. The big towns have experienced a boom in the construction sector and investments, but this progress can not be developed independently of the Rural Ethiopia which comprises the 80% of the population. A sustainable development program must include the farmers and pastoralist groups because the export revenues (coffee, animal skin, minerals, spices, flowers...) represent a backbone to the foreign currency exchange.

Even if there is a growth in the private sector and among investors, the gap between the few very rich and the majority of poor is widening: unemployment of the youth is on the increase, the non-productive groups (HIV/Aids patients and people with disabilities) suffer from financial constrains.

Finally, it must be said that the high Military costs limit even more the restricted resources of the Country.

The Socio-Cultural Complex

Ethiopia offers a rich variety of unique cultural and historical assets, a source of pride for Ethiopians, like:

- ❖ The proper Annual Calendar and system for counting time;
- ❖ The National Language has been chosen among the many local languages of the Country (Amharic);
- ❖ the price paid by Ethiopia to maintain its own Independence for centuries;
- ❖ Ethiopia's merging as a unified Country after being the melting-pot of different internal and regional movement of Peoples of the Horn of Africa...

These and other important historical facts bring cohesion and promote the coexistence, but there are also intricate situations that bring tension and conflict:

- ❖ The secularism found in the cities, together with its taste of modernisation and globalisation endows the town dwellers with a cosmopolitan world view.
- ❖ Urban life is attracting more and more people from the countryside without offering real possibilities of employment.

The cultural values still imperative in the rural society are watered down especially among the youth and in the urban society. But on the other hand education and a new social sensitivity offer a clear opposition to harmful traditional practices like the female genital mutilation, forced marriage, abductions, etc...

- ❖ In good part of the Country Christianity and Islam have been practiced for centuries while at the same time there are places and groups that remained alien to both.
- ❖ Ethnic identity is strongly felt and while due importance is given to local languages, literature and cultural heritage, at the same time there are manifest signs of tension, tribalism and ethnic centeredness.
- ❖ The pandemic of HIV/AIDS continues to disrupt the daily life of many, though there is a growing social awareness and a greater degree of acceptance of the sickness within families of AIDS victims. At present a number of about 980.000 people are affected by the virus and the death toll for 2008 is estimated to be 1,800,000.
- ❖ The migration of skilled and educated people (brain drain) is alarming. Nevertheless they also contribute to the welfare of their families through the remittance of their salaries.

The Coexistence of Different Religions in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia Christians and Muslims have coexisted since the seventh century. This long history has been marked by hospitality, tolerance and reciprocal cooperation, but occasionally there were events and periods of tension and conflict. In general, among common believers there is mutual respect and tolerance since they are able to work together in social reconciliation initiatives, Justice Peace and HIV/AIDS programs.

Both among Christians and Muslims, there can be also found fundamentalist factions that bring instability, tension and conflict.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church -E.O.T.C.- (43.5%) in recent times has been committed to a strategy of "New Evangelization" with a newly organised catechesis.

The number (18%) of Protestants (Evangelical Christian communities) is growing rapidly experiencing a massive conversion from other Churches.

The Muslims (34%) are more and more engaged in the Socio-Economic-Political life. According to them “this is the best time of Muslim involvement in Ethiopian vicissitudes”. Together with it, the strong Whabist Fundamentalist trend of Islam is making its way into the country and in the Horn of Africa Region at large, by means of a powerful financial assistance from the Middle East and Gulf countries.

These and other features make of Ethiopia a Country where people must be ready for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue with its demands for a delicate, patient and relentless commitment to forgiveness.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church (0.6%) is a small minority present in Ethiopia through Pastoral Programs of Evangelisation and many valuable structures of human promotion. The society at large respects and appreciates the social services rendered by the Catholic Church.

There are dioceses of Oriental Tradition with a greater number of local clergy and religious men and women whereas the number of expatriate personnel is higher in the Vicariates of Latin Rite. In the latter there has been an initial rapid increase on the number of Catholics while the last statistics show that the number of Catholic and Orthodox has diminished to the advantage of Protestant denominations.

Nowadays local vocations in some parts of the Country are still on the increase, but in general in Ethiopia there is a decline in vocations.

The Ethiopian Catholic Church carries on a good number of projects of development and because of this at times is compared and treated as an NGO. Missionaries must get engaged in projects in order to obtain Residence and Work Permits. The Church is waiting for the implementation of the newly promulgated law which rules the NGOs to see how it may affect the services she renders to the society.

In her methodology the Ethiopian Catholic Church is committed to the journey towards a more self-supporting Church.

DATA AND STATISTICS OF THE PROVINCE

“In attaining its purpose the Institute is conscious that the missionaries are the greatest gifts entrusted to it and thus has the greatest care for each one” R.L. 162.1

Confreres per Community			
Total number of communities: 9			
Archdiocese of Addis Abeba	Addis Abeba	Provincial House	3
		Postulancy	3
	Metekel zone	Gilgel-Beles	5
Vicariate of Awassa	Gujji zone	Haro Wato	4
		Qillenso	2
	Sidama	Awassa	6
		Dongora	4
		Fullasa	3
	Teticha	4	
Bishops			2
Further studies and Language study			3
Scholastics			11
Outside community			3
Total			53
Internationality in the Province			
Italians			24
Ethiopians			7
Mexicans			3
Spaniards			2
Togolese			2
Peruvians			1
Portuguese			1
Total			40
Number of Confreres per Age Working in the Province			
80 and above			6
Between 70-79			5
Between 60-69			12
Below 60			17
Age Average			52.63
Total			40
Scholastics	Innsbruck		1
	Lima		2
	Nairobi		3
	Petermarizburg		3
	Sao Paulo		1
	(Cape Coast) Ghana		1
	Total		11

Candidates:

Novices: 4

Postulants: 7

PROVINCIAL SECRETARIATS AND COMMISSIONS

- ❖ Secretariat of Evangelization and On-Going Formation: one secretary two members and two advisers.
- ❖ Secretariat of Finances: one secretary and two members.
- ❖ Secretary of Mission Animation: one secretary and two members.
- ❖ Secretariat of Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation: one secretary and three members.
- ❖ Justice and Peace Commission: one coordinator and two members.
- ❖ Coordinator for Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM).
- ❖ Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenism: two members.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

- ❖ Journey of the *Ratio Missionis*: The Province has been fully involved in the reflection of the *Ratio* from its very beginning as a means of Renewal and On-going Formation. This commitment has helped the communities to be more aware of the need for a personal and communitarian renewal (“*Let it be seen that you are serious in your conversion*” Mt. 3: 8). The Ad-hoc Commission participated in all meetings organized at continental level and kept the Province in touch with the journey of the entire Institute.
- ❖ All communities have been faithful in the timely organization of the community project of life and as much as possible the Provincial Council has strived to keep a sufficient number of confreres in all the communities according to the different needs and pastoral demands.
- ❖ The internationalization of the communities (R.L. 18) could not always be achieved due to unexpected and unavoidable circumstances like the death of three confreres, sickness, rotation and other needs of the communities within the Province.
- ❖ Evangelization: According to the priorities of the Six Year Plan the Province has attained the following plans:
 - Gumuz: strengthen the presence by the establishment of one community of 5 confreres in view of a future second community in the area.
 - Developments in the Gujji area: the communities of Haro Wato and Qillenso have experienced a frequent change of personnel, but notwithstanding this difficulty both communities have been given the necessary confreres according to the pastoral needs.
- ❖ Re-qualification of commitments:
 - Sidama:
 - Along the years of service in the Vicariate of Awassa the Province has handed over the following missions and commitments: Arramo, Galcha, Shafina, Awassa (primary school and Cathedral Parish), Tullo, and Arosa (as it was foreseen in the last Six Year Plan this commitment was handed over to the local Church. The official handing over took place at the end of year 2007).

- Division of Teticha: the process of the division of the parish has been slowed down. In their on going discussion, the Apostolic Vicar and the OFM Cap. have not yet decided about the possible taking over of the mission.
- Guji: Qillenso and Sooddu-Abala: the Local Ordinary has taken the responsibility of the mission of Sooddu-Abala. The Comboni Community of Qillenso now serves in Qillenso, Gosa and the urban center of Adola (Kebre-Mengist).
- Other commitments with the Vicariate of Awassa:
 - Awassa Catholic Secretariat: the untimely death of Fr. Carlo Giana, appointed *ad personam*, created a vacuum in the administration of the Vicariate of Awassa. The Province sensitive to this situation has been able so far to provide a confrere for this office.
 - Major Seminary: one confrere has been responsible for the formation of the diocesan major seminarians, at present working together with a diocesan priest.
 - Pastoral Center and Vicariate Youth Coordination: shortage of personnel is reflected on the fact that these two important ministries which ought to have two persons working full time, have been entrusted to one Comboni confrere.

According to the Six Year Plan, the Province is moving towards the handing over of one of these commitments in the near future.

- ❖ Other pastoral areas of concern:
 - Urban ministry: the communities of Qillenso, Teticha Haro Wato, Dongora and Gilgel Beles have given consistency to the urban centers around the missions. The activities focus on the pastoral attention to the youth who move to those centers to complete secondary school or college (cfr. R.L. 59.2).
 - Ecumenism: some confreres were engaged in the ministry of ecumenism and in some instances a more serene interaction with the Orthodox Church and with the growing number of Protestant Churches has been developed (R.L. 67).
 - Inter-religious dialogue with Islam: the Six Year Plan included a mandate to deepen the reflection on Islam. The Province has taken part in the initiatives organized by the Institute but due to different circumstances, other initiatives of on-going formation on Islam within the Province could not be implemented.
- ❖ Basic Formation: there is an on-going reflection in the Province, particularly done by the secretariat of formation about the modalities of vocation promotion and a future pre-postulancy as well as an assessment of the journey of the postulancy.
- ❖ Vocation Promotion has been carried out part time by three confreres according to their possibilities in the zones where they work. The secretary of the Secretariat of Basic Formation and formator of the Postulancy is in contact with the candidates and follows them personally.
- ❖ Mission Animation: as it happens with Vocation Promotion, three confreres are in charge of this ministry and offer their part time service according to their possibilities.

- ❖ Justice and Peace: the provincial commission of Justice and Peace has worked actively in its task of creating awareness among the confreres on matters regarding Justice and Peace (R.L. 61.1): participation in the Social Forum in Nairobi, helping in the organization of a workshop on Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese of Addis Abeba and in the Vicariate of Awassa, giving inputs during the Provincial Assemblies and passing material on Justice and Peace to the communities.
- ❖ The secretariat of Evangelization and Commission of On-Going Formation has been restructured and kept its commitments of helping the confreres organizing the planned activities: Provincial Assemblies, Comboni Days, Age groups and Local Superiors meetings (R.L. 101), zonal retreats, spiritual exercises, distribution of documents,...
- ❖ Collaboration (R.L. 19)
 - CMS: the Province has experienced a positive collaboration with the CMS at provincial level and in the places where both congregations work together;
 - CLM: the Province had the chance of accompanying a Lay Comboni Missionary from the DSP and kept in contact with other CLM groups in other Provinces.
 - With the local Church: by welcoming in our communities local priests, deacons and seminarians in formation; by financial collaboration with the local Churches; by giving qualified services to other religious institutions (AWCS, CMRS, CFIPT - Capuchin Franciscan Institute of Philosophy and Theology- just to mention but a few); by working hand in hand and providing formation to catechists and other pastoral agents.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

- ❖ The concept of Merging of Provinces and Delegations has been raised and is still under discussion in the Institute. The Ethiopian Province is making a journey and is on the process to balance and re-qualify its activities as a committed response and involvement in the Institute's option towards merging of Provinces and Delegations. Yet, there are some previous questions to be addressed: with whom are we going to merge? What are the steps towards it? Is the numbers of confreres in Ethiopia enough to remain a Province? Is the province going to become a Delegation? What is the minimum number of members that makes a Province and a Delegation? The Province will wait for clear indications from the General Chapter.
- ❖ The revision and update of the Provincial Directory (R.L. 131.1) to be passed on to the next provincial administration.
- ❖ The future plan of the Province foresees:
 - The project of opening a new mission among the Gumuz.
 - The division of the mission of Teticha and Daye.
 - The conclusion of the process towards the establishment of a pre-postulancy.
 - To find and prepare a new Provincial Bursar.

- The re-qualification: to hand over a parish or another Vicariate Office in the Vicariate of Awassa.
 - Regarding the implementation of the TCF, the Province will wait for the final directives from the General Chapter .
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Italia

Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus - Italian Province

Report for the 2009 General Chapter

SHORT INTRODUCTION

In drafting the *Provincial Report* we followed the pattern suggested by the Pre-capitular Committee. The text has been written confronting ourselves with the six year provincial planning 2005-10 and taking into account reminders, proposals and themes presented by previous reports (Chapter 2003, Inter-Capitular Assembly 2006, the Charter of the Secretariat of MA/EV, provincial Assemblies etc). This draft was then sent to all confreres for their examination, both on the individual and community level, for possible comments, clarifications, additions. The whole was reviewed, discussed and approved at an extraordinary meeting of the PC – held together with the elected delegates to the General Chapter - and revised a last time. The emerging picture does not claim to exhaust the complexity and riches of the Italian Province and of the life of its members, but we believe it faithfully mirrors the present situation.

The second part of the report, “*General Chapter Themes*” is a summary of the confreres’ replies - at a community and zonal level – to the questions originally laid out by the Pre-capitular Commission, plus some modifications that wanted to take into account a better contextualization of the same. The four synthesis were reviewed and then summarized in the final text as it appears here, trying to highlight the responses that gathered more consensus, without, however, ignore or set aside other significant contributions.

A. THE ITALIAN PROVINCE

1. POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL AND ECCLESIAL REALITIES

Italy is a State of southern Europe and a Republic. It counts more than 60 million inhabitants. The number of Italians living abroad but still possessing Italian citizenship is estimated around 4 million people. It is a founding member of the European Union and has participated in all the major treaties of European unification, including the entry into the Euro Zone in 1999. It is also a founding member of NATO, Council of Europe and Western European Union, adheres to the UN, is part of the G7, G8 and OCSE.

In 2008 life expectancy at birth was 78.8 years for men and 84.1 for women. Italy’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product) *pro capite* is \$ 31.022. Thirteen % of the Italian population is considered to be poor, forced to survive on less than half the Italian average income, i.e. less than 500-600 Euros a month. In our country 30.2% of families with three or more children are spoken of as being poor, of these 48.9% live in the South (2006). In Italy Immigrants are about 4 millions: one million are Romanians, followed by Albanians (402.000), Moroccans (366.000, but the total presence from the so called ‘Arabic Africa’ amounts to 599.000, 220.000 people are from sub-Saharan Africa, China and Ukraine (150.000), Filipinos (105.000) etcetera.

All statistical sources confirm the following: the remarkable and overall presence of foreign citizens and their strong annual increase; the relevance of women paralleling the one of men; the greater strength of attraction is found in the Centre and Northern Italy regions; a fast growing presence in the South; the persistent need for additional manpower; the growing trend towards stable forms of presence; the increasing in family settlements and of the role of children and of second generations; the plurality of their countries of origin and of cultural and religious traditions. Everything suggests that immigrants will remain in Italy permanently and will increase more and more in number: all these reasons provide a structural dimension to immigration and Italy is among the top countries for number of admittances of immigrants in Europe. The fast migration process as well as the emergence of new poverties have triggered the rise of racist and xenophobic trends in various strata of the population and have led to an increased concern about incidents of intolerance and physical, verbal and cultural violence towards foreigners.

Such climate is reflected in the immigration laws, characterized by increased repression and mistrust towards strangers, implementing restrictive measures often discriminatory in nature.

97% of Italians are baptized according to the rites of the Catholic Church. 87% of the population continues to declare themselves as Catholics though only 35% are practicing. The discrepancy between those who plead themselves as Catholics and those practicing, albeit less than other Western European countries, is remarkable, as shown also by their views on abortion, assisted fecundation, civil unions, biological will, and so on. As in many other Western countries, the process of secularisation is increasing, especially among young people. The Catholic Church, is extensively present throughout the country, but with some striking differences - in terms of structure, organization and economic opportunities - that still reflect the North-South divide. The Church also suffers at times a lack of courage and leadership or, according to others, an excessive dependence of the Episcopal Conference in respect of the Holy See.

The “*Missio*” Foundation is the point of reference for all activities that relate to mission and to cooperation between Churches. It includes various bodies of communion, cooperation and consultation in which the missionary Institutes partake; there they find consideration and hearing. It is worth noticing the policy of favouring the going away from Africa and Eastern European countries of priests and nuns who come to live and operate in Italy (some 2,500 present in a stable manner). This is often accomplished by paying little notice to economic aspects (especially for religious Sisters) and to the difficulties involved in dialogue and mutual understanding on a cultural and religious/pastoral level. The fragmentation and division that politicians of Christian inspiration have shown in recent years is a worrying factor, highlighting an apparent moral crisis that leads many to wonder what has happened to the Church’s Social Doctrine.

2. STATISTICS OF PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITIES OF THE ITALIAN PROVINCE (as to the 1st of March 2009)

What is the image that the Italian Province casts within the Institute, at least by looking at the statistics? The average age of its members (71 years) and the scarcity of young people and vocations are undoubtedly striking. Many notice the large number of elderly and sick people present in the Province and praise the commitment shown by the Province in discharging the service of welcoming and caring for them. A mainly ‘taking care of’ image, which is at odd with the one we enjoy inside the Italian Church, the

missionary world and the missionary Institutes. We are held, in fact, in high esteem because of our mission competence, vision and creativity. Some confreres command respect on the national level, though they are also looked upon as an uncomfortable presence, at times. Many initiatives of 'networking', also on an ecclesial level, do not take off or have continuity unless the Comboni missionaries take part in them or support them actively. Because of these reasons many of us do not accept that our Province may be recognized almost exclusively for an average high age, understood as a sign of frailty and decline.

	Number	Average Age	Assignment	Nationality
PERSONNEL	256	71,1		
<i>PRIESTS</i>	203	71,7	<i>2 outside community 4 at home 7 in other Provinces</i>	<i>3 foreigners</i>
<i>BROTHERS</i>	47	72,3	<i>2 at home 2 in other Provinces</i>	<i>1 foreigner</i>
<i>SCOLASTICS</i>	5	33,4		
<i>BROTHERS / CIF</i>	1	30		
<i>NOVICES</i>	0			
<i>POSTULANTS</i>	4		<i>2 candidates for priesthood 2 candidates for Brothers</i>	
<i>COMMUNITIES</i>	23		<i>2 with less than 3 members</i>	

<i>Years</i>	<i>Italians</i>	<i>in IP</i>
<i>90 or more</i>	8	6
<i>85 - 89</i>	64	45
<i>80 - 84</i>	86	41
<i>75 - 79</i>	94	33
<i>70 - 74</i>	113	29
<i>65 - 69</i>	142	34
<i>60 - 64</i>	63	11
<i>55 - 59</i>	61	19
<i>50 - 54</i>	46	15
<i>45 - 49</i>	31	5
<i>40 - 44</i>	27	9
<i>35 - 39</i>	13	3
<i>30 - 34</i>	9	5
<i>under 30</i>	1	1
<i>Total</i>	758	256

3. OUR JOURNEY SINCE THE LAST CHAPTER: achievements and shortcomings

We can compare our Province to a blanket increasingly short: if you pull on one side, the other side remains uncovered. Several communities have insufficient personnel to enable them to fulfil their objectives, even when it comes to qualified commitments and services. We would need more bursars, superiors, vocation promoters, mission animators, confreres working for the CAA (Elderly and Sick People Care Centres). Rotation is a slow process becoming more and more of a challenge, re-qualification is difficult, carrying out plans a task increasingly arduous. Despite these difficulties, there has been no lack of desire in trying to implement the directives of the Chapter, in keeping initiatives going, as well as in the planning and implementation of proposals aiming at new ways leading to a significant missionary activity and presence. Without forgetting that, in Italy as in Europe, the advocacy and lobbying activities called for by the last Chapter are becoming more and more a priority in the light of 'global mission': many of the problems and misfortunes of Africa and other countries of the South find their origin in Europe and in America.

Three were the main challenges put forward in our **Six years-Plan**:

- 1) better focussing of our commitments, bearing in mind the concrete situation of many of our communities (that is, by measuring the ideals with our strength and real possibilities).
- 2) starting a gradual and inevitable revision/reduction of our commitments, a task which all Provinces had been asked to take up;
- 3) helping each other - elderly and young people – in living out our vocation to the best, continuing to feel and be missionaries in every season of our life.

The first challenge will be examined as we go through the various activity sectors. The second challenge has been a difficult one to achieve. There is undoubtedly a difficulty among us in understanding (not so much with our mind, but with our heart) that we cannot continue to maintain the same number of communities and commitments that we have had so far. The desire to maintain the status quo would inevitably result in a further weakening of the communities and in asking too much of some confreres already overburdened. That is said without forgetting that many of the elderly confreres in the IP are still offering their time and efforts in carrying out various valuable tasks. The third challenge is still an open agenda, but the awareness among us of the 'quality of life' issues has grown lately.

3.1. Missionary Animation / Evangelization

This was the area the PC was more concerned about at the time of drafting the Provincial Planning; for such reason it was decided to strengthen the Secretariat, some communities and sectors of activity.

1. *The Charter of missionary Animation* was revised after a laborious process of consultation. It is not only a 'how to do things' charter, but it bears a vision for the future and takes into consideration the reflection process of these recent years about *our being missionaries* everywhere and in relation to our mission in Europe today.
2. More attention has been given to the *return* of confreres to the Province of origin and to the related proposals for refreshing courses and on-going formation.

3. Efforts continue - with their ups and downs - to create or maintain some communities as better 'qualified' places for various forms of mission animation.
4. *The Peace Missionary Caravan* - proposed also as a networking attempt with other Missionary Institutes, organizations, church bodies and lay people - marked a significant step forward in working with ecclesial and civil organizations.
5. Our participation in other ecclesial and missionary organizations (in particular the CIMI and SUAM) has been fair.
6. *Youth Animation* by the missionary animator - recognized as being necessary and urgent - is still awaiting further inputs and developments.
7. *Mass Media*: it is worth mentioning the money and personnel investment involved in the process of transforming the CCA into a Multimedia Centre (see the launch of the *web radio* amongst other things), the optimizing of resources and improving synergies and collaborations with lay people (also in view of an inevitable future weakening of our own confreres' presence). Unfortunately, our means of communication still remain little appreciated by several confreres.
8. *LCM and LC*. The provincial policy regarding LCM and LC was clarified as we tried to consolidate the existing reality. The path towards self reliant "Lay Comboni" people is still laborious, even if we do have some valid groups of laity engaged in various fields, often in close collaboration with local Comboni communities and their activities.

Community of families (Palermo). After a long and laborious process of consultation and confrontation inside the MA / EV (Secretariat and Assembly), VP, Lay Committee and PC - their common consensus and support for the new initiative encouraged the beginning of a first experience of a community of families of Lay Comboni people, living in one of our structures. These families want to live a life style of sharing, hospitality to the needy and sobriety, expressed in the choice of a life in common (though each family enjoys an independent space of its own) and in the gradual sharing of spiritual and material goods. They do this drawing on the early Christian communities and translating it into a Comboni-missionary lay style of life and presence. The community is also a place of missionary animation and work with the youth (in close collaboration with us and the Comboni Sisters), as well as a possible accommodation for the preparation, departure and return home of LCM.

A *second community* is in the process of being established in the North, enjoying similar spirit, objectives and criteria (this time in a residential structure owned by a Charity).

9. *Immigrants*. The two provincial commitments are continuing: the community at Castelvoturno - with its various activities of pastoral nature, of hospitality, shelter, support and defence of the rights of the most vulnerable and exploited among immigrants – and the ACSE commitment, whose work has been well known for some years. Worthy of notice is the existence of various forms of attention, presence and hospitality practiced by a good number of communities. All in all, the attention to the needs and expectations of immigrants has known quite a progress in the Province as a whole.

10. *Justice and Peace*. We continue our fruitful presence and collaboration with the JP Commission of the CIMI (The Conference of Missionary Institutes in Italy) as well as at local level.

11. We contribute with qualified personnel, equipment and other forms of support to the activities of EMI and MISNA (both inter-congregational bodies).

12. We continue some forms of collaboration with the Comboni Sisters (ACSE activities, the JP Committee, Caravan and similar initiatives, organization of the Limone Symposia).

3.2. Basic Formation and Vocation promotion.

It is the sector that has suffered most because of the decrease in personnel and of other hardly predictable events, together with the difficulty in finding suitable confreres for the necessary rotation. Needless to say that the sector is vital to our future!

The European Novitiate was transferred to Portugal. The Postulancy has one formator only. One of the three existing GIM centres lacks a full-time confrere. The proposal of working towards a community where vocation promotor, formator and missionary animator work together ('vocation communities') has proved difficult to implement. Requests for a greater collaboration between the MA and VP remain still mainly unanswered. There are encouraging signs as well:

1. Vocations' promotion has been strengthened in the South.
2. The Scholasticate, now located in Casavatore (Naples) has proved an overall positive and enriching experience for the IP.
3. The GIM Charter is being revised..
4. Collaboration with the Comboni Sisters is more pronounced in the field of vocation promotion. It has its official times of common sharing, programming and evaluation.
5. Some communities are still able to offer a degree of openness to proposals for young people, often with the help of the Comboni laity.

3.3. On-going Formation

We tried to give new impulse to the Community Charter, even as a means of on-going formation. Traditional initiatives (spiritual exercises and meetings for different age groups) have carried on as usual. The process of the *Ratio Missionis*, which was generally welcomed as a positive instrument of sharing and renewal, was understood and used also as a primary means of on-going formation. It has therefore taken up energy and time that would otherwise have been used by other proposals and issues. The same holds true for sectors and zone meetings, which have continued to be held. All provincial and sectors Assemblies have always offered moments of on-going formation as part of their program.

3.4. Economy

Proposals for training of local bursars and communities on ethical demands related to economy, solidarity and justice, had to take into account the excessive work load of the province Economato. Inputs were also offered during provincial councils and provincial assemblies, but it was not possible to do it so systematically on a local community level. Worthy of notice is the meeting of the various Secretariats on some ethical aspects of economics and finance, held at the end of 2006. Such meeting led to the appointment of a commission for the investments (including ethical aspects) and to a gradual increase in investments in ethical funds.

3.5. Care and support of sick and elderly confreres

A third centre was opened in Brescia, by restructuring part of the existing building so as to increase accommodation and improved facilities in view of lightening the work of the centres of Milan and Verona (Verona ordinarily assists some forty confreres, Milan slightly less). Rebbio and Arco have had in turn to raise the standards of care. Substantial improvements have been made to the houses of Milan and Rebbio. A new centre for elderly confreres confined to bed - built to current standards and criteria for such patients care – is being planned. A decision due to the fact that the present structure of Verona is not in compliance with regional laws and regulations. A restructuring of the present building has been ruled out because it could not meet in any way the conditions required by such rules.

Solutions for our patients suffering from Alzheimer are under study. The increased presence of psychologists in our teams has been a valuable improvement in our standards of care.

1. We are still left with a feeling of emergency and of a great difficulty in identifying, assigning and preparing confreres for such service. We feel, as well, the need to find better ways to guarantee a more frequent rotation so as to avoid excessive wearing out and pressure on our confreres who work in these centres.
2. There is still room for improvement towards an ever better human and spiritual accompaniment of the sick and elderly confreres.
3. The level of medical assistance in our centres is more than acceptable and appreciated.

4. OTHER SPECIFIC TOPICS RELEVANT TO THE PROVINCE

4.1. Limone

The criteria of our presence in Limone as well as the opportunities offered for formation and animation were better defined. The exhibition-museum on Daniele Comboni has been updated and translated into a new mass-media trail to help visitors to enter into the mind and heart of Comboni. After a long process the project of a multi-purpose building has been approved. It includes some facilities for pilgrims, a place reserved exclusively for prayer and a hall for conferences / meetings (it can be sub-divided into several halls as needs be).

- **Symposia of Limone:** started in 2006, they wish to be a way to re-actualize Comboni in the light of our mission today, highlighting the new hermeneutics of our charism, with a special focus on our mission in Europe. Organized by the IP in collaboration with the GERT (European Group of theological reflection), the symposia are open to the participation and collaboration of confreres of other Provinces. The results are published in the '*Quaderni*' of Limone.

4.2. Inserted communities / new poverties

In addition to the already existing community of Castelvoturno and to a small presence in Naples (rione "*Sanità*"), we are continuing the dialogue with the diocese of Milan for the opening of a small community in a farmhouse on the outskirts of Varese (building owned by the diocese).

As it has been strongly desired by VP and also appreciated by the Secretariat of MA / EV, it aims to be a place of welcome and of a special 'vocational attraction' for young people wishing to spend time with a community that operates according to a Comboni pastoral strategy and missionary style on the territory (strategy conceived and planned in dialogue with the pastoral agents of the local church). It includes also activities of

social promotion (new poverties / immigrants), in collaboration with local church bodies, enhancing the presence and ministerial testimony of the Comboni brother who will be a member of such community. A similar welcoming of young people – and vocational attraction - can also be found in other communities of insertion.

4.3. Personal and community style of life (structures, sobriety, sharing)

Such topics have been discussed in various assemblies but have not been addressed adequately, yet. The debate has reminded us of the importance of our ‘being’ (not only of our ‘doing’) as well as of a community life consisting not only in common activities. It is not easy to give an assessment of the spiritual life of each confrere; it is easier to note the recurrent thrusts of individualism, legalistic attitudes and the difficulty many have in questioning themselves, rather than noticing the more positive aspects, present in our communities often in a hidden and unobvious ways.

Regarding the use of structures, the present global economic recession (with its impact on aid and donations for the missions) compels us to come to terms more and more with our temptations to lead a middle-class life-style, to reappraise the value of sobriety as well as the importance of a better understanding of the relationship between our structures and their running costs. The number of communities that struggle to close with an active balance and need help from the Province is, in fact, on the increase.

We are still far from achieving a significant practice of Common Fund (which still remains a disputed topic); we do have proposals aiming to a gradual growth in mutual trust, promote a greater sharing in responsibility and implement a policy of greater transparency on a personal, community and provincial levels.

4.4. Welcoming those who suffer in body and spirit

1. We are members of the Association “Ministers of Mercy”, which deals with religious people in need of a diagnosis of some special difficulties, possible residential care and, hopefully, re-insertion in religious life (the “Agape community” is part of it). The collaboration with the GD has been good and to be encouraged further.

2. We are aware that our communities should be places able to give room and attention to those among us who are most injured in their spirit. However, it is important to consider having at least one community that can help the dynamics of re-entry for the confreres who have completed a path of accompaniment / verification. Our current answers are not enough .

3. It remains unanswered the urgent need for a greater effort – on the side of the whole Institute - to implement a realistic planning and assignment of some confreres able to manage the CAA centres. The current planning is not sufficient and leaves us in a near constant climate of emergency and leads to the wearing out of our confreres helping in such Centres.

4. The last Chapter recommended that all Provinces should organize themselves so as to allow elderly confreres who are self-sufficient to remain - if they wish to do so - where they have spent years of missionary service. Such recommendation - we believe - remains valid and necessary, also in order not to burden unnecessarily the centres and facilities that we have.

5. We have always made ourselves available to accommodate sick confreres in need of care from other Provinces. Recent laws, however, make more and more problematic and costly to continue doing this. It seems urgent, therefore, to study possible alternatives with the other Provinces.

5. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

As we re-read the “future projections” that were presented in our Report to the 2003 General Chapter and on the occasion of the Intercapitular Assembly (2006), one can say that the Province has been working fairly and with dedication on many of the original recommendations. We are grateful to the Lord for it and, we believe, it is a clear sign that the IP is not and does not want to look only facing the past or focussing solely on the assistance (albeit praiseworthy) to those who return to their home Province after the apostolic labours. The IP is instead convinced that ‘being and living in a state of mission’ concerns us too, in Italy as in Europe. It questions us more than ever with paths still subject to further debate and with the possibility of commitments not yet fully explored.

The priorities that have still to be fulfilled - and which interact with each other - are summed up under two headings: community (and its vocational dimension) and mission animation understood as living in a ‘state of mission’.

5.1 Community (and vocational attraction)

In recent years several times it has emerged the invitation to commit ourselves to a more simple and less expensive style of life, having the courage “to re-program our presence on a territorial as well as structural level and live in smaller houses, simple and close to poor people” (Provincial Assembly 2006). This remaining open to the world and feeling more closely the hardships, sufferings and hopes of ordinary people (not just the so called ‘new poverties’) help us to feel ourselves more alive and authentic here, and not to live by just remembering what we were once and what we were doing elsewhere. Beside this, the urgency to grow into a common life marked by greater fraternity and sharing is still there. To be achieved thanks to prayer, formulating and carrying out together the community project, through the implementation of the Community Day, time spent relaxing together and through going back to a truly brotherly correction.

We know, in fact, that the very low response to vocations in the Comboni way of life questions not only those who work most directly in vocation promotion or the vision of mission they have, but it questions also the quality and attractiveness of our community life, the spiritual life and missionary identity of our communities.

In particular, we want to confirm:

- a. The proposal of fostering “vocation communities”, in spite of the difficulties experienced so far.
- b. Working towards the establishment of some international communities.
- c. Encouraging the presence of small communities (or groups) of Comboni’ laity, who do missionary activity on the territory, moved by the spirituality of our founder, with whom various forms of collaboration can be established.

5.2 Animation / Missionary Presence

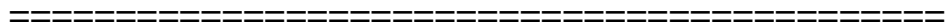
In the report of the European Provinces to the last General Chapter it is written: “*We, as Comboni missionaries, feel the urgent need to redefine our role and our presence in the European continent ... in terms of action, or missionary presence, rather than missionary animation only. In other words, it is a matter of making a quality leap and a change of vision*”. Overcoming, in short, a sort of dual identity shown by seeing ourselves as missionaries there (in Africa, America or so) and just missionary animators over here. “*We are called, instead, to always live and feel that we are in a ‘state of*

mission' wherever we find ourselves. A commitment that can and should involve everyone, beyond different ages and having more or less specific or qualified tasks".

As IP we have certainly worked in this direction (the inputs at the Symposia held at Limone as well as some GERT contributions have been particularly valuable as a help for the underlying reflection), but the process is still long and laborious.

Conclusion: "What does it mean for us to be missionaries in Italy and Europe today?"

Undoubtedly it does not mean to give up leaving our own countries, the "going beyond". But it does not mean either continuing to think of Italy as just the stopover place where we wait for the date of going back, or just for medical care as we return on home leave. Or, again, just as the place where we look for financial resources and/or new personnel to be sent abroad. Our identity as missionaries/evangelists carries on somehow even over here, as far as possible and always in compliance with our specific charism. As missionaries we are called to both take up the challenges of the mission ad gentes that come to us from the reality in which we live as well as to open our local churches to mission. We do so through our choices of insertion and presence on the territory and by recalling everybody to the urgency of missionary service in view of the realization of God's plan, at a local and global level.



B. Chapter Themes

1. RATIO MISSIONIS

1.1. Analysis of reality

It was pointed out how important it is to start off from an analysis of the reality in which we find ourselves and should question us. In the last stage of the Ratio such analysis has been left out; hence the feeling that we are far from reality, concerned only with own limitations, folded on ourselves. Our renewal cannot start from within only, but also by a commitment to meeting the new challenges we are receiving thanks to today's world.

1.2. Spirituality / Charism

It has been noted that more time to prayer should be devoted, especially personal prayer, to the study of the founder and of the Institute' traditions, as well as to issues related to mission. Individual and community witness should begin from the recovery of the founding elements of our charism: the spirituality of the pierced Heart of the Good Shepherd, of the Cross, of the spirit of self-giving and sacrifice. Our presence as Comboni missionaries must reflect our way of 'evangelizing as a community' and to living a community lifestyle as a 'Cenacle of Apostles', overcoming strong tendencies towards individualism, isolation and private initiative as we carry on in our work. Our life style must be renewed by adapting it more to the conditions of insecurity in which many people live, giving up comfort and unnecessary things, avoiding waste, or unjustified travel expenses and so on ... and making better use of our time. We have to improve interpersonal relationships within our communities, exchanging more of our experiences, developing a community project and learning to use the method of brotherly correction. Acting as a community also ensures the necessary continuity of our projects of missionary presence and animation.

1.3. Areas of commitment / Mission

At times our communities live in isolation, rather than close to people and involved in the situations of social discomfort, in solidarity with the most marginalized or

discriminated groups. There are, however, also experiences of real engagement and involvement with ecclesial and social entities that defend the rights of the weak. We must move away from the traditional style of missionary animation to a new mode of presence. From ‘speaking about mission’ to ‘doing mission’, even here in Italy.

The following are the priority areas for our commitment and cooperation today:

- human groups abandoned to themselves (*ad gentes* in Italy: immigrants, gypsies, marginalized people) in collaboration with organizations already involved with the same: Caritas Migrantes, NGOs, etcetera.
- The insertion in local churches and in their bodies: Diocesan Mission Offices, mission groups, Vocation Centres etcetera.
- Invitation to choosing mission life, including the new ‘vocation’ communities (come, see, live ..).
- Missionary animation in the field of Justice-Peace-Integrity of Creation, North-South cooperation..
- Creating international communities where confreres are called for specific projects.
- The enhancement of Rectories or even (new) Parishes, by re-structuring along our Comboni mission methodology.
- Providing the elderly still active in the Province with pastoral activities and animation possibilities.
- Commitment to mass media and alternative information.

2. FORMATION

2.1. Do you think that the model of the Comboni formation with its four levels (postulancy, novitiate, scholasticate and missionary service) and four aspects (human, Christian, spiritual and missionary), responds to the needs of today’s mission?

The model of formation is considered valid as a whole; the missionary service only raises doubts in some confreres (is it necessary? Wouldn’t be better to anticipate it at the end of the Postulancy?).

The confreres call for a stronger focus on the missionary dimension and for promoting a more personalized formation and to give more attention to the values of sobriety and relations. The selection and preparation of formators is stressed; they should be well `

2.2. Do you think that the fragmentation of the formation journey in different socio-geographic contexts and with different formators can be negative for the growth of the candidates? If so, what suggestions would you give to overcome this limit?

The fragmentation is generally seen as a limitation. In order to diminish its effects it is suggested:

- continentality in the formation journey
- a more demanding (and more flexible in duration) Postulancy in order to lead the candidate to a serious vocational discernment
- greater care in defining the formators’ role, as they ought to work as a team, not postponing solutions and decisions about personal problems of the candidates to the next formation stage.

2.3. Aware that the quality of our witness of missionary life can affect the formation of our candidates in a positive or negative way, which aspects of our personal and community life should undergo conversion so as to foster the growth of our young people in formation?

We are called to be more authentic and open, showing that we have mission at heart and have a strong love for the poor.

At community level we have to improve the quality of our relations and facilitate interculturality.

2.4. What do you suggest in order to contextualize the formation journey in Italy and in Europe?

We suggest:

- to prepare people well versed in Theology and Missiology, so as to be able to better enlighten the process of contextualization (this is for all continents)
- to have small and inserted vocation and formation communities.

3. GOVERNMENT

3.1 Which proposal of government do you deem as best and why?

The majority of confreres sees no need to change the current structure and does not consider it appropriate to increase structures at a time of aging and reduction in personnel; it is rather a question of making a better use of the indications already presented by the Rule of Life, the General Directory, *Vademecum* of Provincials etcetera, regarding the practice of subsidiarity, cooperation, shared responsibility and dialogue. A matter of choosing wise people with experience and passion for the mission and for the Institute as members of the GC; people willing to dialogue and to apply the decisions of the Chapter. The question of rotation of personnel is very much felt: GC is asked to better define the program of priorities and the time duration of offices, services and tasks, in order to allow proper planning. See the provisions of Chapter 1997 (Nos. 169-172).

1.2. Do you think it useful to retain all General Secretariats? If not, which ones should be kept?

In the zones different views have appeared:

- some want to keep the current Secretariats, which provide the main lines of thought and action throughout the Institute
- others (many) can clearly see the value of the Secretariats of Economics and Formation on a general level and those of Evangelization and Mission Animation on a continental level, because better able to respond to the need of contextualization (2 zones)
- someone proposes one General Secretariat (joining together all the existing Secretariats), that could deepen the issues and offer operative proposals to the General Council, besides ensuring memory of the past and continuity between the different mandates

- others, finally, propose a Secretariat for the Personnel; it would have an overall view of the situation of personnel and of the needs of the Institute, could schedule rotation, stimulate On-going Formation and specializations in specific areas, and so on.

1.3. In an International Institute do we need a Continental coordinator? Endowed with which powers and authority?

Continentality is considered to be a positive element to be encouraged at grassroots level (meetings, collaboration among the provincial Secretariats..), in need of a better definition on a juridical level (a widespread opinion in all the zones). Some refer to the implementation of the rules of the Chapter (AC 2003, 137ss).

The zones expressed themselves in favour of a gradual (and well thought out) process of unification of the European Provinces.

1.4. What do you think of the duration of the mandate of the General Council and of the Provincial Superior?

The majority of members of the zones is opposed to the extension of the mandate of the General Council, because of social changes, always faster and faster. Continuity can be ensured by a serious handing over (extended meetings between old and new members of the GC) and inputs from the General Secretariats. The same applies to the Provincial and his Councillors. One zone would take away the 2/3 restriction for the election of the Superior General and of the general Councillors for a second term.

Kenya

REPORT OF THE PROVINCE OF KENYA TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER

Introduction

The inspiration, motivations and methodology of the missionary work of a given Institute are based on its peculiar charism. Nevertheless, fidelity to the charism implies attention to the signs of the time and fidelity to the people we are working with.

The encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* made the whole Church aware that the horizons of mission *ad gentes* are not restricted to geographical boundaries; mission *ad gentes* is to be expanded to new worlds and new social phenomena, to cultural sectors as the modern equivalents of the Aeropagus. In addition to the indications of the Church, issues such as the encounter and mutual influence of cultures, and the formation of a global culture, the increasing importance of interreligious dialogue and inculturation, liberation and justice in a world deeply divided are some of the questions missionary work has to take into account. These questions entail that a model of mission adopted so far, focused on preaching the Gospel and building the church (*plantatio ecclesiae*), be re-considered. The young missionary's style of life and ways of working are also different from past missionaries': Fr. A. Vignato would definitely re-write his handbook '*Raccolta di Suggerimenti e Dottrine per Utilita' Pratica del Giovane Missionario*' today. Moreover, missionary work has to be contextualised in a particular situation: undoubtedly justice, peace and reconciliation – incidentally, also the theme of the upcoming Synod of Bishops for Africa – are the main issues challenging the Comboni missionaries work in Kenya today. Fidelity to Comboni entails fidelity to people in their own situation. These are some of the challenges shaping our thinking on mission and forging our ways of doing mission, namely the elaboration of our *Ratio Missionis*.

1) Political, Social, Economic and Ecclesial Situation of Kenya

The 2002 General Elections in Kenya were hailed as an example of democratic change. KANU, the party which ruled the Country since Independence in 1964, was defeated and replaced by NARC, a coalition of various parties. Hopes and expectations in the Country were high. Two of the priorities of the new Government were to draft a new Constitution and to fight corruption. Neither of the two were ever fulfilled. Hopes were dashed after few months: rifts in the Government became visible and the Country became more polarized into various ethnic interests. Although the economy during the years 2003-2007 grew at the rate of an impressive 6% annually corruption became rampant and the tendency of those in charge of the State's machinery to favour their cronies, widespread. Moreover two major problems which began during colonial times

i.e. the inequitable sharing of wealth and the land issue, remained unresolved, casting a negative spell on the future and becoming a recipe for disaster. Although the middle class' affluence in towns grew, poverty and destitution became more widespread, with the negative consequence of an increase in criminal activities and insecurity. In Kenya 70% of the population is under the age of 30. In Nairobi, according to the United Nations' statistics, 60% live in slums euphemistically called 'informal settlements' by the Government. The explosion of violence after the 2007 General Elections – in which the Orange Democratic Movement of Raila Odinga accused the Party of National Unity of the incumbent president Mwai Kibaki of vote rigging – had to do more with social injustice and the scandalous division between the haves and have nots than with the tally of presidential votes. During the two months in which the Country was entangled in senseless violence more than 1000 people lost their lives and hundred of thousands had to flee their homes. The white tents of the Internally Displaced People are still dotting the landscape in various parts of the Country. Moreover, violence in Kenya disrupted the economies of the neighboring Countries (Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Eastern Congo and South Sudan) being Kenya the main access door for the goods coming from overseas. As the situation was becoming unbearable, running the risk of unsettling the whole Region, Kibaki and Raila agreed to strike a deal under the auspices of the former United Nation Secretary Kofi Annan. A Coalition Government was formed with the creation of the figure of a Prime Minister and the formation of more than forty ministerial posts (with a plethora of vice-ministers, permanent secretaries, undersecretaries and the like). It was clear since the beginning that this Government was too bloated to exercise effective power, moreover lacking unity and common vision. The allocation of power to appease ethnic interests seemed to have been the main issue. Today the Coalition Government precariously continues its existence but it always seems on the brink of exhaling its last breath. The Country is far from peaceful, the healing process far from being even started: there is no soul-searching and honest admission of what went wrong; there is no serious process of reconciliation going on. A move to answer the injustices which were the remote causes of the violence is not even considered in the political agenda.

Christians in this Country amount to about 70% of the total population and the Catholic population is roughly 25%. The Church has still great moral authority in Kenya and the Church's social services amount to almost 65% of the total social services operating in some part of the Country, especially the north. However, controversial declarations on political issues by some Bishops before the 2007 General Elections have, to some extent, eroded the authority of the Catholic hierarchy, notwithstanding the example and dedication of individual Bishops during the crisis. The Kenya Episcopal Conference gives the impression of being divided along ethnic lines and there seems to be no real charismatic figure who could coalesce the KEC and be looked at for inspiration by the people of this Country.

2) The Province. Data and Statistics

In April 2009 there were 54 confreres juridically belonging to the Kenyan Province (57 in January last year) in addition to 6 scholastics.

As for people in formation, apart from the scholastics, there are 3 novices in Uganda (first year), 17 postulants and 5 pre-postulants.

The average age of confreres belonging to the Province is 53.4, roughly the same as the 2008 average of 53.7.

31 confreres are working in pastoral commitments in various missions: three missions in West Pokot, two in Turkana, two commitments in Marsabit - the Cathedral and the Pastoral Office; one in Nairobi - Kariobangi and the inserted community of Korogocho. Two members are newly assigned to the Province and are still to be appointed. 11 are working in provincial services (Administration, Mission Animation and teaching); 8 in particular services (Scholasticate, CBC and Fr. Kizito); 1 confrere is attending the sabbatical year and 6 scholastics. One confrere is living outside the community and is in the process of being exlaustrated.

If we consider the number of confreres in the Province in a span of 5 years and half (beginning 2004-April 2009) we have these figures: in January 2004 we had 61 confreres as compared to 54 at the beginning of April 2009 (without counting the scholastics), a 10% decrease. However, if we take into account that in 2004 we had two more commitments in pastoral work as compared to this year's, we have to conclude that there is a better balance, numerically speaking, between personnel and commitments by the beginning of April 2009. However, we have also to admit that two missions are run by confreres over 70 years of age. So numbers not always reflect a fair balance between personnel and commitments.

3) The Work Done since Last Chapter

3.1 Priorities and Criteria of Our Missionary Presence in Kenya

The 2003 General Chapter gave great emphasis "to being missionaries" as the way to enhance our doing mission. Requalification of commitments implies, therefore, personal and communitarian renewal, before being a plan intended to restructure our commitments and redistribute personnel.

The elaboration of the Six Year Plan which started in 2005 and took one year of study with the involvement of all the confreres of the Province, was in itself an exercise of ongoing formation. Furthermore, as the number of confreres in the Congregation had been - and still is - steadily decreasing the Plan had to consider cutting some commitments. So we had to keep into account two challenging and preliminary issues in the elaboration of the Plan: ongoing formation and the possibility of reducing the number of commitments to keep the balance between personnel and activities.

To help in the process of ongoing formation the Plan proposes some activities at community, zone and provincial level without forgetting, of course, an organized spiritual and human growth process at more personal level; at community and zone level the Plan recommends the drafting of the community charters, the zone charters and the mandatory approval by the people of the zone of projects of human promotion - so as to build a unified ministry and give prominence to the pastoral priorities of the zone; at provincial level it proposes the yearly Provincial Assembly, the creation of various age groups (under '40s, middle aged and elderly confreres), the organisation of the yearly provincial Retreat and the Introductory course to Kenya every two years. The proper work of the *Ratio Missionis* - one of the Chapter's issues to be implemented - as

proposed by the *ad hoc* commission, started in 2007. We thought that the elaboration of the Six Year Plan had to completely focus the attention of the Province and that this work should have been our contribution to the *Ratio Missionis*. Regrettably, this was not taken into consideration by the commission which preferred to follow a pre-arranged methodology – thus impoverishing, according to us, the work on the *Ratio*.

Some other criteria were taken into account in the drafting of the Plan.

As re-qualification meant a new style of presence in the mission, physical changes might also be required; to keep a mission for more than 30 years (the span of a generation) might be detrimental to the renewal of our missionary presence and might box the missionary into a style of presence, built over the years, difficult to change; we risk transforming missionaries into parish priests mainly centered on the pastoral care of Christians with less attention given to mission *ad gentes*. Besides, to set a limited time-frame to our presence in a given area, helps us focus on pastoral priorities: as a matter of fact, we have been successful in erecting structures, less in establishing vibrant Christian communities. Another criterion of renewal taken into account in the Plan was the preference given to missions with one culture and language so as to give the young generation the possibility to study the local culture and be identified with a particular ethnic group. However, the move to decrease the number of missions and commitments has not made exchange of personnel within a given zone more viable and, therefore, the study of the local language easier. Besides, we were forced by circumstances to hand over some commitments which were not supposed to be released (such as Lokori and Sololo, both missions of first evangelisation). A third criterion was to give priority to areas inhabited by pastoralists and to slum ministry.

Alongside the criteria spelled out in our Plan, another has to be kept into consideration. As the missionaries operate within the framework of a local Church, which increasingly takes on the direction of pastoral activities and projects of human promotion, missionary work has to harmonize its priorities with the various Diocesan Pastoral Plans’.

3.2 Commitments and Activities

As we assess the activities and the work done since the last Chapter we want to acknowledge the greatest richness of our Province: our confreres. They are an asset for the local Church and fully dedicated to the people they are living with, partaking in their lives even at the risk of their own. Zealous and passionate in their work of evangelisation, they are respected by the Bishops and appreciated by the people they serve.

In **pastoral work** priorities are given to nomadic/semi-nomadic peoples and to urban and slum ministry. During the years 2005-2007 three commitments were handed over: Lokori in Turkana , Sololo in Marsabit and Ongata Rongai parish in Ngong Diocese. Of these commitments only the parish of Ongata Rongai was sufficiently self-supporting as to be handed over without any problem. Moreover, there was a plan to hand over two other commitments and start new ones in the same area: Kacheliba in Pokot and Kariobangi in Nairobi – both of these parishes were started in the early seventies. While Kacheliba is in the process of being phased out, the handing over of Kariobangi and the erection of Korogocho as parish - where we would eventually stay -

present some logistical problems. In the area of Pokot, Kapenguria mission has been retained until elderly confrères will be in a position to run it. Furthermore, Marsabit the Pastoral Centre, where a confrere was already working full time, was officially erected as a community in 2007. In conclusion, we have so far officially handed over three commitments, while starting a new one in Marsabit.

Within the area of nomadic/semi-nomadic peoples the Plan considers important the collaboration and the elaboration of common pastoral plans with confreres of the Provinces of Uganda and Sudan. Regular meetings with confreres working in Pokot, Turkana and Karamoja (Uganda) have been going on since March 2008.

We have a team of two confreres working in **Mission Animation**. There is a good collaboration with teams of other Institutes to animate the local Church. The team of Mission Animation and Vocation Promotion form one community. The Six Year Plan foresees that MA be part of the community of New People Media Centre in future. Furthermore, it will be difficult to keep on maintaining a MA team with 2 confreres: we might be forced to reduce the MA team to one confrere.

Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation. At present there is a three-year course provincial postulancy with two formators. Before joining the postulancy the candidate has to undergo a period of 10 months of pre-postulancy carried out in two slums where the candidates are living in small communities and working. They are regularly followed by the Vocation Director who usually has had previous contacts with the candidates before they join the pre-postulancy. Although the VP belongs to the community of MA, he may join the postulancy community once the MA confrere(s) will be part of New People community. One of the problems in the postulancy is the proper formation of formators (and Vocation Director). However, emergencies and rotation of personnel in the Institute do not allow long term planning. A second problem is the dwindling number of confreres in the Province in the foreseeable future. If this is so to have a Provincial postulancy with two formators (with other two would-be formators ready in case of any emergencies) might not be feasible. We will have to foresee an inter-provincial postulancy.

The **Comboni Lay Missionaries**, mostly coming from Germany and the NAP, have been working mainly in Nairobi. Only once a CLM worked in one of our missions in rural areas. The fact that the CLM come to Kenya for a short time may partly explain why employing them is not a priority for our rural missions. The plan to start a local CLM as envisaged by the Plan never materialized. Likewise, the idea of having a full time person in charge for **Justice and Peace** has never been fulfilled. It is also true that some diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions are working fairly well and a number of confreres may not see the need to double the work.

Inter-Provincial and Institute Commitments

New People Media Centre is a 'joint venture' of the English speaking Provinces of Africa and Mozambique (with the addition of the late comer, the Province of Togo/Ghana/Benin). A plan of a possible merging of the magazines in the Sub-Continent (Leadership of Uganda, New People of Kenya and Worldwide of S. Africa) has been always talked about but never put into practice. The meeting of editors in October 2008 agreed in principle to merge New People and Leadership. However, the

Board of Governors' meeting of NPMC in January this year failed to reach a workable conclusion.

The Kenya Province hosts two commitments of the Institute: the **Scholasticate and the Brothers' Center**. There are some question marks on the future of the Brothers' Centre as the number of Brothers is declining and two Comboni Brothers' Centre, as they are now, may not be sustainable in the future. At the moment there is a proposal to restructure the CBC with the possibility of a more inserted Centre; one proposal is to open a Comboni Project of Human Promotion for Brothers in Kibiko (where there is a rehabilitation program for street children and alcoholics run by the community of Kariobangi/Korogochi). However, we believe that there are not enough Brothers in the Province, moreover qualified, to take Kibiko as a commitment. Nonetheless, we can start a 'meaningful community' for Brothers in one of our missions. This proposal will be discussed at the level of the zones and at the Provincia Assembly, while the Provincial Council will help in restructuring the formation of the CBC.

There are three confreres teaching at **Tangaza College**, as part of our commitment to the College being the Comboni Missionaries members of the College *Consortium*. The **Institute of Social Ministry**, founded by the Comboni Missionaries, is part of Tangaza. The management of the **Institute** was to be taken over by the General Council, according to the 2003 General Chapter's intentions. The Council never gave a positive answer to that, partly because of lack of qualified Brothers who could have taken over the management of the Institute. So the previous Provincial Council decided to give the Director of ISMM authority to contact other religious Congregations and explore the possibility to share the responsibility in the running of the Institute. Some Congregations answered positively, an Advisory Board (AB) was formed and has already met several times. This AB will be the first step towards better defining how to properly run the Institute (structures, personnel, directorship etc.). However, the hope that the General Council, in collaboration with the Kenyan Province and the Provinces/Delegations of the English Sub-Continent, could take over the management of the Institute has not completely faded. We believe that the Institute is important in Africa as a means to elaborate ideas coming from the experience of the missionaries and make viable pastoral proposals (organisations of courses on slum ministry and a seminar on the works with nomadic peoples may be taken as examples of how ISMM can be an instrument to help in the pastoral field). We lack in our Congregation such theological centres. So we could have two poles of theological reflections in Africa: Cairo for dialogue with Islam and Nairobi for what concerns ideas and proposals for missionary work.

SOMIRENEC (Social Ministry Research and Network Centre) which, according to the intentions of the founders, was to be the operational division of Social Ministry and was closely associated with the Institute, was transformed into an NGO in 2006 and operates independently from Social Ministry.

Secretariats

The **Secretariat of Evangelisation and Ongoing Formation** has been working in collaboration with the four zone coordinators. They have helped the Province in the

work of reflection on the *Ratio Missionis*: the contributions from the zones have been compiled into a booklet. To be added, the elaboration of the *zone charters*, the revision and the final draft of the *Directory of the Province* and the additions of norms for the contextualisation of the *Code of Conduct*. Moreover, the four zone coordinators and the Secretariat have assisted the confreres in the reflection on the *working documents for the Chapter*. *Missionary Reflections (MR)* is regularly published, with the *Informal Group* having regular meetings. On the other hand, the communities and the various zones of our Province should be more involved in reflecting upon the issues of *Missionary Reflections*. Added to that, *MR* is eminently Kenyan with confreres mostly from this Province contributing to the issues, in spite of the English speaking Provinces of Africa's intention to make *MR* an instrument of Continental reflections and sharing. The *Ratio Missionis'* desideratum for groups of theological reflection seems not to be a priority in our sub-Continent.

The Secretariat of **Basic Formation** has had regular meetings. A charter of *Basic Formation* will soon be issued. There is also need that a charter of Vocation Promotion be elaborated

The **Secretariat of Finances** regularly meets before the Provincial Council's meetings and has helped the Council in matters pertaining the administration of goods.

The **Secretariat of Mission Animation** has started to have meetings on a regular basis. It needs to prepare a charter, as envisaged by the Six Year Plan.

Sharing of goods

One of the targets of the Plan was to have a *zonal common fund* as a first step towards the total common fund (zcf). Nevertheless, there are some doubts in the Province about the total common fund, one of the main reasons being that it may foster a sort of passive attitude towards providing funds for the running of our activities. The zonal common fund should have been adopted by the 2007 Provincial Assembly. However, practical questions were raised on the feasibility of implementing it. The problem is that few communities can draw up sensible financial accounts and budgets. Given this difficulty, is it possible to implement a zcf which requires proper financial accounts and budgets? Is there something else we could do to prepare for the implementation of this plan? Beside practical procedures, we need to foster an attitude of transparency, accountability and self-limitation on our use of material goods.

Likewise the law of the '*superavit*', as indicated by the Six Year Plan and the Directory, has been never applied.

4. Shortcomings

At personal level

What was written in the report for the 2006 intercapitular still holds today, namely individualism is the main negative attitude slowly eroding our community life. Even though we have to avoid undue generalization, we have to admit that this attitude is fairly widespread to be a problem. There is no particular age group which suffers from its negative consequences more than others. Individualism brings about the difficulty with personal accountability (use of goods, personal timetable, commitments outside an agreed upon plan, projects). Unfortunately we are living a period of

'relativism' where rules are subjectively interpreted and accountability is seen as an intrusion into one's privacy: this is true not only for society at large but our Congregation as well.

Another shortcoming at personal level is that moments dedicated to personal study and reading are not adequately organized. We are so involved in our work that days off become the exception rather than the rule, they are, in fact, considered a waste of time. We believe, instead, that scheduled moments of pause from work are beneficial for a sounder pastoral work. At times even personal prayer is reduced to a boring recitation of the breviary without any other more personal forms of prayer. We wonder, also, if the practice of spiritual direction is considered essential for our spiritual life. The yearly personal retreat has not been seen as a priority by some confreres. We feel that if a personal spiritual life is not properly organised we run the risk of losing the motivations for our vocation.

Generally a young Comboni missionary in Kenya today does not show great enthusiasm in learning and practicing the local language (apart from kiswahili, the national language) and studying the culture. This is not only due to problems connected to rotation of personnel but also to the tendency of the youth (should we call it post-modern?) who shuns such words, and connected attitudes, as 'protracted and frustrating dedication' 'capacity to face tensions and pastoral frustrations'; these attitudes seem at odd with today's cultural atmosphere. Our youth, after all, are breathing the same narcissistic culture, an 'all-now' and ephemeral culture of outward appearance as the youth of today. It is not uncommon to find young people whose psychological structure is not strong enough to face the challenges of reality. If this is so the process of inculturation of the young missionary becomes problematic.

Community level

Although, generally speaking, there are no great tensions in the communities, we are still far from forming truly reconciled and viable communities; communities where quality time is given to prayer life, ongoing formation, reflection and discernment. The fact that only three communities have so far elaborated and submitted the community charter might be an indication that finding time to meet and reflect is not within our frame of mind. As individualism is a common tendency, likewise we give more the impression to be communities where work and efficiency are at the centre of our life and the 'essence' of our relations, rather than communities where the values of the Gospel - attentive listening, compassion, mercy, reconciliation, patience and tolerance – are to be lived and fraternal correction really exercised. The community council is not practiced in all communities. We must admit that the provincial house is not a shining example of dedication to this commitment.

In the community the ministry of the local superior, in his service of leadership and communion, is essential. At times the superior has to take tough and unpopular decisions for the sake of the confrere, the community and the people we serve and this, regrettably, is not always done. Likewise coordination of activities such as family councils, prayer and meetings to discuss issues proposed by the secretariats are, in some communities, inadequate. We believe also that relations based on dialogue, trust and respect with other pastoral agents – in particular with the Comboni Sisters - are vital for

the success of our work. The impression is that moments of sharing, conviviality, dialogue and the common discernment of God's ways are reduced to day-to-day informal encounters rather than sought as a means of enhancing our ways of doing mission. In fact we lack the habit of having regular meetings of reflections and planning.

Zone

The work done so far (on the *Ratio Missionis*, the *zone charters*, the *Directory of the Province* and the *Working documents for the Chapter*) are indications of the vitality of the zones and the good work of the zone coordinators. However, the regularity and the quality and time given to the monthly retreat have to be improved in some zones. The zone should be more consistent with giving time to discuss, discern and decide on local projects of human promotion, as the directory of the Province emphasizes. Furthermore, sharing on the success and frustrations of our ministry should find in the gatherings of the zone an ideal forum.

Province

As for Provincial commitments, the Introductory Course to Kenya has been organised every two years. The yearly provincial Retreat has been planned and attended by some confreres. The Provincial Assembly has been arranged every year. Unfortunately, not all the confreres are attending it (elderly ones, especially). It seems there is a sort of pessimism in some confreres who may think the Assembly is merely a talking forum without real and positive impact on our life and work of evangelisation.

The under '40s' group have had fairly regular meetings. Nonetheless, the formation of groups of middle aged and elderly confreres in our Province – as indicated by the Six year Plan – has never actually taken off. After four years of failure there might be some insurmountable difficulties (practical and, perhaps, ideal) which prevent the execution of the Plan.

5. Relevant Issues and Future Perspectives

Most of our missions in Kenya are among pastoral peoples who are mostly following traditional religion and culture. Although there is a tremendous cultural transition (more educated people, less dependency on animal husbandry, nomadism as a style of life of the past, without speaking of the challenges from the aggressive Pentecostal churches and Islam in competition for souls) most of them live on the outskirts of society and Church. If on one side pastoral priorities adopted so far are important (catechumenate, pastoral care of the faithful, schools and work of human promotion) a more focused methodology of first evangelisation is needed. Therefore, better coordination of activities among the three Provinces of Kenya, Uganda and S. Sudan is necessary. The meetings with the confreres of Karamoja, Pokot and Turkana should be the first step towards a better organised work with the pastoral peoples.

We have already referred to the importance of retaining the directorship of the Institute of Social Ministry and the possibility of an inter-provincial postulancy. An

issue to worry about is the dwindling number of Brothers in our Province. The Province, to properly express the Comboni charism, needs a balance between the number of brothers and priests. As written before, the Province is reflecting on the possibility of opening a ‘meaningful community’ of Brothers.

As it has been repeatedly emphasised, we might expect that numbers in the Congregation and in our Province will decline even further in future. If this trend continues we might anticipate a further decrease of number of confreres in our Province from the 54 of today. We might be forced, in the next Six year Plan, to further reduce our commitments. A proper discernment has to be carried out and decisions taken with courage. As personnel diminishes and the administration of the Province, in terms of finding people for Vocation Promotion and Mission Animation, Formation and Procure, might be too demanding to be sustained in the future, one possible solution would be the merging with other Provinces – as it is the established trend of other Institutes and has now been generally accepted by many Provincials of the Congregation. In any case, we have to overcome that parochialism which seems to be our common disease preventing many good plans from being implemented. Now is the time to go beyond our petty interests and visions.

However, we believe that these moments of transitions are a blessing in disguise; they may be harbingers of a new future of missionary endeavour and enthusiasm. Therefore, as we start a new era of missionary life for our Institute the relevant questions are, ‘What kind of Province do we want for the future? What kind of identity do we want for our Province?’ ‘What kind of re-qualification of commitments are the society in Kenya and the Church asking from us?’ The answers to these questions are born out of a dialogue with all the confreres, the local Church and the people we are working with. A frank discernment and courageous decisions are especially demanded today when *“we face a religious situation which is extremely varied and changing. Peoples are on the move; social and religious realities which were once clear and well defined are [...] increasingly complex”* (Redemptoris Missio no. 32)

Fr. Mariano Tibaldo

Fr. Paolino Twesigye

Fr. John Ikundu (delegate)

Bro. Dario Laurencig

Fr. Tomas H. Baroja

Khartoum

KHARTOUM PROVINCE REPORT TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER (2009)

1. Brief Introduction

The Institute was founded to answer the needs of evangelization of Central Africa. Khartoum was chosen as the head quarter of the mission. If we take Khartoum Province as it is now, we may distinguish three periods: before independence (1956), from independence till the Comprehensive Peace Agreement: CPA (2005); after the CPA.

1.1 Before independence

There was very little direct pastoral work consisting in assisting the Christian community, about 50.000 people in the whole of Northern Sudan, mostly foreigners, the majority being Syrians and Lebanese. Missionary work was understood as making Christ and Christianity present among the Muslims through presence and social works, especially schools well run, animated with Christian values.

1.2 After independence (01.01.1956)

This is the time in which the Sudanese Church is born and grows in the North, made up of the Southerners who escape the war in the South and find refuge in the North. There is also a movement of conversions among the Nuba. It is a Church made of displaced people. The Church grows visibly, and as a consequence it is not anymore a small seed or a foreign body but becomes a Sudanese reality with about one million Catholics, about one hundred Sudanese priests, more than 40 established parishes, and hundreds of Christian Centres. 25 more parishes could be easily opened if priests were available. The Church provides possibility of education for thousands of displaced children during the difficult years especially since Bashir took over in 1989: about 100 schools were opened only in Khartoum diocese with more than 50.000 students to be added to the 6.000 students of the so called “Formal Comboni Schools”. It is the time when the Sudanese hierarchy replaces the *ius missionis* (1974), Bakhita (2000) and Comboni (2003) are proclaimed saints, and for the first time a Sudanese National is Archbishop of Khartoum (1981) and Cardinal (2003).

Northern Sudan seems to be the Arabic speaking Muslim country in the area of North Africa and Middle East with the biggest number of Catholics.

Most of this was the fruit of the work of the Comboni Missionaries. Small groups of other congregations joined after the 80ies: Missionaries of Africa, Jesuits, Salesians, Franciscans Capuchins, PME from Canada’.

1.3 After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (09.01.2005)

Many thought that after the CPA the Southerners would return to the South in big numbers and the Church in the North would return to be a small seed again. This has not happened and will not happen, unless something really dramatic takes place. The majority of the Southerners at present in the North will remain in the North. Not anymore as displaced, but as residents. As displaced, people have in a certain way developed an attitude of “dependence”. The time has come for them to pass from an attitude of being “dependent” to an attitude of self-reliance: this process is not easy yet it must take place.

2. Presentation of the political, social, economic and ecclesial situation

2.1 Political

The population of Sudan officially is 40 millions, of which 8.200.000 in the South. Unofficial statistics assign to the South over 11.000.000.

Since 1989 Sudan is ruled by the National Congress Party (NCP) that took power with a military coup headed by Omar Bashir. Ideologically NCP was inspired by the National Islamic Front (NIF), the party of Hassan Turabi, and it is marked by radical Islam. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005, SPLA participates in the Central Government, but its influence is rather marginal. The other parties have no voice.

In recent years three elements have dominated the political scene:

2.1.1 The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

The CPA was signed in Nairobi (Kenya) on January 9, 2005. It marked a turning point in the history of Sudan, and has given a sense of direction in the political life. The journey of CPA has not been an easy one, with plenty of obstacles on the way and repeated provocations by those who want the agreement to fail. The difficulties started at the very beginning with the tragic death of John Garang on 30 July 2005. Was it an accident? Was it a murder?

A lot of things were foreseen in the CPA:

- Semi-autonomous Government in the South guaranteed by the presence of 10.000 UN soldiers
- demarcation of the border between North and South (still to be defined)
- Protocols of Abyei, Blue Nile, Nuba Mountains
- Disarmament of militias and their integration either in the national army or in the SPLA.
- Formation of an integrated army made of the national army and SPLA soldiers.
- National census in 2008.
- elections that were supposed to be held in July 2009 but have been postponed till February 2010.
- referendum in 2011 for self-determination of the South which will decide either for unity of Sudan or for separation of the South.

The SPLA has sent many signals of dissatisfaction for the way CPA is (not) implemented, but has avoided to break away, waiting patiently for the referendum to take place.

2.1.2 The war in Dar Fur.

It started in 2003, inspired by the negotiations with the South, but it went its own way. The liberation movements, two at the beginning, split again and again: today there are 15 of them (some say 45).

In connection with the war, we have:

- Spreading insecurity in Dar Fur: according to UN sources 300.000 were killed
- massive displacement of people both internally and abroad, especially in Chad: according to UN sources nearly 3.000.000 people.
- UNAMID soldiers now about 15.000 but to reach 26.000. Their effectiveness is very much questioned, in terms of bringing security to the people and facilitating services.
- International NGOs flocked in, mostly to do relief work.

2.1.3 The warrant of arrest of president Bashir.

Announced on the 14th of July 2008, issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on March 4, 2009, has been a source of uncertainties. Bashir refused to comply with it. The Government rejected the accusations. Solidarity to Bashir was expressed by African Union, Arab League, China and Russia. It was understood as western colonialism, especially of USA, Britain and France, a reaction to the Arabs' policy against the West.

Even the Catholic Church through the words of its bishops expressed skepticism, insisting that other measures are needed to put an end to the sufferings of the people in Dar Fur, such as entering into serious negotiations and stopping violence in the field. There is the fear that the removal of the president may affect negatively the CPA. As a reaction to the warrant of arrest, the Government expelled 16 relief agencies, 13 foreign ones and three Sudanese.

2.2 Social

The political situation has an enormous impact on the social reality.

Apparently everything seems to be normal, but the dramatic events, that erupt suddenly now and then, prove the contrary. The attack of Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in the capital on 10/5/2008 was a shock. A small incident may light up a fire, as it happened in Abyei in May 2008, in Malakal in January and February 2009, in South Kordofan between Misseriya and Rizeygat at the end of May 2009. Incidents happen here and there, every one proving that there is something burning under the ashes.

2.2.1 Insecurity, violence

The grip of the security forces on the population points at the fear that things may escape from the hands any time. We have never seen so many security people in the streets, permanently patrolling the sensitive areas. One of the reasons to reject the warrant of arrest against Bashir was that the arrest would create a void of power which would bring about social unrest. International events (Palestine, Iraq) are used by the government to divert the attention of the people from domestic problems that could be source of unrest.

A source of tensions are the unsolved political problems concerning the South: Abyei, Blue Nile, Nuba Mountains, the presence of LRA especially in Equatoria.

Another source of tensions in the South is the problem of the land with ethnic groups invading areas traditionally belonging to other ethnic groups.

The insecurity is growing: lost boys in Khartoum and in other areas, armed groups, robbery, anarchy in Dar Fur, consumption of drugs. More and more knives and guns replace the traditional sticks and stones.

2.2.2 Discrimination based on ethnic or religious ground.

The war in the South, as well as the war in Dar Fur and in the East are expressions of this attitude. In spite of the CPA and other agreements, still Christians and non-Arabs do not have the same opportunities that Muslims and Arabs have.

2.2.3 Widespread corruption.

It affects particularly the South with devastating effects. Quite often the politicians use the financial resources for their own interest, and do very little for the good of the people, such as building roads, schools, hospitals, etc... The dominating tribes tend to occupy all the Key posts; ethnic clashes and tribal conflicts erupt among southerners themselves. It seems also that the Government of the North is extremely able in fuelling these disagreements at its own interest, in this case to demonstrate that the South is not able to journey alone and needs to be united with the North.

2.2.4 Displacemet is still a phenomenon of great relevance. The foreseen repatriation after signing the CPA did not work at the planned speed. Many people after seeing the poor conditions of the South decided to come back to the North, where they have children in schools, some properties and more working possibilities. It is clear that the presence of the Southerners in the North will continue to be consistent also in the future.

2.2.5 Weakness of education

The level of education has dropped in Government schools at all levels, included universities. Private schools, with a better performance, are increasing, and are run as a business. In the State of Khartoum 57% of the Senior Secondary Schools are non-governmental, and they reach 51% of the students. The drop of the standard seems to be the effect of the weak syllabus presented by the Government.

2.3 Economic

Sudan in recent years has witnessed a growth in the economy as it never happened before. Most of it is due to crude oil. This economic growth is felt especially in Khartoum which wants to become a big modern town in many aspects: roads and bridges, facilities, cars, goods available,

hotels. There is business running fast. But the farther you go from Khartoum the less you see in terms of development. And as it often happens, the growth itself, being unequally distributed, has become one of the sources of social unrest, at regional level with the struggle to get a proper share (see Dar Fur and the East), and at individual level with the increasing violence of people living at the fringes (lost boys...).

2.4 Ecclesial

The Church is present and the ordinary activities go on such as Bible groups, youth groups, legion of Mary, recollection days for lay people, vocation groups. The formation of leaders has always been a concern: Khartoum has opened a special Institute for the formation of catechists, runs a theological course for the preparation of teachers of religion at all levels (Catholic Teachers Training College), is struggling to open a catholic university. 60% of the priests in Khartoum and even more in El Obeid are Sudanese. Khartoum has held its second synod which took five years of hard work. We have had the canonization of Saint Bakhita (2000) and Saint Daniel Comboni (2003). Remarkable: St. Bakhita was presented by Pope Benedict XVI as an example of hope for the whole Church (see Spe Salvi n.3). And for Comboni, mind: the miracle recognized for the beatification happened in Brasil and the one for the canonization concerned a Muslim woman in Khartoum. God may tell us something.

2.4.1 Formation of the consciences

The Church is very much affected by the post CPA situation. The time of massive growth seems to be over, except in certain areas that were isolated during the civil war. We have the impression that the main problem in the Church and in the society is a moral crisis. Because of this, while the effort of first evangelization continues, more attention must be given to the deepening of the faith. Bishops lament the scarce influence of the social teaching of the Church at political and social level. The formation of the consciences has become an imperative as people seem to have lost much of a moral sense, and the criteria other than Christian, seem to prevail such as money, career, social position, tribal cultural concepts. Common good is not a concern to so many. Excessive mobility and lack of perseverance in implementing the pastoral plans are two difficulties we experience in our pastoral work.

2.4.2 Crisis of vocations

After the boom of the nineties, the Church is experiencing a crisis of priestly and religious vocations. Diocesan priests are about 100. In recent years some (about 20%) have left, either for unsolved personal problems or even attracted by the possibility of good salaries and good jobs with the Government of the South or NGOs. What worries most is the easiness with which some leave the vocation. The Archdiocese of Khartoum is passing through a phase of restructuring the previous Parishes to cope with the limited number of priests. The expatriate all together are about 45.

2.4.3 Financial difficulties and its consequences

Finances is another matter of concern. In Khartoum the economic crisis is forcing the Church to accelerate the process of passing from emergency to development and self-reliance in many different activities, particularly education. The Save the Savable program that provided education to tens of thousands of children displaced from the South needs radical rethinking. Donors have cut their contributions and the students have to pay much of the cost of their education, which is not easy. Many are unable to pay. This year 2008-2009 the number of the students in the Save the Savable program dropped from 22.500 to 16.500. The risk of Islamization for many of them is a reality. In fact many children are now taken to the Koranic schools and Government schools, also in areas where the Church is present. Alternative programs should be organized for them.

2.4.4 Catholic University

In spite of the good number of Christians, the Church continues to be under menace and needs to be alert and work hard to get stability and solidity. Education is of crucial importance both for the Christians themselves and for the impact it may have in the Islamic environment. Efforts are being made to develop a Catholic University as an important opportunity to form lay

Christian professionals who could be inserted in the society in high positions. Comboni College has taken the initiative to start: it runs already two bachelor's degree programs (Computer Science and Educational and Religious Sciences) plus a diploma program in Information Technology.

A field that deserves particular attention is social ministry. Unfortunately late developments in international politics have made the country extremely sensitive and suspicious towards any external interference into Sudanese issues; the work of the Church, especially in the field of social ministry becomes more and more delicate and even risky, especially for foreigners.

3. Presentation of the Province: data and statistics of personnel and communities

3.1 Personnel. Statistics refer to 1.1.2010

In the Province we grow in age and diminish in number. In the last three years we passed from 11 to 9 communities. The members are 54 (bishops and scholastics included). Of them, 7 are over 80; 21 over 70; 28 over 60; 8 are between 60 and 50; 7 between 50 and 40, and 11 are under 40. In each community there are 3 or 4 confreres with the exception of Comboni College and the Provincial House that have more. 2 of the 9 communities (Wau and Raga) belong geographically to the South. We wait till the referendum of 2011 before deciding to which province they are to be annexed.

-Bishops 2

-Priests 39

-Brothers 10 (of whom one applied for ordination and is doing missionary service).

-Scholastics 3 (of whom 1 in missionary service).

-no novice and no postulants.

3.2 Radical members

The radical members are 12: 8 fathers, 3 scholastics, 1 Bishop. 2 of the fathers are in Tchad, 1 in Brasil South, 1 is taking the Comboni Year, 1 is studying in Rome, 1 is teaching and doing vocation work. 2 are out of community.

3.3 Nationality of the confreres

Out the 54 confreres, 30 are Italians, 10 are Sudanese (one from SS), 14 from 12 other nationalities.

3.4 Commitments

In recent years we have left nearly all the commitments in diocesan or national institutions: at present we have only two confreres working in the major seminary, one full time, one part time. We have four confreres working as administrators in four dioceses, of whom one part-time. We are very much involved in first evangelization. Out of the 9 communities, 8 are parishes. The ninth is Comboni College whose chapel ministers to hundreds of students and young people.

The Province works in 3 dioceses: Khartoum (5 communities: Provincial House in Khartoum North, Comboni College, Omdurman, Port Sudan and Kosti); El-Obeid (2 Bishops and 2 communities: El Obeid in Kordofan and Nyala in Darfur); Wau, which geographically is in South Sudan (2 communities: Wau and Raga).

In spite of the age and the hard work, the confreres are happy to be in Sudan, and highly motivated.

4. Path followed and developments since the last Chapter

4.1 Aims and milestones achieved,

4.1.1 Building up of Christian communities

The Comboni Missionaries of the Province are fully involved in the pastoral initiatives of the local Church. With the local Church (Bishops, diocesan clergy, religious and lay pastoral agents) we contribute to the elaboration of the pastoral plans and to their implementation. Evangelization is what moves everything. The initiatives are many, touching all sections of people. We are very much involved in the schools from the kindergarten to the university,

having in mind the growth of the students both at human and Christian level. An important apostolate is the organization of the teaching of Christian religion for the Christians who go to Government's schools, and the formation of the teachers who accompany them. In fact in the schools of Sudan religion is a compulsory subject, but in Government schools only Islam is taught. The policy of the leading group in the North seems still to be the Islamization of the pupils through education.

Shedding light on the dark sides of the society is also a concern in our pastoral approach. Among them we mention: alcohol, marginalization of the Christians in the context of the Arabic majority among whom they live, ignorance, cultural disorientation of the youth, the scars of the war and of being refugees, corruption, lack of social concern and indifference to the common good.

In areas of conflicts, like Dar Fur and Wau, the work of awareness and enlightenment in the field of justice, peace and reconciliation is carried on.

4.1.2 Comboni College for Science and Technology

Because we believe in the importance of education we made an effort to develop Comboni College Khartoum (CCK), till now at the level of Senior Secondary, into a real College that gives Bachelor's Degrees, with the possibility of developing into a University. Actually the project of a catholic university in Khartoum is a project of the Episcopal Conference. We as Comboni missionaries took the initiative to start and will collaborate.

4.2 Objectives not achieved in the different aspects of our life – community life, lifestyle, missionary work and actions in different sectors.

4.2.1 With the aging of the members and the reduction in number, it is difficult to plan development. We were unable to find a confrere for our own parish in the provincial house and the Bishop had to send a diocesan priest who lives with us. Years ago we had local vocations, now we are undergoing a crisis in this field. We want to start anew and are preparing a vocation promotion team.

4.2.2 In Missionary Animation, we have still to start. With difficulty we resumed in January 2009 an insert in Arabic in New People. This year we were offered the possibility of running the National Office of Pontifical Works within Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC), but with regret we had to decline the offer for lack of personnel.

4.2.3 The Total Common Fund did not do any progress. We continue to deduct 15% from the offerings that the confreres receive. We use this money to cover the expenses of the Province and to help the communities in need and the local Church. There is no deduction from projects approved by the PC.

4.2.4 We were unable to answer the appeal to re-open the mission of Bunj (Maban) in Upper Nile. The area is under Malakal, but it is served by Khartoum diocese through Kosti pastoral zone. Evangelization in this area was started by a Comboni Missionary (Fr. Parlade') of the diocese of Khartoum in the 80s. The missionary was forced to leave about 20 years ago during the war. People have now returned. We have not been able to provide a priest.

5. Future perspectives

5.1 Concerning the structures of the Province

5.1.1 On-Going-Formation

We feel the need of requalifying ourselves by seriously assuming the orientations of the Chapter

5.1.2 Vocation promotion and missionary animation

We are aware that through vocation promotion and missionary animation we may give a great contribution to the future of the Church. The confreres are very much involved in youth ministry and this may produce fruits. The work is urgent and demanding.

5.1.3 Reinforce the provincial secretariats and make them play a real role in the journey of the province.

5.1.4 Update the provincial directory, community charters and six year plan and make them points of reference in our choices and our action.

5.2 Concerning our pastoral choices

5.2.1 Catechesis and education.

In the present crisis of moral values and of pressure of Islam we see the necessity of giving the people we serve, both in parishes and in schools, a solid formation enabling them to live coherently their faith, to stand the trend of the secularized society and the pressure of Islam. The project of a Catholic University falls in this context.

5.2.2 Dialogue with Islam

Islam is a topic we speak a lot about, but as we are very much engaged in the evangelization of the Southerners and the Nuba, we give it only marginal attention. We were more involved 50 years ago, before independence, than now. The fact that Comboni made a miracle to a Muslim family questions us. We have started integrating the preparation in Arabic and Islamology given to the confreres in Dar Comboni, Cairo, with courses in the African International University in Khartoum (An Islamic University that prepares Muslim proselytizers for African countries), to help the missionaries, to come in touch with Islam from within and to develop relationship and friendship with the Muslims in view of a better dialogue.

5.2.3 Open new missions.

Being missionaries for first evangelization, we feel the urge to open new missions (at least one) in areas not yet touched by evangelization such as among the people along the borders with Eritrea and Ethiopia, and in Dar Fur.

Fr. Salvatore Pacifico, Provincial Superior

Fr. Angelo Giorgetti, Provincial Councilor and Delegate to the Chapter

Fr. Dominic Eibu, Vice Provincial

Fr. Giovanni Fenzi, Provincial Councilor

Bro Agostino Cerri, Provincial Councilor

Khartoum, 30 May 2009

CONFRERES KH = AGE (1 January 2010) *Italy 30; Sudan 9; Others 15+1*

Name	Nationality	Born	Age	
1. Pilati Tarcisio	It	10/1/25	85	
2. Cazzaniga Francesco	It	30/3/25	85	
3. Debertolis G.Francesco	It	1/10/27	83	
4. Fortuna Girolamo	It	6/8/28	82	
5. Soardi Tarcisio	It	10/11/29	81	
6. Ferracin Giovanni	It	9/2/30	80	
7. Zopetti Giuseppe	It	9/10/30	80	over 80 = 7
8. Menegazzo Antonio	It	13/9/31	79	
9. Calvisi Carmine B.	It	3/2/32	78	
10. Puttinato Giuseppe	It	7/4/33	77	
11. Coppo Salvatore	It	17/9/33	77	
12. Uhl Joseph	Germany	6/3/34	76	
13. Redaelli Abele	It	1/4/35	75	
14. Buzzacarin Benito	It	5/5/36	74	
15. Plotegheri Carlo	It	10/5/36	74	
16. Coronella Pietro	It	2/7/36	74	
17. Pacifico Salvatore	It	28/11/36	74	
18. Martin Arnanz Isaac	Spain	7/12/36	74	
19. Caligari Eugenio	It	1/1/38	72	
20. Macram Max Gassis	Sudan	20/9/38	72	
21. Dalla Vecchia Renato	It	16/12/40	70	over 70 = 21
22. Ferraboschi Davide	It	19/7/41	69	
23. Tomasoni Lorenzo	It	4/6/42	68	
24. Manara Giuseppe	It	18/1/45	65	
25. Fenzi Giovanni	It	13/7/46	64	
26. Parise Giuseppe	It	7/7/47	63	
27. Redaelli Giuseppe	It	10/3/48	62	
28. Cignolini Luigi	It	3/8/50	60	over 60 = 28
29. Feliz Da Costa Martins	Portugal	5/3/51	59	between 60 and 50 = 8
30. Schiavon Lorenzo	It	29/11/51	59	
31. Cerri Agostino	It	3/4/52	58	
32. Stonfer Norberto	It	4/2/54	56	
33. Paulo L. Correia Aragao	Portugal	25/1/57	53	
34. Marrone Salvatore	It	8/7/58	52	
35. Juma Androgo M. Elia	Sudan	15/1/59	51	
36. Annis Paul	Egypt/GB	8/12/59	51	
37. Lako Martin	Sudan	1/1/63	47	between 50 and 40 = 7
38. Ramirez F.N. Martin	Mexico	10/5/65	45	
39. Duku George	Sudan	9/4/67	43	
40. Monyo Marcello R.	Sudan	23/9/67	43	
41. Yousif William Idris	Sudan	8/11/68	42	
42. Giorgetti Angelo	It	5/1/69	41	
43. Eibu Dominic	Uganda	30/4/70	40	
44. Matthew Remijo A.G.	Sudan	5/5/72	38	under 40 = 11
45. Antonio Manganhe Natal	Mozambique	15/8/73	37	(8 +3 Scholastics)
46. Otieno Onesmas Godfrey	Kenya	30/12/73	37	
47. Apaap Bonifacio	Philippines	24/1/74	36	
48. Naranjo A. Jorge C	Spain	19/4/74	36	
49. Nboka Ngere Faustin	Congo	7/7/1975	35	
50. Asfaha Yohannes W.	Ethiopia	29/12 /75	35	
51. Hernandez Rigel Juan J	S. Salvador	23/12/77	33	
52. Lwanga Cornelio G	Sudan	3/5/78	32	
53. Peter Ladu Alphonse	Sudan	1/1/79	31	
54. Francis Cirino	Sudan	27/10/79	31	

In Italics: Bishops (2), scholastics (3), out of community (2) : they are 7.

London Province

REPORT TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER.
OF THE
COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS
LONDON PROVINCE – March, 2009

1. Introduction

The Institute first arrived in these islands 106 ago in the person of Frs. Mantica and Lehr who took up residence in Sidcup (now part of south-east London) in 1903. Only six years later the Institute pulled out of the new parish there and did not return to the UK until 1926. Some twelve years later (1938) the Institute bought its first property in the UK (Sunningdale) but in 1940 all the Fathers in Sunningdale were interned on the Isle of Man during WWII where they stayed until their release in 1944. In effect it was not until this time that the Province as we know it really began to take shape.

The physical area covered by the LP today may be represented in a variety of ways: there are 3 distinct Bishops Conferences (England & Wales, Ireland, and Scotland), there are now 5 distinct - if not totally autonomous political entities (England, Scotland, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Wales), and there is a mixture of other commonly used divisions (political & geographical) such as Britain, Great Britain, the British Isles, the UK, Eire, Ulster, The Free State, The Six Counties which add to the complexity of the zone in question. For our purposes we will refer simply to the UK (England, Scotland and Wales) and Ireland (the whole country) unless otherwise stated.

Society in the UK and Ireland shares much with the rest of western Europe: it is post-modern, largely de-Christianised and secular, it is much influenced by large media and communications interests, it is part of a fast-moving globalised world and currently is passing through a severe economic recession. Religion counts for little in the lives of most people and morality in large part is apprehended as a form of entertainment (on TV, in the tabloid press, on the internet and in gossip magazines).

2. Political, social, economic, ecclesial situation:

In both the UK and Ireland the incumbent governments have been in power for a number of years. Today they are under pressure – there is growing unemployment, the economic crisis is leading to many home repossessions, the sour after-taste of war (UK) lingers. There is a feeling that it is time for a change. Both societies share certain other socio-economic features, too: the speed at which change takes place, the general apathy towards religion and all matters religious despite the presence of radical Islam, a youth culture that finds itself more and more isolated, growing legal and moral disregard for the pivotal nature of stable family life, the increasing dominance of the communications media in everyday life (CCTV, mobile phones, face-book/u-tube and the internet), an obsession with ‘security’, the continuing mistreatment of refugees and asylum-seekers, the current economic crisis accompanied as it is by significant distrust in banks and other institutions formerly perceived as unshakeable pillars of society, a distinct reduction in long term ‘commitment’ in favour of a more short-term kind often expressed as a statement of fashion (controlled -if it is controlled at all - by the self interest of particular economic enterprises).

The Catholic Church accounts for 7.5% of the 61 million people in the UK and 82% of the 5.8 million in Ireland. In the UK Mass attendance has gone down by 50% over the last 30 years and even though in the whole of the country Catholics make up the biggest single unit of the 6.3% of the total population that attends Church regularly, in good part this is due to a significant boost in numbers by immigrant communities hailing from countries such as Poland, the Philippines and various countries of Africa. What is true of the UK in this regard is also true for Ireland though on a smaller scale. In Ireland just over 30% of the Catholic population still attends church regularly. The wane in immigration into both the UK and Ireland - a direct result of the stricter rules adopted by the respective home governments and a consequence of the global economic down-turn – will further affect church attendance in the coming years.

Vocations are down for the secular clergy, monastic orders and Religious Institutes but especially so for Missionary Congregations (Ireland has been particularly hard hit) and Congregations for women are disappearing rapidly. Among the faithful,

attendance at Church (and the sacraments generally) lessens as each year passes and the most regular attendees are of late middle-age and older. Very few young people attend church at all. The Church's moral teaching (e.g. regarding marriage and social reform) is often ignored by the baptised and the media still does all it can to undermine the Church as a moral force by making the most of every case of child abuse involving the Catholic clergy. Another facet of Church life that gives rise to concern in these islands is the rather right wing 'reaction' by a very vocal (and unfortunately rather influential) minority group to today's secular environment. Matters are not helped by the perception that this same group, even if it does not have the ear of the Vatican, claims to mirror the Vatican's presumed position on any number of moral issues.

On the up side, society is more cosmopolitan than ever before, society's response to emergencies (such as natural disasters) wherever they occur in the world is heartening, interest in global issues such as the environment, fair trade and human rights continue to be maintained; in Church matters the ecumenical flame burns brightly, the standing of the Catholic Church in UK society has recently risen so far as to have reached the point where the Archbishop of Westminster may be offered a seat in the House of Lords (the second chamber in UK government), Church inspired aid organizations abound, and the lay ministries are becoming more mainstream – a circumstances often dictated by the shortage of priests. Clericalism is not as prominent as it once was and parishes which promote active lay participation display benefits which are plain for all to see.

3. Province statistics on personnel and communities

Confreres: 18 all priests.
 Radical – 11 (i.e. English - 5, Scottish - 4, Irish – 1, Italian – 1)
 Italian - 5,
 Eritrean - 1,
 Mexican - 1

Average age of confreres (end of 2009): 65.6 **Age of Youngest Confrere**
(juridical): 50

Age of Youngest Confrere (radical): 50 **Oldest Confrere**
(juridical/radical): 85

Age ranges [2009]: Under 50 – 0 [0%]
 Under 60 – 6 [29%]
 60 to 69 – 5 [29%]
 70 to 79 – 6 [36%]
 Over 80 – 1 [6%]

We have 10 confreres [60%] 65 years of age and over and 8 confreres under 65 [40%].

We have no confreres under 50 years of age.

Of the 18 confreres who are **juridical members of the LP, two-thirds have health issues.**

Houses: 6

Communities with less than 3 confreres: 3

Communities with 3 confreres: 1

Communities with more than 3 confreres: 2

All communities – and thus all the confreres - are involved in Missionary Animation

Provincial Activities:

Mission Animation

- 3 National Mission Offices (England, Ireland, and Scotland)
- Mission Appeals (c. 230 per year)
- Ministry to refugees and asylum-seekers
- Mission magazine *Comboni Mission* (print run of 25,000) & calendar (65,000)
- JPIC
- 2 web-sites

Pastoral Involvement

- 2 Communities directly involved in parish work
- Parish Supplies

Other Activities

- Provincial Offices (Provincial Superior, Treasurer, Procurator) in Sunningdale
- Youth ministry/School visitation
- Student & guest facilities for Missionaries
- Lecturing

Finance

- Mission Procure
- Significant Financial Assistance to the Institute

4. Developments since the last Chapter: aims achieved/not achieved/partially achieved re. community life, life style, missionary work, other initiatives.

Since the last Chapter the juridical membership of the Province has dropped from 26 confreres to 18 [a drop of around 30%]. In reality in the last six years we have had 10 confreres leave the Province [50%] and six return [33%]. The average age of the juridical membership of the Province has increased significantly [from 58 years of age to 67] and an increasing number of confreres have health concerns.

Regarding our activities we have seen the closure of the Missionary Institute in London and consequently the sale of the scholasticate in Elstree. This unlooked for development has had a big effect on the Province depriving us not only of valuable personnel but also of the challenge represented by the scholastics. Our main point of contact with the younger generation in society has also thereby been greatly reduced.

Other changes: We have had to combine the offices of Provincial Treasurer and Procurator. The magazine editor has been changed twice and his place of work once (from Clontarf to Sunningdale). We have also changed the Directors of all three Mission Offices. Of the six communities, 4 have had a change of Superior and three of local bursar. Due to the shortage of personnel we have also had to cut back on our JPIC activities.

The most significant event in the LP over the last six years, however, has been the setting up of the new community in Battersea, south London, where we have taken on a parish that puts us on the front line in terms of service to refugees, asylum-seekers and economic migrants.

In a small Province such as the LP the effects of change are magnified. These last six years have seen change aplenty yet the overall stability of the Province and the commitment and generosity of the confreres (in their service and community life) is of the highest order. The changes made and the flexibility exercised by the confreres is perhaps the proof we need to confirm that for now the right choices have been made.

Our dialogue and collaboration with the local Churches is healthy. Our dialogue with the Comboni Sisters, however, is more limited – their circumstances are much more dramatic than our own. In regard to the exercise of authority within the Province a more collegial form of government is aimed at. Local Superiors make the effort to arrive at decisions in discussion with their respective communities - similarly the PC and the Provincial Superior. The resultant sense of co-responsibility for the Province and thus real ownership of its activities is felt to be a value worth pursuing. This way we all seek to implement the principle of subsidiarity in our everyday lives.

Our communities all maintain a modest life-style and as a result our overall standard of missionary service has been well served. Our relationship with the Ratio Missionis, on the other hand, has not been quite so smooth. The initiative's lack of clarity - in both aim and method - and shallowness of vision were the elements that concerned us most.

5. Other themes relevant to the Province:

As is the case with all the older Provinces in the Institute, the increasing age and often failing health of their radical members remains a concern. Although in essence we have one community earmarked for 'eventualities' (Sunningdale), so far we have been in the fortunate position of finding the confreres for the most part still able enough and active enough to not have to depend on specific 'retirement' facilities. Things may well change in the future but we feel that should that happen we would be able to make suitable arrangements.

6. Future perspectives:

As six years ago, the membership of the LP still maintain that the Institute needs to attempt a definition of 'Mission' *per se*. Only after we arrive at an adequate understanding of Mission, valid in the world of today can we hope to resolve the other issues that challenge us – governance, formation, service, renewal
.....

In the UK and Ireland the secularisation of society on the one hand and heavy immigration on the other has meant that we now face 'mission' as both subject and object in our environment. In both cases suitable personnel is essential. As far as our service to refugees and asylum-seekers is concerned we renew our request for personnel - from anywhere in the world and even if assigned for only a year or two (missionary service perhaps). If such assignments were to become a regular feature of our service, the whole pastoral picture would feel the benefit.

We reiterate that the LP holds service in the field of MA as its priority branching into youth ministry where appropriate and/or opportune. Once again,

more might be done in this latter field (as with JPIC) were suitable personnel to become available.

The LP remains dependent on the GA for personnel; and since the pool of confreres to whom we might turn is so very limited, internal rotation remains problematic. Certain positions e.g. Provincial Treasurer and magazine Editor, would ordinarily require trained personnel. If solutions are to be found (if we are to be pro-active) and we are not to remain the victim of circumstance, we feel that steps would need to be taken in this regard fairly soon.

A final service that the LP offers and which is not sufficiently exploited by the Institute is its unique position for extending hospitality to confreres wishing to learn English or to attend specialised courses in centres for further education (London, Dublin, Glasgow and Leeds all have first class educational facilities that are just waiting to be tapped).

The Province itself is happy to be at the service of the Institute just as the Institute is, in turn, at the service of the Gospel. As brothers united by the same Gospel, then, we look to the future with confidence.

Malawi-Zambia

REPORT OF MALAWI / ZAMBIA PROVINCE TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2009

FROM THE PLAN OF COMBONI TO THE PLAN OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES IN MALAWI / ZAMBIA

1. INTRODUCTION

We thank God for calling us to the work of evangelization as Comboni missionaries in this part of Africa. We are thankful that in Malawi and Zambia we can carry out our missionary work in an environment of social peace. There is freedom of worship, of movement and of expression. People are friendly and open to the work of evangelization and to the Word of God. The political authorities are receptive to the presence of the Church. The local Church, in which we work and of which we are part, is young, alive and growing.

As Comboni Missionaries we draw inspiration from the life, spirituality and example of our founder. St. Daniel Comboni had his eyes fixed on Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep.

We are the embodiment of the charism of St. Daniel Comboni in Malawi and Zambia. Our founder works in us and through us to fulfil his plan of evangelization and regeneration of Africa today.

We have only to be faithful to '*the primigenia inspiratio*' of our founder, so that our missionary work reflects, today, the purpose, the spirit and the methodology of the Plan of Comboni.

2. THE ECONOMIC, SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION OF MALAWI AND ZAMBIA

Malawi and Zambia, just like contemporary Africa, are undergoing enormous and rapid changes in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Some problems that need urgent attention include: poverty, rapid urbanization, the scourge of HIV/AIDS and the liberation of women.

Malawi has a population estimated at 12 million inhabitants. On July 6th, 1964 Malawi gained its political independence under the leadership of Hastings Kamuzu Banda who tried to consolidate his personal power over all sectors of life in the country. After decades of one-party rule, multi-party democracy was introduced in May 1994 with Bakili Muluzi as new Head of State. The Church played a leading role in the transition to a pluralist political system. The political changes brought about new economic systems causing improvement in some areas but also hardships to the people. The 2004 elections saw Bingo Wa Mutharika assume the presidency.

Zambia's population is estimated at 11 million people, with the highest urban concentration in the whole of Africa. Zambia attained its political independence on October 24th, 1964, with Kenneth Kaunda, who endeavoured to lead the

country in the way of humanistic socialism. Zambia has always sympathised with liberation movements in the neighbouring countries. There followed a big influx of refugees which has made Zambia the country with the highest number of refugees in Southern Africa. In November 1991 Zambia underwent a political transition from one-party system to multiparty system with Frederick Chiluba as the new President. In 2001 he was succeeded by Levy Mwanawasa, who died in 2008. The present president of the Republic of Zambia is Dr. Ruphia Banda.

3. THE ECCLESIAL SITUATION IN MALAWI AND ZAMBIA

MALAWI:

About 25% of the population is Catholic, 20% other Christians, 13% Moslem and 42% adherents to African Religions and others. There is a proliferation of Sects and Independent Churches.

In 1959 the Catholic Hierarchy was established. Today there are 7 dioceses of which five are under the care of Malawian Bishops, a clear indication that the Church is developing into a truly Local Church. The local clergy is increasing in number and managing much of the pastoral work.

ZAMBIA:

About 30% of Zambians follow African Traditional Religions, while 25% is Catholic and 25% belong to other Christian denominations and Evangelical Sects. Islam is on the rise (about 3% to date), while African Independent Churches are flourishing.

The Catholic Hierarchy was established in 1959 and today there are 10 Dioceses. The number of the local clergy is increasing steadily.

The Church has always played a leading role in what touches upon integral human development and civic life.

4. OUR PRESENCE IN MALAWI / ZAMBIA

4.1. Comboni Missionaries in Malawi

Our missionary service began in Malawi in 1973, in the Archdiocese of Blantyre, with the arrival of Fr. Giuseppe Gusmini. In 1977 Malawi was constituted a Delegation with Fr. Jaime Rodriguez as Superior. The Province of Malawi-Zambia was constituted in 1984 with Fr. Luigi Casagrande appointed as its first Provincial Superior. In 1984 we began vocation promotion and mission animation followed by the launching of Zikomo magazine. In 1986 we began formation work at Balaka, in the premises of the Montfort Fathers. In 1987 we moved our Postulancy to the Inter-Congregational Seminary (ICS). In 1992 the new house of Lunzu and the Mission Animation Centre were opened. In 1993 the Craft Training Centre (CTC) was opened in Lunzu.

4.2. Comboni Missionaries in Zambia

We commenced our missionary service in Zambia in March 1978 with the arrival of Fr. Kizito Sesana in Chipata Diocese. We took pastoral care of the parishes of Chadiza and Vubwi, and later we opened the parish of St. Mathias Mulumba in Chipata town. The Chikowa Youth Project was started in 1988. Later on we took care also of Chikowa Parish.

In 1988 we accepted pastoral commitments in Lusaka with our presence in two Parishes: St. Kizito and St. Andrew Kaggwa (Lilanda). In 1997 the Parish of

Chama was opened among the Tumbuka people. December 2001 witnessed the official opening of the new Inter-Provincial Novitiate at Bauleni (Lusaka).

5. PRESENT SITUATION OF M/Z PROVINCE

5.1. Commitments

5.1.1. In Malawi, we have the following commitments:

- i. Balaka: formation (Postulancy).
- ii. Lilongwe: pastoral work / provincial administration.
- iii. Lirangwe: pastoral work.
- iv. Lunzu: Youth Development Project (CTC) / MA/ VP.
- v. Lisungwi: pastoral work.

5.1.2. In Zambia, we have the following commitments:

- i. Chama: pastoral work.
- ii. Chikowa: pastoral work / Youth Development Project.
- iii. St. Mathias Mulumba: pastoral work.
- iv. Lilanda: pastoral work in Kizito and Lilanda parishes, MA / VP.
- v. Bauleni: Formation (novitiate).

5.2. Situation of the Personnel

5.2.1. Members assigned to MZ Province:

Priests:	30
Brothers:	9
Scholastics:	2
Total:	41

Distributed in the following areas:

Provincial Administration:	2
In Parish Pastoral Work:	18
In Youth Projects:	6
In Formation:	5
In MA and VP:	2
Doing Further Studies:	2
In CYOF:	1
Scholastics doing Missionary Service:	2
In Community:	2
<u>In Sick Leave:</u>	<u>1</u>

Total: 41

Nationalities:

From Italy: 16; Mexico: 5; Malawi: 5; Portugal: 4; Uganda: 3; Togo: 2; Benin: 1; Costa Rica: 1; Ireland: 1; Philippines: 1; South Africa: 1; Zambia: 1.

5.2.2. Radical members of MZ Province:

Priests:	10
Scholastics:	10

Place where they are at present:

Priests:

In Ghana / Togo / Benin:	1
In Tchad:	1
In Equador:	1
In Brazil NE	1
In Central Africa Republic:	1
In South Africa:	1
In Malawi / Zambia:	1
Doing further studies:	2
At CYOF:	1

Scholastics:	In Lima:	1
	In Nairobi:	3
	In Kinshasa:	3
	In PieterMaritzburg:	1
	In MZ (Missionary Service):	2

5.2.3. Other (radical) members:

Priests who died:	1
Brothers who left:	2
Scholastics who left:	8

5.2.4. Novices: Second Year: 4 First Year: 3.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SIX YEAR PROVINCIAL PLAN

The MZ Province is in the process of implementing the Six Year Provincial Plan (2005-2011).

6.1. Actions which have been taken

Handing over of Phalombe parish; building of the house for Lisungwi community in Zalewa; two confreres sent one to Chama the other to Balaka; evaluation and closing of Zikomo magazine; restructuring of secretariats; reflection on pre-postulancy; questionnaire on pastoral methodology; evaluation of Chikowa and Lunzu projects; reflection on Ratio Missionis; specializations (*Fr. Jesto Bwalya, Fr. Andrew Mpanda*); opening of community of Lisungwi, in Zalewa, in September 2008.

6.2. Actions still to be taken

Handing over of Mathias Mulumba parish; Building of a house in Chipata town as a welcoming place for the confreres and possible future pre-postulancy; New pastoral commitment in the northern zone of Chipata diocese; Handing over of the parishes of Lilanda and Kizito; New pastoral commitment in the outskirts of Lusaka.

Other areas of intervention:

In the Provincial Assembly 2007 other motions were approved calling attention to some important aspects of our missionary life in our province, namely: Pastoral guidelines and methodology; Self-reliance of Chikowa and Lunzu Training Centres; Zikomo magazine and mission animation material; Pre-postulancy programmes; JPIC.

7. RATIO MISSIONIS

The confreres of the Province of Malawi / Zambia accepted warmly the launching of the process of the *Ratio Missionis* by the General Council. A representative from the Province attended the Intercontinental Assembly held in Rome in May 2004 and later informed the confreres accordingly.

The Provincial Council then appointed a Provincial Team of Animators for the *Ratio Missionis*. The work of animating the confreres in the Province by the process of the *RM* proceeded well. Meetings were organized at Zone level. Regular Reports on the process of the *Ratio Missionis* were availed to the confreres.

We are convinced that this exercise of the *Ratio Missionis* has indeed been a moment of grace for our Province.

8. CODE OF CONDUCT

Copies of the document were made available and distributed to all the communities.

During the Mini-Assembly which took place in October 2008 in Lilongwe, Malawi, a general presentation of the document was made to the confreres. It was also decided that the study of the document would continue during the visit of the Provincial Superior to the communities (October and November 2008), in the Meeting of the Local Superiors (5-8 January 2009) and hereafter in the communities.

A draft paper on “Norms of the competence of the Province to be inserted in the Provincial Directory” has been prepared as a starting point for further reflection at community level and to be approved in the Provincial Assembly at a later stage.

9. PREPARATION FOR THE 2009 GENENERAL CHAPTER

During the meeting of the local Superiors (5-9 January 2009, in Lilongwe), copies of the thematic documents in preparation for the General Chapter were distributed to the participants.

The preparation for the Chapter at provincial level continued with reflection in the local communities and in the Zone Meetings.

The Zone Meetings took place during the month of March 2009 in three places: Chipata, Lusaka and Lunzu. There was a good participation by all the confreres, who felt free to share their views on the different topics. Some concrete proposals were made to be sent to the commission.

10. CHALLENGES FOR THE MZ PROVINCE

10.1. Comboni Missionary identity

In MZ Province there is a good atmosphere. The province is small, manageable and well organized. Our commitments are in line with our Comboni charism.

The confreres are identified with their vocation, dedicated and happy to work in the province. The challenge is to keep renewing ourselves and reviewing our commitments and to keep alive the Comboni missionary spirit among the confreres.

10.2. Community and Apostolic Life

As Comboni missionaries we are called to be “*holy and capable*”, and to make our communities “*cenacles of apostles*”. Our challenge in this area will be:

- 1) *To improve our community life.*
- 2) *To improve our apostolic methodology, as integral members of the local Church.*

10.3. Common Fund

The good atmosphere which exists in our province is in great part due to the existence of the Common Fund. The CF is not only a means of administering the money more efficiently, but, above all, the expression of a new way of doing Mission today.

The CF is an expression of our common project as missionaries in MZ, providing the means to carry it out together as a missionary family.

It is a great grace, but it is also a great responsibility. We have to keep trying to keep the spirit of the CF alive through accountability, preparation of the community budgets and projects; responsibility in using the means available, commitment in looking for funds, and presentation of regular financial reports.

10.4. MA, VP and BF

Our challenge is to continue to work with enthusiasm in the areas of MA, VP and BF. Concretely: Studying and implementing new initiatives of MA and VP in the local Church; organizing properly the pre-postulancy according to the needs of the candidates; continuing collaboration with NP magazine; creating in our communities a welcoming atmosphere for our candidates and students.

10.5. JPIC

In our Province we want to commit ourselves to issues related to Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation, namely:

- Fight against poverty and corruption.
- Integral development.
- Empowerment of women.
- Formation of the youth and local Christian leadership.

10.6. Collaboration

We want to commit ourselves to improve our collaboration:

- *With the Local Church:* as we feel part of the Local Church we want to strengthen our links by developing new ways of responding to new challenges presented to us by the local Church, especially in the area of Mission Animation.
- *With neighbouring Comboni Provinces:* we are open to merging of activities and structures (inter-provincial postulancy for candidates to priesthood and to brotherhood, and others).
- *With the Comboni Sisters:* we are open to close collaboration with them, especially in the sectors of OGF, MA and VP.
- *With other religious Institutes, other pastoral and pastoral agents:* we want to promote dialogue and cooperation.

10.7. Lay Comboni Missionaries

We want to foster collaboration and inter-action between our Province and Lay Comboni Missionaries from other Provinces.

We want to find ways of continuing the establishment of the Lay Comboni Missionaries within our MZ Province.

10.8. Personnel

The greatest challenge of all has to do with the personnel.

MZ Province needs to have 40 members in order to be able to fulfil its purpose and mission.

11. CONCLUSION

We thank God for our Comboni missionary vocation, our Province, the Comboni Family, the people with whom we work, for the commitment, dedication and good will of each confrere.

God will continue to bless our Province, also with vocations, in as much as we are faithful to our charism and use our energies and also our material and financial means for the service of the Mission.

Let us enjoy our missionary life and carry out the work of evangelization with the same spirit of St. Daniel Comboni: a deep trust in God, a strong passion for the Mission, and a great love for the peoples of Africa, especially the poor and most abandoned.

May St. Daniel Comboni bless us and the Mission entrusted to us.

Lilongwe, March 2009

Fr. Dario B. Chaves
Bro. Jonas Dzinekou
Fr. Enrico Colleoni
Fr. Carlos Nunes
Fr. Gabriel Uribe
Fr. Tiziano Laurenti

Provincial Superior
Chapter delegate
Provincial Councillor
Provincial Councillor
Provincial Councillor
Provincial Councillor

México

REPORT OF THE PROVINCE OF MEXICO TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER 2009

1. Brief Introduction

We are deeply thankful to God because, although the difficulties, He has made grown the seed of his kingdom in our midst, in accordance with his planes and rhythms. The Mexican province has been going ahead. Among us has been established the conviction according to which it is possible to fulfill our ideals when all of us are committed. We are conscious about how important is a continual discernment, in order to verify if our deeds are in accordance with the Holy Spirit and in fidelity to the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni, or if on the contrary, we are permitting to ourselves to become spoiled by criterias against the gospel which make us to step back.

2. Presentation of the political, social economical and ecclesial realities

The Society:

In Mexico we are living hopeful times, although the many and complicated problems. We can perceive that in the growing up of new social movements, the a weakness of the minorities poorest and marginalized, a democratic process that came to be years ago and which still going ahead, the efforts of many peoples and institutions (ecclesial groups included) that seek for a most just and human society, the evident move forward in certain sectors like heath, education, employment transportation, etc.

At the same time, we are living a time of great crisis. In fact, Mexico, as the majority of the nations, is immersed in the process of globalization, an ambivalent phenomenon that, frequently, has its negative consequences in the masses. The pragmatic schemes of the neoliberal doctrine and the corruption of institutions have created a system that, having as a main goal the profit and the dictatorship of the marketing, is exclusive, giving place to a major number of poor people without access to the basic goods and services.

Among the negative aspects, the ones that more worrying us are: the permanent poverty (groups more affected are indigenous, farmers, temporary workers and migrants), the dysfunctional lifestyle in families (sign of a strong abandonment of the traditional values) and the growing of social violence. This last one has expanded itself all over the country like an oil spot and has as principal characters the drug cartels and the criminal organizations. We perceive a deep bad feeling in the people, because of the imprudence of those who look for power, corruption, the inefficacy to stop criminal acts, the coming up of political parties that seek just their own well being and the few availability for a mature and constructive dialogue.

The Church:

The ecclesial events at universal level (Vatican II) and continental (Rio di Janeiro, Medellín, Puebla, Santo Domingo, and Aparecida) have contributed to create a more dynamist Mexican Church making it more ministerial and closer to the people. The recent published document from the Aparecida Conference, particularly, involves us

directly, considering our being “disciples and missionaries” so that our peoples, in Him, have life.

The analysis of the reality that the Episcopal Conference presents us (for instance, the Pastoral Letter: “From the encounter with Jesus Christ to the solidarity with everyone”) seems to us of great value. Even though all her contradictions, we see a Church in process of renewal that favors the evangelization and the variety of lay ministries and is committed with the society’s transformation.

Among the most relevant values we find: the simple faith of the people and their strong popular piety; a consecrated life that make efforts to be more significant doing option for the poorest; the missionary spirit of one sector of the Church, promoted for the missionary congresses at national and continental levels. In this, the institutes specifically missionaries have play a very important role, like ours, which make efforts to animate the local church in a missionary dimension.

With all these lights co-exist some shadows that turn the Church into a less efficient and credible institution: a certain clericalism, scandal at several levels, sacramentalism, incapability to assume the changes of the current age (sometimes it seems to make use of an ancient language that does not touch the contemporary challenges), difficulty to enter into the youth and poor world, lack of prophetic sense. There is also a certain going back to consider the mission simply *ad intra* (arguing that in our midst we have urgent needs) and the desire to close the eyes to the mission *ad gentes*.

Certainly the future for the Mexican Church seems to be uneasy because an atmosphere of suspiciousness and opposition surround it, many times because of manipulations of groups interested in to demolish her prophecy and also because of the fundamental values that she represents before the people.

3. Presentation of the comboni reality: statistics of personal and communities

Some history:

The Comboni Missionaries arrived to Mexico in 1948, as a request from the Holy See in order to work as missionaries in the Vicariate of *Baja California*, almost totally abandoned. Later on, around the year 1951, they established themselves in the center of the country accepting the vicariate of *Tepepan, Xochimilco*. Along all this time great efforts have been done working in the formation of future missionaries as in the mission animation of great number of dioceses as well. Since 1953 the Comboni Missionaries began with the publication of *Esquila Misional* and later on in 1966, they started with the publication of *Aguiluchos*; both have been of transcendental importance in the development of the Combonis presence along these lands. The first novitiate was opened on august 15 of 1955 and since then the number of houses of formation and of Comboni mission centers has growth. It deserves to be mentioned, as a brief remainder, the numerous works of evangelization and human promotion in *South Baja California, the Chinantla Oaxaca* [indigenous], *city of Netzahualcóyotl* and *Valle de Chalco* [suburbs], *Costa Rica* and lastly *in Tlapa Gro.*, [indigenous].

In the Mexican province we are: (01.07.2009):

- Priests = 66 (3 of them in other provinces)
- Brothers = 14

- Nationalities = 57 México. 17 Italy. 3 Spain. 1 DSP. 1 USA. 1 Costa Rica.

- Scholastics = 9 (4 of them in missionary service)
- Brothers = 2 (1 of them in mission)

- Novices = 1
- Postulants = 14
- Pre-Postulants = 8
- Minor Seminary = 14

- Mexican Comboni Missionaries in mission = 1 bishop. 67 priests. 9 Brothers.

- Communities = 18
 - Provincial House, DF: (provincial, secretary, treasurer, hospitality)
 - Vizcaíno, BCS: (evangelization)
 - San Ignacio, BCS: (evangelization). It will be given to the diocese on august 15 2009.
 - Cd. Constitución – Las Pocitas, BCS: (evangelization)
 - La Paz – Sagrada Familia (Holy Family), BCS: (evangelization)
 - La Paz – Casa Comboni y Sagrado Corazón, BCS: (evangelization and hospitality)
 - Monterrey, NL: (mission animation and vocational promotion)
 - Guadalajara, Jal. (Oasis san Daniel Comboni = elderly and sick, mission animation, vocational promotion and evangelization)
 - Sahuayo, Mich.: (novitiate, mission animation and vocational promotion)
 - San Francisco del Rincón, Gto. (formation, mission animation and vocational promotion)
 - Cuernavaca, Mor.: (formation and mission animation).
 - Xochimilco, DF: (formation, mission animation and vocational promotion)
 - CAM, DF: (Comboni Mission Center, headquarters of our magazines and publications, mission appeals and campaigns with benefactors)
 - La Moctezuma, DF: (evangelization and place for hospitality)
 - Tuxtepec, Oax. (evangelization). It will be given to the diocese in July 2010.
 - San Pedro Sochiapam: (evangelization). It will be given to the diocese in November of 2010.
 - Metlatonoc, Gro.: (evangelization)
 - Cochoapa, Gro.: (evangelization)

* Commitments that have been accomplished (closed) during these six years:

- Bahía Asunción, BCS
- San Felipe Usila, Oax.
- Minor Seminary in Guadalajara
- Postulancy for Brothers in Monterrey
- Bahía Tortugas, BCS

4. The covered journey since the last Chapter

- Objective:

“May all members of the Mexican province gather our efforts and commit ourselves with the purpose of doing possible the transformation that the Lord is

requesting from us in order to be authentic missionaries according to the style of Saint Daniel Comboni, at personal and community levels, in this concrete reality where we do our missionary service and with today's challenges."

- Goals:

To acquire our configuration with Christ through a solid spirituality, the practice of constant prayer, the living of sacramental life, the spiritual direction and sobriety and coherency in solidarity with the poor. In other words, to live the charism of our founder Saint Daniel Comboni embodied in the rule of life, which makes us people only for God and the most needed.

To place fraternal life at the center of our being Comboni Missionaries because we evangelize primarily by our testimony. To build up communities with mutual respect, human growth, genuine friendship and effective co-responsibility with bases on the listening of God's Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. To assume the criteria that the rule of life gives us to hold the growing of the community life from mutual charity and confidence; the co-responsibility in work, the conquest of selfishness, the mature acceptance of authority and of common norms.

To reach a level of planning and evaluation of our work which permits us, in the various areas, to focus in the specific of our charism; without room for dispersion, individualism, escapes or superficialities. Missionary passion to pay attention to: vocational promotion with constancy and conviction, formation with clarity in the demands and through example, mission animation made with enthusiasm and creativity, evangelization that privileges the solidarity with those in most need and which has as finality to transform the person into subject of his/her own history.

- Priorities

We feel the need to keep ourselves in on-going formation, as an internal attitude that encourages our mutual integral growing, taking care of the quality of our person, and of the updating of our missionary service, which could guide us in the ideal of the *Holiness Comboni Missionary* according to our identity, in an especial way, being involved at personal and community levels with the process of the Ratio Missionis, which wants to be an instrument of change for the institute.

We choose to involve ourselves in the Vocational Promotion as a concrete answer to the challenges we are living with. It will be an authentic commitment to our own vocation in order to "infect" young men with our being missionaries; this has to be a great effort of every one, without exception, to support our team of promoters and the plans of the pastoral for vocations.

- What we have done:

- We have focused our attention in establishing a direct and genuine contact with every confrere and community. Besides official visits, great importance the assemblies have had at all levels.
- During our ordinary meetings of the Provincial Council, we have made efforts to give answer to any urgent issue, to accompany the several secretariats or sectors of the missionary activity, and also to visualize a provincial project through which we could improve our service.

- We convoked the meetings of the local superiors and secretaries of the different sectors in “a path” of co-responsibility.
- The different services that we offer in the field of evangelization, mission animation and formation; vocational promotion, economy, on-going formation, JPIC and promotion of the Lay Comboni Missionaries have been done with generosity and display of physical and spiritual energies. Missions in the dioceses of *La Paz*, *Tuxtepec*, and *Tlapa* still going ahead with earnestness and elaborating constantly their pastoral planes. It deserves to mention some successes: the conclusion of the Educative Charter, the Charter of Evangelization, the Charter of Mission Animation, the treasurer’s handbook, the beginning of the movement of the “Aged Missionaries,” the summer institute in Theology of Mission, the review of properties and the establishment of common funds as the appointing of the commission for Justice and peace as well.
- A significant effort has been done in order to take care of the economical administration and juridical matters. We have given answer to some appeals in favor of missions in most need or in disaster.
- We hosted the participants of the CYOF (Comboni Year of On-going Formation) and with them we shared somehow “a piece” of the congregation’s life.
- We have followed situations of sickness of some of our confreres. Also with those missionaries in vacations.
- The Provincial visited the scholasticates of Innsbruck, Rome, Naples, Chicago, Lima, and Sao Paolo. Together with the provincial secretary, the provincial answers promptly messages from the scholastics and their educators.
- The Provincial Directory was reviewed and approved after a long process in its new edition.
- We have organized the Spiritual Exercises with competent people, who have shared their faith with us.
- We had the opportunity to host the Inter-capitular Assembly, which we consider a motive of animation and communion with the whole institute.
- We elaborated the “Three Years Plan” of the province, which helped to share and to grow since the beginning of its discussion.
- We succeeded in the construction and functioning of the Oasis Daniel Comboni in Guadalajara, for our sick and elderly confreres, with the idea to become a center of mission animation too. At the side, we are building a church dedicated to Saint Daniel Comboni, its first priority will be the formation of the Christian community.
- The location of the *Casa Comboni* in La Paz BCS, has been changed. Now this house is being restructured.
- The work in the office has been intense: e-mail and mail communication with the General Administration, scholastics, missionaries out of the country, family, religious and civil institutions, etc. Minutes of several meetings, to keep files updated, *Combomex*...

- Our lights:

The majority of our confreres are committed to their religious-missionary consecration and they work responsibly in their duties without sparing of efforts or sacrifices. There are confreres with a clear vocational choice, committed to their own spirituality, community and work. Likely, we experience a good sense of belonging to the province: interest, support, participation, genuine wonder and desire to work hardly. The province can count with these confreres, even if their strengths are wick.

In our Mexican province we count with a beautiful tradition of missionaries, who have come ahead of us or who still currently among us, whose example of holiness still in our midst. That permits us to still being appreciated for the church as for the Christian people as well particularly because of the missionary ideal that gives life to the local church.

In the other hand, whitening our institute, several of our confreres offer an important service in other countries and there are others out there who spent their lives (quietly) in the most remote missions and in very difficult conditions. Also are taken in account the Comboni Missionary Sisters and the Lay Comboni Missionaries who are out in the missions.

Perhaps one of the signs which give us more hope in the province is the strong desire of renewal that is growing in the heart of our missionaries. The challenges begin to be interpreted as a call from God to a consecrated life more authentic and to a missionary style more radical. There is a lot of vitality and desire to continue offering the own life in the following of Christ for the manifestation of his kingdom.

- Our shadows

In some of the members of the province: a certain tendency to bourgeoisie, individualism that underlines the personal and private life over community life and common projects, divisions and misunderstandings in the community, difficulty to find new ways to do mission animation (especially in urban zones), fragility in our formation that –in several occasions- provokes the going out of our candidates, confreres in especial situations or out of community life. On the other hand, the number of active missionaries is decreasing, fact that originates the difficulty in the re-enforcement of our missionary presence.

In some of us: poor attention to spiritual growth, lack of interest in going deeper into God's word, poor reflection on the different events around us ... We wander in some cases about laziness in the own work, out goings without notification, waste of money; excessive abuse of goods like TV, internet, cars and cell phones. Another reason to be worried is to corroborate a scale of values in which are first personal interests, after health, friends, family and lastly the community and the province.

Another element to consider is the fast decrease in vocations, although we have noticed a certain recovering. It is a complex phenomenon, which according to us has the following causes: the strong transformation of the society, the current instability of many young people, and also the poor attraction of our testimony or power to convoke. In this matter, none of us can deny the negative impacts coming from family disintegration, the deathly effects of an elaborated message from the mass media and the influence of materialism.

A last aspect is the highlighted issue about the re-qualification of staff and forces. As much as we are becoming less and less in number, growing in age,

facing cases of physical and psychological sickness, next to the complex reality, the situation becomes urgent. Perhaps, as province we have to grow in the following principle: it is better to do things well, rather than to intent a lot badly done. In other words, what matters is to do our best in our duties, to be better prepared in every area, to live in a more complete and integrative way. This is not about to close just to close, but to avoid to give a bad service to the missionary church. There are a lot of things ahead of us regarding a better planning and considering the advantages of our human resources and material structures.

5. Looking at the future

According to us, the first challenge is practically to be convinced that the renewal begins from a personal choice of a more complete life and authentically evangelical. In the current time our message does not match if do not live what we preach.

It is important to maintain an attitude of healthy realism, renouncing to sadness because of the past and to dramatize because of the future. God has the history in his hands. The important thing is to be reborn in the theological convictions, to recover the vocational motivations, to recognize that God still with us calling us to a full life in order to accomplish the original project to which He has called us to life and to the mission.

We will look, above all, to promote the provincial unity around the charism given to us by Saint Daniel Comboni: the service to the poor with the optimism that emerges of the certitude that the Holy Spirit works in our midst.

Another challenge will be to face the fact that we are not able to respond adequately to the commitments that we have. We cannot to fill empty spaces, neither to complete communities. The challenge will be to invest wisely what we are and have, with serenity and apostolic zeal, looking to do well what we decide to do.

Today more than ever, it is demanding to consecrated people and missionaries the capacity to reflect and to discern. All that so quickly is happening at social and ecclesial level, it is too much for us and it is necessary to stop in order to listen, to analyze, to study, to dialogue, to pray, to choose, without fear and ingenuousness. Formulating genuine questions in every field: motivations, ways of presence and formation, language, priorities and kinds of work, use of our houses, structures and goods...

We have to continue accompanying people and communities that help us to keep a faithful life to the gospel and to our missionary vocation; we have to emphasize our priorities, although few numbers, we should be serious and demanding. In these last days we still have confreres that leave priesthood or religious life. Some others come much wounded from missionary experiences. We also have cases that require prolonged accompaniment or categorical interventions.

We want to re-take vocational promotion with the goal to create a vocational culture as a priority in our communities by re-enforcing the promoters' team and elaborating a unique plan in continual evaluation; this, without avoiding the wise reading of the reality or the demands of a promotion through an "infectious" testimony.

We want to support every secretariat and commission of the province in the exercise of their function such as to encourage, to coordinate and to evaluate the

diversity of jobs; to success in the elaboration of plans of work for every sector and to review those plans.

We have to consolidate the Oasis San Daniel Comboni with a good team and dynamics to help our confreres who live there or are just passing through.

We have to start with a project of the Comboni Brothers; this will be a work of human promotion inserted in a poor area and with vocational promotion.

We think it is important to give continuity to the organization of economical aspects: co-responsibility, solidarity, transparency, updating of the legal matters, common fund, care of benefactors and maintenance of properties.

We have to concrete the staff rotation lists for future years, work already started but stopped because of some urgencies and few possibilities of new staff at general level. Here we can include the renewal of contracts and agreements with the bishops of different dioceses where we collaborate.

We will look to strength the relationship with the Comboni Missionaries Sisters and to collaborate with them in any possible area. In the same way we want to proceed with the Lay Comboni Missionaries, favoring the opening of a mission under their responsibility in some of our parishes among the indigenous people.

It is urgent to do a general review of our structures (houses and land properties) to a better use of them. In a particular, the re-location of the provincial headquarters as of the Postulancy of Xochimilco as well.

We commit ourselves to accompany the process that is emerging at continental level: collaboration between provinces and restructuration of our presence at global level.

All these missionary eagerness we put in hands of Holy Mary of Guadalupe and of Saint Daniel Comboni, so that, through their intercession, may come to us the strength and graces we need.

Fr. Rafael González Ponce mccj (provincial and delegate to the chapter)

Fr. Fernando González Galarza mccj (vice-provincial and delegate)

Fr. Rubén Padilla Rocha mccj (counselor)

Bro. David Enríquez Sánchez mccj (counselor)

Fr. Sergio Agustoni mccj (counselor)

Fr. Erasmo Bautista Lucaz (Delegate)

Bro. José Velázquez Blancas mccj (Delegate)

P. Héctor Manuel Peña Sánchez mccj (Provincial secretary)

Mozambique

REPORT OF THE PROVINCE OF MOZAMBIQUE TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

The first group of Comboni Missionaries came to Mozambique in 1947. The area entrusted to the group covered a territory belonging to the dioceses of Nampula and Nacala. The evangelization in that area, inhabited by Macua ethnic group, started with the arrival of the Comboni Missionaries. Those first years were characterized by a strong evangelizing activity and, at the same time, by the building of churches, schools, hospitals, pastoral centres and, of course, houses for missionaries. In 1968 the Comboni Missionaries founded in Mueria a school for catechists, which was later on moved to Anchilo and eventually it became the “Centro Catequético Paulo VI”. There, the catholic magazine Vida Nova began its publication. The Technical School in Carapira (Nampula) was founded in 1964, an institution which gave a great contribution to the development of that region.

In the sixties the Combonis moved to the dioceses of Tete (1965) and Beira (1967).

The Combonis witnessed all the historical events which led the Country to reach the independence from Portugal. In 1974 thirteen Combonis were expelled because they were critical of a situation which was intolerable.

After the independence (1975), Mozambique was drawn into a civil war which lasted sixteen years. More than a million people died; one million and a half refugees outside the Country, and three million displaced inside Mozambique. Two Combonis, Br. Alfredo Fiorini and Sr. Teresa dalle Pezze were killed in that war. During those years the Combonis never left their place, sharing with people their sufferings and also their hopes for better times. Christian communities continued to grow and the centre of Anchilo gave its contribution by forming Christian leaders and catechists. In 1984, the Combonis started to work in the archdiocese of Maputo; in 1989 the pre-postulancy in Nampula was opened, in 1990 the postulancy in Maputo was started; in 1991 the diocesan minor seminary in Nampula was opened. From 1984 to 1994 the Combonis opened a community among the Mozambican refugees in Malawi.

Eventually, a peace agreement was signed in Rome in 1992, followed by a period of political stability which enabled the country to start recovering from the war. The Combonis continued working in various missionary fields: first evangelization, parish work, formation of Christian leaders, mass media and formation of the diocesan clergy (we ran the Interdiocesan Philosophical Seminary in Maputo from 1994 to 2005). In 1994 the government gave us back the direction and administration of the Carapira Technical School. In 1997 the Provincial House was transferred from Nampula to Maputo.

The extension of our presence to areas abandoned by other missionaries and the new challenges of evangelization, forced the Province to adopt a style of community life

quite flexible but unsustainable in the long run. The decreasing number of confreres forced the Province to reduce commitments and to rethink its priorities and strategies so as to serve the mission according to its possibilities and strength.

2. SITUATION OF MOZAMBIQUE

2.1 Political, social, economic situation

Mozambique has a population estimated at twenty million people, of whom 65% live in rural areas and 35% in towns.

From the first General Elections held in 1994, Mozambique has been showing a considerable progress not only in the consolidation of democracy, but also in the field of economy. Obviously, the democratic process is still far from being completed. As a matter of fact, there is an ambiguous relation between the main party in power, the *Frelimo*, and the Government apparatus. There is a strong centralization and a weak autonomy of the legislative and juridical power. The high level of corruption does not help in giving credibility to the action of the Government. The main opposition party, the *Renamo*, does not seem to be a credible alternative to the present Government. The Country is preparing for the next General Elections, which are going to take place in October 2009. The Government introduced a series of reforms which have improved the situation of the Country, and we can somehow see signs of that development. For example, investments are done in order to improve the educational and health system. Nevertheless, in spite of a common optimism, the main effort is to reduce the level of poverty, which is still high among the population. There is a wide gap between few rich families and the many poor struggling to survive. The main causes of poverty are: a poor standard of education, especially among women; lack of investments in order to create jobs; poor infrastructures to improve agriculture, fishing and tourism; rapid urbanization; unemployment; natural disasters, calamities, such as drought, floods; high dependence on foreign aid; high level of corruption; increasing number of people infected with HIV/AIDS (20% of the population).

On top of that, there are still human rights violations, especially of prisoners. Mozambique has also been at a centre of human traffic investigations, due to some cases discovered in the past years.

2.2 Ecclesial situation

About 23% of the population is Catholic, 10% Protestants, 15% Moslems and 34% followers of African Traditional Religions. The presence of Sects and Independent Churches is also growing.

The Catholic Church is growing with the help of the small Christian Communities. There are twelve Dioceses and a quite a good number of Parishes, many of them are not properly assisted because of lack of qualified personnel, especially priests. Some of the priorities of the Local Church are: formation of pastoral agents; attention to the youth; liturgical ministry; the family; care of Christian communities; inculturation. We as missionaries feel that the Local Church is not very missionary-minded; it seems instead that it is much more interested in solving its own internal problems. In spite of that, we continue our collaboration by giving our help to meet local needs.

The country has an important percentage of Muslims. There is mutual respect and tolerance between members of these two religions.

3. COMBONI PERSONNEL IN THE PROVINCE OF MOZAMBIQUE

This report is based on the Six Year Plan 2005-2010, its programs and realization. Statistics concerning Comboni personnel refer to the General Administration March 2009 Consulta.

3.1 Personnel in the Province

The Province has forty nine juridical members, consisting of thirty four fathers, eleven brothers and four scholastics, one of them is undergoing his missionary service in Mozambique. There are also two scholastics, one from Congo and one from Poland, assigned to the Province for their missionary service. The average age of the Combonis is 56. Twenty nine confreres are over fifty years of age, among them fourteen are over seventy; twenty confreres are less than fifty years of age. At the moment there are no novices. In our formation houses there are fourteen pre-postulants and fifteen postulants. There are also four candidates to brotherhood. Of the five Mozambican radical members with perpetual vows, there are three fathers and one brother working in other Provinces, while one of them is working in Mozambique.

3.2 Communities

The Province has thirteen Communities: four in the Archdiocese of Nampula, three in the Diocese of Nacala, two in the Diocese of Tete, two in the Archdiocese of Beira and two in the Archdiocese of Maputo. All but two have at least three members. Within the Plan of handing over various commitments, three communities were closed namely: Matola - "Santo Agostinho" (Maputo), Buzi (Beira) and Mueria (Nacala).

4. Implementation of the Six Year Provincial Plan

The aim of the Plan was to create the right conditions to work, coupling quality with continuity. To do that it was necessary to reach a balance between personnel and activities. Our criteria was to reduce the number of commitments, strengthen community life, foster collaboration and team work with lay and other religious people, especially Comboni sisters and lay Comboni missionaries.

4.1 *Ratio Missionis*

The reflection on the *Ratio Missionis* was carried out by all the confreres, both at local, zonal and provincial level. It was a good opportunity to reflect on how we live and work in the field of mission. The material elaborated and sent out by the central commission was shared and enriched by all in the various assemblies organized for that purpose.

4.2 Evangelization

In the last five years we handed over thirteen Parishes and we closed three communities. Unfortunately, some of those Parishes are still without proper assistance due to lack of diocesan clergy. At present the Combonis in Mozambique are responsible for nineteen

parishes in rural areas and three in urban areas. Furthermore, we run two Diocesan Pastoral Centres (Anchilo and Carapira) and the Carapira Technical School.

4.2.1 Commitments handed over

The following commitments were handed over to the respective Archdioceses and Dioceses: the Parishes of Lunga (May 2007) and Mueria (April 2008) to Nacala Diocese, we also suppressed the Community of Mueria. The Parishes of Namecuna (January 2006), Momola, Riane and Iapala (July 2007) to the Archdiocese of Nampula. The Parishes of Buzi and Ampara (December 2006), Mangunde, Chiloane and Nhamucindo (January 2007), Estaquinha (December 2008) to the Archdiocese of Beira. We also closed the Community of Buzi. The Parish of Songo was given back to Tete Diocese (August 2005). The direction of the Inter-diocesan Filosofical Seminary was given to the local clergy in 2005. At the same time we closed that Community.

4.2.3 Commitments under the responsibility of the Province

The following commitments are still under the responsibility of the Combonis: the Parishes of Carapira, Mossuril, Namapa, Mirrote, Alua and Chipene, the Diocesan Pastoral Centre of Carapira and the Carapira Technical School, in Nacala Diocese. The Parishes of Ribaue, Lalaua, Meti, Anchilo, Santo Antonio de Monapo, Santa Cruz, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre of Anchilo and the catholic magazine Vida Nova in the Archdiocese of Nampula. The Parishes of Muxungue, Nhaapua and Machanga in the Archdiocese of Beira. The Parishes of Matundo, Mavudzi Ponte, Boroma, Marara, Estima and Mukumbura in the Diocese of Tete. The Parish of Benfica in the Archdiocese of Maputo. In December 2008 there was the inauguration of a new parish church of Matundo – Tete.

4.3 Human promotion

In 2007, the Provincial Council approved a project to improve the material conditions at the Carapira Technical School by building a new dormitory and an administration office. We want to invest in the school as a significant project for the Comboni Brothers. It was not by chance that an assembly of Comboni Brothers from MO-MZ-SA was held there in 2008. It was an occasion to share our plans and proposals for a more focused presence of brothers in the mission field.

The Province put up a fund to help university students to pay their school fees. There are also projects helping some health centres in rural areas in collaboration with Comboni sisters.

4.4 Ongoing formation

A great effort was made to improve our community life, even though we have not always achieved the aim. We have had regular zonal and provincial assemblies. Every two years a provincial retreat is organized, while the year where no provincial retreat is taking place each Comboni has to organize his own. We have organized provincial and Comboni's celebrations. There have been workshops for local superiors and meetings for young confreres. The visit of our Major Superiors have also been an occasion to strengthen our communion with the Institute and to deepen our Comboni identity.

4.5 Basic formation

The Province has two formation houses: the Pre-postulancy, with fourteen candidates, and the postulancy, with fifteen candidates. In 2008, the Provincial Council decided to reduce the time spent in the Pre-postulancy, from three to one year. After that period, those who are admitted to the Postulancy will start the first phase of Comboni formation. There are also four candidates to brotherhood. In the last Provincial Assembly we discussed the possibility to have an inter-provincial postulancy for candidates to priesthood and brotherhood. It seems that we need to give to our confreres more time to digest the proposal, but sooner or later it will be a concrete reality. At the moment there are no novices. There are four scholastics, one is doing his missionary service in Mozambique, two are studying in Kinshasa and one in São Paulo. The Province has always been available to welcome and follow Comboni candidates from other Provinces during their vocation discernment or missionary service.

4.6 Comboni Lay Missionaries

The presence and work of CLM in Mozambique has been strengthening, especially during the last five years. At the moment they are five, three from Portugal and two from Brazil. They work in Maputo and Carapira. A Directory for the CLM was approved; there is a confrere responsible for the CLM at provincial level and a lay coordinator of the group. They have already had three annual meetings (2004, 2005, 2008).

4.7 Comboni Missionary Sisters

There is a good collaboration with the Comboni Sisters, in spite of some misunderstandings and different points of view. The two Provincial Councils met four times (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009) and once a year the two Provincial Superiors visit those communities where members of the Comboni family work together in the same area. It is our intention to continue the mutual collaboration and sharing of commitments in various areas of missionary work.

4.8 Common Fund

In 2008 the Province adopted the provincial common fund as the new way to run our finances. At the end of the first year, the result was positive. Let us see how far we manage to go.

4.9 Mission Promotion

The Province started a centre for mission promotion in Beira. We have a full time confrere to do the job. He is already working, supported by the members of the secretariat and by some diocesan structures.

4.10 Other elements of our Plan

The Provincial Directory was approved in 2007. The Code of Conduct was presented and studied during the last provincial assembly 2009. We hope to have the contracts with the Bishops signed as soon as possible.

5. CHALLENGES FOR THE MOZAMBICAN PROVINCE

- 1) The decreasing number of confreres and their increasing age, make it difficult to give continuity to all the activities and commitments. It is a challenge to find a way to tackle the problem and to give a satisfactory answer to that question.
- 2) Considering the above-mentioned difficulties, we shall continue to hand over commitments, we shall make further efforts to improve community life, collaboration with other lay and religious people working in mission.
- 3) Our commitment in the area of Justice and Peace. We need to be more involved in that area keeping in mind the role the Combonis played in that field in the past.
- 4) Dialogue and meeting with Islam and other Religions. In spite of an initial effort the Province has done in order to be involved in that field, the present situation is not encouraging. Let us hope for the future.
- 5) Presence in slums or outskirts of towns. It is in the Provincial Plan, but the current situation of personnel has not favoured its implementation.
- 6) Presence in diocesan pastoral centres. We want to continue our contribution to the formation of pastoral leaders and people involved in parish work, as a way to help the Local Church to be stronger and become self-sufficient.
- 7) Basic Formation. We shall carry on our reform of the system, trying to give an answer to the challenges coming from this sector of our missionary life. We think that a close collaboration among neighbouring Provinces in that area is necessary.
- 8) Collaboration at Regional and Sub-continental level. It is necessary to overcome certain parochialism if we want to improve our presence and work, with new ideas, new proposals and new solutions.

Maputo, 25th of May of 2009

P. Massimo Robol

P. Manuel Lopes Ribeiro

P. Francesco Antonini

Ir. Silvério Maria dos Santos

P. Paulo de Araújo Rocha

North American Province

North American Province Report to the General Chapter 2009

Presentation

1. Social Economical situation of USA (Few Points)

The United States (Population 320 millions –Census 2007-8) is an increasingly diverse society, both ethnically and culturally. The number of immigrants from many parts of the world is growing, as are the larger minority groups (Latinos-44.5 Million of which 20 Million are illegal, Asians-13 Million, African Americans with a long history of slavery and segregation-40 Million) Minorities already make up about one-third of the global population and are actually the majority in some major cities. Although racial discrimination is no longer officially permitted, racist intolerance and socioeconomic differences remain among social groups.

The election of an African American has given a new sense of hope and enthusiasm to many. He has inherited a catastrophic situation in the economy, corruption of the banking system, health care system, education, ecology, war and unemployment are all very difficult tests to handle at once. He has surrounded himself with expert and committed persons crossing over all political boundaries.

Despite many social problems, the U.S. is still a land of tremendous opportunity which greatly values individual freedom and strives to uphold human and civil rights.

Economic opportunity, technological advances and social development allow most people to enjoy a comfortable and affluent standard of living. People respond generously to specific human needs of others, and participate actively in the democratic process at the local level and in advocacy groups around specific issues (human rights, political freedom, social justice, peace, the environment, etc.

Economic uncertainty, the crisis in the family and the overall breakdown of traditional values, seem to be reflected in the increase in violent crime, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancies and abortion. More than half of all marriages end in divorce. Many people suffer from the scars of broken-family experiences.

2. The Church

The Church is becoming aware of and is trying to respond to its growing ethnic diversity and fast-changing demographic makeup. Minority Catholics, especially Hispanics and Asians, are the most rapidly growing groups and are on the way to making up half of the Catholic population. This process is not free of tensions. In particular, Black Catholics, still a very small group, struggle to assert their Catholic identity and specific contribution, while the Church seeks to be more sensitive to their needs.

The great wave of accusations of sexual misconduct against priests and religious have nearly paralyzed the work of the church, for a time not knowing how to react to it. The Catholic Bishop's Conference chose a zero tolerance approach against offenders while

the religious struggle to be just and merciful towards victims and perpetrators. Consequences of the crisis are felt severely, in the lack of trust, less attendance and collaboration in the church. The already aging and diminishing clergy has received a further hit in the lack of vocations, closing or merging of churches and bankruptcy of dioceses and some provinces of religious.

Our province, together with all the religious congregations of men, and under their leadership Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) have given this problem very thorough attention.

3. The Province

Mission Statement.

We, the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, North American Province, seek to follow in the footsteps of our Founder St Daniel Comboni, by ministering to those he loved as the world's "poorest and most abandoned". We do this by:

- Proclaiming the Gospel with all its value, including justice and love for humankind.
- Living the gospel values fully in our lives on a daily basis and inviting others to join us in doing so.
- Encouraging others to work with us in the liberation of the human person among neglected minority groups and refugees, and
- Working with local churches and people to open their hearts and minds to the universal mission of the Church

NOTE: We are working in a real mission territory from the beginning. Contrary to certain prejudicial beliefs held within our Institute, from our very beginning we have existed to evangelize among African Americans and in other situations of poverty, not merely as a source of money to be sent to other missions. Those MCCJs who have lived, sweated and given their lives here know in some prophetic way, that what happens in this complicated reality will happen later in other countries and provinces. The vocation crisis and past year's scandals are only two of many examples. This applies to the political, cultural, social and ecclesial spheres. Our presence, though small in number, is significant and prophetic - note our commitment to Justice and Peace, the great efforts of our Mission Promotion Centers as well as the development of the Comboni Lay Missionaries and Leadership in the Parishes.

Distribution of Personnel

Members of the province as of 31/5/2009 32 Average age 66

Fully (+/-) active 19 - (special assignment 1 - Process of Incardination 2 - Limited or no commitment 12)

Number of communities = 8.

In urgent need: Provincial treasurer, director of Peace Corner.

1. Evangelization

The North American Province, consistent with the Comboni Charism, has focused its attention on the poorest and most abandoned. These underprivileged, live in pastoral situations that the diocese could not meet or diocesan priests would not accept. Thus we have been present among Native Americans, Appalachians, and are now serving African Americans and the new urgent challenge of the Latino Immigrants.

As the parishes or communities become viable (complete in ministry and financially solvent) we entrust them to their respective dioceses in favor of other commitments consistent with our Charism.

Provincial guidelines for Evangelization.

- We are present in places consistent with our charism (situations of poverty and neglect).
- We want our ministry to be a sign of gratitude to the diocese and to the people who are supporting us, and we want it to be the voice of the missionary vocation of the church.
- Our legal standing in the diocesan structure gives us a voice in addressing diocesan issues. We focus on justice, the poor, minorities, inclusive participation in ministry.

Our style: We are promoting intercultural attitudes that are open to interdependence and collaboration: because the reality that we meet is of different ethnic groups, living in the same city, that speaks at its best of respectful coexistence, but most of the time their behavior is that of a ghetto mentality.

Our strategy: We are present in all activities and organizations; we search for, train and empower leaders. Our effort is to not do what can be delegated. (The Comboni way is to believe in the goodness and talents of others and to empower them to be free and ministers to themselves).

Note: We are not just relieving the diocese of the responsibility of a Parish, we are actively pursuing and promoting our missionary goals. The work of the pastors and associates is a source of income for the province

Present commitments:

1.1 In the Dioceses Cincinnati: We maintain our pastoral presence by taking charge, by diocesan request, of organizing and directing all Hispanic Ministries. (about 50 Thousand immigrants, mostly undocumented).

Connected to the parish, but with some independence SU CASA a social/pastoral service to Latin America immigrants. In the recent past we have returned to the diocese two parishes.

1.2 In the Archdiocese of Chicago

1.2.1 Peace Corner/St. Martin de Porres' Parish. A New Form of presence among the African American community in inner-city Chicago.

With a bold move to reach out to the needs of the emarginated African American youth, the province initiated the Peace Corner. It was a new experience of insertion by which Fr. Maurizio Binaghi has been able to offer both education and outreach programs to youth at risk in the worst slum on the city's west side. With the help of our scholastics, the Comboni Lay Missionaries, and other volunteers from both Loyola and DePaul Universities as well as the Jesuit volunteers, the Comboni Missionaries have brought a unique witness of the Gospel and a special commitment to the African-Americans in the spirit of our founder. In a second commitment we accepted the administration of the Parish St. Marten de Porres, located in the same area to complete pastoral with social ministry in the context of FIRST EVNGELIZATION. (See Allegato 2 for Peace Corner)

1.2.2 St. Donatus/Seven Holy Founders

Two Parishes in the south side of Chicago, mixed communities of old Italian Immigrants, African Americas and the majority of immigrants from Mexico, entrusted to one community. The parishes provided a place of ministry for the scholastics of Chicago. Very significant pastoral work.

Seven Holy Founders was returned to the Dioceses in 2006. We are in the process of withdrawing from St Donatus (2010) for lack of personnel.

1.3 Los Angeles, California

The work of the Comboni Missionaries in the two parishes of South Central Los Angeles has continued to grow. One community of confreres serves two parishes comprised mainly of Hispanics and African-Americans. (also a colony de Belize y Igbo de Nigeria)

1.3.1 Community Center (started by Bro. Robert Strabla, now in Milan) where material and also educational and health needs are met, continues to flourish in the hands of lay personnel.

1.3.2 The Vocation Office of the west resides in these premises as well as the facility for a formation program.

1.4- Pastoral commitment and Mission Promotion in Kitchener (Canada).

The Mission Center, previously standing alone, moved into a Parish setting. This model gives stable ministry and a structure that facilitates our mission promotion activities.

The parish church is also used by a Spanish speaking community and most recently by an Eritrean community.

Challenges. All these ministries function well (with considerable stress) with the fathers that are present. As some of them will become incapacitated, we will need to withdraw and return the ministry to the diocese: probably to be closed, to merge with others and, where present, to be directed by Lay Ministers. To plan for rotations and the replacements of some of those involved in these vital ministries that truly identify us as Comboni Missionaries is very difficult for the NAP, without collaboration from other provinces and the General Administration.

Plan: The provincial orientation for the places where we have multiple presences is to unify pastoral presence with mission promotion, and vocation programs.

Members in evangelization #12 (these include people in mixed commitments)

2. Vocation Promotion and Formation

2.1 Vocation. We are conscious that the future of a Province depends also from native vocations and resources, even though we witness the fact that the missionary sending countries are now becoming mission territories.

Three fathers are assigned to work as a team and in the context of the “here and now.” (1 on the West Coast, 2 on the East Coast/Mid West)

We have revised the guidelines for recruitment based on the new rules and regulation of the church in the USA and the principles of the Ratio Comboniana and the guidelines of “Praesidium”

We focus on personal contact and with a follow up at home, school or work for a considerable time before receiving a candidate into the program.

We are eliciting closer involvement of the scholastics in the life and mission of the Province, and especially in Vocation Promotion as personal witnesses of what we are trying to accomplish.

We are unifying the various Vocation Promotion Activities (advertising material, media, visits...) and strengthening the collaboration with the Mission Promotion Office.

A Budget for Vocation Promotion work has been set-up.

Our Vocation Director is in close contact with about 100 interested youth with a possible entering of 1 or 2 this fall.

Plan: The 6 year plan has been in process for 4 years... we are in the process of full evaluation and possible readjusting.

Members in Vocation Promotion # 3 vocation-(1 will be for formation)

2.2 Formation

2.2.1 The Chicago Scholasticate (opened 1976) is the only presence of Basic Formation in the NAP now coming to an end in its present form.

To all the talk and discernment about the scholasticate of Chicago we would like to add the following comments.

In the last 10 years the Scholasticate has lost much of its internationality: Europe and Asia have not been sending candidates for a variety of reasons, some of them questionable.

We resent the attitude of some provincials who “a priori” exclude Chicago as an option for the neo professed.

We feel the prejudice of several ‘Comboniani” towards “America” that comes from old stereotypes. They confuse politics with ecclesial and religious life, knowing little about the country or its culture.

In the evaluation of the Scholasticate there is a lot of talk about those who leave it and the money it costs, very little about the quality of study and the richness of exposure to actual hot issues, soon to become world concerns. Unfortunately, there is nothing about the background of the students, the issues and unresolved problems they bring with them or the quality and preparation of the Formation Directors. Often they are formed in Rome or somewhere else and then sent to work in Chicago, (most of them also coming to the USA for the first time).

Enculturation does not apply only to the southern hemisphere. A multicultural city like Chicago and the intercultural experiences and activities present here are a rare opportunity and a gift for the formation of missionaries committed to internationality, to work and serve in different cultures.

The province gladly supports the Scholasticate as a service to the mission of the Institute and we do not have any selfish interest. Under the present policies 12 years need to pass before we could ask for some graduate from Chicago to offer a service in the NAP. The exceptions are rare.

Note: 1 We are grateful for the visit of Fr. General, some of the General Council and the provincials who have Scholastics in Chicago, but we regret that in the past 8 years, while the future of the Scholasticate in the NAP was being discussed, the Secretary of Formation, never visited the Scholasticate of Chicago.

It is our opinion that by closing here to open in some other place, with the same formation system, will result in just moving the problem rather the solving it.

Note:2 Father Archimede Fornasari has been a teacher in CTU since it beginning (30 years) In a program founded by Fr. Archie , the students and teachers at CTU have worked together on bettering relations among Catholics and Muslims, and Jews in the Chicago area. After 9/11 this was the only formal on-going Christian/Muslim dialogue taking place in the entire country. Fr.Charles Walter was also a teacher at CTU and director of World Justice Program.

Members in Formation Team #1

PROPOSALS:

1) We would like to propose that the building of the scholasticate of Chicago be considered as a residence for on-going formation, specialized studies for Justice & Peace, Missiology and Cross-cultural studies. Also the IRF (Institute of Religious Formation) is recognized as one of the best schools in the world in the preparation of formatters.

2) We suggest the NAP as favorable sight for inserted community for the study of theology. (See ALLEGATO 1. Inserted Formation Program for theology).

3. Comboni Lay Missionary Program

Our LMP is over 20 years old, and one of our successful initiatives. The program is now in the hands of a lay director who teams up with another lay associate and a Comboni Missionary. The province is committed to full moral support and to financial assistance that will gradually diminish according to an established schedule as the program reaches full independence in the next few years.

The Program is still in need of growth, identification, stability and continuity.

We have 7 lay missionaries in the field: Peru-4, Kenya-2, and Guatemala-1, and 4 candidates to enter the program in the fall 2009.

4. Mission Promotion

Primary purpose is a question of faith; Jesus the Missionary of the Father sends us, the baptized.

We promote the missionary vocation of the church and our specific Comboni vision of mission by personal and community witness, in our prayer groups and retreats and by preaching.

We use the media, websites, newsletters, brochures, direct mailing, personal contacts (Office of Benefactor Relations), cultivating missionary groups, auxiliaries and volunteers, maintaining contacts with missionaries outside the country, collaborating with Comboni Sisters, organizing and preaching mission appeals.

The preachers of Mission Appeals participate in special programs to highlight the work of their provinces. (Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia and Peru among others).

Activities of mission promotion (MP) in the NAP are carried out by a number of provincial offices based in Cincinnati and, in varying degrees, by the promotion centers located in Montclair, NJ, LaGrange Park, IL, and Covina, CA.

The structure of the provincial offices does not necessarily follow the structure of other provinces, but is based on what works and is acceptable in North America. Another peculiar aspect of our MP activity is that for the longest time we have been employing lay people who are experts in their field. These employees are given specific areas of responsibility, specific titles with corresponding monetary remuneration according to their degree of responsibility and the demands of the social justice we preach. Our effort is to see them more as collaborators than employees. Here are the various offices and their tasks:

4.1 Mission Office

The Mission Office (MO) of the NAP serves a double purpose: administration and MP.

4.1.1 Administration

As the Provincial Procure the MO administers custodial funds on behalf of about 40 provinces/delegations/dioceses/institutions for a total of nearly \$10 million. These funds are invested and interest is passed on to the various entities. The MO also takes care of subscriptions and purchases/bills in USD for all of these entities. Furthermore, the MO manages daily and transmits monthly all restricted donations it receives. This includes banking, electronic transfers and acknowledgements to the benefactors. The amount of these transfers is close to \$5 million a year. The direct donations from our benefactors are approximately \$2.5 Million.

4.1.2 Mission Promotion

The MO organizes the mission appeals campaign across the USA, which usually takes place during the summer months. The system is strictly regulated by the Missionary Cooperation Plan devised by the United States bishops many years ago. It covers the country and is carried out in cooperation with our local MP centers and with the collaboration of confreres kindly loaned to us by a number of provinces. In the course of a summer we drive an average of 30,000 miles and cover almost as many more by train, bus or, plane. These appeals net the NAP an average of \$200,000 yearly. It is to be noted that these funds are not used for the daily living expenses of offices and/or communities. They are what we freely give to the general administration and to projects.

The MO also manages a program of “small mission projects.” The MO researches the requests it receives and presents them to the Provincial Council for approval. Grants seldom go above \$10,000. The MO also acts as a ‘fiscal sponsor’ for mission entities who receive grants from charitable foundations.

The director of the MO is also closely involved in diocesan and nationwide mission related activities and organizations.

4.2 Communication Office

The communication office covers the production of the quarterly (every three months) newsletter, other targeted publications, and contacts with the local and national press. The award winning Comboni Mission Newsletter is the main printed vehicle of MP in the NAP. Canada also has another version of the Newsletter in English and in French. There are individual arrangements and variations for our local MP Centers, but they also publish local sheets for the benefit of the local supporters. The purpose of the newsletter is to educate the local Church and its people, and to draw a concrete response from our benefactors.

The Comboni Press Network is an instrument of our J&P team, a targeted publication, namely a simple sheet with basic information on issues of advocacy, J&P and Comboni involvement specifically aimed at national news outlets, J&P organizations and politicians at the State and Federal level who are involved in African affairs, immigration issues and shaping of foreign policy.

The Web page (www.combonimissionaries.org) is now in the process of renovation. We have good relations with the local and national press and receive a good amount of exposure on a number of issues. This past year we have seen an increase of interest in the tragedy of Darfur, Congo and the plight of immigrants.

4.3 Development Office

This office has been run by professional lay people since the early 80s. Its task is to engage past and potential mission donors. This is done mainly through direct mail appeals. Thousands of letters go out periodically soliciting funds for the work of the Comboni Missionaries. Each mailing highlights a different challenge, illustrated by concrete examples of missionary life. In the United States and Canada direct mail appeals are the preferred way to solicit funds from donors across the country. The high degree of mobility of the people in the United States presents a constant challenge in keeping lists up to date.

Recently development has been growing in a new direction, with one confrere in charge of keeping in touch personally with significant donors. The development office plans different mission oriented activities to maintaining and making new contacts with an interest in the work of the Missionaries. Different Auxiliary groups are present in all our

mission centers and the one in Monroe, Michigan has been continuing in their mission support and activities since we left Monroe several years ago.
Members in Mission Promotion # 6

5. Renewal Journey

5.1 Ratio Missionis

It began with the two mini assemblies of 2005 with the presence of Fr. Tesfamariam and it was carried out basically at our zonal meetings. The reception varied from skepticism to full acceptance based on age and openness.

Two days of the provincial assembly was dedicated exclusively to the Ratio with great participation and good results of sharing and planning and confirming priorities.

The implementation in the process has helped us to a better awareness and appreciation of ourselves, communities and work. It has been basic in addressing the documents in preparation for the Chapter.

5.2 Ongoing formation

It is carried out at zonal meetings, provincial workshops on special topics such as Ratio Missionis, Aging, Sexual Misconduct: prevention (Virtus courses), management of problematic situations (Praesidium), reconciliation and healing. We keep close connections and collaborate with CMSM (Conference Major Superiors of Men).

5.2.1 Individualism is also a consequence of the small number of confreres in communities and the pressure of work often assigned to a single person. One tends to become owner and protective of his work or isolated and withdrawn when no longer able to work.

Reflection on the new theology of mission as part of on-going formation. We try to strengthen community ties and share information at community meetings, form leaders and delegate responsibilities.

5.2.2 “Praesidium” The commission visited our communities, checked the record keeping of the relationship of the fathers with the dioceses in which we work. They were very pleased with our Codice ontologico, Code of Conduct, Provincial Directory, and the ongoing formation on this matter. The province is receiving full accreditation from Praesidium. At present, the Province does not have any standing formal accusation against any Comboni Missionaries.

Note: Praesidium is an interfaith organization retained by the Conference of Major Superior of Men (CMSM) to help in the crisis of sexual misconduct denounced in the church and religious congregations of men and women.

Based on science, expertise and collective experiences, the religious develop, with the help of Praesidium, a series of criteria to ensure the protection of children and young adults in ministries where religious are involved. These criteria demand a serious evaluation of our rules, regulations, procedures and personal behavior in dealing with minors. When accreditation is granted, civil authorities accept, in a possible lawsuit, that the religious group is doing everything to ensure the protection of minors and the supervision of members who might have been accused. (Many lawsuits were based on neglect of bishops and superiors in handling these cases).

Reference: Church to pay 2.3 million dollars to abuse victims.

Not an unusual headline. Claims against churches and religious organizations exceeded 500 million dollars last year. Why? In part because church members become like family—and no one suspects, or screens, their family, and religious organizations don't always have in place safeguards that non church groups may use. Unfortunately, child

molesters exploit the trusting atmosphere of churches to take advantage of unsuspecting parents and vulnerable children.

We know that managing risks in religious organizations requires sensitivity. Risk management must not interfere with the mission of the organization or with the intimate, sanctioned relationships between its members and clergy. At Praesidium, we work with churches of all faiths, religious orders, dioceses, and youth-ministries to set standards that ensure safety. (<http://www.praesidiuminc.com>)

6. Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation

The Office of Justice, Peace Integrity of Creation of the North American Province was established in our mission promotion house in Montclair New Jersey, due to its proximity to United Nations in New York and to Washington. An ideal place to meet and lobby, together with other religious groups and NGO, in favor of the poor and voiceless of the world, in places where world decisions are often taken (in the belly of the beast).

The purpose of the office is to collect first hand information of the urgent needs of our provinces and delegations in the field of justice and to bring them to the attention of the proper channels. It should be the official voice of the institute and a service of the province for this purpose.

Other aspect of it includes the animation and accompaniment of the NAP and other provinces in this delicate ministry.

The office has a history of highs and lows because of circumstances and people but always faithful to the mission and dedicated to the wellbeing of the poor. At present we have a full time Father in Montclair and a part time employ in Cincinnati, with the new assignment we hope to complete our team. (see: Fr. L. Zanotto Power Point)

7. Sharing of goods and lifestyle

The province counts on a Provincial Treasurer and a Finance Director/Office Manager. The NAP has had a system in place for a long time that implements the idea of the Common Fund. The communities present a budget to the Finance Council and it is approved by the Provincial Council. At the end of the year, the sharing of goods is done by sending the "Superavit" to the Province for its expenses and for funding the mission projects. The economic crisis has affected us painfully and has touched the lives of all in the United States, especially the poor and those who live from paycheck to paycheck. Our investments are conservative and constantly under evaluation and under these conditions are still relatively safe. Our losses have not been as serious as most of those in the business world. Regretfully we had to share some of these losses with the procurees that have money invested with us.

We estimate that our province and the American People in the last 6 years have contributed to other provinces and the GA over 20 million dollars. (GA - 4.5 million) We consider our life style simple and adequate for our work. The Comboni Fathers own only 4 houses in the province; all others are places of residence for our work. The provincial house has only 5 rooms with private facilities. The service personnel are related to the maintenance of the properties and not to the person of the confreres. Health insurances are those of the average person. We comply with the local laws and needs. (see Pesaro: assembly of Provincial Treasurers).

Every community has a small common fund from which every confrere takes what he needs for personal expenses writing, date, amount and the reason. This will be evaluated in the family council. The use of credit cards is monitored by the Finance Director. The use of the cars is related to the type of work of each person considering the distances and circumstances of the country. Model and quality: that of the average person.

8. Challenges:

The challenges are the priorities established by the Assembly:

- a) Vocations - Full commitment
- b) Justice & Peace - Forming a team
- c) Maintaining the good commitment that we have with the people we have available.
- d) Formation proposal (See: Inserted Community of Scholasticate).
- e) At the continental level, to establish closer collaboration with neighboring provinces and delegations (continuing education, personnel, resources, temporary exchange of personnel).

9. What the NAP can offer to the Institute:

- The best opportunity to have a significant voice, on the international level, on the issues of world Justice and Peace by forming and hosting a team for this purpose. The team should represent the voice and the institute with the connection and the concerns of other provinces.
- The best training grounds for future formators, people interested in Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation., fund-raising and benefactor relationships.
- We can offer the expertise present in the country for the care of confreres in difficult situations.
- A model of collaboration with other religious congregations, under the leadership of the CMSM, in dealing with important matters, such as Code of Conduct, Sexual Misconduct and addictions, Evaluation and therapy facilities.
- The presence among the “really poor” in the most powerful and wealthy country in the world can be a powerful witness to the Gospel values here “in the world but not of the world” according to our Comboni Charism.
- Place for Inserted Communities
- Our collaboration with the lay staff (Finances, Development, Communication, Mission) is a successful effort in making them partners in the mission cause and our best collaborators. We hope it could be a model for lay involvement.

Signatures:

Rev. Louis Gasparini

Rev. José Manuel Baeza Gama

Rev. David Bohnsack

Rev. Peter Ciuciulla

Rev. Mario Malacrida

Date: June 1, 2009

Allegato 1

POSSIBILITY OF SMALL INSERTED COMMUNITY FOR SCHOLASTICATE IN THE NAP

In the decision taken by the GC (letter of April 8, 2007) concerning the Theologates it is envisioned the possibility of Small Inserted Communities in place of the “traditional” structure of the Theologate.

The Theologate in Brazil is a start.

We believe that the NAP could well be host of such a “Small Inserted Theologate”.

In particular 2 locations could be feasible for this:

1. St. Charles in Cincinnati
2. St. Martin/Peace Corner in Chicago

Both locations have theological schools in the area capable of guaranteeing a good theological preparation.

Both locations have a specific and significant pastoral commitment where the scholastics could be inserted.

- St. Charles Borromeo, within a hispano environment dealing with pastoral and social care of the immigrants and the undocumented in the Cincinnati area.
- St. Martin de Porres/Peace Corner, within an African American environment with pastoral and social care in one of the toughest neighborhoods of Chicago.

Besides being inserted in a committed pastoral reality there would also be the possibility for the scholastics to orient their academic formation in Peace and Justice (this would probably work better in Chicago)

Notes:

The small group of scholastics (3) would be part of the community as well as the pastoral team with specific responsibilities. It would be a Study/Work environment where the concrete Mission is lived and not just experienced.

The group should start and complete the formation program as a group.

Because of the Study/Work setting this Inserted Theologate would probably require a time span of 6 years instead of the usual 5 in order not to overburden the scholastic with academic activities and reduce the pastoral commitment to a minimum. Certainly it would anyway be shorter than 5+2 years of the actual system.

The NAP should guarantee the “core” Comboni Community with confreres available to be part of such a project. The Scholastics will be part of the community as “confreres” not as guests.

A specific Formation Director would be part of this community as the primary mentor but the whole community would be a “formation community” involved in the pastoral project as well as in the community life. Community life is a part of the reason for these inserted communities as much as the Mission commitments.

We realize that the location of St. Charles would be more appealing within a “continental plan” and once it could start as soon as the primary “formation director” is found and the community is set

Concerning Chicago, we wouldn't exclude the possibility of proposing the location to the European provinces as well as any English speaking provinces and in doing so making an exception to “continentality”. Certainly it would work well with scholastics

well motivated in terms of being involved already at this stage of formation in a concrete project of Justice and Peace.

Allegato 2

Background of The Peace Corner Youth Center

The Peace Corner is a drop-in center for young people on Chicago's West Side, located in a store front building at the intersection of Madison Avenue and Lavergne. The Peace Corner opened in January 2002 to provide neighborhood youths with a safe place to gather, do their homework, and to participate in various recreation and learning activities. The Peace Corner is open Monday through Saturday 2pm-8pm. It is a welcoming and caring environment in a neighborhood characterized by crime, poverty, and drugs.

The Peace Corner is a not for profit corporation that strives to encourage the youth we meet to dream, build self-confidence and live rewarding lives. Our approach with the Peace Corner is to share in their poverty and the uncertainties of their daily lives, while offering positive alternatives to empower them through our GED classes, job training programs, 'Becoming Your Own Person' classes, and simple personal interaction. We at the Peace Corner hope to improve the quality of life through simple, concrete efforts and gradually empower people to help themselves and better their situation through positive alternatives.

The Peace Corner has quickly built up a base of loyal visitors and participants. Each day, approximately 70 - 90 youths come to 'the Center.' We actually have very little to offer in the way of equipment and furnishings—a pool table, a ping-pong table, and newly donated computers for educational purposes. The young people have developed a sense of ownership of the facility, not only because they find acceptance, respect and caring here, but also because many of them have personally helped with the rehabilitation and fix up of our new rented space. In fact, after only three years of operation, we realized a need for additional space. Since September 2004 we have moved from 352 N. Cicero to our new location on 5014 W. Madison Street, just four blocks away. This new location provides us with a better and slightly bigger facility (it is still a storefront) and now we can accommodate even more youth and foster all our programs.

The remodeling and preparation of the new location was done by neighborhood youth who volunteered many hours to get their new Peace Corner ready. We strongly encourage the active participation of young people in the improvement and maintenance of the Peace Corner because it helps to increase their attachment and respect for our shared space. More importantly, it deepens their experience of creating something valuable through their own efforts. It gives them hope that they can change things for the better and helps them to understand that possibilities can become real through dedication and effort. Yet even today, we have quickly outgrown our building and need an even greater facility space to serve some of the most neglected youth in Illinois. The Peace Corner tries to provide a safe space that is open to everyone in the neighborhood. Regular participants have attachments to no less than seven different gangs, yet we have never had a fight inside the facility. Instead, several instances of peace and reconciliation have occurred through the mediation of Peace Corner staff. Thanks to the efforts and involvement of many of our youth several episodes of reconciliation have happened also in the neighborhood thanks to the involvement and

positive approach of our youth. Through an honest sharing of anger, pain and frustration, youth and staff were able to bring about reconciliation. Young people made a positive choice to forgive rather than seek revenge. We are gradually breaking down the artificial barriers that separate young people in the neighborhood.

Violence is a way of life in the neighborhood. In the last several months, several people have been killed in the immediate area: we knew many of these innocent victims. Our children live in the midst of this violence. This is why the Peace Corner provides a space where young people can gather in an atmosphere of safety and caring, where they can be children, and where they can experience genuine feelings rather than the superficial toughness they must exhibit on the streets.

Goals and Programs

The activities of the Peace Corner are aimed at accomplishing the following closely related goals:

- Provide a safe haven and neutral ground to young people living in a neighborhood characterized by gang violence and drug use.
- Create a sense of belonging and community for young people as a potent alternative to the lure of street life and gang membership.
- Instill self-esteem and pride of accomplishment by endowing young people with responsibility and “ownership” of the Peace Corner.
- Offer several educational, training, and immersion programs for youth according to their needs.

The basis of the Peace Corner program is a modest recreation effort. This effort, built around a pool table, a ping-pong table and occasional field trips represents an initial attraction for young people in a community that offers few positive options for them. Recreation is the basis for relationship building and more substantive assistance. Because of the limited resources of the Peace Corner, volunteers have been a key component in expanding a range of programs. In each program area, we attempt to respond to the expressed needs of young people using the facilities of the Peace Corner and other organizations.

GED Preparation

- Volunteers from Loyola University and various professional teachers conduct a GED preparation program. They utilize a personalized approach since some of the young adults seeking to foster their education have been out of school for a long time. We have 2 GED class sessions in the Fall and Spring that students participate in and then are prepared to take their Illinois GED test in one of the city colleges of Chicago. Our success rate is close to 90%.

Tutoring Program

- Volunteers from Dominican University help with our tutoring program working with our youth in their school work and research papers. This is an invaluable service to many students who are often very far behind some of their peers. Academics is stressed greatly as a way to succeed as a productive citizen and we often, without asking, have kids bring their report cards for approval.

Computer Literacy Class

- Volunteers from many different paths of life conduct weekly computer classes for interested young people using the Peace Corner’s seven donated computers. They are instructed in the basic skills of typing, Microsoft Word, and resume writing.

Peace Corner Newsletter

- Our youth interact with each other and with the staff in publishing our Newsletter for the youth attending the center, their families, and our friends and benefactors. The newsletter is called: “The Peace Corner Rap.”

Legal Counseling

- Volunteer attorneys from a renowned LaSalle Street firm are available on a regular schedule to help people with legal problems to assemble appropriate materials for their public defender.
- The Peace Corner’s telephone is also available for neighbors who don’t have phones at home to receive calls from incarcerated family members.

Job Skills Training

- The Peace Corner cooperates regularly with CIC (Community Investment Corporation) an association of realtors and Landlords. We have a large focus with this program in working with ex-offenders to offer opportunities for gainful employment and lower the recidivism rate of these individuals. CIC acquires old buildings to renovate them and the Peace Corner youth provide the cleaning crews who get those buildings ready for rehab. Several of our youth have proved to be very good workers and were regularly hired by local construction companies.

Business Class – B.Y.O.P Course

- ‘Becoming Your Own Person’ (BYOP) is a comprehensive program specifically designed for The Peace Corner Youth Center. B.Y.O.P has been designed and organized by Communication Education, a professional agency in collaboration with the Peace Corner Youth Center. B.Y.O.P was created to assist the young men of The Peace Corner Youth Center to be productive and educated in work values and ethics in order to apply and retain work. B.Y.O.P. will also provide the participants with the basis to become successful entrepreneurs. Seven youth have been selected to participate in this class held every Saturday morning. The instructors are Cynthia Hernandez Kolski, president of “Communication Education”, Bill Klump a successful businessman, and Commander Alfonza Wysinger, the commander of the Police 15th District. At the end of this class the participants will receive a certificate from Communication Education.

Introduction To The Trades

- We have begun a new program in 2007 that introduces young people to trades in the construction industry. It incorporates classroom instruction and teaching, while also allowing students to gain hands on experience working in their respective trades. They get training and instruction in a variety of trades including; carpentry, plumbing, electrician, mason, building inspector, laborer, and construction manager. It is a new program that had a class enrollment of 10 students who are eager to learn a valuable skill and gain a decent job. The teacher is a certified instructor from Community Investment Corporation.

Support Group

- The ‘Making Choices’ support group is available for those who have recently been released from prison to help reduce their potential for recidivism. In this effort, we cooperate with several agencies and benefit from the expertise of some professionals.

Summer Program

- The Peace Corner provides an assortment of recreational activities including field trips to the beach and local museums, basketball tournaments and parking lot

barbecues during a five-week summer program that is free to all individuals who participate.

Basic Finance Class

- The Peace Corner is developing a new program that will focus on teaching our youth and adults in the community the importance and basics of money management and the importance of saving and financial growth. We are hoping to partner with Park National Bank and other organizations with financial background and teaching ability.

Nutrition and Health Class

- The Peace Corner is developing a new program that will focus on teaching our youth and adults in the community the importance and basics of healthy eating and participating in an active lifestyle.

Illinois Department of Human Services Safety Net Works Partner

- We are an organizing partner of the Austin Safety Net Works coalition and received a grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services Safety Net Works. The goal of the grant is to promote strategies and activities that develop youth leadership and prevent youth violence in the Austin community and throughout Illinois.

We are very proud of our programs and very excited about the importance of our two new programs involving finance and nutrition. The finance and nutrition classes are specific areas that are important to the community we serve because of the lack of education in these areas that have a massive negative impact on social, economic and family life.

The Peace Corner cooperates regularly with various organizations in the Austin Neighborhood. We are part of the Healthy Austin Coalition and involved in several of its initiatives and programs. We are also part of Region Three Youth Net, a citywide program. We also partner with SACC (South Austin Community Coalition), the Westside Health Authority (WHA), Austin YMCA, State Representative La Shawn K. Ford, and St. Miguel School.

In our six years of operation, we have realized some important indicators of success, chiefly in the continuing interest and broad participation of young people in Peace Corner's programs, including:

- A daily average of 70-90 young people visit the Peace Corner,
- 100+ have received cost-free, confidential legal counseling from volunteer attorneys,
- 100 began GED preparation courses held at the Peace Corner, 87 have received their GED diploma and the others are still attending daily classes.
- 50+ attend a twice weekly tutoring program working individually with a tutor on academics or computer related studies,
- 90 different youth participated in our summer recreation program.

In addition, we have built up a small staff (mostly unpaid) of young men and women from the neighborhood. Some of the older participants begin to call themselves "the staff" and take responsibility for the organization and supervision of daily activities. Currently, only three of these young men are paid a salary to assist with daily operation of the Peace Corner. The other young men volunteer many hours each week to assure that the Peace Corner functions smoothly. Some of these young men and women have had a checkered past, but when given responsibility they have consistently proven their trustworthiness and talent. Their ongoing efforts are helping to give the Peace Corner a

community-managed character that helps us respond better to neighborhood needs and provides us with a certain legitimacy and rapport with people in the surrounding area.

14 Corporate Capabilities

Staff:

Father Maurizio Binaghi, a twelve year resident of the Austin neighborhood, is Executive Director of the Peace Corner and ultimately responsible for the operation of the center.

Mr. Charles Annerino, graduated from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a volunteer with the JVC (Jesuit Volunteer Corp) Mr. Annerino is the Associate Director and is responsible for the day to day operations of The Peace Corner and development of new and existing programs and partnerships.

Mr. Deandre Manuel, is currently attending Harold Washington College and is Supervisor of many of our programs and activities.

Mr. Marquin Gooden, alumni of the Peace Corner programs now serves as Supervisor. Mr. Gooden is responsible for continuing positive development of our youth and daily activities.

Mr. Daniel Brown, is responsible for the Job training program and in charge of the maintenance crews who operates out of the Peace Corner as part of their job training. The Peace Corner is a 501 C 3 Non-For Profit Corporation registered in the State of Illinois. We have a Board of Directors who oversee the general operations of The Peace Corner.

Members of the Board of Directors

Father Maurizio Binaghi Peace Corner Executive Director

- Angela Maurello, Vice President of CIC
- Georgiana Faraci, Public Notary
- Mary Ellen O'Donnel, Associate Director Memnonite Peace Center
- James Maday, President of Life Trading
- Terry Quilico, Office Manager
- Jeff Coleman, Independent Contractor
- Sr. Brenda Egan, Director Ministry Services Loyola University School of Medicine
- Emily Noelle Ignacio, Sociology Professor at Seattle University in Washington State
- Fr. Louie Gasparini, Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries
- Fr. Peter Ciuciulla, Provincial Treasurer, Comboni Missionaries

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND JOB DESCRIPTION

My ministry at the Peace Corner is mainly a ministry of presence to the youth: I am there for them every day and I am available any time for them. It is what these youth need: somebody willing to care and love them. At first they are suspicious and they do not trust anybody, but after that they give trust and affection in an incredible way. Availability to them means a lot of things: First of all that I am there for them no matter what. These youths are street smart and it is impossible to fool them: they can read a person in few minutes and they understand who is honest and sincere with them, who cares for them and those who are there for personal gains or reasons, with personal agendas and these people do not last too long around here... Available means that the youth are very familiar with me: they come to my house, they call when they need (even during the night...) and they know they can count on me. There is not much of a distance: they all call me by name but the respect they have is the utmost. I play and joke with them but it is also very clear who is in charge.

Concretely I spend all my afternoons at the center just being there and interacting with them at various levels: sometimes somebody wants to talk, most of the times I just hang around and be part of the center. Interaction can vary from assisting with tutoring, listening to them, or playing pool or ping pong (I am still undefeated at ping pong..). The message is that I am there for them and with them. It is amazing to note how everybody who comes in, if they do not see me (I might be in my office) they immediately ask: “Where is Maurizio?” This not because of me but because who I represent for them: I am the older brother for some, almost a father figure for others a friend who cares for everybody

Whoever becomes the executive director here must keep in mind that these youths need a lot of love and attention and if not given, they will get your attention... in ways that are sometimes “a little” over the line.”

A person with a judgmental attitude or a “law and order” - “I am in charge” bossy person will really have a hard time here. The youths here have been given by me “ownership” of the Peace Corner in the sense that they feel at home here. They cannot be treated like they are not the protagonists of all that happens here. They are used to be treated with the utmost respect and they are part of the decision making process concerning the activities and programs. Also the youth are very comfortable when it comes to sharing their struggles and at times their troubles or “extra curriculum activities”. They know we do not condone those “activities” but sharing is the first step toward change.

The rest is a lot of paper work: administration, fund raising, contact with benefactors, relationships with other community based organizations (we are part of several organizations) at city, local and state level; relationships with schools, universities and colleges and with a great variety of other organizations and groups. Nothing too hard but it requires attention and dedication and a lot of time. For all financial matters I have to report to the Combonis and also to the various organizations that sponsor us: all money must be accounted for down to the last cent. Plus the Accounting firm regularly (by Law) investigates our accounting books and reports to avoid irregularities and mismanagement. To have all financial records in perfect order is key to be allotted grants from foundations and city and State agencies and the Comboni Missionaries. We have a payroll company who handles our employees and an accounting firm for all the tax related issues. We have lawyers and professionals who help us at various levels (some we pay, some volunteer). Again, nothing too hard but that require a minimum expertise and a lot of attention.

For further info, please contact me at: fr.mauriziob@gmail.com or fr_maurice@yahoo.com or 001/773/368-4214

NOTE: In 2006 the Province accepted the Parish of St Martin De Porres offering now in strict collaboration Pastoral and social care in the same neighborhood.

Perú-Chile

PROVINCE OF PERU- CHILE – RELATION TO XVII COMBONI MISSIONARIES GENERAL CHAPTER

1. Foreword

The German branch of the Comboni Missionaries (MFSC) started their missionary activities in Peru, in 1938, to the request of Propaganda Fide, in order to minister to the Austrian-German colony established in Pozuzo. This was a wildish difficult area where the colonizers were living in precarious conditions in all possible ways.

After just a short time, the missionaries gained the trust of the local Church and new tasks were being assigned to them: they began taking care of Huanuco's Major Seminary and were entrusted some parishes, among other commitments. During the first years they decided neither to work for vocation promotion nor for missionary animation; it was like that up until the Seventies when, by invitation of the General Chapter of 1975, they began their endeavours in these sectors: starting by the creation of the CAM of Lima in 1978, publishing their own magazines: "Misión Sin Fronteras" and "Aguiluchos" (Mission without Borders and Eaglets) in 1979; later on, in 1984, they opened another CAM in Santiago de Chile. In the field of the formation of future missionaries, the province gave decisive steps with the creation of a Postulancy in 1979, of the Noviciate in 1983 and of the Theologate of Lima in 1985.

In recent years, the province has kept 15 communities, half of them work in evangelization, some mix evangelization with Missionary Animation and Vocation Promotion, and up until a year ago, it counted with all the stages of formation. It is a province which we could say is complete and well integrated: we reckon there is a good balance between the several sectors where we are present in: Evangelization (countryside and urban pastoral), Missionary Animation and administration; Basic Formation and Vocation Promotion (Cfr. Statistics).

2. Peru's Political, Social, Economic and Ecclesial Realities

Political Reality

Unlike other world contexts, the political scope has much relevance in our countries, by the fact that very strong bonds between the economy and social life exist. With the APRA, political party at the moment in power in Peru, the government has controlled key sectors in the life of the people. There is not a true social and political opposition, therefore, we often find authoritarian behaviors against anyone who dares to dissent with state decisions, even using state apparatus to persecute the dissidents. That entire situation has put in danger Human Rights defense (we think about the distrust and law projects that have been prepared to regulate and to control NGO's which work in the country). Bribery is favored at all levels and puts in danger citizen's participation. The judicial power was tremendously discredited, but in recent days, this pejorative image has been changed by the impeccable work of the Supreme Court in charge of judging former president Alberto Fujimori and his collaborators accused of committing crimes against Human Rights while they were in power.

Social reality

By the end of 2008, mass media in Peru indicated, according to data distributed by the State's Human Rights Defense Bureau, that there were 277 conflictive issues in our

country and if the adapted measures were not taken, they could develop and have tragic outcomes. Lately, they spoke of 193 conflict situations and, almost half of them, related to environmental issues (mining pollution and natural resources exploitation). Other sectors that people are concerned with are the ones of the health, education and public security.

Economic reality

In spite of some politicians repeated affirmations about Peru being armoured against the international economic crisis, it is quite evident that this does not correspond to the truth. The financial crisis of the banking and mortgage systems in the most powerful nation on earth has inevitable consequences in economies like ours that depend considerably from the Western economic model through market forces and currency transfers from outside of the country. In Peru, we are witnessing a sustained growth of the Gross Internal Product, for the last five years, but to which cost? We have passed from 15% of concessions granted for mineral extraction to 72% of the total existing resources sold to foreign companies. That is to say, we are getting into a true social mortgage.

Eclesial reality

In all the ecclesiastical Jurisdictions of Peru, like in other countries of the continent, the Great Continental Mission has been launched on 30th August 2,008. This is an initiative to second Aparecida's proposal (N° 326) that invited us to review the Latin American bishops' conclusions and to set up a plan in order to be implemented among all Latin American dioceses. Such a plan had to follow Aparecida's guidelines and activities which will help us all in an effort of missionary renewal, true characteristic of the Church's vocation. In this way, the Latin American church is taking advantage of this hour of Grace to assure an encounter between the faithful and the person of Jesus Christ, stimulating the creation and formation of missionary communities. Unfortunately, in Peru, it is apparently becoming not more than a list of good intentions and a pretext to summon multitudinal concentrations that have as an objective not more than to demonstrate that the Catholic Church continues having the same force of many years ago and it is not being what it should be, a propitious occasion for an authentic spiritual and pastoral renovation.

At the Episcopal level, there are internal conflicts and power struggle at the inside of the Episcopal Conference and we have noticed an increment in the number of bishops affiliating themselves to Opus Dei and/or to similar associations. We have noticed that such associations are not really committed with the poor. At the moment, there has been a recent change in the Apostolic Nunciature in Peru; we do not hope that the situation will improve, due the characteristics and the typical formation of our Pontifical Delegates. According to an authorised observer of Peruvian Church affairs, future times will be full of hardships for the community of believers. We are going from an outspoken Prophetic Latin American Church to a one in exile which will have to walk in silence, following in the footsteps of the Lord, clarifying and fortifying its reason to be in the world.

Chilean situation

Chile is prepared to celebrate presidential elections at the end of this year. Jose Miguel Insulza, present Secretary General of the O.A.S., was one of the candidates with aspirations to govern the country, but, few days ago, he has actually retired from competition when he realised that the electorate directed their glance in another direction.

With Insulza' withdrawal from the presidential race, practically we are left with two well known personages in the lead: Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, of the Christian Democracy (Governing Alliance in power) and Sebastián Piñera, of National Renovation, present right wing opposition party.

The retirement of Insulza will facilitate the way to Frei (President of 1994-2000) to whom he has actually endorsed its votes and a slight increase in the surveys may already be perceived. But the battle just begins and Piñera is a skilled man who has before tried to arrive at the presidential office and, surely neither of them has already won the day. Peru is not expecting greater changes if either candidate wins the election, Piñera has important interests in Peruvian economy and Frei is not a neophyte in politics, therefore, he well knows that, in political affairs, it is better to act wisely and to offer a minimum of continuity in order not to create insecurity among citizens.

Another important factor is the disastrous fall of metal prices in the international markets that, doubtlessly is affecting the income of a country that depends much on the price of copper and other minerals. Nevertheless, the economy of the country is stable, although some signs of recession begin to show gradually.

The eclesial situation is, in many aspects, completely different from the one in Peru. There is less acceptance of our missionary charism, it is a Church that tends more to close in itself and hardly welcomes proposals that come from outside. The contribution of the Chilean Church, from a missionary point of view, is very poor. They have much difficulty to leave its local context and to be sent in new unknown ways; there is much attachment to their family and traditions.

3. Comboni Missionaries Reality in Peru-Chile

3.1 Province Personnel

Belonging to our province from 01 July 2009:

51 Fathers (including: David Farfán, Edison López y Jorge Tapia in experience FC)

05 Brothers

04 Theology Students

04 Students in missionary service (two belonging to our province)

01 Novice (Brother Candidate)

08 Postulants (2+4+2)

06 Preparatory

3.2 Province Communities

Total Number: 15 communities

Four members or more 08: Chorrillos, El Carmen-Sunampe, Huánuco, Monterrico, CAM of Lima, Trujillo, Arequipa and the Scholasticate.

Three members 06: Postulancy, Santiago de Chile, Palca, Pangoa, Baños and Cerro de Pasco.

Two members 01: Pozuzo (in process to be handed over soon).

3.3 Peruvian and Chilean Comboni Missionaries:

28 Fathers (including 06 incardination processes), 2 Brothers PV, 2 Brothers TV, 02 students in missionary service and 4 theology students which total: **38**

3.4 Peruvian and Chilean Comboni Missionaries in Ad Gentes experience:

10 Fathers (U, CA, A, TCH, T/G/B, DCA, M/Z, COL, RSA) y 02 Brothers (ET y DCA)
+ 1 Diácono (A)

3.5 Peruvian and Chilean Comboni Missionaries Peru – Chile Province:

16 Fathers (including David Farfán, Edison López, Jorge Tapia), 01 Brother, 01 Scholastic y 02 students doing their missionary service.

4.0 The Road Traveled since the latest General Chapter

The road traveled by the province since the latest General Chapter (2003) has been one in harmony with the guidelines that our Institute has suggested. “It is not easy to make a comprehensive análisis from the reality in which we are present...” (CA 2003 N°3) “We perceive among us certain uncomfortable feelings: wistfulness, uneasiness, and a wish for a change, to become more radical and authentic” (Cf. *ibidem* N° 23). While we were drawing our six-year-plan, we were certainly guided by those desires of authenticity and the desire to be faithful to our Comboni charism. Our six-year-plan sprung from a deep longing to face the challenges of the Church in Peru and Chile. We wanted to identify and choose our priorities and then to requalify our commitments accordingly, keeping always in mind particular situations of the personnel in the province and taking into account those who were serving outside the province in their *ad gentes* missionary service, but on whom we could always count.

4.1 Achievements and Goals Fulfilment

Comboni’s beatification and canonization

We achieved great involvement in the festivities of the beatification and canonization of our Founder and Father, Daniel Comboni. Those were moments which allowed us to review our commitment and to retrieve the missionary figure of Saint Daniel Comboni. All these activities were organized at provincial level and in collaboration with the local churches in which we are present.

The Province Six-Year-Plan

According to N°30.1 (CA 2003) which says: “[It is necessary] to identify priorities in order to reduce and requalify our commitments, taking also into account the personnel’s individual situations...” We had our six-year-plan drawn, but we could not fulfill it entirely, also because of some obstacles coming right from the General Council in what regards personnel. We elaborated the plan bearing in mind personnel and commitments, but it was quite difficult to strike a balance, running the risk to over stress some confreres. We took special care in putting into effect the proposals of the General Chapter 2003 and the provincial council alongside the various confreres in charge of provincial sectors and committees, put ourselves to the task of preparing the six-year-plan, picking up suggestions and comments from confreres at the grassroots, stablishing objectives and proposing a plan of action which would help us to put into practice the Institute’s guidelines.

Ratio Missionis Process

Although there were a number of different reactions to the proposal to revise and renew our life and missionary styles, we must acknowledge that generally there has been a good acceptance. We created a committee in charge of animating the province communities, which worked well, bearing good results.

Missionary Animation Strengthening

During the past six years, the province celebrated XXV anniversary of our missionary publications; we have gradually strengthened the sector of missionary animation with the help and commitment of Peruvian and Chilean personnel. We consider missionary animation a priority and a fundamental part of our Comboni missionary vocation.

Vocation's Response

If it is true that numbers are dwindling, it is also true that there are still some candidates who ask to join the Institute in our province. We are looking for new ways in order to ensure a good following up of our candidates and we are also trying to explore new territories.

Ongoing Formation

There is an ongoing formation team in charge of motivating this sector in the province. During the past three years, we had a confrere working full time in this field, but in recent months, we had to ask him to help out at an emergency in the postulancy. Nevertheless, our confreres acknowledge the effort we have been doing in this area during all these years.

4.2 Sectors State of affairs

Where are we at the moment? How do we want to live the present situation? These questions deserve an answer from us, Comboni missionaries, now and here. We are undergoing a process of death and resurrection, like a seed that falls into the ground, we cannot do much to change things as they are, and nevertheless, we are invited to ensure minimal living conditions, dreaming about a new life springing forward. We are conscious of our inability to cope and we pray for the grace to be able to remain open and receptive for the new which will come from God's providence and generosity.

EVANGELIZATION

Among the proposals' synthesis drawn by the *Ratio Missionis* working group in the document "Reviewing the Mission- Renewing Ourselves": we are advised in number 104: "to review commitments in every community in order to choose more specific fields of action according to the basic elements of our identity; favouring to work among groups of people at the margins of society..." We need to have more courage in these fields of action and in order to do that we must remain ready to evaluate and hand over commitments where we are not any more necessary. Thus we shall be able to reinforce other communities, becoming more efficient; dedicating ourselves to what is specific of our Comboni charism and methodology.

The greatest challenge we are facing now is that the profet in us has become the cleric, the charism has turned into a trade and love has left its place to habit. We may fall into the temptation to think that the horizon is not the world at large but our own parish boundaries. We have to bear in mind that this is an actual dangerous way of thinking in us missionaries: to replace the boundless horizon of the world for a parish keeping mentality and to enclose ourselves in that limited space. Our province is not enclosed in itself but we are not exempt from this problem.

In our province, we have undergone this painful process, taking up the challenge, touching our vulnerability, we have questioned how necessary is our presence and commitment in the areas in which we work and are present at the moment. Since the beginning of 2003, we have handed over the following Comboni commitments: Ambo and Huariaca (January 2003), Yanahuanca (2004), Villa Alhué, Chile (2005), and in Trujillo we have handed over half of the parish where we work (2005); Renca, Chile

(March 2009) and Pozuzo (September 2009). Nowadays, we are looking at the possibility to hand over Cerro de Pasco during the following three years (?).

We have begun a new misión in Saint Martin of Pangoa among the Amazon tribes (March 2009), following the priorities of the Continental Plan which proposed the care and attention to these most abandon brothers and sisters. We have as well reinforced our presence among afro-americans (El Carmen-Chincha). Presently, half of the province's personnel are committed in the area of evangelization.

ECONOMY

The province has advanced greatly in getting a more community sustained economy. Several confreres have quitted from the former personal account system and have passed into a community fund system, but there are a few confreres who are still using the former system, and though they collaborate with the community maintenance, they still manage their accounts and the funds they get from their benefactors personally, in a rather selfish manner.

Another step forward has been the deliberations around the Total Common Fund at provincial level, a committee prepared and sent a Total Common Fund draft document to all communities to be studied, underlining the need to move forward in this direction. Nonetheless, the road ahead seems long and difficult, though we are already giving the necessary steps in this line of thought, for instance: we have decided to increase our collaboration with the provincial fund from 10% to 15% of all the offerings we receive. In other area of economy, we have established the province's inalienable assets, including: the provincial house, the postulancy and the house in Trujillo.

FORMATION AND VOCATION PROMOTION

Walking with the rest of the Institute, the province of Peru –Chile has put formation as a priority during these past years, investing personnel and resources. The province has prepared several confreres for the sectors of formation and vocation promotion.

Up to the middle of 2008, the province of Perú-Chile had three formation stages: Postulancy, Novitiate and Theologate, after merging our novitiate with the one in Sahuayo, we have left the Postulancy and the Theologate. We count: two full-time vocation promoters, two formators in the Theologate and two formators in the Postulancy. We acknowledge the importance of planning timely the rotation of the personnel working in formation and vocation promotion.

We are forming our candidates keeping in mind the missionary service, taking into account the various directions coming from the several continental assemblies of formation.

International communities and vast missionary fields of work have always been characteristics of the different formation stages. These traits help our young confreres in their vocation discernment and identification.

According to the Six-Year- Planning, we have also improved various aspects in formation. Presently we have:

- ▶ 14 Postulants.
- ▶ 2 Novices
- ▶ 5 Scholastics.

Areas which we still need to work at:

To bring the formative Chart up to date both in Postulancy and Theologate.

To bring the Vocation Promotion Chart up to date.

To carry on with the efforts of ongoing formation for the formators.

MISSIONARY ANIMATION

The Church's situation in our countries provides a challenge for our missionary animation endeavours. On one hand, Peru has a rather conservative local Church and nowadays, it is, evermore, directing all its missionary efforts *ad intra*, this inwards movement is now being fortified with the launching of the Great Continental Mission. On the other hand, Chile is a sensitive Church, touched by all themes related with the universal mission of the Church, but with few people ready to leave their country for an *Ad Gentes* missionary commitment.

Missionary Animation is one of our priorities for the Six-Year-Plan in the province of Peru-Chile. In order to do this missionary animation work, we have as a point of reference the Animation Centre in Lima (CAM) and the Santiago de Chile community.

As a way of promotion we have the missionary magazines "*Misión sin Fronteras*" and "*Aguiluchos*" (Mission without Boundaries and Eaglets) in Peru, with some subscriptions in Chile and a brochure, published every three months by the Santiago de Chile community. All these publications are welcomed among people in both countries. In recent years, we have reinforced missionary animation with new personnel and augmented the number of magazine promoters.

Currently, at the CAM in Lima, we have a magazine director for both publications, an administrator, two promoters and 5 lay-staff- members. The Centre has the task of promoting our magazines "*Aguiluchos*" and "*Misión sin Fronteras*" at public and private schools, missionary animation in parish groups, keeping in touch with friends and benefactors; they also campaign various campaigns along the year (Mothers Day, The Redemptor Scholarships Foundation, Elderly Missionaries, etc).

JPIC

There is a committee in charge of following these issues. Most initiatives have been mainly keeping us informed about different matters, lacking a bit concrete actions and further motivation to take up seriously these challenges and participate actively in these areas of work. In this line, we thank the creation of a web page dealing with these concerns and this year we have appointed new members to support the efforts of the committee in charge. Nevertheless, we see poor reactions from confreres in the province.

YOUTH MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The youth ministry committee has been carrying out the plan prepared at this year's beginning. According to the plan, we projected the celebration of II National Comboni Youth Congress with the participation of youth leaders from all over the country, working with us in our parishes. They are usually formed in a missionary way. We also foresee to offer other workshops in different venues, along the year, in collaboration with The Vocation Promotion Teams.

COMBONI LAY MISSIONARIES COMMITTEE (CLM)

We have 19 CLM – PE members; of whom 14 are in their formation and 3 are aspirants. Plus, there are already 2 doing their first mission experience in the Peruvian highlands.

The group of Peruvian Comboni Lay Missionaries has a well defined formation program which includes pastoral activities during weekends in the area where the Comboni Missionary Sisters have committed themselves.

Besides all this, we have at present 10 Comboni Lay Missionaries coming from other provinces: 4 (NAP); 3 (E); 3 (M). They are working in Trujillo, Baños, Chincha and

Arequipa. There are also two volunteers from Canada who work in the highlands of Huanuco.

COMBONI LAY FRIENDS (CLF) - AMIGOS LAICOS COMBONIANOS (ALC)

The group of Comboni Lay Friends (CLF) is made of people who like the ideal and the Comboni charism. The festivities of the beatification first and the canonization later were favourable occasions to let more people getting to know us and thereafter many of them began to support us and our work with more enthusiasm.

Since their foundation they have been gathering to receive formation in Comboni's spirituality, and they have organized fund-raising in order to support our missions. They meet periodically with a Comboni missionary who works as their adviser.

Lima, Perú, 1° de Mayo de 2009

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF PERÚ-CHILE

Polska

Report not available

Portugal

REPORT OF THE PORTUGUESE PROVINCE TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER - 2009

1. BRIEF INTRODUCTION

We perceive a historical time of change at the socio-economic-ecclesial and missionary levels, felt strongly in our European and national context. To it, we wish to answer paying attention to the signs of the times and to what says to us the Spirit that is creating “something new”.

In front of this new situation, we experience contradictory feelings, simultaneously the desire of keeping the “status quo” and the dissatisfaction, too, from what we are doing, the need for a positive response to this "epochal" change and our limited human resources and the fear of risking for the “new!” We expect from this Chapter some guidelines and a sort of framework to take surer steps and walk at the same rhythm with the Institute.

All these years, while we have maintained our missionary presence and “traditional” works, we have begun a wholesome reflection, deepening the meaning of our missionary presence in Portugal and our way of being on mission in this new socio-ecclesial reality. Of these aspects, we shall speak more deeply in the nº 4 of this report.

2. PRESENTATION OF THE COUNTRY: ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND ECCLESIAL REALITY

With about ten million inhabitants, Portugal is integrated in the socio-political and economic system of the European community, sharing both of its strengths and weaknesses.

2.1 At the social level

Like in the whole Europe, we live the consequences of the economic global crisis that are at the root of new levels of poverty in the country. There are many families that suffer hunger, especially in the cities, due to the increasing unemployment.

(According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the unemployment rate in the 4th trimester of 2008 was of 7, 8%. The Bank of Portugal affirmed that the unemployment “is the most negative point of the evolution of the national economy” and that the number of unemployed will be over 500 thousand in 2009)

As a response to this reality, we assist to an increasing number of initiatives that show the appearing of a new culture of solidarity in some sectors of the population.

The emigration keeps on being a phenomenon in the Portuguese society. Though it has brought economic advantages to many families, it also caused the loss of several cultural, familiar and religious values. On the other hand, the immigration is increasing in the country. At the present moment, the migrants count officially more than 400.000, most of them coming from Portuguese speaking countries and from the East.

2.2 Political level

At the political level, one assists to a rising of a class that uses the politics to serve their own interests. In some way, the mystic of public service has been lost. One notices

certain subservience to the “Chief” so as not to lose employment and privileges. Image and interests are above fidelity of conscience.

Often government takes distance from the moral values that were shared up to now by the majority of the catholic population. It is considered “modernity” everything that comes from foreign countries. Materialism, ethical relativism and individualism is strongly affirmed in society. The worth of things is what pleases “now”. The country institutions – political, judicial and financial – have been discredited by the politicians.

2.3 At the religious and ecclesial level

Being one of the eldest nations of Europe, Portugal finds its historical roots and moral values in its great Christian and missionary tradition. However, as the years pass by, the Sunday practice is going down, especially with the youth. (Following the latest census (2001), the Sunday practice is around of 20% of the Portuguese population).

In its pastoral care, the Church dedicates its attention to the family – considering that the quality of life of each person depends on the stability of this institution – and to the youth. On one hand, the mobility of the population questions the “traditional” organization and, on the other, it values the new apostolic movements. Parochial groups, many of them beneficiaries of a youth pastoral animated by movements and religious institutes, surprise us by their Christian vitality and apostolic creativity. From the hierarchy, one notices a preoccupation and commitment on the formation of families, lay and young people. These last ones seem to live a certain interior malaise. Many of them have lost the meaning of life or they are about to give up. It is therefore fundamental to create an atmosphere of hope in the pastoral ministry with the youth.

The Church, in its fight for the right to life, is being supporting solidarity initiatives and incentives to life. There are groups that are rooting deeply themselves in the genuine faith.

In the last twenty years, important steps have been taken, at the level of missionary vision and commitment of the dioceses in their places as well as in ad gentes. One realizes an increasing true missionary lay movement, being organized by the dioceses and by the institutes, as well.

The socio-ecclesial changes and the transformations at work in society led us, in these years, to rethink the meaning and the form of our presence, especially in our missionary activity and in our vocation pastoral and formation.

3. THE COMBONI REALITY PRESENTATION: PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITIES

- Confreres in the Province: 41, 2 of which are Italians
- Number of priests: 31
- Number of Brothers: 10
- Average age of confreres: 54 years
- In particular situation: 3
- Confreres in temporary vows: 1
- Postulants 3, 2 candidates to the priesthood and 1 to the brotherhood
- Number of communities: 6 (all with more than 4 members)
- *Reduction to laical state: 1
- *Abandon the Institute: 3
- *Encardination: 1

**The 3 cases have just been regularised, since the situations were dragged for many years.*

4. PROVINCE AND COMMUNITIES

4.1 Provincial level

There is a clear identification with a good missionary spirit. With an average of 54 years, we still feel with energies to carry on the mission of the Province, but we also are faced with uncertainty towards the future of a Province becoming older and without a young generation which can ensure the replacement. We are nonetheless projecting ways of innovation for the vocation Pastoral and mission awareness that may bear new fruits.

- An increase of old and sick members is being felt, those working in the Province and those who are coming back from other Provinces, too. In the future, one foresees that we will have bigger communities, in number, but this will not mean that they will be more effective.

- In these past six years, a good number of young confreres were sent to mission. This fact has contributed to the weakening our active forces which were necessities in some Provincial sectors, e.g. in our vocation pastoral.

- We notice also, in the past period, such a rotation that continuity and sustaining life of the Province has been weakened. To this, we should add the fact that missionaries who come back to the Province come with limitations (health, age, problems); the Province activities are the same but the energies are not; perhaps we do not take into account the gifts and the preparation of the confreres; to think that a Comboni should know everything and that he has to rotate to any place and work; it is desirable the dialogue between provinces and the General Direction with them in this regard.

- The kind of structures we have (houses) – big and insufficiently used and occupied by few persons – create some dissatisfaction.

- It's been proposed, in this period, the construction of a Centre for the old and sick confreres. Though its need persists – and will increase -, we were unable to fulfil this aim, due to new elements that came across in our way. This reality has forced us to alter the way to build it. Instead of a new structure, we shall readapt one of our houses in the Province.

- In this period, the Provincial Directory has been revised; also the Deontological Code was translated and published in Portuguese.

4.2 Communities

We have been insisting on the quality of our Comboni community life. We consider that faithfulness to the community moments fixed in the community charter (recollection, community council, day of on-going formation...) favour the dialogue and fraternity, and help the communities to keep united and focused on their specific mission. We realize, however, that we could have made progress at the level of spiritual life sharing. Regarding the witnessing of our fraternity – among us and with people outside – there is still a place to bring fraternity to the heart of the community and to make of our communities, places that generate mission.

5. SECTORS LEVEL

- An effort has been made to concentrate forces and to qualify our Vocation Ministry. Two Centres have been created: one, for the Adolescents and the other for the Youth.

- Attentive to the new realities – at the social, faith and ecclesial levels, we have been fostering new ways of missionary presence and have also promoted a reflection and requalification of our work with the lay people.
- We have also been reflecting upon the convenience of not emphasising too much the separation of the sectors, instead recognizing the relation between them. We aim at, therefore, favouring a better coordination of the activities so as to maximize the results.

5.1 On-going Formation (OGF)

According to the Institute orientations we have encouraged and planned the participation of some of our confreres in the CYOF and in the Renewal Course in Rome.

Besides the animation of the specific meetings in the Province, the Reflection Commissions instituted and, especially, the Commission of OGF has led to a greater consciousness of the actual demands of the Province life in its communities and sectors.

The specific activities have been done regularly, with the relevance that the meetings of the Brothers have been organized together with Spain. This year, also, the meeting of the young confreres (sub-40) was also organized together with the confreres of all European provinces.

Among the most significant moments of OGF, we underline the following, in these six years:

- The Province retreats, one of them led by the Superior General and the other by a Counsellor General;
- The annual meetings of Superiors were unique moments of OGF which helped to create a “synodal” way among us;
- The sharing and reflection done in the communities, first for the *Ratio Missionis* and, then, for the preparation for this Chapter, were moments where a sharing spirit in the communities was cultivated as well as a sense of deeper belonging and involvement of all in the “*causa nostra*” was promoted. This process seems to have contributed to a greater fidelity and radicalism in the living of our vocation which is both a personal issue and an issue of responsibility of all
- The process of acquaintance and of acceptance of the Deontological Code marked also an important moment in our way of OGF.
- The Institute documents were read and used as means of OGF by the communities.
- We could have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the local Church and the Religious Institutes’ Conference in Portugal (CIRP) in this area of OGF.

5.2 Vocation Ministry and Basic Formation

5.2.1 Vocation Ministry of Adolescents

The Province has always invested in this field, with young confreres. For more than twenty years, we have kept the Comboni Seminary in Family (SCF). The results have been quite poor, as regarding the people joining the “Seminário Interno Polivalente” (SIP) – structure which welcomes and prepares the students to enter the Postulancy.

In the last six years, we started running a Vocation Centre for Adolescents. The students of the SIP were involved in its activities. In this Centre and through the persons who

worked there, initiatives of formation were planned for catechists and groups of adolescents in preparation for the sacrament of confirmation.

On the other hand, the SIP is in its minimal expression. The Province is orienting itself to concentrate more in the youth vocation ministry and to lessen its attention and activity with adolescents. This demands an altogether reformulation of our Seminary (SIP), in terms of vocation accompaniment, perhaps thinking of this new experience as an alternative to the SCF.

5.2.2 Youth Vocation Ministry

The Youth Vocation Ministry is all thought and organized by a team of Youth Vocation Ministry and by a Youth Vocation Centre, that plans and animates all the Youth Vocation Ministry, at the national level.

In these past six years, the persons in charge and the place of residence have changed. Our Youth Vocation Ministry is developing towards parish groups and has its aim to Christian formation in view of a missionary commitment of life. (It is structured in 3 levels: the Generic youth pastoral (to it belongs the JAMIC - Jovens Amigos Missionários Combonianos; the Specific (Fé e Missão (Faith and Mission) and Pós-FM) and Vocation Group. In these last two levels, the youth are personally accompanied.)

In this last year, the postulants and the formator of Postulancy were involved in the activities of this Youth Vocation Centre.

The sector has just reviewed the Youth Vocation Ministry charter which is still waiting to be approved.

5.2.3 Basic Formation – Postulancy and Novitiate

In spite of our commitment in the Vocation Ministry of Adolescent and Youth Vocation Ministry, we are faced with the numbers extremely low in our formative structures.

In these six years, the few postulants that we still have, are coming from the SIP; only 2 entered from the PVJ. It surprises us that, as they go through formation, they lose their enthusiasm and quit their formation. During this time, only one has made his first profession.

This reality worries us and that is the reason why the Province has been reflecting upon this in order to better understand its causes. We perceive that the time has come to risk new ways and experiment new formative structures for the Postulancy and Novitiate (*Cf. Perspectives for the Future, No. 6.3*).

5.3 Missionary Animation and Evangelization

5.3.1 In General

We realize that in all these years we have been insisting more on the MA and less on Evangelization. Now, we understand that MA cannot do away with Evangelization. However, we notice that forms of MA which were destined to respond to needs for the maintenance of Comboni structures still subsist, even if they are not needed now as in the past. We realize that a “passing” presence in the parishes – as we used to do in the past - is not responding anymore to what the parish priests ask from us. Meanwhile, we are searching and already implementing new forms of presence and missionary action in the country.

Following the plan for these six years, the Province gave back the Viso vicariate to the local Church of Viseu.

5.3.2 In Particular

In our MA, we recognize that it is fundamental our insertion in the local Church; In it, we wish to offer what is our specific.

In the last years, the Province has progressed in the ways of collaboration with the lay people; new experiences of MA have been initiated with them. For this aim, we have formed teams and given formation to their members. There are also lay people who in their environments organize themselves MA initiatives.

In collaboration with the National Pontifical Missionary Works and the dioceses, we support the formation of missionary groups in parishes. As part of the orientation of the Province, we animate the formation of Cenacles of missionary prayer (COM) that are structuring themselves at the national level.

In this area of MA and Evangelization, one needs to have great availability to do what the dioceses or parishes request from us. It demands competence, knowledge and coordination between the diocesan plans and ours. We feel the same need concerning our work with the apostolic movements and other lay people working with us.

The Province recognizes situations *ad gentes* in the country and would wish to live here all the dimensions of our Comboni charisma. Therefore, we consider necessary to develop an evangelization commitment in the frontier situation.

5.4 Magazines

We publish monthly Além-Mar (20.000 copies), Audácia (23.000), and the Família Comboniana (36.000), every other month.

We consider our magazines integral part of the MA project of the Province. As means of social communication, the magazines continue to be a privileged means to convey to the families and to the society in general the vision of a new world, more just and fraternal, informing and involving people in a wide net of solidarity.

The magazines have marked a peculiar presence through its web page. Together with the site of the Province, we wish that they will become a channel to connect people and open spaces to wider collaboration with mission. Presently, we have a confrere in charge of the site of the Province, in part-time.

The decrease of subscribers continues to worry us as we try to find ways of promotion them.

As for our collaboration with other means of social communication - newspapers, radio, net, etc - it seems that a greater participation of the communities and the individual confreres was greater before than today. It is something to encourage.

Besides the collaboration fostered among our Comboni magazines, at the European level, our magazines are also associated to Mission Press – association of missionary magazines owned by the Missionary Institutes *Ad Gentes* (IMAG) in the country – being presently a Comboni, its president.

The Province was unable to carry on with the plan to give formation on social communication to three confreres, at it was planned. Actually, the director of Audácia keeps his formation, as a journalist, as the opportunity arises.

5.5 Comboni Lay Missionaries (CLM)

Since 1997, the Province follows a formation *iter* and a serious preparation of CLM. We believe in this form of missionary life. Presently, we have 6 CLM working in other Provinces, 8 in the Province and 9 in formation. They are growing up in their

missionary identity and the commitment *ad vitam*. They walk in communion with the continental structure, taking part in their meetings and reflection.

Regarding their presence in mission, our main concern is to ensure continuity to their communities and projects. In the country, we have guidelines for a greater insertion and collaboration with the communities of the Province and their local Churches, especially in the MA.

Their Directory has been reviewed and approved in 2008.

5.6 Justice and Peace (JPIC)

The Province has been experiencing some difficulties in giving more visibility and consistency to its commitment in this area. However, it is growing in awareness and considers this area integral part of its mission in the country and in the Church. The confrere in charge is a member of the national secretariat of Justice and Peace Commission of the Religious Institutes' Conference in Portugal (CIRP).

The vocation youth Centre (CVJ) promoted initiatives in this area that made good impact at the national level. In this context, the entire Province, in its pastoral structures, took part in the project in favour of DARFUR.

The magazines have known how to invest in this field, through information and fostering involvement of people in different projects.

Two members of the Province participated in the Comboni Social Forum, held in Belém (Br.).

5.7 Inter-Comboni Collaboration

At the institutional level, the Provincial Councils meet once a year to share mainly experiences.

There is also regular collaboration among the members of the Comboni Family, namely, in the CLM formation, in the Pilgrimage to Fátima and in the Course of Comboni Spirituality. The Comboni sisters keep a regular collaboration in the youth vocation Ministry. For any other initiatives, we also ask for collaboration to one or another branch of the Comboni Family.

It is our desire to have a more effective collaboration among all the members of the Comboni Family, but we all need to grow together in this same understanding.

5.8 Collaboration with other Missionary Institutes

We are members of the Missionary Institutes *ad gentes* Association (IMAG). We take part in the MA that this association organizes and implements together with the animators of the Institutes *ad gentes* in the country (ANIMAG). Our magazines are, as mentioned above, associated to "Mission Press".

5.9 Finance

Before the crisis that lately has affected us all, the country experienced a quite good economic situation and we have benefited from it. The economic situation of the communities is, then, positive and the life standard of the communities is simple. In fact, we have made sure steps towards a more sober lifestyle. The decisions taken by the communities are to be always accompanied by a good evangelical discernment so as to avoid unnecessary expenditure, giving thus a better witness of our poverty in the social and ecclesial environment our communities live.

We have adopted the total common fund which is functioning quite well and with the satisfaction of all. We notice a spirit of detachment and a commitment in looking for the means to sustain our mission. It has been given more attention and care to the community budget: there is more contention in the expenses and the projects.

Fruit of this spirit, we were able to increase, twice in these past six years, our annual sharing with the Portuguese confreres working in other provinces, as well as the effort to support the projects of other ONG's or non-Comboni persons who ask for our help.

As a sign of our insertion in the local Church and in communion with the suffering people, the communities will also be attentive and open to respond to emergency situations that may happen around us, especially in collaboration with specific organizations.

The maintenance of our houses still is a preoccupation to us, because we still have big structures. In the last years, we conducted a reflection in order to close the house and the community in Coimbra. The decision was reached to close the community and to find ways to make profitable that structure, through rent or any other way. Till now, we did not find viable solutions.

The financial and bank crisis has made its negative impact in our deposits. This put us in front of the necessity to find a financial advisor and led us also to question the criteria that guide us when we have to make deposits and investments. These should not be only under the responsibility of the Provincial bursar.

6. OTHER RELEVANT THEMES OF THE PROVINCE

6.1 Rotation

From the previous Provincial report – two years ago – it was obvious a too frequent rotation (During his 6 year-period, as Provincial, “between those confreres that arrived and those who departed to other provinces, 66 confreres changed “, in a Province of 35 members (*Provincial Report to the 2007 Assembly*).

We feel part of the whole Institute and its problems are also ours. We have walked in communion with it and have kept attentive to its necessities, especially regarding the lack of personnel. However, rotation persists on being a *punctum dolens* for the Institute and for the Province. We hope that this Chapter will deal with this matter, helping the Provinces to keep the balance between their openness to mission and the requalification of their presence in their context.

At the practical level, this touches the problem of collaboration between Provinces and the discernment that should be done regarding the appointment of personnel. This certainly would favour the continuity of mission, because solidity and results won't be reached without continuity.

6.2 Internacionality

From its beginnings, the Province has a rich experience of internationality which has given a good evangelical witness. We deem it necessary, then, to insist on the openness of the Province to the internationality, concretized especially on the level of ministries (MA, YVM)

That need, becomes more urgent with the presence of the european novitiate in the Province, demanding continuity of a vocation-formative community with an international face.

7. PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS THE FUTURE

7.1 New modalities of our presence in the Local Church

We are part of the local Churches where we live. We recognize that our local Churches are growing up in their missionary consciousness and that they see themselves as subjects of mission. The future of our Province depends on the modalities of its insertion in the local Church and, at the same time, on its capability to keep its identity – as a missionary Institute that finds its reason of being in its being in mission *ad gentes* (to go out...) – in this time of change.

In these last years, we are trying to respond to the question “how should we stay in this local Church, according to our specific gift, the evangelization? Should we allow ourselves to only fashion us by the local Church? What is our prophetic contribution?”

As an Institute, we are primarily for the first Evangelization, whether we are sent to other countries or when we are in our own, and it is obvious that our charism in its totality of its services and ministries should be at the service of the local Church here as it is in other continents. Till now, we find it difficult, when we are in the Province, to live in its completeness our specific gift of evangelization.

Keeping always our identity – evangelization, to go out, *ad gentes*... – and keeping the due proportions of the “nigrizia” situations –here and there – we feel growing ever strongly the need to give visibility to our presence in Portugal, as persons passionate for the mission, according to the lifestyle of Comboni, in line with the enculturation, where we live. And, if we live our evangelizing charism with new ardour, method and language, here in Portugal, soon will the Church recognize also our charismatic identity.

7.1.1 An Evangelization Commitment in Portugal

In this line, in the last Provincial Assembly, in preparation for this Chapter, it was decided by unanimity the opening of an evangelizing Commitment. The modalities are still to be defined. This commitment will give visibility to both our insertion in the local Church and to our identity. The focus will be to devote ourselves to the first evangelization, giving priority to the Kerygmatic proclamation and the catechumenate. Our social action and the challenges in the field of justice and peace will be integrated in our evangelizing action. In the same way, we see this commitment as a space where the candidates may make significant experiences that foster vocation decision.

7.1.2 New Ways in the MA

In this new context and from what we are already doing, the MA is slowly being defined in the Province. Without leaving behind immediately the “traditional way” that informs and gives witness of the mission, we are passing to one MA more centred on the announcing Jesus Christ with the peculiar spiritual sensitivity of the Comboni charism.

In the Christian formation, in all levels - whether in the MA or in the YVM -, we give priority to the formation of the groups. These guarantee the continuity of mission animation of the communities through the commitment of their own members. They spread the Comboni missionary spirituality and they ensure the protagonism and the lay co-responsibility in the evangelization where they live. In this way, we aim at creating and animating a wide missionary movement in the People of God, hope of new missionary vocations. Thus, Comboni will appear ever more as a missionary animator with a strong power of attraction.

7.1.3 Structures of Vocation Ministry

Our presence and significant intervention in the local Church is reached through our integration and collaboration in the Diocesan structures (secretariats, commissions...) regarding YVM.

7.2 Restructuring the Ministry of Vocations (VM) and Basic Formation (BF)

Facing the new reality of the youth, the significant changes in society, in the Church, in the families and in our Comboni reality, the Province is open to welcome the guide lines of this Chapter concerning this sector and decided to start restructuring the VM and BF. Thus:

- At the VM level, we want to focus on the youth VM; the adolescents who may come into contact with us will be accompanied till the 12th year, in a similar structure of the SCF.
- At the BF level, we want to concentrate the candidates in one only formation community which will be the community of Novitiate. Instead of the actual Postulancy, we will organize the vocation Comboni discernment in such a manner to take the candidates directly to the Novitiate; the discernment will be done in the house of the Novitiate, possibly accompanied by the *socius* of the master; this discernment phase, besides being very personalized, will have a defined program where the fundamental items of the postulancy *sillabus* will be systematically presented (e.g. religious life, charism, Comboni, mission...); In this way, the values that were presented in the “traditional” Postulancy, will be imparted now in this new structure of vocation accompaniment, which favours the socio-ecclesial and familiar environment.
- The Novitiate will follow the regular structure.

The new structure proposed for Postulancy entails then the transformation of the old style; in this way we will give altogether more solidity, motivation and visibility to the vocation group.

This structure demands also the creation of a vocation and formation community – consecrated and missionary – that help nourish, through an adequate atmosphere, the vocation of the candidates in the Novitiate; Consequently, this new structure will also require from the entire Province an effort to create a vocation culture in it, where, by witness of life, all confreres collaborate in this project.

7.4 Houses

7.4.1 Reconstruction of the House of Viseu: the Provincial Welcome House

In # 4.1 it was given the reason why we were not able to build the Centre for our Sick and elderly confreres. It is still in our plans to restructure the house of Viseu - mother house of the Province and stable patrimony – to be a Provincial welcome house where the elderly and sick confreres may feel at home. We will also ensure there the presence of a community devoted to MA.

7.4.2 Closing of the House of Coimbra and its Community

In the sector of Economy (Cf. #5.9), we mention the decision taken to close the community. As for the house, we are looking for ways of making it rentable. Up to now, no viable solutions were met. The Province will persist on finding ways to implement its decision, in the coming years.

South Africa

THE REPORT OF THE MCCJ PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Historical background. In 1924 the German-speaking branch of the Comboni Missionaries (MFSC) entered South Africa and took charge of the pastoral care of the newly established Apostolic Prefecture of Lydenburg (Papal Decree of 12th of June of 1923), covering a territory comprising part of the present provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga. The Apostolic Prefecture became first a Vicariate, then the Diocese of Lydenburg-Witbank and, in 1988, the Diocese of Witbank. The Prefect/Vicar/Bishop was a member of the Comboni Institute: 1923-1926 D. Kauczor, Prefect Apostolic; 1927-1938 A. Mohn, Prefect Apostolic; 1939-1955 J. Riegler, Prefect/Vicar/Bishop; 1956-1983 Bishop A Reiterer. An historical turning point in Witbank Diocese was the ordination in 1982 of Fr. Mogale Paul Nkhumishe as the first black African Bishop. He was appointed Apostolic Administrator in 1983 and Local Ordinary in 1984. In 2002 he was succeeded by Bishop Paul Mandla Khumalo, CMM, who was appointed Archbishop of Pretoria in 2008 and installed on the 25th of January 2009. At present Witbank Diocese is *sede vacante*. In 1967 the first Comboni Missionaries from the Italian branch (FSCJ) arrived in the Diocese of Lydenburg-Witbank. The official reunion of the MFSC and the FSCJ was in 1979, but already in 1977 the two branches had elected a common Provincial for South Africa. Since then MCCJ of many more countries were sent to South Africa, thus strengthening the internationalization of the Province.

1.2. Other developments. To be faithful to the various characteristics of the Comboni charism and become more widely involved in South Africa, in 1969 the MCCJ started working in the Archdiocese of Pretoria. In the 1970s a MCCJ was appointed professor of Scriptural studies in the national major seminary and he continued, with occasional interruptions, to give this service till July 2009. The Provincial House was first transferred from Lydenburg to Bronkhorstspruit (1987) and then to Johannesburg (June 1991). Vocation Promotion was undertaken on a full-time basis and the postulancy was opened in August 1988. In 1990 the MCCJ moved into the Diocese of Kokstad, where at present they have two communities responsible for three parishes. One MCCJ worked for many years in the JPIC department of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC). Another has been involved in retreats and workshops, especially for religious, and another has been cooperating in the ecumenical translation, printing and re-printing of the Tsonga Bible. Commitments in the Diocese of Witbank were gradually reduced as parishes run by the MCCJ were handed over to local diocesan priests, to *Fidei Donum* priests from different African countries and to other religious Institutes. *Worldwide* magazine was published for the first time in October-November 1990 and the *Liturgical Missionary Calendar* in 1993, making the MCCJ more widely known in South Africa and offering the local Church a world missionary perspective. At the beginning of October 2008 the MCCJ assumed responsibility for pastoral work in three parishes in Soweto in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg.

1.3. Apartheid. During the Apartheid years the MCCJ shared in the daily struggle of the people for freedom by living and working among them, being involved with trade unions and youth groups, participating in marches and demonstrations against injustice, sponsoring bursaries for secondary school and university students. The MCCJ also cooperated with other churches, NGOs, traditional leaders and some government structures in assisting Mozambican refugees, fleeing the civil war in their home country.

1.4. MCCJ international structures. The second Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation (CYOF) started in October 1997 at De Mazenod Conference Centre in Germiston, and is now being hosted every second year at the Comboni Study Centre, in Pretoria/Tshwane, bringing the South African Province in wider contact with the Institute. The international scholasticate, situated on the grounds of the parish of St. Joan of Arc at Pietermaritzburg in the Archdiocese of Durban, started with the arrival of the first six Comboni Missionary students in the middle of 2002. Since July 2008 all scholastics are Africans and African formators are therefore urgently needed. In 2008 a Comboni Missionary started teaching at St. Joseph's Theological Institute at Cedara where our scholastics study theology together with men and women students of other religious Institutes and of some South African dioceses. The Province also hosted various continental and sub-continental MCCJ assemblies.

2. SITUATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

2.1. Political situation. South Africa is still in a period of transition from the repression of Apartheid to an authentically democratic society. There is a strong emphasis on the improvement of human rights and basic services, but government and non-government resources are far from adequate to bring about rapid improvements for a great number of South Africans. Skilled people of all races leave South Africa for other countries where they find better remuneration for their work, impacting negatively on the maintenance of the infrastructure and of the services of the country. Although the African National Congress (ANC) dominates the government, there are many small opposition parties and a relatively free media that are able to challenge corruption and mismanagement to a large extent. The recent general election challenges the new president of the country and the new government to re-direct the country resources for the benefit of all people, especially of the poorest. The Soccer World Cup in 2010 will focus the eyes of the world on South Africa.

2.2. Social situation. Although there is a growing black middle class, primarily made up of government employees, skilled workers and business management, economic injustices continue. Black Economic Empowerment policies (BEE) were and are successful has hoped, enriching often only a handful of privileged people. The gap between the richest and poorest is among the worst in the world and is growing, despite the extension of basic services to a greater percentage of the population. Inter-racial and inter-cultural integration is very slow. High population growth, the influx of immigrants from other African countries, 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 and other socially communicable diseases. In addition to efforts by the Christian churches and other world religions to address these ills, there are very many associations and NGOs making a significant contribution. The tiny Catholic Church (6% of the population) provides one fourth of all assistance to HIV victims in Southern Africa.

2.3. Economic situation. South Africa is an economic powerhouse with a modern infrastructure, especially in the urban areas. Mining, agriculture, a variety of industries and tourism are the backbone of the economy. Land distribution has been very slow and land is being taken out of agricultural production, so that South Africa from being a food exporter has become a food importer. Despite high unemployment, economic refugees from all over Africa, as well as from Asia and Eastern Europe, arrive in South Africa in search of a better life. Especially the poorest among them, are often victims of xenophobic attacks by the local people who see them competing for the scarce unskilled jobs available. South Africa promotes its ambition to lead Africa into the future economically and politically through the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the African Union (AU), and its economic and military power. The government is attempting to mediate African conflicts and provides peacekeepers in different African countries. South African businesses are investing in much of Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond and have already had a major impact on the economic and political life of the continent.

2.4. Ecclesial situation. The churches have less social and political influence than they had during the final days of the struggle against Apartheid, but they are still able to raise their voices on social-political issues, such as xenophobia, and to give witness through social services to the most needy. The Catholic Church is not growing. The percentage of Catholics has diminished in the last few years. Nevertheless the local black clergy, a good number of *Fidei Donum* priests and men and women religious from other African countries are making the leadership of Church more African. People continue to become Catholics and local parishes are implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in their care of adult catechumens. The Church is continually challenged to give witness to Christ and his Gospel in a multicultural and multiracial society, where racism, economic disparity, unemployment, corruption, violence and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are still present. There is also a subtle opposition by the government structures and the media to the values promoted by the Catholic Church. The scarcity of local vocations to the priestly, religious and missionary life is worrying, even if lay people are becoming more motivated in their commitments to various ministries and to supporting the local clergy and Church structures. The preparation and implementation of the Synod of Bishops, the II Special Assembly for Africa, *The Church in Africa in Service to reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, will hopefully involve all the Catholics in South Africa in a process of renewal of their faith and of their commitment to social issues.

3. MCCJ PERSONNEL IN THE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

3.1. Total number of MCCJ: thirty eight, consisting of thirty priests; three Brothers and five scholastics.

3.2. The average age of the MCCJ is 50.6 years. Five are over seventy years of age, eleven are forty years of age or younger.

3.3. Priests and Brothers by nationality: one each from Ecuador, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Philippines, Uganda, USA and Zambia; two each from the RDC, Portugal and South Africa; four from Germany, two of whom are Brothers; five each from Mexico and Spain; six from Italy, one of whom is a Brother and two of whom are from South Tirol.

3.4. Number of MCCJ communities: ten. All but three communities have at least three members. Two confreres have *ad personam* commitments. The MCCJ are present

in three Archdioceses (Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria) and three Dioceses (Kokstad, Pietersburg and Witbank).

3.5. Of the five **South African born MCCJ priests**, two work outside South Africa, two in South Africa and one has obtained simple exlaustration.

3.6. Initial Formation houses are the pre-postulancy and postulancy in Silverton and the scholasticate in Pietermaritzburg.

3.7. Languages used. English, Northern Sotho, Xhosa, Tsonga-Shangaan and Zulu are the main languages in use. Afrikaans, Seswati, Southern Sotho and Tswana are used occasionally and so are the languages of immigrants such as French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and others.

3.8. MCCJ publications. *Worldwide* (2,700 copies six times a year), the *Comboni Friends Newsletter* (1100 copies three times a year), a yearly *Liturgical Missionary Calendar* (30,000 copies), *Comboni News* (provincial bulletin issued four times yearly) and various pamphlets and posters for Mission and Vocation Promotion.

4. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROVINCE SINCE THE CHAPTER OF 2003

4.1. MCCJ losses. The accidental and sudden death of two young MCCJ, the 40-year old Fr. Giorgio Stefani (20.10.2005) and the 44-year old Fr. George Nok Adiang Kur (15.08.2006), the first being the formator in the pre-postulancy and postulancy and the second doing full time work in vocation promotion, left these two areas in limbo for more than two years. Five MCCJ left the province for personal reasons and they have left or are in the process of leaving the Institute. As already mentioned above, a Comboni priest from South Africa has obtained simple incardination (October 2008) in his home diocese of Witbank.

4.2. Vocation and Mission Promotion and Formation. One MCCJ was sent for one year (2006-2007) to Rome to prepare himself to be a formator in the postulancy, but at present we have no pre-postulants, postulants or novices. Since 2008 a Brother promotes *Worldwide* in parishes almost every weekend, helped also by other MCCJ. Since the beginning of 2009 a MCCJ has resumed full-time vocation promotion for the Institute.

4.3. New commitments. The following commitments were started: St. Daniel Comboni Parish at Mahube Valley in Mamelodi (01.01.2007) in the Archdiocese of Pretoria, made up of an area taken from our old parish of St. Peter Claver, and the Soweto parishes of Holy Cross in Zola, of St. Theresa in Zondi and of Holy Rosary in Phiri (05.10.2008) in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg; *ad personam* commitments at Mokopane Pastoral Centre (01.07.2003) in the Diocese of Pietersburg, at St. Clare Parish in Soshanguve (01.11.2005) in the Archdiocese of Pretoria and at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Sovenga (01.01.2008) in the Diocese of Pietersburg.

4.4. Commitments handed over. The following were handed over to the respective archdioceses or dioceses: the parishes of Elukwatini (23.05.2004) and Burgersfort (08.10.2006) to Witbank Diocese; St. Peter Claver Parish in Mamelodi (01.01.2007), an *ad personam* commitment in St. Clare Parish in Soshanguve (28.02.2009) and the chaplaincy to the German-speaking Catholic community (by the end of 2009) to the Archdiocese of Pretoria; an *ad personam* commitment at the Mokopane Pastoral Centre

(01.05.2008) to Pietersburg Diocese; St. Martin de Porres Parish in Pietermaritzburg (25.01.2009) to the Archdiocese of Durban.

4.5. Kinds of parishes. At present the MCCJ in South Africa 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. Rural parishes are comprised of many Christian communities, often distant from each other, some of them with a very tiny number of Catholics in villages of up to fifteen or twenty thousand people, while in a number of other villages there are no Catholics at all. Active and skilled people move from the rural areas to the cities in search of work, leaving behind mothers with children, primary and secondary school students and elderly people. It is an environment of real 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. Recently Islam is becoming more visible. Traditional African Religion is still practiced by many people, including Catholics. Township parishes cover smaller areas but are densely populated, usually with poor housing, including large squatter camps. One MCCJ community is responsible for three township parishes that are near each other.

4.6. Types of involvement. On the parish and community level the MCCJ are involved with parish, diocesan and national programmes, projects, meetings and workshops dealing with JPIC, HIV/AIDS, counselling, youth, orphans, Catholic men's and women's associations, catechetics, ministry training for lay people, Small Christian Communities, refugees and immigrants, primary, secondary and technical school and university students.

4.7. Cooperation with the local Churches. The MCCJ cooperate fully with the local Catholic Churches to make them self-supporting (especially financially), self-ministering (promoting local vocations to the priesthood, religious and missionary life and lay ministries) and self-propagating. We have recently signed updated agreements with the archdioceses and dioceses where we work. The means of transport and the funds for the normal running of the parishes are provided by the parishes concerned or by the respective diocese. The diocese also covers half of the travel expenses of confreres going on home leave. In parishes all cars used by the MCCJ are usually provided by and belong to the dioceses; sometimes the local MCCJ community contributes a small percentage of the total cost. The MCCJ are members of the Leadership Conference of Consecrated Life (LCCL) and share in many of the activities promoted by it.

4.8. On-going formation. The Provincial Assembly of all MCCJ in South Africa has taken place regularly once a year, and so also a workshop for newcomers and a meeting of young confreres. Every two years there has been a workshop for local superiors. Area meetings of confreres of the same region (Witbank, Gauteng and Southern Region) were started and continue to take place more or less once every three months. Some nearby communities come together once a month for a day of retreat and sharing. Every two years a provincial retreat is organized, while the other year each MCCJ has to organize his own. MCCJ are encouraged to participate in pastoral and catechetical courses offered by the pastoral Institute of LUMKO and to study by correspondence with the University of South Africa (UNISA) and St. Augustine College, two learning institutions that offer degrees in a variety of biblical, philosophical, theological, pastoral, anthropological, linguistic and scientific subjects.

4.9. The Community Common Fund was introduced on the 1st of January 2009. We also try to promote local fund-raising through our mission and vocation promotion activities and the network of Comboni Friends in order to move towards greater financial self-sufficiency for the Province.

5.0. IMPORTANT TASKS FOR THE PROVINCE

5.1. Updates. The Provincial Directory and the Six Year Plan for the Province are to be revised and updated, reflecting recently signed agreements between the dioceses and the MCCJ, the introduction of the Common Community Fund, the indications of our protocol *Missionaries both Holy and Capable* and of those of the SACBC (Southern African Bishops Conference) on the professional conduct of Church personnel and the forthcoming General Chapter Documents. The legal foundations and structures of the MCCJ presence in South Africa as an institution, i.e. the Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs), must be strengthened.

5.2. Finances. There is a need to improve the individual and community financial budgeting and reporting and find ways to increase local fund-raising.

5.3. Missionary service. The province must plan well the time of scholastics coming to South Africa to do their missionary service in preparation for perpetual vows and ordination to the diaconate and the priesthood.

5.4. Specialization. It is necessary to free MCCJ to obtain specialized training, for example, in formation, media, finances, catechetics, pastoral ministry, missiology, Bible, JPIC and counselling.

6. FUTURE CHALLENGES

6.1. Personal and community renewal. As MCCJ we are challenged to rediscover our identity by meditating on the Word of God, the *Rule of Life*, the *Writings* of St. Daniel Comboni and the General Chapter Documents and by reading *Familia Comboniana*, the *MCCJ Bulletin* and *Archivio Comboniano*. We renew our spirituality by having a spiritual director, by celebrating regularly the sacrament of reconciliation and by giving time for personal prayer, ongoing formation and rest. We reaffirm our commitment to our vocation, to Mission, to the Institute, to the priorities of the province, to the local Church and to the local people. Our community life is strengthened by updating the Community Charters, by being faithful to the monthly community retreat, by planning and evaluating together. We strive to have all MCCJ communities with at least three members and a greater stability in personnel assignments.

6.2. Insertion. The learning of local languages and cultures remains a challenge, also because in some of our parishes three and even four different local cultures are present and multiple languages are spoken. Institutional resources for learning the languages and culture are limited and so we are forced to “make do” with whatever we can arrange.

6.3. The MCCJ and the local Church. We need to increase our cooperation with the local Church and the Leadership Conference of Consecrated Life (LCCL) in all pastoral areas, in vocation promotion (priesthood, religious and missionary life) and mission promotion, ongoing formation, personal growth, counselling and spiritual direction, biblical and liturgical translations.

6.4. Cooperation. Ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and cooperation with all kind of churches and sects, with members of Traditional Religion, with Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, with NGOs and government structures will help the MCCJ to promote a more just society and to tackle the challenge of integrating locally immigrants and refugees.

6.5. Commitments. The Province will continue to reduce and focus its commitments, by finding a balance between the MCCJ involvement in parishes, assuming specialized ministries in pastoral centres (e.g. Maria Trost at Lydenburg in the Witbank Diocese) and strengthening vocation, mission promotion and initial formation teams.

6.6. South Africa, Mozambique and Malawi-Zambia. We promote greater cooperation with MO and MZ in initial and ongoing formation, specifically by taking practical steps to set up common postulancies for the three Provinces for our candidates to the priesthood and to the Brotherhood.

Johannesburg 20.04.2009

Fr. Giuseppe Sandri
Martins
(Provincial Superior)

Fr. Jeremias dos Santos
(Vice-Provincial Superior)

Fr. Jérôme Anakese
(Provincial Councillor)

Fr. Thumbi Andrew Wanjohi
(Provincial Councillor)

Bro. Francesco Padovan
(Provincial Councillor)
Chapter)

Fr. Masoja Vincent Mkhabela
(Delegate to the XVII General

South Sudan

Comboni Missionaries – South Sudan Province Report to the XVII General Chapter

1. A bit of history

a) The Country

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. A few historical data will help us understand the uncertainties of its present situation. It was a British colony up to 1.1.1956. Before the British, the North had been exploiting the South in many ways, including the slave trade.

b) The struggle North-South

One year before the independence, before the British left the country, a rebellion occurred in the South, trying to free itself from the burdens the North was trying to impose on it. This first civil war lasted from 1955 to 1972. It ended with the Addis Ababa Agreement, which was broken by the North in 1983, the North tried to impose the Sharia Law (Islamic Law) in all the country, and this caused the beginning of the second civil war.

c) The last agreement

This second liberation movement was called the Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA). It fought against the army of the government from 1983 to 2005. The struggle was concluded in 2005 with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), in which the Government of Sudan and the SPLA Movement agreed that:

- The South will function as an independent country up to 2011, when, with a Referendum, the southerners will decide whether they want to continue to remain one country with the North, or whether they will choose to become a new and independent country.
- A Census was to be taken in 2007, as a preparation for the presidential election in 2009 and for the Referendum of 2011.
- The income from the abundant natural resources present in the South, which were already being exploited by the North during the war, would be shared in equal parts by North and South up to 2011.

d) The present uncertainties

The Census was taken as planned, but no complete results have yet been published. The Elections, which were planned for this year, have been postponed to next year. And the revenue from the natural resources, which should be equally divided between North and South, is often a disputed point from either side.

About 4 millions southerners took refuge in the North during the 22 years long second civil war. It was thought that, with the Peace Agreement of 2005, the majority would return to the south, but this did not happen; many had indeed come back but, after seen the plight of the South, eventually returned to the North, where they can envisage a better life.

Some progress has indeed been attained in these past 4 years since the CPA agreement: new roads, new schools, new hospitals, in all regions of South Sudan, but, compared with the North, there is still much to do. That is why many would-be-returnees preferred to go back to the North rather than settling down in the uncertainties of their own South.

2. The peoples of South Soudan and their hopes

a) Many tribes

South Sudan is inhabited by many different tribes, each with its own language, culture and way of life. Most of the tribes are pastoralist. Some are dedicated to agriculture. Where rivers and swamps abound many people make their living by fishing.

b) Lack of chances for education

Due to the disruption of the educational system during the war, many young people could not complete their education; only those who were able to take refuge in the neighboring countries could follow a regular course of studies. And in remote areas many people have never been to school.

c) The educated abroad

During the war many of the educated Southern Sudanese took refuge abroad, where they remained during the war. After the peace agreement of 2005 many of them came back to share in the rebuilding of their country. But some remained where they are still now, apparently attracted by better chances for their life and for the future of their children.

d) Hope and disillusionment

Soon after the peace agreement there was a great hope and optimism for a completely new page in the history of South Sudan: the war was over; the country was discovered to be extremely rich in natural resources; the petrol-money could put an end to the miseries that many had known for many years. But it was soon realized that the way to development and progress would be longer than expected: dissention among the tribes; allegedly widespread corruption; and the difficulties met in the

implementation of the CPA agreement, brought in a good amount of uncertainty about how things will turn out in 2011.

3. Our missionary presence

a) Expulsion

All expatriates, missionaries included, were expelled from South Sudan in 1964, during the first civil war. They left behind a small number of local clergy – too small, compared with the number of Christians. The local clergy continued to care for the Christian community with dedication, and sometime with real heroism; some died a martyr's death for the love of the church. A few Sudanese confreres were also left behind, to share with the local clergy in their caring for the Christian community. But the opposition of the government made it impossible for the church to recover from the expulsion of the missionaries.

In 1974 the local hierarchy was instituted. This was a great step ahead for the life of the church, even if a lot remained still to be done in order to offer to the large Christian community the care it needed to ensure their growth.

b) Gradual return

After the first Addis Abeba Peace Agreement in 1972, the church started to enjoy real freedom, particularly in the South, where the majority are Christians, and there are very few Muslims.

In the late 80ies some confreres were also allowed back to South Sudan, but in 1990 they were not granted a further renewal of their stay-permit.

In the early 90ies some confreres found a way to come back to South Sudan and were working in SPLA controlled areas. In 1995 they were a small group, the New Sudan Group.

From 1995 they became a Delegation: they were 18. From 2002 they became a Province: they were 35 in number and were present in 9 communities. The Provincial House was in Nairobi.

In 2006 we started preparing to move the Provincial House from Nairobi to Juba with the restoration of Juba compound.

c) Our missionary service

At the moment we are 40 confreres, we work in 4 Dioceses, with two communities in 3 of the 4 dioceses, and one community in one. We also have 4 confreres *ad personam* (= *who live alone, doing a specific service in agreement with a Bishop*). The following list shows where we are and what we do:

1. ARCHDIOCESE OF JUBA: in the Archdiocese of Juba we have two communities:

- **Tali**, among the Mundari, an old mission from which we were expelled in 1955, and which was re-assigned to our care 2

years ago. In this mission we have 3 confreres. Everything is being started.

- **Juba** itself, where we have the provincial house, with 9 confreres: two confreres work for the Sudan Catholic Radio Network which we started 2 years ago, one confrere teaches in the Catholic University, and some elderly confreres continue to offer precious services.

2. DIOCESE OF MALAKAL: in this diocese we have two communities:

- **Leer**, a very large parish, with more than 200 outstations, a catechetical center and a newly started vocational school, with 20 students.

We have here 4 confreres.

- **Old Fangak**, also a large parish, with about 80 outstations, a catechetical center and a small agricultural project, to enhance the planting of fruit trees and vegetable in the area.

We have here 4 confreres.

3. DIOCESE OF RUMBEK: in this diocese we have two communities and two confreres *ad personam*

- **Mapuordit**, a parish with 25 outstations. There is a big primary and secondary school, with about 1500 students. This school is run by the sisters of OLSH (Our Lady of the Sacred Heart). Two confreres are part-time committed in teaching and in the administration. The parish priest takes care of the 25 satellite schools. In this mission there is also a hospital with 100 beds, which is run by 3 of our Brothers: a doctor and two nurses.

We have here 5 confreres: 4 brothers and a priest.

- **Yirol**, a parish with 40 outstations, a big primary school with 1700 pupils, and 30 satellite schools: The primary school is run by sisters of a Ugandan congregation, and the satellite schools are taken care of by the confreres who work the parish. One of the confreres who work in this mission is also the coordinator of all the catechists of the Diocese.

We have 3 confreres working in Yirol.

- **Nyamlel**, a parish with a primary school, with about 500 students, and a secondary school, started two years ago; at present it has only the first 2 classes. Both parish and school are taken care of by a confrere *ad personam*.
- **Barghel**, where another confrere *ad personam* is supervising and organizing a new vocational school.

4. DIOCESE OF YEI: in this diocese we have one community:

- **Lomin**, a parish with 30 outstations, a kindergarten a primary school with 700 students, a model secondary school with boarding facilities, with 500 students; and a workshop for metal work, carpentry and building activities.
In this community we have 4 confreres.

5. Two other confreres *ad personam* are Vicar Generals: one in the Diocese of Torit; and one in the Pastoral Region of the Nuba Mountains.

4. Positive points

- ✓ To work as Comboni missionaries in SS is considered a privilege by many confreres. The land where Comboni worked and died seems to have been signed by his zeal and his love for the people. The 10th of October, called Comboni Day, is celebrated everywhere by the people with an enthusiasm and a joy comparable only with the joy and solemnity of Christmas.
- ✓ Most of our missions, particularly in the Dioceses of Malakal and Rumbek, are situated in areas of first evangelization. We don't need arguing about being allowed to live in an 'inserted community'. Most of our communities are as inserted as can be. We are continuing Comboni's unfinished work.
- ✓ In SS there are many tribes, many languages and many cultures; there are Catholics; there are Protestants; there are followers of traditional religion; and there are Muslims. Usually there is a great respect and a positive understanding between all these different groups. Even if Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue are not yet organized and don't appear as a priority, it doesn't seem that they would be extremely difficult.
- ✓ In the dioceses where we are present there is a good relationship between us and the local clergy. Exceptions to this are rare, but the desire to improve is also there. Reciprocal esteem and collaboration are the norm. And the people in general are very well disposed towards Christianity.
- ✓ The civil authorities are normally very cooperative, holding a very high opinion of the Catholic Church, for having remained with the people all through the civil war. But sometimes their collaboration might also be on a less lofty level, and some of them might be keen in getting something in return for their eventual cooperation.

5. Difficulties and challenges

- ✓ Isolation: Some of our missions are very isolated, with no proper roads. During the raining season, for 6 months or more, they can only be reached by UN planes, if there is an airstrip nearby. During the raining season one of our missions can only be reached by helicopter, since there is no airstrip in the area. If one falls sick in similar situations, as it happened once last year, with no doctor and no nurse around, there remains only God to whom one can turn.
- ✓ Local Languages: As said above, we work in 4 different dioceses, where there are 4 different languages. If a confrere is assigned to SS, and he does not know English or Arabic, it would take him 2 or 3 years before he feels at home in whatever assignment he might be given. To learn one of the local languages properly is quite a long task which requires patience and perseverance. And when a confrere has learned it properly and has become confident in it, it is difficult to dispose of him and assign him to a mission where a different language is spoken. Both internal rotation and rotation to one's own home province are usually rather difficult in SS, because of this.
- ✓ Shortage of Personnel: This seems to have been the situation common to all provinces in these last few years, and thus not to be insisted upon. Still, more than what a number may count; there are other elements to be considered: when a confrere is assigned to SS, it should be kept in mind that, he would still have to go through a long process of enculturation and introduction to our complicated pastoral reality (see next heading).
- ✓ Specific Pastoral Challenges: Particular pastoral discernment and creativity are requested for at least 4 reasons:
 1. In general, particularly in the Dioceses of Rumbek and Malakal, the presence of the missionaries has been very limited (1940? – 1964); baptisms have been multiplied both by Protestants and Catholics, but religious instruction has been very poor.
 2. The absence of formed Christian Communities leaves the Missionary without the support of a Christian tradition for pastoral actions. He needs to be pastorally creative; "inventing" what is valid and useful for the people. If he does not act, people will not react...
 3. Local pastoral collaborators (Catechists, mature Christians) are often weak, poorly prepared or not present at all; the missionary might find himself abandoned and discouraged.

4. Human promotion and structural development are so exceptionally needed that the missionary is overwhelmed by challenges of this kind (without available lay collaborators). How to avoid the temptation of doing nothing and the risk of being dragged away by “external commitments” overlooking pastoral initiatives?

6. **Points of special concern**

- ✓ The Vow of Poverty: There is a lot of discontent in the province about the lack of clarity on this regard. The Provincial Common Fund (PCF) which was adopted in 1999, instead of uniting us in the service of the missions with the resources Divine Providence puts at our disposal, has become a system that still creates uneasiness.

In our last Provincial Assembly we tried to tackle this point: whether we would continue with the PCF or we should readopt the Community Common Fund (CCF), at least until, as a group, we reach a more peaceful attitude in the matter.

After a long discussion the assembly was asked to choose whether to continue with the PCF, or to go back to the traditional system: the Community Common Fund (CCF). The majority of the confreres present (18 out of 21) chose to continue with the Provincial Common Fund.

Indeed most confreres do think that it is the ideal, but at the same time most of them seem to find it difficult to allow ‘their’ money to end up in the common pot. A serious revision, at personal level, community level, and province level, of what the vow of poverty is about, seems to be overdue.

- ✓ Vocation Promotion and Basic Formation:

Seeing the difficulties met in the past in this field, we are now trying to restructure the VP, and we do it at zonal level: 4 confreres, one for each zone where we are present, are in charge to organize activities of VP; and one of the 4 is to coordinate these activities at provincial level. It is a different way of doing VP, compared to the one we have been following, and we hope it will bring positive results.

But in the province we still have different opinions and feelings on this point.

We urgently need a clarification among ourselves: an honest revision of what we have been doing, together with a unified plan of action: for the good of the young people whom the Lord calls; for the good of the province; and for the good of the missions.

Last remark

It seems that the idea of our identity, and maybe our identity itself, have become rather vague and blurred; it doesn't seem to be easy to

answer the question what we are supposed to be in the Church of today. A few confreres think that indeed we need to renew ourselves thoroughly, and become, in the church of today what we are supposed to be.

Both basic and ongoing formation need to be geared to what the church of today can expect from its missionaries.

Our meetings and discussions, our decisions and our plans should try to give us a clearer idea of what we are supposed to be.

Fr Luciano Perina, Provincial Superior

Fr Estrada Meza Luis Alfredo, Vice-provincial

(Absent: he has been granted permission for a year of leave of absence)

Fr Adot Oryem Albino, Councilor

Bro Alberto Lamana Consola, Councilor

Bro Nicola Bortoli, Councilor

Date:

(Final edition – May 09 – containing corrections and additions suggested by confreres, and by the provincial council, after reading the first draft)

Tchad

PROVINCIAL REPORT TO THE XVII GENERAL CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION

Coming from Central Africa, the first Comboni missionaries arrived in Chad in 1977 called by Mgr Henri Veniat, bishop of Sarh. The Comboni group in Chad becomes delegation in July 1989 and province in 2002.

We are aware that our mission in Chad is a God's gift that we receive through our Institute and the local Churches who welcome us and make us their members, and at the same time we contribute to their openness to the universal mission of the Church.

Our mission today is been possible thanks to many confreres who have preceded us and have given their lives announcing of the Gospel in Chad's land.

This rapport is the fruit of the contribution of the members of the province gathered in extraordinary assembly from 14 to 17 April 2009 and the final composition has been done by the provincial council and the delegate of the Chapter.

2. OUR REALITY

2.1 PRESENTATION

The republic of Chad, with an area of 1'284,000 km², has a population of 10'111,385 inhabitants according to the last census. Chad, which means in Kanuri language "great spread of water", is one of the countries the most isolated in the world.

The country is few populated, the population density is of 7, 2 inhabitants per square kilometer; but this density of the population is very irregular according to the climatic zones. For instance, the Sudanese zone has 10% of the area of 50% of the population.

The Saharan and Sahel zones form what is called generally "the North", that is a geopolitical concept; in these two zones Muslims live as a majority. The Sudanese zone is commonly known, in the geopolitical concept, "the South" and in that place lives Christians and animists as a majority.

The ethnic and linguistic diversity is very strong. There are more than 130 languages, from which 18 are spoken, each one of them for more than 50,000 speakers. The official languages are: French and Arab. French is been adopted as such at the independency (1960). It is in 1982 that Arab is been proclaimed the second official language.

Crossroad of cultures and religions, Chad finds the difficulty of co-habitation between Islam, Christianity, Animist religions and the influence of modern society.

It is since XVII century that Islam is truly settled down in Chad, particularly in the north. Only at the end of the last century other parts of the country are touched by Islam.

The Catholic Church of Chad is the youngest among all African Churches. The first catholic missionary entered by the south of Chad in 1929; it is only in 1946 that

evangelization has begun in a systematic way. Catholics represent the 10, 21 % of the population, non-Catholic Christians are 3, 80%, Muslims are 50% and the other animist religions are 35, 99% (source: Mundo Negro 2006)

2.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION

- The economic and socio-political situation may appear stable at the first glance.
- A positive aspect is that the awareness of a State of civil rights is growing up in the society.
- Thanks to the petrol's income, there are all over the country new building constructions: schools, water towers, hospitals and some principal roads with asphalt. These achievements are a sign of hope from the economic point of view.
- Nevertheless, the boom of petrol's period, that is at its summit, produce some consequences: extreme poverty, rise o food prices, rural migration towards the cities, Aids in progress.
- Recently, the problem of energy, charcoal of wood and electricity has made hard the life at home in the great towns.
- By the income of petrol, a new high class is at birth; on the contrary the impoverishment grows in the great majority of the population, especially among youth who don't find any job.
- The political instability because of rebel's threats and the confuse situation in the region of Darfur continues. The last three years we have assisted to two rebel attacks in the Capital that caused lot of destructions and thousands of victims. Moreover, it is still weak and poor the political structure and a national awareness.
- In the Chadian society, the Muslim culture has a tendency to impose itself on the economic and the political life.
- The traditional conflict North (Muslims) and South (Christians and Animists) is cooled down because of the political conflict North-North, but it is enough a little spark of violence to awaken the demons of distrust and of prejudices. The conflict between peasants and pastoralists is an example that causes victims in two sides.
- The present regime since 18 years becomes stronger by force and by petrol's income.
- The traditional society is in mutation by different factors of modern life (easy travel, telephone mobiles, etc) and the familial structure endures the consequences.
- The diversity of languages doesn't help the national unity.

2.3 ECCLESIAL SITUATION

- The Church in Chad is a Church in foundation that needs being accompanied in a process of consolidation.
- It is a Church that, since its birth, has known to commit itself in the Gospel's inculturation, in the human promotion and in the struggle for justice and peace.
- Each diocese has its pastoral project that helps a unity in all evangelization initiatives, especially in the insertion of new missionaries.
- The Church continues its way, these past years thee were some important events.
 - 2005: The gathering of Episcopal Conferences Associations of the African Central region (ACERAC) in N'djamena.
 - 2006: The first National Eucharistic Congress in Moundou.
 - 2008: The Youth National Forum in Sarh.
- Nevertheless, the Church in Chad continues to be strongly dependent of the financial support from abroad.
- The Church is confronted today to several challenges:
 - The impoverishment of the population despite of many projects set down.
 - The deepness of Christian's faith so that there is a coherence between life and faith, between evangelization and human promotion. Sometimes the two poles follow a different logic. It is necessary to help Christians to be well settled down in front of so many influences of tradition, of globalization and of Islam.

- Growing in the self-sufficiency so that the Church satisfies its needs with its own means.
- Offering a contribution so that the young people make themselves a way to go ahead and to support their studies.
- Helping lay Christians to play more their role in the society for a democratic process and the struggle for the equal distribution of wells.
- The ongoing formation to prepare the taking over, that is, at all levels: community, parish or diocesan structures.
- The strengthening of young priests in their vocation.
- The accompaniment of youth in the awareness and discernment of his own vocation.
- A pastoral of vocations that takes in consideration the diversity of vocations in the Church.
- A religious life called to make its own way inside this Church.
- A pastoral of dialogue between Muslims and Christians.
- Continuing the openness to the universal mission of the Church.

3. OUR COMBONI REALITY

3.1 Membership:

We are 28 members (01.07.09):

- 3.1.1 Total number of priests: 24
- 3.1.2 Total number of brothers: 2
- 3.1.3 Number of scholastics: 1 (in missionary service)
- 3.1.4 Number of brothers in the CIF: 1 (in Bogota)
- 3.1.5 Average of age of confreres: 45, 5 years old. Confreres by age group: 30-40 years (12); 41-50 (8); 51-60 (4); 61-70 (2); 71-80 (2)
- 3.1.6 Number of confreres according to their nationality: Portugal (5), Italy (4), Mexico (3), Chad (3), Benin (2), Sudan (2), Peru (2), Brazil (1), Ecuador (1), Spain (1), Togo (1), Chile (1), Zambia (1), Poland (1).
- 3.1.7 Number of confreres out of Chad: 6
- 3.1.8 Number of confreres according to the period of mission in Chad. First appointment (14) whose during the first period of three years (5) and the second period (5) and the third period (4); second appointment in mission (12)
- 3.1.9 Postulants: 1 candidate for priest.
- 3.1.10 Novices: 0
- 3.1.11 Two bishops.

3.2 The communities

Our province has eight communities.

- One community in the diocese of N'Djamena.
- Two communities in the diocese of Laï: in the town of the same name and in Donomanga.
- Three communities in the diocese of Doba: in the town of the same name, in Bodo and in Bendoné.
- Two communities in the diocese of Sarh: in the town of the same name where there is the provincial house and in Moïssala.

3.3 Characteristics of combonians in Chad

3.3.1 Diversity of countries of origin

We are from 14 countries and 12 provinces. It is a wealth that we take advantage for the good of the mission and for the witness of the universality of the Church. At the same time, it is a challenge, at each moment, to gather all members into a common project of the mission and to grow in our relationships of fraternity, but we want to keep this pluri-cultural face of the province wishing anyway a better balance.

3.3.2 A young group

We are a young group in the province of Chad. The average of age is 45 years. Half of the confreres (14) are in the first appointment in Chad, ten are between their first and second period of three years. This is an element of missionary dynamism and generosity. The challenge is to accompany the learning process of being missionaries here in the Chadian context.

3.3.3 Inserted in a local Church

We are in charged of eight parishes: one parish by community. This allows us to live from inside the way that these local churches are applying their different pastoral plans and in the communion at the moments of joy and of difficulties. Most of the confreres are committed to the first evangelization and to the strengthening of this local Church.

3.3.4 A province that structure itself

We are a province from 2002. The provincial experiences are welcomed and we want to carry them forward as heritage and source of creativity. Mainly:

- The establishment of a total common fund in January of 2003.
- The writing of provincial directory in 2004.
- The building of the postulancy.
- The creation of different secretariats.
- The writing of the history of the province (finished in 2007). "Semer aux frontières du Sahel (Sowing at the borders of Sahel) 30 years of Comboni history in Chad.
- The agreements signed between the Institute and the dioceses where we work, are the scope in which we live our mission.
- The persons committed to a service in the province are: the Provincial (full time), the Provincial bursar (half-time). Until 2007, we had a full time formator in the postulancy. During two years, from September 2006 to July 2008, a vocational promoter was working in full time as well.

3.3.5 In the Sub-continental zone

As a part of our membership to the Institute, we walk together with the French speaking provinces (zone francophone) of Africa (C-TGB-RCA).

According to our possibilities we are involved in CAE (Kinshasa) (Afriquespoir Centre); in the inter-provincial postulancy of brothers (Lomé) and in the inter-provincial novitiate of Cotonou.

The year 2007-2008 le postulancy of Bangui has welcomed two Chadian postulants and this year we have only one. We have participated at the annual meeting of provincials and at the Ratio Missionis and GRAF's meetings that were realized at the same period.

4. THE WAY WALKED ALONG AFTER THE GENERAL CHAPTER (OCTOBER 2003)

4.1 From the priorities of six-year provincial plan (January 2005)

4.1.1 Strengthening, reinforcing and enriching our communities

- Remind of history: From 1997 to 2003 we have passed from 4 to 9 communities.
- References of the Chapter: AC' 03 Chapter IV
- Remarks:
 - ❖ In order to grow in communitarian quality of life, we have insisted on:
 - The elaboration of the communitarian Charter.
 - The programming and revision of commitments.

- The involvement of all members in the economical management of the community (balance and budget).
- Fidelity to communitarian meetings (communitarian councils, recollections, life of prayers, relaxation, etc)
- A way of doing mission that takes into consideration more and more our human and material resources. To make choices because we cannot do all.

There is still a way to follow especially in overcoming a certain tendency to individualism and to disinterest.

- ❖ We have stopped with some diocesan services “Ad personam” without assuring the taking over.
- ❖ We have wanted to reinforce our communities in members (at least three confreres in each community) so as to favor the communitarian life. Despite of the mobility and of the diminution of personnel, we have succeeded to have most of our communities with three confreres during these six last years. Nevertheless, since 2003 there have been two or three communities that remained for a long period with two confreres.
- ❖ We foresee to close one community in 2009
- ❖ It is necessary to have the means to manage our human and interpersonal relationships so that to grow in fraternity. In fact, the difficulties have been in a good number and they have hurt us deeply.

4.1.2 Deepening our missionary identity in front of Islam

- Remind of history: Since at least 1997, combonians in Chad want to be engaged in the challenge that Islam represents today in the Chadian society and for the Church.
- References of the Chapter: AC’03 n. 30,5;45
- Remarks:
 - ❖ We are more aware that Islam is not only a reality of N’Djamena but in all towns and villages of Chad. We observe in this last time an acceleration of the visibility of Islam and of the number of Christians that are converted into it.
 - ❖ At the level of knowledge of Islam and of formation to dialogue
 - We have spent two days of ongoing formation during the provincial assembly of 2005 about Islam.
 - The diocesan office of gathering Christians and Muslims in N’Djamena is a mean of information and formation.
 - We see the need of being more involved in knowing this reality.
 - We point out our regular participation as province in the different gatherings of “Group of reflection about Islam” at African level.
 - We could not keep our proposition of sending each year a confrere to receive a formation in Bamako.
 - ❖ At the level of action
 - Our house, the center “The Abraham’s Tent” in N’Djamena starts producing its first fruits.
 - Many of activities are already realized by our confreres, in N’Djamena and in other dioceses.
 - ❖ The way continues, especially,
 - By profiting more of means that we have in Chad to be informed and trained.
 - By profiting of confreres present in the province that can help to assume more this dimension of the mission.
 - By continuing to elaborate a pastoral of gathering between Muslims and Christians without remaining in the theory. To favor a dialogue of life around common action for a common well and for the seeking of peace.
 - By consolidating our missionary identity who announces The Christ in Muslim milieu by our consecrated life. We avoid that our service is perceived as a simple social service.

4.1.3 Investing in the vocation promotion and in the missionary animation

- Remind of history: Since 1989, the combonians in Chad have accepted that young people enter into a vocational process and we have had a person as a formator in full time. In our agreements (with the dioceses) are mentioned this essential dimension of our missionary activity in Chad.
- References of the Chapter: AC' 03 n° 40, 2-3
- Remarks:
 - ❖ We are more and more aware that missionary animation and vocation promotion are part of our mission in Chad.
 - ❖ Giving a hand so that this Church is more open to the universal mission of the Church. It has been difficult to set apart a person in full time for the vocation promotion; in spite of that, we did it for two years. However, it remains a challenge for us.
 - ❖ We foresee to re-open this year the formation house in Sarh.
 - ❖ At the level of missionary animation, through the magazine *Afriquespoir* and calendars, a missionary spirit is on the way of birth.

4.1.4 Making more solid our commitment for the youth

- Remind of history: The choice in 1999 of opening a community in the capital of N'Djamena was as well motivated by the desire of being more committed to the youth.
- Remarks:
 - ❖ We cannot evaluate the results or the fruits; but we are aware that we have followed well the youth in all pastoral domains of our commitments.
 - ❖ Several of our confreres have invested themselves in the accompaniment of the youth, in the schools, universities and in the movements.
 - ❖ A financial support for students at the university through a project has a good result.

4.2 Other priorities of the Chapter

4.2.1 The On-going formation

- The provincial commitment in the process of Ratio Missionis.
- The process of Ratio Missionis has made us aware of who we are and what we do.
- The period of time given for the introduction of newcomers in Chad is taken for granted.
- Fidelity to our provincial gatherings (assemblies, Sacred Heart, 10th October) that are part of our Ongoing-formation.
- Comboni retreats: 2004, 2006 and this year 2009
- Meetings of superiors of the communities.
- Meetings of On-going formation by age group.
- Formation of community bursars.
- Since January 2008, we do not have a provincial commission for the On-going formation. The provincial council is in charged at the moment until the commission will be restored.
- Regular sending of On-going formation articles to each confrere.

4.2.2 JPIC

- The involvement in Justice and Peace domain is more notorious these last years.
- In the secretariat of Evangelization there is a confrere in charged of animation of the province in this essential dimension of our mission.
- Through diocesan and parish commissions we are involved in this domain of Justice and Peace and we want to strengthen it.
- Some confreres of the province have participated in different appointments of JPIC: Kinshasa 2005; WSF to Nairobi in 2006.

4.2.3 Missionary Methodology

- We feel as a demanding attitude coming from the missionary reality and from our charisma (To save Africa with Africa) working in teams and preparing our own succession.
- We are aware that this is not always present in our way of living and of doing mission.
- A work very much centered on savoir-faire of a person, without involving the others, delays the succession of the mission by this local Church and does not give a good testimony of evangelizing in community.
- This one is an essential criterion for certain provincial choices and for fighting against a way of doing mission in solitary.
- We believe that in these services so-called “diocesans”, we are called to live in the spirit of our charisma and methodology.

5. OTHER RELEVANT THEMES OF THE PROVINCE

5.1 Vocational and Spiritual accompaniment

The formation session for formators and vocational promoter to Cotonou on July 2007 out the vocational discernment has been beneficial. We would wish that this formation is organized in Chad to accompany better the youth that knock at our doors.

5.2 The personnel of the Province

We have passed from 33 confreres in 2003 to 28 members on the 1st of July 2009 whose 6 are out of the country. At the moment of our six-year program (January 2005), we have observed that with less than 30 members working in the province, we cannot fulfill all our commitments assumed in the agreements. So we will begin the pastoral year 2009-2010 with 22 confreres in Chad. We need to increase the personnel to assure the different services of the province.

5.3 Formation

We need formation to face the new challenges today in Chad: Islam and the domains that involve Justice and Peace, the petrol's project, the mass media...

5.4 Demands of the Local Church to the Institute through the Province

We are solicited by the bishops to get involved in the local seminary, in the economy of the dioceses and to take other places of mission in the two new dioceses.

6. PERSPECTIVES OF THE FUTUR

- 6.1 Investing more in the vocation promotion and accompaniment of missionary vocation.
- 6.2 The choice and the formation of guides and formators.
- 6.3 Investing more in the lay formation to ministries. Formation at all levels. Mainly in the domain of Justice and Peace and of Pastoral family.
- 6.4 Continuing to elaborate a pastoral of gathering between Muslims and Christians.
- 6.5 Re-initiating the collaboration with lay Comboni Missionaries.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 We see the need of continuing the process of re-designing our missionary presence. However, we cannot treat this demand of the mission today in the same manner as in Chad as in other countries; observing the actual challenges that we have presented above such as: this is a Church in foundation, there are regions that the Gospel has not arrived yet, this is a country between the Muslim world and the Christian regions. That is why; we demand to the XVII General Chapter that Chad,

which was part of the Vicariate of Saint Daniel Comboni, be considered one of the priorities of our Institute.

Provincial Council:

P. Miguel Navarrete Arceo

P. Pedro Percy Carbonero Mogollon

P. Ngoré Gali Célestin

P. Saturnin Comlan Pognon

P. Paulino Tipo Deng Amylidh

Delegate to the Chapter:

P. Jose Gabriel Martinez Torres

Togo Ghana Benin

COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS XVII GENERAL CHAPTER PROVINCE OF TOGO – GHANA – BENIN PROVINCIAL REPORT

1. Introduction

The Province of Togo-Ghana-Benin, situated at the West African coast of the Gulf of Guinea, has its own characteristics. It combines three countries with two cultural realities. That is Anglophone-Ghana colonised by the British and that of Francophone-Togo and Benin colonised by the French.

Our presence as Comboni Missionaries began on 19th January 1964 in Togo. After ten years of presence in Togo, we enlarged our presence to Ghana and Benin in 1974. The cultural, religious and ecclesial diversity is very remarkable. Communication between the three countries, especially with Ghana, is sometimes challenging because of the political borders.

There is a nice brotherliness and missionary spirit in the Province. We try to keep in focus our six-year provincial plan. In spite of the frontiers, the geographical proximity promotes a spirit of unity and collaboration amongst the communities.

After 45 years of presence, our Province is going through a delicate and important moment of growth:

- Above all the **'look'** of the Province is changing from one 'coloured'- almost monolithic (European and Italian), to a diversified physiognomy - more African and Native.
- This implies self-awareness and the aspiration to affirm oneself, the need to look for one's own **physiognomy** in the context of the Institute, to be recognised as such and to grow in one's own specific identity and responsibility.
- At this point in time in our history, the Province of Togo-Ghana-Benin plays a special role in the life of the Institute with regards to **vocations**. For some years now, we are leading in the number of scholastics in the Institute. With the opening of the Scholasticate in Cape Coast, henceforth the Province will be endowed with all the three stages of basic formation (Postulancy, Noviciate and Scholasticate). We are grateful to God for His gift.
- The Province has also begun to **diversify** its' activities. If for the past we were focusing solely on first Evangelisation in an environment dominated by the African Traditional Religion, of late we have engaged ourselves more in Vocation and Mission promotion. We have also started expanding missionary activities towards the North of Benin, an area where Muslims are the large majority. Besides, from a predominant rural presence, we have moved to the urban area of the three capitals.

2. Political, Social, Economic and Ecclesial situation

Some points on the socio-politic and ecclesial situation of our Province:

- A **positive** political progress could be observed in the region with the consolidation of the democratic system in Ghana and in Benin, coupled with some

improvements in the life of the citizenry. In spite of difficulties and uncertainties, we could see some elements of hope in Togo, a struggle within the political circle to embrace democracy fully and a serious commitment towards national reconciliation.

- The general socio-political situation is background by **globalisation**, in which one can see the blend of lust and exploitation by some world powers and multinational, corruption and grabbing of the nation's wealth by a minority of elite and the majority of the population getting poorer and poorer.
- The negligence of the rural areas promotes urban **migration**. The future of the youth is blare. Lack of job opportunities obliges the youth to look for greener pasture elsewhere either in Europe, in America or in other developing African countries. The **youth** in this precarious situation demand our attention and care.
- Reference to the **family** is still strong. However the family is undergoing a deep and serious crisis which is manifested in the falling apart of cultural, ethical and moral values. The cultural environment has been weakened and made vulnerable by the influx of western cultural models invading all the spheres of life through the fascination of the media. Youth-elderly relationship is the worse hit by this 'modernity'. Despite all these, the culture remains deeply rooted in the traditions. This guarantees social cohesion characterised by a great capacity to associate easily.
- From the **religious** point of view, the statistics are very confusing according to the sources. It seems the majority of the population of both Togo and Benin belong to the Traditional African Religion, whilst in Ghana it seems the Christians are the majority (more than half of this belongs to the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches). The Catholic Church has deep roots in all the three countries - 25% in both Togo and Benin, 15% in Ghana. Muslims seem to be the majority in the northern belt of the three countries. They are becoming more and more visible in the South. They could be 15% of the population.
- The **local Churches**, fruit of the missionary effort of almost a century and half of evangelisation (in the South), have taken up the role of leadership in the Church. All the bishops are natives of the land. Vocation to the priesthood and religious life is encouraging. The Christians live their faith with zeal and dynamism, even if sometimes one can see superficiality. Inculturation is one of the major concerns though still very premature. The laity is very active, especially the women. Membership to prayer and devotions groups and confraternities in the church is on the rise. Clericalism with its risk of settling down, loosing the missionary enthusiasm and forgetting its obligation towards the poor is gaining grounds amongst the local clergy. On the other hand, there is the proliferation of sects and the apparent expansion of Islam.
- **We** work within the settings of the local Church offering our services according to our charisma. With one or two pastoral assignments in a diocese, our presence is quite 'hidden', among other pastoral agents and charisma that enrich the local church.

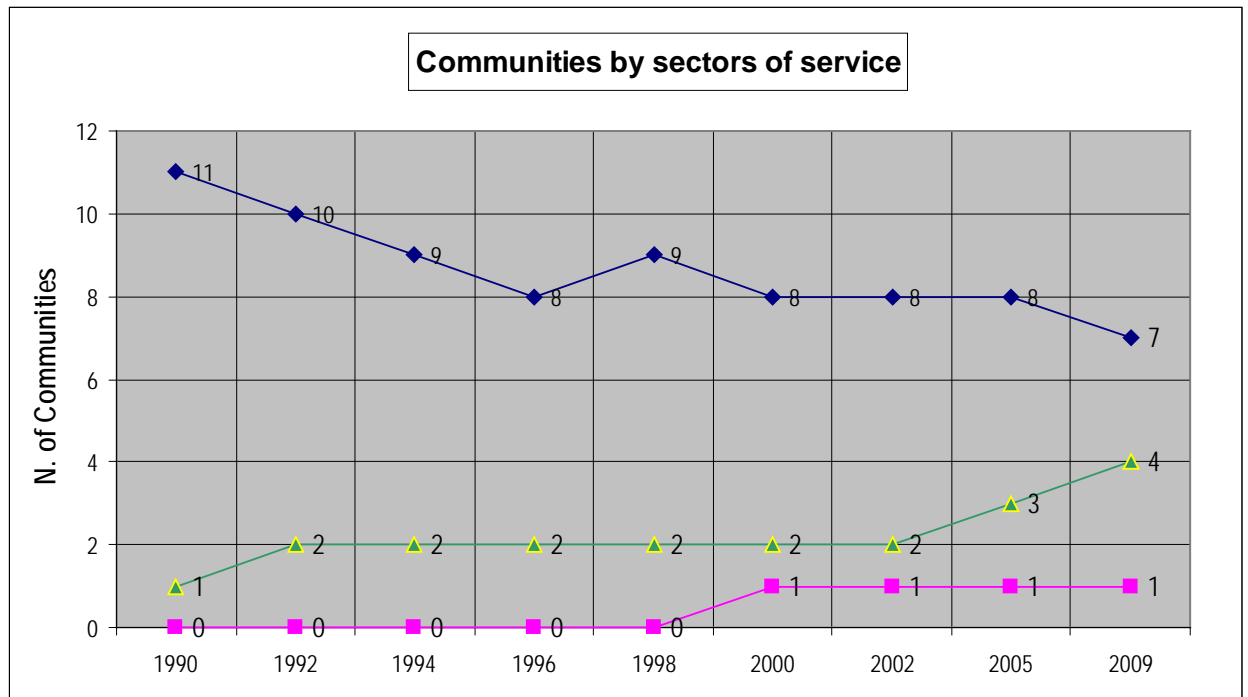
3. Situation of the Province: Personnel and Communities

3.1 Communities

With the opening of the Scholasticate in Cape Coast, we have 12 communities in the Province of Togo-Ghana-Benin. We are present in 8 dioceses: Lome, Aneho and Kpalime in Togo; Keta-Akatsi, Accra and Cape Coast in Ghana; Cotonou and Djougou in Benin. Apart from French and English, we have 5 principal local languages: Ewe-Mina, Adja, Twi-Akan, Fon and Yom-Lokpa.

Find below the presentation of our communities.

Country	Diocese	Community	Year of opening	Confreres
TOGO	Lomé	ADIDOGOME Postulancy (candidates to priesthood)	1983	Fr. José Francisco M. Dias (superior, formator) Fr. Eugène Nordjoé (formator, bursar) Fr. Fabio Gilli (confessor) Br. Jean-Marie Mwamba (teaching, pastoral, CAM)
	Lomé	ADIDOGOME Parish	1996	Fr. Elias Afola (superior, parish priest) Fr. Shane Degblor (bursar, pastoral) Fr. Bruno Gilli (teaching, pastoral) Fr. Ricardo Andrade (pastoral)
	Lomé	CACAVELI brother's Postulancy Provincial house (1993) and CAM (1995)	1991	Br. Genesio Maroso (superior, formator) Fr. Victor Kouande (CAM) Fr. Manuel João Pereira Correia (provincial superior) P. António Gonzalo Dasilva (provincial bursar) Sc. Elisée Laye (missionary service)
	Aného	TABLIGBO Parish	1986	Fr. Gaetano Montresor (superior, parish priest) Fr. Gilver Calongos (pastoral, bursar) Fr. Benjamin Guivi (pastoral) Sc. John Bliss Boadi (missionary service) Sc. Pierre Woami (missionary service)
	Kpalimé	ASRAMA Parish	1998	Fr. Louis Kouevi (Superior, P.P) Fr. Claude Bernard Wakouzou (pastoral, bursar) Fr. Alfonso Zulianello (pastorale)
GHANA	Keta-Akatsi	ADIDOME Parish and « Comboni Center » of Sogakope (1985)	1997	Fr. Giuseppe Rabbiosi (superior, parish priest) Fr. Ramón Orendain (bursar, pastoral) Fr. Lino Negrato (pastoral) Fr. Ruben Awuye (pastoral) Fr. Riccardo Novati (Centre of Sogakope)
	Accra	KANESHIE Mission promotion	1999	Fr. John Tasiame (MA - VP) Br. Jean Afanvi (MA - VP) Sc. Jean Philippe Lokpo (missionary service)
	Accra	OLA Parish	2002	Fr. Eugenio Petrogalli (superior, parish priest) Fr. Moses Huruwella (pastoral, bursar) Sc. Yves Gbénou (Missionary, service)
	Cape Coast	SCHOLASTICATE and Parish	2009	Fr. Vincenzo Percassi (superior, formator) Fr. Godwin Kornu (parish priest, formator) 4 scholastics (students)
BENIN	Cotonou	FIDJROSSE Parish and CAM (2001)	1989	Fr. Sandro Cadei (superior, parish priest) Fr. Bernard Megnihoue (pastoral, bursar) Fr. Cesare Pegoraro (pastoral) Fr. Théophile Bessan (MA-VP, pastoral)
	Cotonou	NOVICIATE St. Daniel Comboni	2005	Fr. Habtu Teclai Tiluck (novice master, superior) Fr. Beppi Simone (socius) Br. Oscar da Cunha (bursar)
	Djougou	TOKO-TOKO Parish	2008	Fr. Juan José Tenias (superior, parish priest) Fr. Paul Djago (pastoral) Br. Alfio Guzzardi (bursar) Sc. Evans Kotokou (missionary service)
		Absents from the Province		Fr. Donato Benedetti Fr. Ambrogio Grassi (sabbatical) Fr. Justin Dossou-Yovo (sabbatical) Fr. Salvador Castillo (ACFP) Fr. Timothée Hounake (studies) Br. Albert Aboudou (preparation for perpetual vows) Fr. Luigi Gambin (sick) Br. Luciano Giacomelli (sick)



- 7 out of the 12 communities are engaged in first evangelisation (4 in a rural context, 3 in urban context), 4 communities in formation (Postulancy of Adidogome for priestly candidates and Postulancy of Cacaveli for brothers) and one community in Mission promotion (Kaneshie-Accra).
- All communities have at least 3 members according to our Rule of life 40.1.
- During 2008 and as part of our six-year plan, we handed over two parishes to two dioceses: Akoumape to Aneho diocese in Togo and Toffo to Cotonou diocese in Benin. We have opened a new community in Toko-toko in the diocese of Djougou, northern part of Benin. For this year we are opening a new Scholasticate with a pastoral assignment in Cape Coast archdiocese in Ghana.
- During the 45 years of presence, we have worked in 23 parishes (many of them are 'mothers' of other parishes). We have handed over 16 parishes with average of 19 years of presence.

3.2 Personnel

On 1-7-2009 we are 53 in the list of personnel assigned to the Province, including the scholastics on missionary service (but without counting the four scholastics of Cape Coast).

Here are some details:

- 53 confreres: 40 priests, 7 brothers (5 perp. vows and 2 temp. vows) and 6 scholastics
 - Europeans*: 23 (19 priests and 4 brothers: 18 I, 3 P and 2 E)
 - Africans*: 26 (17 priests, 3 brothers, 6 scholastics (22 TGB, 1 CA, 1 CN, 1 ER, 1 MZ))
 - Americans*: 04 (3 M, 1 PE)
- Average age: 51 years

Number of confreres aged more than 65 years (in 2009): **10** (1 brother and 9 priests)

Average of permanence in the Province: **9** years
(NB: not including scholastics on missionary service)

- Groups of age : 30-40: **13**; 41-50: **17** 51-60 : **8**;
 61-70: **10**; 71 plus: **5**

In the Province, the majority of confreres are Africans (26) but the number of Europeans is very close (23), while Americans (4) are the... pointer of the balance between the two! The average age of the Africans is 40, Europeans 63. The European group has an average of 15 years of continuous missionary presence in the Province, whilst the African group has only 4 years (without including scholastics).

During the 45 years of presence, 127 confreres have been assigned to the Province - 95 priests and 27 brothers. Out of this number, 17 left the Institute, including those who incardinated in a diocese, and 17 died.

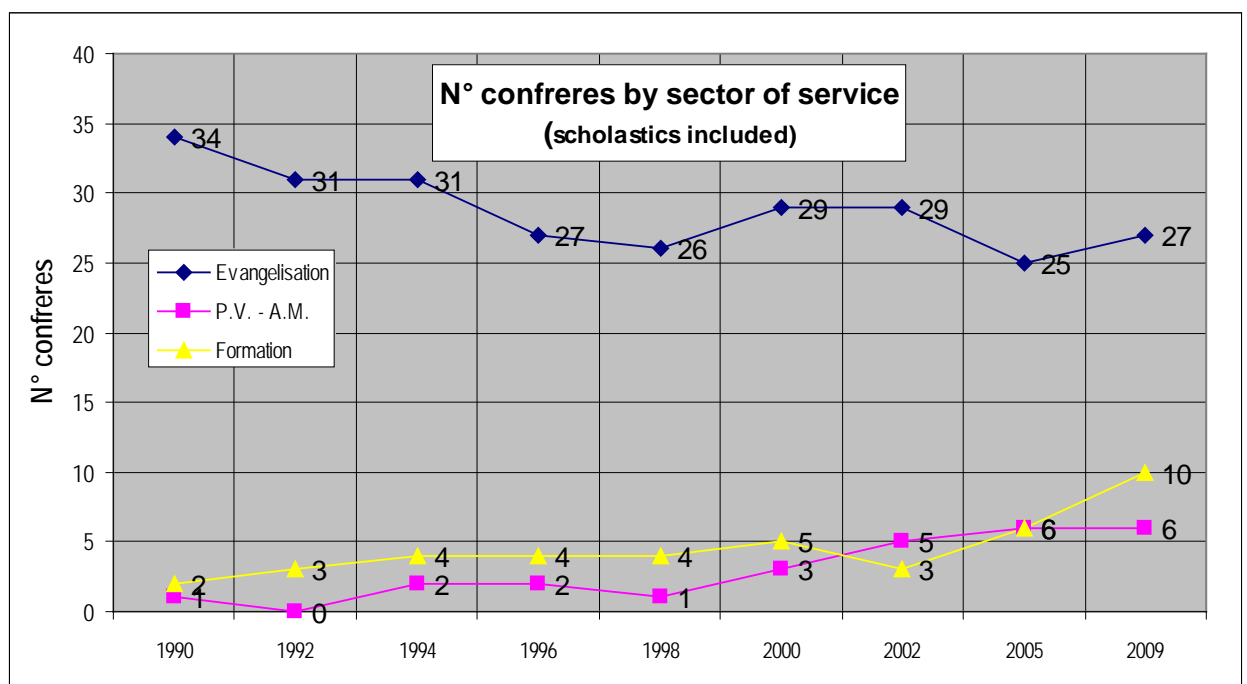
3.3 Distribution of personnel

We include here the scholastics on missionary service but not confreres living 'outside' the Province, who are 8 in number (53-8=45).

- Evangelisation: 27 confreres (22 priests, 4 scholastics and 1 brother) – 60 % of the personnel.
- Formation houses (formation and teaching): 10 (7 priests and 3 brothers: 1 in the Scholasticate, 3 in the Noviciate, 3 in the Postulancy, 2 teachers and 1 confessor) – 22 %.
- Mission and Vocation promotion: 6 (3 priests, 2 scholastics and 1 brother) – 13 %.
- Provincial assignment: 2 fathers (provincial and bursar) – 5 %.

The confreres 'outside' the Province are 8 (2 for sabbatical, 1 ACFP, 1 course, 1 preparation for perpetual vows, 3 sick) – 15 % (of 53).

28 confreres are working in urban areas (62%) and 17 in rural areas (38%), scholastics included.



3.4 Members originating from the Province (1-07-2009)

- Total: 66 confreres: 27 priests, 6 brothers of perpetual vows, 4 brothers of temporary vows and 29 scholastics.
- Working in the Province: 22 (14 priests, 2 brothers and 6 scholastics).
- In the Mission: 20 (12 priests and 8 brothers: 3 in America, 14 in Africa and 3 in Europe).
- In formation and studies: 24 (1 priest and 23 scholastics).

Country	Priests	Brothers	Scholastics	TOTAL	Mission	Province	Formation
Togo	13	09	18	40	7P+7B	5P+2B+3S	1P + 15S
Ghana	04	-	05	09	-	4P + 2S	3S
Benin	10	01	06	17	5P+1B	5P+1S	5S
Total	27	10	29		12 P + 8 B	14 P + 2 B + 6 S	1 P + 23 S
Total	66 confreres			66	20	22	24

4. Achievements of the six-year plan

The six-year plan has steered the journey of our Province. Through the animation of the Province by the provincial council in collaboration of the various secretariats and local superiors, we have tried to keep in focus the six-year program, in spite of some resistance and delay.

We had five main points in the planning:

4.1 Improving the quality of our community life

Our major challenge, springing from the progressive change of the physiognomy of the Province (dominated by Europeans and Africans-Natives), has been the concern: a) to better the quality of our living in common; b) to live our diversity as a 'gift and richness' (Ac '03, n° 82); c) to deepen the inter-personal relationships; d) and to work together as a 'cenacle of apostles'.

For that we tried to work with tools of management and animation of community life: community charter and pastoral project, community council, community day and monthly recollection...

On the whole, we can see some **achievements**:

- Almost all communities have their charter, respect the community day and are faithful to community council.
- Presently all the communities are 'canonical', in the sense that they are composed of at least three members, and are international.
- A provincial assembly (2007) was dedicated to the dynamism of inter-personal relationships, coupled with the exercise of dialogue and fraternal correction between the two main groups (Europeans and Africans).

At provincial level, we tried to promote communion and provincial cohesion amongst us:

- Taking advantage of the geographical proximity, we meet four times at provincial level in a year (provincial assembly, Sacred Heart, 10th October and annual retreat).
- We have promoted zone meetings (by countries). In Ghana, for instance, the confreres meet on monthly basis.
- We experience to engage all confreres in the secretariats, even if of late we had to review this practice.
- The provincial council tried to work hand in hand with the local superiors and the secretariats.

But there are also some **limits**:

- Many communities are not faithful to the community monthly recollection and few have failed to organise the fraternal correction that we proposed.
- The proposed objective of improving the quality of the inter-personal relationship and to work together as a community (especially with regards to projects) still remains far fetched.
- The effort to enhance and maintain the multi-ethnic character of our communities, to promote mutual trust and true collaboration still remains a big challenge.

4.2 Focusing on our on-going formation

On-going formation and community life have been the priorities of the six-year plan. The reflection on the 'Ratio Missionis' has helped us in this direction.

In general, the evaluation of the six-year plan is **positive**:

- The provincial council has fulfilled its' role of animation of the Province and of the communities (promoting a formation segment in each gathering, visiting the communities, meeting with the provincial secretaries and local superiors).
- Provincial meetings - like provincial assembly, Sacred Heart, 10th October and annual retreat – have been important moments to animate the provincial community.
- The 'cultural week' organised by the secretariat of evangelisation has been very much appreciated by many.
- We insisted on the role of the community in on-going formation.
- The commission for on-going formation has been supporting the communities by sending them materials to help enliven the community in all aspects.
- We have tried, even if partially, to prepare confreres for specialised services: 2 for formation, 1 in psychology, 1 in pastoral theology and 1 in Islamology. Others are on the programme: 2 for formation/VP, 1 in economy, 1 in Missiology, 1 in Philosophy.
- The visits of members of the general direction have been important moments of animation in the Province – Fr. Teresino, Fr. Odelir, Br. Hernan and Br. Martinuzzo, Fr. Miente, Fr. Guarda, Fr. Zolli and Fr. Rosich.

Among other **limits** we have:

- First of all, the challenge of entering into a process of personal conversion and renewal. The reflection on the 'Ratio Missionis' has revealed that we all agree on the principles but we are all incapable of changing some attitudes and comportments, degenerating towards the repetition of methods and contradictory style of life.

- Our spirituality is weak. The effort to cultivate discipline of spiritual life (elaboration of personal project of life, faithfulness to personal prayer, spiritual direction) is insufficient.
- Personal interest for on-going formation has still to grow. The weekly half a day's rest and study time has not been kept.
- The annual meetings for the brothers and the young confreres have not always been done and their impact is very limited.

4.3 Making bold and courageous choices in evangelisation

The Province proposed 3 objectives: a) revisit our vision of Mission; b) re-qualify our engagement in evangelisation; c) and renew our missionary methodology.

Acknowledging that evaluation in this domain is difficult, nonetheless we can mention few **achievements**:

- Handing over 2 parishes (Akoumape and Toffo) in the south and opening a new parish (Toko-toko) in the north of Benin in an Islamic area.
- Programme of dividing some of our parishes (3 already done, 5 still in program and accepted by the bishops).
- The involvement of almost all in the process of the Ratio Missionis.
- Lastly, the preparation of a confrere for Muslim world and the involvement in the continental reflection group on Islam.
- A more communitarian mentality in pastoral planning and projects.
- In spite of the resistance, the idea that our presence must always have the characteristic of 'transition' and that we must remain focused on situations of 'poverty and abandon' is gaining grounds.

On the other hand, we can spot some **setbacks**:

- The resistance to any change, the difficulty to adapt oneself to the changing socio-ecclesial reality, due to age factor, mindset/mentality, style of life and what we inherited from the past generation... this leads to a certain toughness or rigidity or even being blocked in the vision of the Mission and method of work.
- Even though human promotion and social dimension of the gospel are major pastoral concerns, we have not been able to concretise a specific JPIC project or initiative.
- There is persistent individualistic and protagonist manner of handling developmental projects.
- Insufficient attention to other ministries (brotherhood, laity) and collaboration with other pastoral agents.
- A drawback in our commitment to inculturation and study of the local language and cultures and in our focus on catechesis.
- Poor animation towards the renewal of pastoral methodology.

4.4 Making of our presence Mission promotion

We believe that Mission and Vocation promotion is important dimension of our presence, besides the fact that we are present in dioceses where vocation to the priesthood is on the rise. For that we have opened the missionary animation centres (MAC or CAM) in each of the capitals in the Province.

We are celebrating the **25th anniversary** of the opening of the Postulancy. We are grateful to God for his abundant fruits. During these 25 years (1983-2008) 160 candidates (83 from Togo, 35 from Benin and 41 from Ghana) have passed through our Postulancy. Its "first fruit", Fr. Jean-Pierre Legonou, passed away. Since his ordination

in 1992, with the exception of the promotion of 1993/94, we have had ordinations every year. In addition, more than a dozen of those who left became diocesan priests.

During the six-year plan, **Mission promotion** has three objectives:

a) Involving all communities in the animation programme of the Province; b) using modern technology; c) contextualizing our missionary animation.

Concerning **vocations**, we proposed to:

a) Ensure the quality of our commitment in the Vocation promotion; b) connecting more formation to Mission; c) revisiting our formative *iter*.

What are our **achievements**?

- Our magazines are the most privilege means of animation. New People Magazine is doing well in Ghana. We moved from 2000 copies to 7000 during the last six years, with perspective of increasing it. *Afriquespoir* has some challenges to kick-off properly in Togo and Benin.
- The Comboni calendar - 5000 copies - is also a good instrument of missionary animation.
- The formation of '*Amicales*' and '*Friends of Comboni*', lay men and women committed to sharing the Comboni charisma and ready to collaborate with us in the missionary animation.
- Growth in the collaboration with other organs of missionary animation in the dioceses (Accra, Cotonou, Djougou...), like Pontifical Missions and other religious institutes.
- Commitment in the radio (*Speranza* of Tabligbo and sporadically *Radio Maria* and others).
- The opening of St. Daniel Comboni Noviciate in Cotonou (2005) and re-opening of the brothers' Postulancy in Cacaveli (2006).
- The involvement and commitment of communities in welcoming our candidates in formation.
- The revision of the charter of the Postulancy and Noviciate.
- The good work done by the secretariat of vocations.

Some **setbacks**:

- The Province has not yet succeeded in creating a tradition for the missionary animation. A contributing factor to that is probably the lack of experience and the contextual challenges of the local churches though a number of them have began sending out *Fidei Donum* priests on mission.
- In spite of the insistence that all confreres should get involved in the missionary animation, majority is still sitting on the fence.
- We could not open up to the Comboni Lay Missionaries.
- The investment (in means and personnel) in the mass media-magazines, radio, TV, web... is still insufficient.
- We could do better in collaboration with the local church.
- We need to improve in Vocation promotion and in the discernment of our candidates.
- One can notice a withdrawal on part of some communities concerning interest in Vocation promotion (each community is suppose to have a "vocation group" but actually it is not so!)
- Despite the rise in vocations, we have not been able to promote vocations to the brotherhood and to create a commitment to give it more visibility.

4.5 Evangelising our economy

The economy has been another sector we wanted to take care of. Our objectives have been: 1) “evangelise our economy” (AC’03, n° 101); 2) promote the culture of sharing; 3) empowering our bursars to render quality and competent service.

We can be happy about some **improvements** like:

- Introduction of the provincial common fund.
- Technical formation to the bursars (adoption of a logistic accountability).
- Provincial solidarity among the communities and sharing with confreres in the missions.
- Growing awareness of the necessity of a communitarian management of projects and economy.
- More faithfulness in rendering the monthly individual and community account.

But there are still some **hurdles** to fly:

- Abolish the individualistic use of economic means and projects.
- Adoption of style of life that will be more sober and close to the people we are living with.
- Take into serious consideration to auto finance the Province.
- To be transparent in the use of money and the monthly account.
- Render more competent and systematic our accounting system.



5. Perspectives for the future

Looking into the future and for planning purposes, here are some areas and orientations where it seems to us we would need to focus on in order to consolidate our gains:

- To accompany the new Scholasticate in Cape Coast in the context of a pastoral assignment.
- To strengthen our new presence in the northern part of Benin, in a muslim context, and get more acquainted with the Islamic world.
- Continuing to give priority to our community life and on-going formation.
- Pursue the orientation of developing some parishes to be handed over to the dioceses.
- Reconfirm and qualifying the missionary animation of the local churches, especially through:

- * Strengthening the three Mission promotion centres in the capitals;
 - * A significant development of our missionary presence where ever we are;
 - * A serious exploitation of magazines, *Afriquespoir* and *New People*;
 - * To better our collaboration with the Comboni sisters and diocesan animation structures;
 - * Formation of *Amicales* and *Friends of Comboni* in all communities;
 - * Promotion of Comboni Mission Sunday in all communities.
- Deepen and have a consistent accompaniment of our candidates.
 - To better the collaboration between our communities and the formation houses in the Province.
 - Consolidate the provincial common fund.
 - To improve the quality of our service through the specialisation of some confreres.
 - To better inculturate our service and presence.
 - Put into motion the involvement in JPIC.

Grateful to the Lord for the journey done during these six years, in communion with the whole Institute, we gaze on the future with trust submitting ourselves to the intercession of our Fonder St. Daniel Comboni.

Lomé, 19th March 2009
Solemnity of St Joseph

Uganda

Uganda Province Report to the XVII General Chapter Final document

1. Introduction

The Preparatory Commission instructed all the Circumscriptions to develop a report touching the most relevant points concerning the situation of the respective Country, Church, Institute and, in particular, the implementation of the agenda of the Previous Chapter 2003, reflected by the six year plan. Many details have been left aside since the Chapter delegates will not have much time to read and even less to study lengthy reports from all provinces and delegations. Therefore the purpose of this document is to highlight what characterised our journey and the points suggesting future transformations.

2. The General situation

The political, social and economic situation:

The country is undergoing a rapid transformation. The economic growth has been around 15%, although it has recently fallen to around 5-7% in response to the global economic crisis; there are signs that things will not improve much in the immediate future.

In spite of the high level of corruption, there is an effort to improve the level of transparency. In the recent past corruption of individuals and institutions has been exposed and often sanctioned. This has encouraged people to react and to single out corrupt people. It has happened that Institutions had to struggle to clear their names and to renew themselves. Corruption may never be completely eliminated but we have to recognise the effort made at containing it.

Many NGOs, international and local, are increasingly concerned with several social issues: for example the care of children (street children, orphans, and abducted children), health care, environment (protection of wetlands and forestry), schools and all types of development. However, too often the role of the NGOs fosters passivity and dependence, so much that some intellectuals advocate the end of external assistance.

Over the last years, education has seen its fastest development in spite of many limitations. Universal Primary education, followed recently by Universal Secondary education, has been introduced. Universities are mushrooming all over the country. Unfortunately, because of the high student-teacher ratio, the standard of education in public schools has worsened. The best education is available in major urban centres and this attracts many young people, taking them away from the countryside. An increasing number of young and highly educated people is unable to get employment. Many people still try to get out of the country drawn by the perspective of a better life abroad. Others find themselves engaged in unlawful activities in order to make ends meet.

Since 2006, when peace talks between Government and the LRA begun, Uganda has experienced peace all over the country. Most internally displaced camps have been demolished and the majority of the displaced people has returned to the original villages or to new settlements. After many years spent in camps, people now prefer to live close to one another in large village settlements and close to facilities such as clean water, dispensaries, schools and roads.

Although in general Uganda now enjoys relative peace, the neighbouring Countries are still affected by violence and strife. Consequently there are hordes of refugees flocking to Uganda. This is causing strain on Institutions and often makes the relationship of refugees with the local people tense.

Uganda is also experiencing the impact of the globalization of culture and of new ways of life. There is a high population growth rate, hence land is becoming scarce; this results in land grabbing and land wrangles. The breaking down of family, clan and regional ties generates new types of social tensions and social deviations. Traditional values are lost without being replaced by new ones. The intensified recourse to witchcraft may be linked to these types of tensions and loss of values.

Uganda is becoming a connection country in Central Africa. It is an increasingly relevant transit place for goods to Sudan, Congo, Rwanda etc. The improvement of its road network enhances this role and provides access to new resources such as oil and unexploited minerals (gold, uranium etc.).

However, we cannot fail noticing the increasing gap between rich and poor, educated and uneducated; the Southern part of the Country which develops faster than the Northern part, large towns grow faster than remote villages, industrial and mineral rich areas faster than remote agricultural countryside. Youth are many and their hopes fly high; many will see their hopes frustrated. Hence emigration and exploitation of the youth is on the increase. Between different groups, minority groups are increasingly marginalized and exploited to the advantage of the majority groups (see the Batwa people, the Bakonjo and others people living in remote areas).

Ecclesial situation:

The Church and the Comboni Missionaries have been a powerful force for peace-building in the Country. Peace talks have been initiated and carried on, in spite of all odds and opposition, by the Church authority hand in hand with several Comboni Missionaries who risked their life to give a chance to peace. Later on peace talks became part of the policy of government and of the international community. This has eventually led to the final agreement. Although Joseph Kony (the leader of the rebellion) has not signed the agreement yet, peace has prevailed and has become a reality for the people. We cannot forget mentioning that it was the relentless effort and constant presence of the Comboni Missionaries (brothers, fathers and sisters) together with the local religious and diocesan priests that has sustained hope, prevented further disaster and avoided the total collapse of social structures.

As matter of fact, the situation of suffering and insecurity helped the people of Northern Uganda to deepen their faith and determination to live as Christians. The presence and activities of ecclesial movements has helped the Church to grow in maturity and increase her evangelizing dimension.

The Church is now steadily moving toward three objectives: being self-reliant, self-ministering and self propagating. Although the Church still depends on external resources, the internal contribution is growing steadily. Priests and religious are many. They are sufficient to cover the pastoral needs of most of the dioceses.

As a growing Church the local church also struggles with identity crisis of some of priests and religious. Nowadays several of them are engaging in endless studies, income generating activities and white collar jobs, abandoning Pastoral ministry. There are nonetheless priests and religious who are not distracted by the appeal of mundane aims and show remarkable dedication and a lot of creativity.

In some areas, the Church suffers from poor leadership both at the lower and higher level. There is a tendency not to talk about problems, or to leave them unattended in the hope that they may spontaneously disappear. Diocesan structures are well established but are expensive and do not always deliver what they are expected to. Many people therefore lose confidence and trust in the Church and move away from her. However, in places where the Church has vibrant leaders, life blossoms and raises great hopes for the future.

The quoted dimension of self-propagation seems to be disregarded by some sections of the Church. Missionary Animation finds a stiff resistance and it is often misunderstood. An inward looking Church falls prey to the new evangelical churches which are more missionary and more daring. Indeed these independent churches are registering success both in urban settings and also in very isolated places like Karamoja and among the marginalised people. On the positive side, it must be remembered that the Church in Uganda has a large number of “workers” in terms of clergy and religious and that it has been able to send missionaries all over Africa and beyond.

A recent challenge is the shocking rise in the practice of witchcraft and ritual killing. People seem less capable to cope with the tensions of modern world and the rapidly changing society; they are lost and confused and they easily fall into the hands of unscrupulous people who promise them a quick solution through witchcraft and magic rituals and sacrifices. Human sacrifices have recently become frequent news, even in the capital city, leaving many dumbfounded and shocked.

3. Situation of personnel: age and statistics

3.a. Personnel and Age

The Province today has 99 Fathers (103 in 2003) and 25 Brothers (23 in 2003), for a total of 124 confreres (126 in 2003).

The average age of Fathers is 62.38 (+ 0.34), of Brothers is 59.61 (- 2.58), and the overall average is 61.82 (- 1.08). The Province is slightly younger than it was in 2003.

Confreres are distributed over 32 communities, five communities less than in 2003 (when there were 37 communities).

3.b. Movement of confreres

We are grateful to God for the work and dedication of the missionaries. We have been gifted by the sacrifice of two martyrs: Fr Mario Mantovani and Bro. Godfrey Kiriyoowa, who died violently while serving the people entrusted to their missionary

care; they are our precious witnesses. We also remember in a special way 6 confreres who died during the last five years: they are Frs. Serra Paolo, Russo Giuseppe, Balzarini Mario, Ottolini Paolo, Moser Luigi, Dellagiacoma Raffaele.

During the last five years 19 confreres have been transferred outside the Province, either on rotation or for health reasons. We also have one confrere who recently left the Institute.

We thank God for those confreres who worked for many years in Uganda and are now retired in their Country of origin or in houses for the elderly confreres. The retirement of the missionary constitutes a positive fact because the missionary who returns to his own country still carries with him a positive witness of faith which touches many people and evangelises them.

3.c. Radical members

Radical members of the province with perpetual vows are at present 35 (31 in 2003); 16 of them are assigned outside Uganda. Since 2003 Chapter 5 confreres were ordained priests and 2 made the perpetual profession as brothers. Three Ugandan confreres left the Institute.

Regarding those in temporal vows, there are 14 candidates on formation: three of them are brothers and 11 are candidates for priesthood. There are also 9 scholastics who left the Institute; 5 left by their own accord and 4 were discontinued. This tells us that the loss of candidates during the last stage of formation is around 50%.

3.d. Communities and commitments

With the handing over of various commitments, five communities were closed namely: Akanyo, Gulu Cathedral, Kanjokya, Aduku, and Moyo. At present the Province has 32 communities (they were 37 in 2003).

Eleven commitments “ad personam” have been handed over to the Diocesan personnel due to transfer of qualified confreres to other provinces or offices, sickness of the confrere and the availability of local personnel for the office handed over.

The number of under-staffed communities (i.e. with less than three confreres as required by the RL) decreased from 12 in 2003 to 5 in 2009. The reasons still justifying the presence of communities with less than three confreres are to be found in the necessity of maintaining some pastoral commitments that the Dioceses are not able or willing to take over.

4. Community life

The quality of community life is in itself a form of evangelization. There is a direct link between the quality of community life we live as Comboni Missionaries and the type of community we try to foster among the people we serve. People learn more from what they see us doing than from what they hear us saying. Unfortunately in some instances our effort to bring people together as God’s family is hindered by our inconsistent witness of community life.

Chapter Acts 2003 (CA 03) n. 59.1 reminded the Institute that the community is still the most important place for ongoing-formation. Therefore we must look at the community from this perspective and not merely as a means to ensure our survival

or a more efficient pastoral work. While our missionary dedication is remarkably high, the attention given to our own personal growth and sanctification does not keep the same standard. This may become our Achilles' heel. Our good service must be matched by our capacity of self-renewal if we want to stand the test of time and the challenges of secularization.

4.1. Encouraging aspects:

- Most confreres are committed and dedicated to the service of the Gospel in close collaboration with the local Church.
- Bishops have praised the confreres and expressed their gratitude for their dedicated services particularly in difficult and dangerous areas.
- Also at National level the Comboni Missionaries are praised for their determination to stay with the people in situations of insecurity and war as that experienced by North Uganda for decades (Acholi, part of Lira and Karamoja).
- There has been a good participation of confreres in the Zonal Assemblies. It seems that this is the preferred way to take an active part in the life of the Province.
- Some projects and initiatives of confreres carried out in collaboration with the Comboni Sisters and other religious have been highly praised not only by the Church but also by International Organizations; among them Reach Out project for persons affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic of Mbuya Parish, Matany and Kalongo Hospitals, the Technical Schools, and St Jude Orphanage are worth mentioning.
- Most communities improved the way they keep the accounts and how they report the use of material goods.
- Communities are generally happy and there is a certain level of cooperation.
- The Province has managed to retain the presence of a good number of brothers and we are grateful to God that we have vocations to brotherhood, a sign of hope for the Institute.

4.2. Areas that need greater attention:

- It is desirable to see more and deeper communication among the members. We need to have regular community meetings and practice communitarian decision making; we should also set aside some time for ongoing formation. The Rule of Life and the Provincial Directory offer us the means for a better organized and qualified community life; unfortunately we do not make full use of them.
- Many confreres are too busy with their personal programs at the expense of ongoing formation and other community commitments.
- Some confreres show little commitment to their pastoral work and waste much time on unnecessary communication with distant people through constant use of internet, phone, socialization, and needless travelling. Sobriety in this field is to be fostered.
- Individuals' and communities' limitations are a call for a deeper prayer life. Difficult situations are to be lived in faith and not with despair and anger. Unfortunately prayer itself is in many cases reduced to the bare minimum and it is often too superficial; thus personal conscience loses its power to keep us close to the Lord and to His style of life.
- Individualism is still one of our major enemies: it is visible in pastoral, economic, and social fields (projects, administration of offerings, movements, socializing, etc.). Working together with a common purpose is still a challenge for many confreres.

- Not all communities have reached that culture of communion envisaged in CA n. 102f and of self limitation envisaged in CA n. 103.

These observations are not so much a judgement on anyone but, rather, an encouragement to give greater attention to the quality of our community life for our own personal fulfilment and joy, in view of an effective work of evangelization and for the renewal of our Institute. We surely need, in the coming years, to give greater attention to personal ongoing-formation and community life.

5. Implementation of CA 2003

The Implementation of CA 03 followed two main lines: the first has been indicated by the General Council to the entire Institute under the well known programme of the Ratio Missionis. The second line is that assumed by the Province through its six year plan.

5.1. Main areas of implementation of CA 03

a. Assemblies:

The assemblies of the Provincials and Delegates at congregational and continental level (Cairo, Rome, Nairobi) plus the intercapitular assembly (Mexico) have been an important moment for the launching and, subsequently, the following up of the implementation of the Acts of the General Chapter 2003.

b. Ratio Missionis:

The reflection on the Ratio Missionis – i.e. on almost all the issues proposed by CA 03 -, has been carried out and actively participated by the quasi totality of confreres within the Province at zonal level. We need to recognize that most communities are not able to carry out an ongoing formation program at their level; hence most of it has been carried out at zonal level. This has entailed the advantage of greater interaction and has had the limit of less personal involvement. The summary of the reflections has been published and sent to each confrere; it is recognised as a good instrument of ongoing formation and reflection.

c. Code of Conduct:

The Code of Conduct has been well received and studied at zonal level. The Provincial Assembly has formalised those changes needed to align the Provincial Directory to the Code.

d. Common Fund:

All are convinced that the Common Fund (CF) as envisaged by the CA 03 is an ideal to aim at, which requires the conversion of hearts first. Without such conversion any forceful implementation of the CF will not help to reach the purpose. The Province engaged itself in trying to achieve the prerequisites for the application of the CF.

- The share rate was raised from 15% to 20%;
- Courses have been offered to local bursars to help them to do their service with competence and according to the rules of accountability and consensus.
- The Province insists that there must be a monthly financial report in each community where all confreres are to become aware of the financial transactions of the community and have the opportunity to analyse its economic life, while monitoring the implementation of the budget.
- The Province insists also on the drawing up of the annual budget and encourages the communities to be faithful to it.

e. Balancing commitments and personnel:

In this regard the Province has reached almost all its objectives. The ratio commitments/personnel has improved, in line with the directives of the Chapter. We have still some weak spots requiring some work; we are however aware that the ideal may never be reached.

f. Some resistance to the implementation of CA 03

Obstacles and resistance exist and can be summarized as follows:

- Some remarks are found above and concern the style of community life.
- Confreres still find it hard to share about their faith, hope and love for God and the people. They shy away from serious sharing and from common life. The consequence is poor prayer life and little reflection on the own personal transformation; this results in frequent community misunderstandings and conflicts. Conflicts are therefore not seen as an opportunity to undergo a serious conversion but rather as justification for isolation and individualism.
- There is still resistance to the reduction of our presence; a contributing factor to this resistance is perhaps a bit of pessimism towards the ability of the local Church to carry on. Some of this is based on observable facts.

5.2. The implementation of the six-year plan

We recognize that we have not been very consistent in focusing on the vision and goals that guided us when we worked out our six year plan. Perhaps by not giving time to contemplate the chosen biblical icons we lost momentum and inspiration. We have been bogged down by the limitations experienced in the daily events. In spite of it we achieved some results.

a. Contracts with the Bishops:

The six-year plan has inspired the renewal of contracts and the review of commitments with the Bishops. We have basically kept to the program though it has almost been impossible to get the collaboration of the Bishops. At times the Provincial has been obliged to take the initiative and force changes onto the Bishops. The result we acknowledge consists in the achievement of a more balanced ratio between personnel and commitments.

b. Strengthening of priority commitments:

We have strengthened some of the commitments considered “priority” by the Province such as Missionary Animation, Vocation Promotion, Ongoing-formation (opening of the Comboni Spirituality Centre in Layibi), formation of leaders in various fields through Pastoral/Catechist Centres and Technical Schools run by the Brothers. The Missionary Animation Centre of Kyamuhunga is still under construction; we hope to have it functioning in the near future.

c. Collaboration

We are improving the collaboration with the local Church, with other Missionary Institutes (John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre). In our Province there is a longstanding and positive experience of communities welcoming diocesan priests, working along with them, sharing the same commitments and preparing the handing over to them. The course on Islam helped some to gain a better understanding of inter-religious collaboration. There is nonetheless still much to be done. We also collaborate with many NGOs in the field of relief and development, especially in the areas affected by war, insecurity, harsh poverty and HIV/AIDS.

d. Attention to the pastoralist:

The regular meetings of confreres working among the pastoralist in Kenya and Uganda is a step in the right direction for qualifying our evangelization in this field. The generosity of the confreres working in Karamoja prevented the closing of missions in that area of first evangelization.

e. Mass Media

In the field of mass media we have confreres fully involved in the running of Diocesan Radios. We are carrying on a discussion on how to increase the collaboration between Leadership and New People. We failed to appoint a confrere to run "Leadership" magazine.

f. Specializations:

Three Ugandan confreres have been trained in areas concerning formation. We have failed to train future bursars and journalists.

6. Other themes

6.1. Secretariat of Formation

Over the years, this secretariat has been meeting three times a year and has offered advice in the area of Basic formation to the Provincial and his council. It consists of the Provincial Vocation Promoter, the formators of the two Postulancies and the formators of the Novitiate. The meetings of this secretariat have been important for ongoing formation, mutual support, exchange of information on our candidates, and for seeking better ways of supporting our candidates as we try to implement the vision of formation given by the General Administration.

We are thankful to God that, while vocations worldwide have dropped, we still have a good number of vocations. Many of them are promising. It has to be noted though that the influence of a hedonistic society and the increasingly broken family life have made our candidates more fragile.

6.2. Justice and Peace

The Province engaged with other religious partners in setting up the "John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre". The centre is progressing very fast, although it is struggling to develop its own structure and to move towards being self-supporting. The Centre obtained the favour of the Episcopal Conference, of the Association of Religious, of Academia - particularly from the Catholic University of Nkozi. Its first publication – an analysis of the cost of living in the slums of Kampala - has been widely welcome by Government Officials and NGOs. Other initiatives are in the pipeline such as a *syllabus of justice and peace* for schools and local communities.

6.3. Lay Comboni Missionaries

The Lay Comboni Missionaries of Uganda have grown and have become more autonomous in the way they organise themselves about recruitment, formation and definition of their mission field. Their desire and the effort made to become more self-sufficient - good in itself -, is to be monitored. The risk exist that this aims may become self-serving and mortify the missionary dimension. The group is slowly expanding and its services in various missions are highly appreciated.

7. Future perspectives

Despite statistics show that our province as a whole is not growing older, a large portion of confreres, exactly 50%, are now over 70 years of age. This means that several of the

commitments they currently hold cannot be kept for long. The next Provincial Plan needs to adjust to this reality. The Province is becoming more and more international and the presence of radical members is slowly increasing.

The challenges faced are:

- Vocation promotion and formation: the changing culture in the Country requires new motivations, deeper discernment, attentive accompaniment, focusing on the personal sacrificial love for God, the poor and the Kingdom of God;
- Community life is a constant struggle and there are new disturbing trends that will make it even more difficult. Therefore adherence to the existing rules, attention to one's personal spiritual and human growth, deeper prayer and pastoral commitment are key requirements for the success of community life;
- Renewal of our missionary spirit is an ongoing process that cannot be given up to pursue personal aims. It should be based on the memory of our Founder and founders of the Province, whose centenary we celebrate this coming year.
- The identification with the Institute is challenged by a misleading search to inculturate oneself into the comfortable life which the world of today makes available. We need to recover the centrality of the Cross as a way of incarnating ourselves in the life of the poor, weak, neglected and marginalized.

8. Conclusion

The Province is looking forward to the XVII General Chapter as a moment of renewal for the whole Institute and for us in particular. We are aware that no renewal will happen automatically. However, for us believers renewal is the result of grace given by God and welcomed by us with open hands. We therefore commit ourselves not to make such grace vain because of our lack of attention and commitment. Like Mary we want to say our 'Yes' to the Lord so that his Kingdom may come.
