

# Familia Comboniana

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE EHART OF JESUS

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801

November 2021

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

### GENERAL NOTES OF THE 62<sup>nd</sup> CONSULTA

September-October 2021

#### 1. Appointments

##### **Community of Student Confreres - Rome**

❖ Fr. Victor Hugo Castillo Matarrita (C) is appointed superior of the Community of Student Confreres as from 1 November.

##### **Nairobi CIF**

❖ Bro. Yata Blawo Likenankaa Christopher (KE) is appointed second formator of the Nairobi CIF and contextually confirmed as bursar of the community as from 1 November 2021.

##### **Pietermaritzburg Scholasticate**

❖ Fr. John Baptist Opargiw (RSA) is appointed first formator and local superior of the PMB Scholasticate as from 1 November 2021.

❖ Fr. José Aldo Sierra Moreno (RSA) is appointed and confirmed second formator and contextually confirmed as local bursar of the PMB Scholasticate as from 1 November 2021.

#### 2. Journey towards the General Chapter

❖ The General Council wishes to thank the confreres of the General Administration and of the circumscriptions that have sent to the Pre-Chapter Commission their reports to the upcoming XIX General Chapter and to remind those who have not yet done so to send them as soon as possible.

❖ The General Council wishes to encourage all the confreres to pray for the journey towards the upcoming General Chapter and to remind them that continental and sub-continental meetings will be held to prepare the continental reports during the second week of November 2021, in Chad for Francophone Africa (ASCAF) and in Mexico for AMER-ASIA.

❖ The members of the Precapitular Commission, who are already working on the material they are receiving, will meet in Rome for a month of work from mid-January to mid-February 2022.

### **3. The need for vaccination against Covid-19**

The General Council has been informed that there are some confreres who, though they have the opportunity, have not protected themselves against the risk of contracting and transmitting Covid-19, refusing to be vaccinated against the disease. It reminds those confreres that for people like ourselves who live in community and in close contact with people, protection of oneself and others is not only required for health reasons but is also a moral obligation. It appeals to their sense of responsibility and the need to act out of such reasons of mutual care and protection that each one of us ought to believe it an obligation to ask those not already vaccinated to do so soon, wherever possible. There are no credible reasons for denying the effectiveness of the vaccines being used and only a proven risk to one's health, certified by a medical doctor, can absolve one from the moral obligation of being vaccinated against Covid-19. Only the vaccination of almost 90-100% of the population and the observance of precautions to reduce the risk of infection (such as the use of facemasks, frequent hand-washing or disinfecting and social distancing where possible) can reduce the risk of becoming a carrier and, Heaven forbid, responsible for the sickness and possible death of a confrere of ours or some other person whom we are expected to protect.

The General Council therefore asks all circumscription superiors to be active in raising the awareness of all confreres of the need to abandon any doubts or hesitancy regarding protection against Covid-19 and to point out all the situations of community disquiet caused by possible resistance to vaccination or the adoption precautionary measures.

The General Council also wishes to remind those concerned that it will not be possible to admit to the XIX General Chapter any delegates who have not completed the cycle of vaccinations (except for reasons of sickness properly certified by an authorised doctor in their own countries): we will not be in a position to manage all the complications that would be required by the presence of such an unprotected subject in a large group of people who are of necessity in close contact with each other in the same

building. Furthermore, as everybody now knows, it is becoming increasingly difficult for unvaccinated people to travel by air or cross borders from one country to another. It is also necessary, therefore, that all Chapter Members get to work to obtain the necessary vaccinations in time.

#### **4. Meeting with the Commission for Ministeriality**

The GC thanks the members of the Comboni Family who contributed by means of the Social Forum to raise awareness among the members of our Institutes regarding the theme of social ministeriality. The General Councils and the Co-ordinators of the four branches of the Comboni Family will meet with the commission of the Comboni Social Forum on 17 December at the MCCJ Curia (telematically for those not in Italy). The aim of the meeting is to evaluate the work done and to consider how to give continuity to the processes already initiated.

#### **5. The journey on Synodality**

The General Council encourages all confreres to take part in the reflection, the common journey and the events being organised on the theme of Synodality in the Universal Church and, more specifically, in the local Churches where we are present and in our communities. All of us are called to contribute to the journey by means of our commitment for a synodal Church in which all are called to COMMUNION-PARTICIPATION-MISSION.

#### **6. Finance**

❖ The General Council has approved in this consult the new General Directory of Finance in which are to be found all the decisions taken during the past six years of governance and animation of the Institute. There are still some points to be discussed during the next General Chapter i.e. The separation of the function of Provincial/General Treasurer and Legal representative and the duration of the mandate of the Provincial/General Treasurer in line with what is suggested in the document "Finance at the service of mission", issued by CIVCSVA in 2018. These points actually involve changes to our Rule of Life.

❖ Due to the ongoing pandemic, during a telematic meeting, the provincial treasurers have decided that, absolutely by way of exception, the usual Assembly of Bursars in preparation for the General Chapter will be organised following the same modalities.

## 7. CG Travel Plans

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse	6 November-5 December (MZ)
Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins	22 October-8 November (P) 23 November-26 November (Sacrofano – Assembly USG)
Fr. Pietro Ciuciulla	31 October-7 November (TCH) 17 November-5 December (MZ)
Fr. Alcides Costa	6 November-14 November (M)

## 8. Next Consulta

The next consulta is scheduled for 13 to 19 December.

### Priestly ordinations

Fr. Agede Simon (T)	Akatsi (GH)	09.10.2021
Fr. Nieto Castro José de Jesus (M)	Zacatecas (M)	09.10.2021
Fr. Lizcano González Jálver (CO)	Araucita (COL)	23.10.2021
Fr. Muhime Emmanuel (MZ)	Mtepuwa (MW)	30.10.2021
Fr. Kutsaile Matthews (MZ)	Mtepuwa (MW)	30.10.2021

### Holy Redeemer Guild

November	01 – 15 SS	16 – 30 T
December	01 – 15 PE	16 – 31 U

### Prayer intentions

**November** – That God may welcome into his peace all who have died due to the pandemic and console their relatives and all who mourn them. *Lord hear us.*

**December** – That our Lord Jesus Christ may grant to all missionaries whom he has called to follow him, fidelity and constancy in the mission entrusted to them. *Lord hear us.*

## Notice from the Communications Office

### App: Comboni connected

Due to an unforeseen change in the internet address of the server, the present version of the App is not working. A new version has been issued with the necessary corrections. To update it, it is necessary to uninstall the present version and install the new one which is to be found in the Play Store under the name of “Comboni connected”.

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.comboni.connected&gl=IT>

## BRASIL

### **We are still Comboni Missionaries**

The Combonis of the province of Brazil thank the Lord for the life-witness of Giuseppe Grassi, a former Comboni who passed away on 3 August last.

He had been suffering for some time from leukaemia, accepting his sickness with faith and serenity. Towards the end, he said: "I am ready to go; I feel I am with God". He died holding the hand of his son. He also had a daughter who had Down's syndrome and to whom he dedicated himself totally during the last years of her life. He was the Italian Vice-Consul in Cuiabá, the city where he lived after he got married.

He never lost contact with the Combonis and kept them in his heart: there was always a room available in his house for missionary friends who, coming from Rondonia, needed a place to stay while travelling. He had also built a chapel in his house where he often went to pray, meditate or write. It was dedicated to the three archangels and had a picture of St. Daniel Comboni: "Never forget, my friend, that we are still Combonis" – he would say to a colleague who, like him, had left the Institute.

While still a Comboni, he dedicated himself to the communities of the state of Espírito Santo and Rondonia, with particular attention to the rural communities which he loved. He was very much appreciated by the youth for his enthusiasm. The Bishop of Ji-Paraná, Mons. Antonio Possamai, had charged him with writing the pastoral project of the diocese. He greatly supported the civil case of Fr. Ezechiel Ramin, offering his collaboration in the reconstruction of his history and the collection of documents. The Comboni Missionaries salute him with gratitude and entrust themselves to his intercession.

## COLOMBIA

### **Priestly ordination**

On 23 October, the Sc. Jálver Lizcano González, a Colombian, was ordained priest at Arauquita (in the diocese of Arauca), by Mons. Jaime Abril, Bishop of the diocese. The ceremony took place in the presence of many of the faithful and diocesan priests as well as a good group of Comboni of the Delegation.

The following day, Fr. Jálver celebrated his first Mass at the parish church of La Esmeralda, his home town. It was a beautiful celebration, well attended by the people with an Afro choir from the quarters of Bogotá where the Combonis work. Jálver is the first Comboni of the area. Before the celebration, a group of Combonis carried out a campaign of missionary animation and pastoral renewal in the cities and villages, distributing freely our magazines and books.

DSP

### **Centenary celebration**

The province has celebrated the centenary of the opening of the first community in Germany at Josefstal/Ellwangen, on 2 February 1921. The celebration had been postponed due to the Coronavirus and was held on 10 October 2021, the feast of St. Daniel Comboni. Following the opening of the house of Milland/Bressanone, in 1896, the German-speaking Comboni Missionaries were formed in that house and studied theology at the major diocesan seminary. Due to the First World War and its consequences (the session of South Tyrol to the Kingdom of Italy), the future of the Bressanone house was uncertain. For this reason and in view of the probable division of the Institute into two independent branches, the German-speaking group decided to open a house in Germany but, due to the “Law of the Jesuits” (revoked in 1917), no Order could open a religious house in German territory. Once this obstacle was removed, Fr. Isidoro Stang, a missionary in Sudan and, during the war, a prisoner in Egypt, was charged with finding a suitable place for a foundation. Fr. Isidoro contacted many dioceses and, finally, it was the diocese of Rottenburg/Stuttgart which granted permission to open a house in Ellwangen, on 2 February 1921.

Even though the celebration had to be postponed twice due to the pandemic, the day of the feast of 10 October 2021 pleased everyone. The auxiliary bishop Thomas Maria Renz presided at the Eucharist attended by around 500 guests and most of the confreres. Among the guests were Assistant General Bro. Alberto Lamana and Fr. Arlindo Pinto from Rome, who brought the greetings and best wishes of the General Administration. After the celebration, there were some wonderful encounters with many of our former candidates and postulants who had met the Combonis

during the intense pastoral work of vocations ministry. A group of the CLMs were also present with a display they prepared on the theme "Peace – How to achieve it?" Other groups displayed their photos in which they showed their connection with the Comboni Missionaries.

After the meal, Fr. Reinhold Baumann presented a historical synthesis of the hundred years mentioning in conclusion, with the help of some guests with *mission statements*, how the Comboni Missionaries and their collaborators understand mission today. Since a large part of the celebration was held outdoors, due to coronavirus measures, everyone enjoyed the fine autumnal weather. The celebration was very moving and created an atmosphere of joy and hope for the future.

That evening, more than a hundred people gathered in a hall in the city to listen to a conference given by Roman Siebenrock, professor of theology at Ellwangen Seminary. Using the text Is 43,19 "Behold, I am doing a new deed: even now it comes to light. Do you not see it?", he showed the developments, challenges and opportunities that society today presents to the mission in Europe. The meeting can be viewed on the YouTube page of the DSP: [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=comboni+missionari](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=comboni+missionari)

### **Provincial Assembly**

The following day, 11 October, the provincial assembly was opened. It was also attended by our Superior General Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse. Having been obliged during the previous days, to attend the opening of the synod of bishops in Rome, he had not been able to attend the celebration of the centenary. On the morning of the first day devoted to ongoing formation, Professor Siebenrock explained the theme: "*Let us trust in life since God is walking with us*". The input and group work had the purpose of motivating and animating the confreres and to counteract the rather pessimistic view of the province: it is important, the professor emphasised, to commit ourselves ever anew to the Gospel.

One relevant theme of the assembly was the presentation, discussion and completion of the provincial report to the General Chapter. The confreres strongly supported the availability of the province to have some scholastics come to study theology at Graz or Bressanone. The report will be sent to Rome to the Pre-Chapter

Commission once it has been approved by the Provincial Council and the three chapter members.

The reports of the local communities and the provincial superior, presented on 12 October, showed clearly the advancing age of the group of confreres who have an average age of 74 years. Without considerable internationalisation, the province will no longer be able to fulfil its duties and necessary activities. Out of 43 confreres in the province, only five are radical members of other provinces.

Fr. Tesfaye, Bro. Alberto and Fr. Arlindo led the third day presenting a global view of the Institute that was highly appreciated. A discussion on plans for the future of the province was originally planned for the afternoon but instead the assembly attended the funeral of Father Bernhard Riegel who had died a few days previously. He was buried in the cemetery of the city next to our other deceased confreres. A large number of friends and faithful said their last goodbyes to Father Bernhard, many of whom met him in Ellwangen where he worked for many years.

Pictures and texts are to be found on the website: <https://www.comboni.org/contenuti/113668>

### **Visit to the Province**

After the Provincial Assembly, Fr. Tesfaye, accompanied by Bro. Alberto and Fr. Arlindo, visited the other communities of the province. At **Neumarkt**, a community of four confreres, he spoke with the Parish Priest and visited the former Comboni minor seminary. He also greeted a young Argentinian religious community that had taken up residence close to our community. At **Graz**, we celebrated the Sunday Mass in the parish and spoke with the parishioners. There was great joy at the arrival of two African confreres, one from Uganda and the other from Togo who will do specialised studies at the University of Graz while helping out in the parish. The last community visited was that of **Bressanone**. Apart from meeting with the confreres, Father General also visited the diocesan bishop Ivo Muser in Bolzano, a good friend of the Combonis. Back in Milland, Fr. Tesfaye, Bro. Alberto and Fr. Arlindo visited with interest both the social biological farm and the house of Solidarity, very close to our house, which bodes well for future cooperation.



## ETHIOPIA

### **The Situation around the Mission of Gublak**

A year has passed since we Comboni Missionaries and the Sisters of the Apparition of St. Joseph withdrew from the mission of Gublak dedicated to Blessed Daudi and Blessed Gildo. We were hoping, and we still do so, that the situation would soon normalise and we could return to normal life. However, the real situation is proving very much the contrary.

The waves of violence against the external” communities are still being carried out by heavily armed men thought to be Gumuz militias. There is also news of *shiftas* (gangs) of local Gumuz kidnapping and killing their fellow Gumuz.

Since the beginning of February 2021, we have heard often of groups that destroy and sack the houses and dwellings abandoned by people at Gublak. On 30 March, we received the news of the sacking of the property of our parish. We visited the parish on 26 April. What we saw broke our hearts. All the structures had been broken robbed: the house of the community, the church, offices and multi-purpose hall. We lost very important property and documents. We also heard that some of our chapels have been broken into and used as camps by the rebels.

Not even the parish kindergarten was spared. We recently heard how St. Jacobis KG school, in the city of Gublak was broken into; all the properties were plundered. Recently, some catechists called to tell us that rebels were present in the damaged house of the Sisters and in the new building, in the complex of our main church, in the new hostel building and in some of our chapels in different villages.

As we conclude this report, serious clashes are continuing between the national army and the rebels; our Uganda Martyrs chapel has been seriously damaged.

In June, in the city of Gilgel Beles, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the regional state of Benishangul Gumúz and an un-named "armed group" which granted the members of this group positions of leadership in the region, urban and rural lands and also credit facilities for women with the declared aim of resolving the security crisis in the region in a sustainable way. However, from the latest news it seems that many of the commitments undertaken through this MoU have not

been respected and this has provoked a new and grave wave of violence.

The 2021 general elections ended peacefully everywhere on 21 June and on 30 September, except in the region of Tigray, still in conflict with the armed federal forces. A new government was set up and the prime minister was sworn in on 4 October 2021. Everyone is hoping for a solution to these clashes that afflict different parts of Ethiopia, including that of Metekel.

We are providing this report not to dishearten anyone but to invite everyone to pray for the whole of Ethiopia. Please remember Ethiopia and especially our dispersed students, the elderly Christians, the children and the sick who have hidden in the depths of the forests, cut off and without aid. (*Fr. Isaiah S. Nyakundi, mcccj, Parish Priest of Gublak*)

## MALAWI-ZAMBIA

### **Ordinations to the priesthood**

On 30 October, a large number of Christians gathered at the parish church of Mtepuwa, in Malawi, to celebrate the priestly ordination of two Malawians: Emmanuel Muhime and Matthew Kutsaile. The parish is close to the mountains of Mulanje where the Combonis began their missionary service fifty years ago.

The liturgy was carefully prepared and presided over by the Archbishop of Blantyre-Limbe, Thomas Luke Msusa, a Montfort missionary.

Among those present at the Mass were the provincial superior Fr. Michael Mumba with two deacons, one from Malawi and the other from Zambia.

In his homily, His Grace emphasised the positive journey in course in the Church in Malawi, even if it is still a Church that needs to be supported by missionaries in some parishes and requires all sorts of help in the formation of its diocesan seminarians. He said he was happy to be able to say that now, with the ordination of the two new priests, – of whom Matthew is assigned to South Sudan and Emmanuel to Brazil – the local Church has given an ulterior sign of its Christian maturity. The assembled people joyfully responded with applause. The liturgical celebration was followed by songs, dancing and a meal together.

Fr. Matthew Kutsaile come from the station of Mtepuwa, the parish where he was ordained and Fr. Emmanuel Muhime is from another station, Lihaka, in Chiringa parish formerly staffed by Comboni missionaries in the same area of Malawi.

Let us pray for them in their future missionary service as well as for the local Church, so that many more young men from their communities may also become Comboni Missionaries.

## NAP

### **Events for the feast of Saint Daniel Comboni**

On Sunday 10 October, the community of Cincinnati held its XII "Taste of Mission": an annual event to which the friends of the Combonis are invited to visit the centre and to spend a day together with a programme of entertainment, visits to the museum and shopping at the mission market. Last year, the event was held online due to the pandemic. This year, people were present in person. People gathered outdoors to have refreshments and visit the shows by the Hills of Kentucky Dulcimers, the Pamana Dance Group (a group of Filipino dancers) and the Los Katolico's, a Hispanic musical group from the parish of San Bonifacio where Fr. Rodolfo Coaquira ministers. Thanks to the generosity of the sponsors, the event represents an extraordinary collection of funds for the province and also a wonderful opportunity to share the mission with friends and neighbours.

Also on Sunday 10 October, Fr. Ruffino Ezama, provincial superior, celebrated the feast of Saint Daniel Comboni with the African communities at the cathedral of St. Ambrose in Des Moines, Iowa. The celebration was organised by the Sudanese Catholics and South Sudanese in the United States but also present were people from the Eritrean Catholic community Kunama, the Burmese Catholic community of St. Ambrose and people from Eritrea and Burundi.

Fr. Nipin T. Scariam, who is from India, was the main celebrant. Concelebrating were Fr. Bashir Abdelsamad from the diocese of El Obeid, Fr. Ruffino Ezama, Fr. Protas O. Okwalo, SJ and Deacon Francis Nyawello Chan, from the cathedral of St. Ambrose.

People travelled from all over Iowa and even from Nebraska to join in the celebration. Almost 800 people attended. During his homily, Fr. Ruffino emphasised that St. Daniel Comboni did not want the

mission to be Italian, Spanish or African because it was Catholic! He also spoke of the poverty-stricken childhood of Saint Daniel in the north of Italy and of the fact that, despite being the last and only surviving child in a large family, his parents willingly shared him with the world. In the course of the celebrations, there were performances by the Sudanese choir, the young dancers and the Eritrean choir of Kunama. The readings were read in Arabic, Burmese and Swahili. (*Lindsay Braud*)

## PERÚ

### **From CAM to CAEM**

For some time, the province had been thinking of integrating the religious community at the Missionary Animation Centre (CAM), while keeping its identity as a Comboni Work, into the community of the Provincial House, in order to give it new life.

Due to the pandemic, all churches and schools had been closed in Peru due to the Covid-19 pandemic and so, since April 2020, the magazines had not been printed since it was impossible to distribute them. Also in May 2020, and due to the pandemic, it was decided to close the CAM, together with its offices and to liquidate and cancel it in the government offices.

Missionary animation is an essential element of our missionary vocation, a fundamental challenge within our Comboni charism; for this reason, with the closure of the CAM, in January 2021 the Centre for Missionary Animation and Spirituality (CAEM) was opened. It shows the will to share with the local Church the urgency of the *ad gentes* mission and to live together our work of animation and missionary spirituality.

For the moment, the CAEM is publishing the *Boletín del Perú*, *Aguiagenda* and *Aguiluchos* in digital format and has resumed contact with the former subscribers of the magazines and the other works of the CAM.

A digital “St Daniel Comboni Shrine” has been created to re-launch the participation of all the Comboni communities of the province in missionary animation and, in a missionary spirit, to bring formative celebrations and activities to friends of the mission.

At the moment, the challenges taken up by the CAEM are as follows: when health measures permit it, to recommence missionary animation in the parishes and schools, resume the

printing of the magazines *Misión sin fronteras* and *Aguiluchos*, print new books, reprint others that are out of print and other missionary material, expand the field of action on the social networks and especially at the spirituality centre; present courses/seminars for missionary animators; achieve economic self-sufficiency; increase the commitment of all Combonis, friends, benefactors and the Comboni Family, in missionary animation activities and mission in general.

To render official the opening of the CAEM, on 10 October, the feast of our Founder, the Eucharist was celebrated with Mons. Luis Alberto Barrera, Bishop of Callao presiding, for a small number of people including some confreres from the Comboni communities of Lima, two Comboni Sisters, representatives of the CLM and some benefactors.

After the celebration, there was the blessing of a newly-built oratory at the provincial house and the offices of the CAEM, also on the property of the provincial house, followed by some refreshments. It was a pleasant moment of celebration for our Comboni Family and also the first public event of this community since the pandemic began.

## PORTUGAL

### **Missionary feast at Vila Nova de Famalicão**

At long last, the men and women missionary co-operators of the Comboni community of Vila Nova de Famalicão were able to gather in person to celebrate World Mission Day together. It was a great feast – possibly due to the long period of isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic – celebrating the joy of being missionaries according to the charism of St Daniel Comboni.

“This World Mission Day 2021 will remain in the memory of all – aid Fr. Alberto Vieira, superior of the community – as the day of restoration, the renewal of the passion that motivates us and urges us all to endeavour to live and to be men and women missionaries in the manner of St Daniel Comboni. We were animated by the theme chosen by Pope Francis for the Day: ‘We cannot but tell of what we have seen and heard’”.

The celebration was attended by hundreds of people from all parts of the dioceses of Braga, Porto and Viana. Some groups – Lijó (Barcelos) Marinhas (Esposende) and Arco de Baúlhe – even hired

coaches. Fr. Crespim Cabral Baraja, a Mozambican Comboni, presented a testimony and presided at the Eucharist. Fr. Crespim, 44, started working in missionary animation in Portugal last year. This was followed by a meal that lacked none of the typical dishes of the rich Portuguese cuisine.

In the afternoon there was traditional music and dancing organised by the groups from S. Martinho do Vale, Arco de Baúlhe, Trofa and, especially, by the large group from Serzedelo.

The next celebration is planned for Sunday 15 May 2022 “In the hope – Fr. Alberto said – of once again meeting all these friends to celebrate together the joy of being missionaries”.

## TOGO

### **October 2021: a lively missionary month**

While the month of October is generally celebrated ecclesially as a missionary month, this year it was celebrated in a truly special way in the Province of Togo-Ghana-Bénin.

Four important events marked the life of the province during the month: the priestly ordination of Fr. Simon Agede, the feast of St Daniel Comboni, the opening of the new postulancy house in Accra and the return to the Father of our former confrere Fr. John Kofi Tasiame.

On 9 October, at the parish of the Immaculate Conception in Tsiame, the whole diocese of Keta-Akatsi gathered for the priestly ordination of six young deacons, five of whom were diocesan and one a Comboni. It was a very beautiful ceremony, besides being an occasion for a large number of religious and lay people to meet together. The main celebrant at the Mass was local Bishop Mons. Gabriel Edoe Kumordji, SVD, with Bishop Emeritus Mons. Anthony Adanuty concelebrating together with almost all the diocesan priests and a good representation of Combonis. Despite the rain and the power-cut which affected much of the celebration, the joy of the assembly was overflowing. In his homily, Mons. Kumordji invited the ordinands to always enter by the door of the sheepfold, Jesus. “All your formation has prepared you to pass through this door, to make of you worthy pastors and not thieves. You now belong to the whole Church and to the whole world”. He also reminded them of the words of Pope Francis: “Like good shepherds, you must bear the odour of the sheep”. He concluded

by inviting all the people of God to support the priests, to care for them and to pray often for them.

The feast of the Founder was held this year in each zone, where this was possible. The confreres in the zone of northern Benin gathered, a few days early, on 8 October at Toko-Toko and spent the day in reflection, prayer and celebrating the Eucharist. Those in Ghana gathered in Accra on 11 October and those of Southern Benin celebrated at Cotonou while those in Togo celebrated in their communities. All the celebrations used for their meditation the letter of Father General and his Council and the letter of the Provincial Superior.

The new postulancy house in Accra was blessed on 10 October, after the Sunday Mass, before a large congregation of the faithful and the confreres of the parish, as well as Vice Provincial Fr. Antoine K. Kondo. The blessing was carried out by Fr. Brite, a Portuguese priest friend of Fr. Francisco de Souza Machado, who came specially for this purpose. Fr. Brite financed almost all the works of building and installations. The whole province is grateful to him and also thanks Fr. Francisco for bringing the work to completion.

The following day, 11 October, the house was opened and the postulants with their new team of formators have already taken up residence. The house has room for about 20 postulants.

On 2 October, the Lord called to himself Fr. John Kofi Tasiame, the first Ghanaian Comboni priest. Born in 1965, Fr. John was ordained priest by the first bishop of the diocese of Keta-Akatsi, Mons. Anthony Adanuty, on 7 September 1996. He was sent to Ethiopia for his first mission that lasted but a short time: following a discussion, a public functionary shot Fr. John who returned to the province to recover. He then went to Kenya where he worked for nine years. After completing the CYOF in South Africa, he was appointed to Kaneshie-Accra in charge of missionary animation as well as editing and distributing the magazine *New People*. In 2015, after a short period as parish priest at the Comboni parish of Accra, he decided to return to his own diocese where he served as parish priest in two parishes before his premature death.

His funeral was celebrated on 20 October at the cathedral of Christ the King in Akatsi and presided over by Mons. Gabriel Edoe Kumordji. The concelebrants included Mons. Emmanuel Fianu, Bishop of Ho, Mons. Anthony Adanuty, Bishop Emeritus, who had

ordained Fr. John and many priests from all parts of the country before a very large congregation of the faithful. In his homily, Mons. Kumordji described Fr. John as a joyful and cordial person. He was interred in the priests' cemetery of the diocese of Akatsi. We thank God who has visited Togo-Ghana-Benin in a special way through all these events.

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Fr. Bernhard Riegel (20.08.1942 - 07.10.2021)**

Trying to describe the character and work of Fr. Bernhard, two words come to mind: authentic and credible. He was not an intellectual, was rather slow but very empathetic and able to listen attentively. The people trusted him.

Born at Bad Mergentheim in 1942, the last of seven children, into a family of small farmers, he grew up in Bernsfelden. Aged eleven, he entered the minor seminary of the Institute at Bad Mergentheim where he studied until going on to the Josefinum seminary in Ellwangen where he finished high school and passed the final exams in 1962.

Ten classmates went on to the novitiate but only two of them were ordained priests: himself and Fr Otto Fuchs. It was early in 1968 and the novice masters, the directors of the scholasticates and the Church in general in Germany were not prepared for the new times that were commencing. The younger generations no longer accepted the internal rules of religious life, the manner of governing the Institute or the local communities – the traditional way of commanding and obeying. From then on, only a few people joined the novitiate from our seminaries. Father Bernhard finished his theological studies according to the classical formula at Bamberg, took final vows on 13 July 1968 and was ordained priest on 29 June 1969. He then left for South Africa.

In those days, the apartheid system was coming to its sad culmination. Many Africans had to abandon the land of their fathers and were settled in the so-called *homelands*. Father Bernhard personally experienced the resulting violence and tension in the three parishes where he worked: Bongani, Nelspruit and Burgersfort.

Things were also changing in the German-speaking countries. The minor seminaries, until then the primary source of priestly



vocations, were increasingly under discussion; the novitiates and scholasticates were in crisis. On the other hand, the approaching reunion of our two Institutes was giving rise to great expectations and encouraging more radical steps. Then, after the reunion, the provincial administration began to give the many young confreres working in the seminaries the opportunity to go to the mission, replacing them with confreres with missionary experience: one of these was Father Bernhard who, together with Father Josef Altenburger, recalled from Uganda, was appointed formator at the Josefinum seminary. It was the year 1980. The two soon realised that the time of the seminaries was over: they succeeded in convincing the provincial administration and the seminaries were closed one after the other.

The closure was hastened by the new and promising youth pastoral, the so-called KIM (*Kreis junger Missionare*) movement started in Josefstal by Bro. Bruno Haspinger. In 1981, the province decided to close the more ancient and traditional seminary, the Josefinum at Ellwangen. Fr. Bernhard worked from then until 1989 as the animator of the KIM and collaborated in preparing young people to go to the mission (MAZ) for a limited period. Even though concrete results did not live up to expectations as regards vocations to the religious and missionary life, it was nevertheless a very interesting and fruitful period in the life of Fr. Bernhard: he became a spiritual guide for many of the young people.

In 1989, he was again assigned to South Africa: after the reunion, a new phase was also beginning in that province. Up to then, the majority of the missionaries in the diocese of Witbank came from German-speaking countries. Now there were missionaries not only from other provinces but also South African priests and members of other religious Institutes such as the Kiltegan missionaries from Ireland, Franciscans, White fathers and others. Some of our missionaries then took on missions in Transkei among the Xhosa people, the home of Nelson Mandela. Fr. Bernhard was one of the first to work in those parishes even though he had to learn a new language. In 1989, he went to the mission of Mt Frere and, four years later, to Mt Ayliff.

The confreres showed their trust in him by electing him to the Provincial Council and then as Provincial Superior from 1999 to 2002. In 2002, the General Council opened a scholasticate in

Pietermaritzburg, close to Durban and took on a parish where Fr. Bernhard was appointed parish priest.

In 2009, he was recalled to the DSP and appointed superior of the largest local community of Ellwangen, being soon elected to the provincial council. In 2019, he returned to South Africa, shortly before his Golden Jubilee of ordination. There he succeeded Fr. Konrad Nefzger as parish priest at Maschisching, the former Lydenburg.

However, after just two years, acute leukaemia forced him to return to Germany. He soon realised that his life was coming to an end and he accepted this with great confidence in God. He spent his final years at the hospice of Saint Anne, very close to our house. He died on 7 October 2021, three days before the provincial assembly at Ellwangen which Fr. General Tesfaye Tadesse attended. On the final day of the assembly, Fr. Tesfaye concelebrated the funeral Mass together with almost all the confreres of the Province. (*Fr. Reinhold Baumann mcccj*)

### **Fr. Antonio Calvera Pi (07.07.1946 – 14.10.2021)**

Fr. Antonio Calvera Pi died in Valencia on 14 October last. He was born in Barcelona on 7 July 1946, the first of three children in a family of strong faith. He studied at the College of San José de los Hermanos de la Sagrada Familia and then studied archaeology at the University of Barcelona.

During his youth, he devoted himself especially to the youth of the parish of St Anthony of Padua, also in Barcelona, where he was an active animator and catechist. His friendship with those young people was deep and lasting: many of them were present at his funeral. Antonio was very jovial and communicative; he sometimes organised entertainment with displays of magic for the elderly and the children during the celebrations organised by the parish.

In 1968, he felt that God was calling him to follow him as a missionary and, after a brief period of discernment, he entered the Comboni novitiate at Moncada (Valencia), where he took first vows on 15 August 1970. He studied theology at the major seminary of Moncada and at the Jesuit faculty in Granada. He made his perpetual profession on 8 December 1973 and was ordained priest on 1 March 1975, at the parish of St Anthony of Padua in Barcelona.

After his ordination, Fr. Antonio was assigned to the community of Madrid to oversee the activities of the Missions Procure and, three years later, he was also charged with the administration of the *Mundo Negro* and *Aguiluchos* magazines as well as the *Mundo Negro* publications.

In 1981, he was appointed to Ethiopia after a year spent in London studying English. There he worked in the mission at Awassa and at Dongora, while continuing to collaborate with his articles for *Mundo Negro*. In 1987, he returned to Spain to work in missionary animation in the Madrid community. He used the time to immerse himself in the world of audio-visuals, doing courses and, concretely, producing radio programmes, the most important of which was a radio programme on the life of St Daniel Comboni which proved very successful.

It was during those years that he put into practice his knowledge of art, technology and imagination at the “*Mundo Negro African Museum*”, a museum that still receives many visitors today. He worked body and soul to make it, as he would say, didactic for visitors, clearly African and a reflection of the entire continent.

Between 1991 and 1992, he set up another African museum at the Comboni headquarters in Barcelona: *The Saint Daniel Comboni Africa Museum*, another corner of Africa within the city which Fr. Antonio built up with the same criteria as that of Madrid.

In 1993, he was appointed to South Africa where he spent most of his time in Waterval; he learned the Sotho language and studied the culture, enrolling in correspondence courses run by the University of South Africa (UNISA).

His presence in this mission is remembered happily by the people for his pastoral dedication and his way of relating to them. For some time he was also in charge of the training of catechists in the diocese of Witbank.

In 2005, he was recalled to Spain and appointed to the community of Barcelona to work in missionary animation with the Combined Service of Missionary Animation (SCAM). He was also very involved with the children and assistants of the *Esplai Missioner Aguiluchos*, who gathered every week at the Comboni house in Barcelona.

In 2011, he was assigned to the community of Moncada to continue his work of missionary animation. During those years, he devoted himself assiduously to visiting the parishes and schools of

the area, promoting the magazines *Mundo Negro* and *Aguiluchos*. He was well known for organising well the sale of calendars published by the Combonis, so much so that he became known in some places as *Mossèn calendari*, Father Calendar.

Three years ago, he once again had the opportunity to show his talents when he was asked to reorganise the “Museum of Curiosities” located in the house of Comboni in Limone sul Garda (Italy).

With his accumulated experience and his creative spirit, he built another museum at Moncada entitled “Africa Opens its Doors”. Inaugurated in 2015, it was gradually gathering pace when the Coronavirus pandemic closed its doors.

No doubt, one of Fr. Antonio’s great qualities was his love for missionary animation to which he always devoted himself with great commitment, competence and organisational ability. (*Fr. Jaime Calvera Pi*)

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

**THE FATHERS:** Espiridion, of Fr. Matéo Tellez Zapata (M); Angelo of Fr. Paolo Latorre (I).

**THE MOTHERS:** Gerudia Tumuharwe Rwavumba, of Fr. John Mungereza (U); Maria Angelica of Bro. Pedro Enrique García Hernández (EC).

**THE BROTHERS:** Beni Gilbert, of Fr. Guerlain Joachim Biseka (PE); Ludwig, of Fr. Herbert Gimpl (DSP).

**THE SISTERS:** Isabel Okelatho, of Fr. Justin Ogen (U), Emma, of Fr. Hans Maneschg (DSP).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. Mariangela Cortinovis, Sr. M. Innocenza Turrin, Sr. M. Aldina Martini, Sr. Prassede Zamperini.