

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

803

January 2022



WE WISH YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR

2022

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Ordinations

Fr. Houinsou Vigninle A. Saurel (T) Allada (Ben) 04.12.2021

Holy Redeemer Guild

January 01 – 15 A 16 – 31 BR
February 01 – 15 C 16 – 28 EGSD

Prayer Intentions

January (CMS)

We pray for the Comboni Sisters who this year are celebrating the Jubilee of 150 years since their foundation, that they may continue being faithful witnesses of the Gospel in all the situations in which they are present, according to the particular Charism they received as a gift. *Lord hear us.*

February (CLM)

We pray that our Church may be ever more fraternal so that all of us can participate in it and be co-responsible for announcing the Kingdom of God. *Lord hear us.*

Specializations

On 27 October 2021, Deacon **Habtamu Masresha** successfully discussed the thesis entitled “*The influence of peer pressure on alcohol use disorder among street youth in slum areas of Kariobangi sub-county, Embakasi Nairobi County, Kenya*” at the Institute of Social Ministry of the University of Tangaza (Kenya), for which he received a Master in Pastoral Psychology. Congratulations Habtamu!

Publications

Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Laurence Desjoyaux, “*He venido a traeros la paz*”. *La misión de un cardenal en el corazón del caos*, editorial Mundo Negro, Madrid 2021. Cardinal Nzapalainga recounts, for the first time (with the help of a journalist), the events of his life after he was appointed Archbishop of Bangui in 2013, while a civil war was raging that developed into a clash between Christians and Moslems. The book is a testimony to his exceptional courage and his untiring efforts to restore peace and promote reconciliation between the two communities. The voice of his Eminence is one of the voices most respected in Central Africa: it is the voice of peace.

General Postulation

On Monday, 13 December, during an audience granted to His Eminence Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes

of the Saints, the Supreme Pontiff authorised the same Congregation to promulgate the Decree regarding "The heroic virtues of the Servant of God, Bernardo Sartori".

His was a life deeply marked by the mission. Born on 20 May 1897 at Falzé di Trevignano, in the province of Treviso, he entered the Comboni Institute in 1921. Ordained a priest in 1923, after some work in missionary animation in southern Italy, he was sent, in 1934, to West Nile in the north-west of Uganda, a predominantly Moslem area. In the years that followed, he opened missions and schools and, in 1962, he promoted the consecration of all men and women Comboni missionaries in Africa to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

He lived through the turbulent times that followed the fall of the Ugandan dictator Amin and, in 1979, followed his people to Zaire, become a refugee among refugees. After a brief stay in Italy, in 1982, he returned once again to Zaire to be close to his people. He was tireless in his apostolic work and in helping his neighbour. He died at Ombaci, Uganda, on Easter Sunday, 3 April 1983. His lifeless body was found in the church before the tabernacle.

On a Journey towards the Synod

On the occasion of the opening of the Synod, the Presidents of the Unions of Superiors General wrote a letter to all Superiors, inviting them to participate actively in the synodal process and informing them of the creation of a Commission composed of two women and two men religious charged with the preparation of a synthesis of the contributions received and present to the UISG-USG Executive Councils.

The members of this Commission have indicated some guidelines for the preparation of the contributions: in a synodal Church that proclaims the Gospel we all "walk together": how is this "walking together" being realised today in your Local Church/Congregation? What steps does the spirit invite us to take to grow in our "walking together"?

Even though the traditional method of synodal consultation – they continue – is based on questionnaires and replies, we believe that the "conversational" method is more appropriate and in line with the synodal theme. Conversations, if well carried out, are an authentic exercise in synodality. They also indicated what the content of these conversations should be.

In view of the launching of the first phase of the Synod on 15 August, the UISG and USG secretariats have extended the deadline for contributions until 27 March 2022.

Furthermore, they have also clarified that the term synodality includes all the members of the People of God; it excludes no member of it; it is aware that God often reveals his mysteries to the least and the simple. It

is also good, they emphasised, to take into account the evolution of the human conscience or of the "new conscience" that is emerging in our time, thanks to the Spirit who operates through the signs of the times. Finally, they have suggested an appropriate method for group dialogue that reflects the spirit of Synodality. An example of this is the method of spiritual conversation that encourages active participation, attentive listening, reflective speaking and spiritual discernment.

ASIA

Consecration of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia

On 10 December 2021, the cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia was consecrated by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Prefect Of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. On the previous day, 9 December, the civil ceremony of inauguration was held. Present at both ceremonies was the Vicar General Jeremias dos Santos Martins who had come from Rome for the occasion. A numerically reduced representation of the local Catholic community also participated, observing the rules laid down by the local authorities due to the pandemic.

The new cathedral is located in the municipality of Awali and is one of the principal churches of the Arabian Peninsula, the see of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia; it has room for 2,300 people.

In February 2013, the Comboni bishop Mons. Camillo Ballin, (who died, as we know, on 12 April 2020), the Vicar Apostolic of Northern Arabia, announce, through Agenzia Fides, the news that the King of Bahrain had donated a nine thousand square metre site to the Vicariate to build the new church. Mons. Ballin immediately noted that the document of the royal donation was dated 11 February, the day on which the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. "Our prayers have been answered. Our Lady of Arabia is indeed able to work miracles" wrote Mons. Ballin. On 19 May 2014, during a visit to Pope Francis at the Vatican, King Hamad bin Isa personally presented the Pontiff with a model of the cathedral under construction.

There are about eighty thousand Catholics living in Bahrain, many of whom are workers from Asia, especially the Philippines and India. The territory of the Kingdom of Bahrain consists of an archipelago of 33 islands close to the west coast of the Persian Gulf.

ESPAÑA

"Mundo Negro" African Museum: "Christmas Crib of the World 2021"

The "Crib of the World" display, organised by the Madrid Mundo Negro African Museum and the Comboni Missionaries, reached its fifteenth

edition. From 26 November to 9 January, visitors can admire free of charge more than 200 cribs from five continents, part of the collection of the museum. During the previous edition, more than 4,000 people visited the exposition and it is hoped that more will do so this year.

The first cribs were brought to the African Museum by the missionaries but, little by little, the collection was increased by purchases made by the museum itself and private donations. At the centre of the exposition stands a large crib from the Democratic Republic of Congo which was made by Comboni Brother Duilio Plazzotta helped by a group of young Congolese.

As explained by the Museum Director Fr. Miguel Ángel Llamazares, the cribs are a place of encounter between the mystery of the incarnation and the different cultures that accept it and represent it through the medium of materials, colours and forms that are their own and this explains the great variety of cribs.

The traditional representation of the mystery of the Incarnation that we call "The Crib" dates back to Christmas 1223 when Saint Francis of Assisi created a living crib in a grotto at Greccio (Italy). The intention of Saint Francis was that the representation of the crib of Bethlehem should help to understand the humility and simplicity of God who became man for the salvation of the world.

SOUTH SUDAN

Work and the training of Catechists in Comboni Parishes

During the month of October 2021, the annual workshop of the Provincial Mission Secretariat was held in Juba on the theme "Work and the training of Catechists in our Comboni Parishes". The workshop was well received and seen as necessary for our pastoral work. There were 27 participants: 12 Combonis and 15 citizens of Juba.

The moderator was Fr. Gregor Schmidt, assisted by the catechist Augustine Omugi from the parish of St. Vincent de Paul, Gumbo. During the first part of the workshop, each parish presented its work with the catechists.

In the second part, Augustine presented three chapters of the new Directory of Catechesis of the Pontifical Council for New Evangelisation. After that, Fr. Gregor presented an intervention on inculturation, an aspect also covered in chapter 11 of the new Directory.

In the third part of the workshop, the participants divided into small groups and, bearing in mind the challenges they face, wrote down some suggestions and recommendations for the bishops and Comboni provincials and discussed how to improve the formation of catechists.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Fr. Luigi Moser (07.07.1942 – 22.11.2021)

Fr. Luigi was born at Palù di Giovo (province of Trent) on 7 July 1942. He entered the Gozzano novitiate and took first vows on 9 September 1966. He went to Venegono to do the scholasticate and there took final vows on 9 September 1969. He was ordained a priest on 21 March 1970 and was sent to Paris to study French. In 1971, he was assigned to the Congo where he spent more than thirty years of missionary life.

The bishops of the dioceses of Dungu-Doruma, Wamba and Bondo had more than once expressed their desire to gain the collaboration of the Combonis. Consequently, in July 1971, Fr. Alessandro Benetti became the first Comboni to be sent to the parish of Bamokandi. The parish was officially opened on the feast of the Assumption. Fr. Luigi Moser arrived in November and, in February 1972, Fr. Giovanni Trivella followed, in July, by Bro. Giovanni Cattaneo. The community lived in two mud huts. The chapel was a large brick shed. When the rains were rather heavy, water leaked in everywhere.

In 1973, the missionaries chose a more central place, higher up and healthier and began to build the presbytery, the parish office and the catechumenate. They decided not to start building the church since, as Fr. Trivella said, "It was only right that the Christians should show they really wanted it and were ready to cooperate". On the night of Holy Saturday, after sufficient preparation, Fr. Luigi Moser introduced, for the first time, dancing during the ceremony of the blessing of the Paschal Candle. In 1974, the superiors sent Fr. Luigi to Paris for specialised studies in the department of Ethnomusicology of the Sorbonne.

In November 1976, Fr. Luigi was sent to Nangazizi as curate of the parish where he was of great help at the catechetical centre in the field of musical and liturgical education. At the end of 1983, he took on the mission of St. Mbaga, a large parish in the outskirts of Kinshasa. He was appointed parish priest at Easter 1984.

In 1993, he was called to Italy to serve in the mass media. He was in charge of Comboni audio-visuals, FATMO (open window on the third world), a member of the Nigrizia team in Verona and engaged in missionary animation through the 256 Italian Catholic radio stations and TV.

Once again in the Congo, he was media head and director in the diocese of Kinshasa: diocesan media commission, radio director, coordinator of the planned TV and founder and director of the school of liturgical music. All the while, he worked constantly in the apostolate. In 2010, the local mafia, for reasons of money, made his life impossible. He therefore left the Congo and, in 2012, after a year of missionary animation in his home territory of Trent, he left once again to embark upon a new missionary

adventure in Chad where he was pastorally responsible for a large part of the southern outskirts of N'Djamena. Every Saturday, he celebrated Mass in the prison of the capital (with 3,000 prisoners of whom 10% were Catholics), and also produced educational videos for the small farmers, the local health service and missionary animation in Chad.

During his fifty years in the mission, Fr. Luigi established or completely restructured 3 radio and one TV station: Radio Boboto (Peace) in Isiro, at the spot where Fr. Remo Armani, a Comboni missionary from Trent, was killed by the *Simba* on 24 November 1964; a radio station and the new TV station *Elikya* (Hope), in Kinshasa and, in 2012, in Chad where, again with the support of the province of Trento, he completely restructured the *Arc en Ciel* (Rainbow) radio station and the mass media centre of the diocese of Ndjamena.

Fr. Luigi died following an operation at N'Djamena hospital on 22 November 2021.

Fr. Severino Crescentini (23.10.1937 – 20.12.2021)

Fr. Severino Crescentini was born at Colbordolo on 23 October 1937, in the diocese of Urbino. After the novitiate in Gozzano (1955-57), he made his first profession on 9 September 1957 and his perpetual profession on 9 September 1963. He was ordained a priest on 28 June 1964 and was immediately sent to the mission in Sudan where, for a number of years, he was director of schools in Omdurman. He carried out his mission in Sudan (1964-1970; 1974-1994) and in Italy (1970-1974; 1994-2021). Up to last week, he was a member of the community of Cordenons (Pordenone).

Fr. Severino had suffered a sudden physical and cognitive collapse for some weeks and was first admitted to the hospital of Pordenone and then to that of San Vito al Tagliamento.

After some days in San Vito, in agreement with the medical personnel, it was decided to transfer him to our house in Castel d'Azzano, in the hope that this might alleviate his confused state and help him to regain his composure.

Unfortunately, his physical condition had deteriorated to the point where he had to be taken to the Borgo Roma Hospital (Verona) where he died on the morning of 20 December.

His funeral took place at the community of Castel d'Azzano on the morning of 22 December, with Fr. Renzo Piazza, community superior, presiding. He was buried in the afternoon at the Family Tomb at Morciola (PU).

Fr. Severino lived for 84 years, for 57 of which he was a priest, 26 outside Italy and 31 years in the mission in the communities of the Italian province. At the time when Pope Francis sang the praises of the

peripheries, we may say that Fr. Severino was already a man of the peripheries. Born in the outskirts of Pesaro, he exercised his ministry in various outskirts (El Nahud, El Obeid, Omdurman, Port Sudan, Atbara, Wad Medani, Troia, Lucca, Cordenons), far from the bright lights, performing simple services and helpful duties. He ended his life in the periphery hospitals of Pordenone, S. Vito al Tagliamento and Borgo Roma.

As I paused to reflect upon the last days of his life, I found much in common with the experience of the passion of Jesus, beginning with his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemani.

On 22 November last, Fr. Severino had gone to Pesaro for the spiritual exercises. He found it difficult to keep up with the programme but found confreres there who comforted him and helped him to “keep watch” and fulfil his duty.

On his return to the community of Cordenons, he showed sudden signs of deterioration and weakness, so much so that he had to go to the emergency department in Pordenone. Due to the situation caused by the pandemic, “there was no room for him” in that place.

He was then taken (the Gospel would say: handed over”) to the hospital at San Vito al Tagliamento where he stayed for a few days. The confreres who managed to visit him found him in a state of confusion, alone and tied down ... Wishing to provide him with a more welcoming and fraternal place, they brought him to Castel d’Azzano. He arrived here on Friday morning but his condition was so serious that he had to be “handed over” to Borgo Roma Hospital where, at cockcrow of the second day of the week ... he commended his spirit into the hands of God.

Every life must end but it does not end in a hospital ward or the corridor of the emergency department, but in the arms of the most merciful Father from whom we come and to whom we go. (*Fr. Renzo Piazza*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE BROTHERS: Zegay, of Mons. Mengheteab Tesfamariam (ER); Lorenzo, of Mons. Guerrino Perin (I).

THE SISTERS: Rosaria, of Fr. Michele Sardella (I), Tigist Ensermu Wakuma, of Fr. Fufa Ensermu Wakuma (CO); Virginia, of Bro. José Godínez Pérez (M).

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Sr. M. Pasqualina Pili; Sr. Miriam Armanasco, Sr. Maria Tullia Passini, Sr. Angela Didoné.