

“YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF THE PROVINCE”

The young Comboni confreres working in the Province of South Africa gathered for their annual meeting from Monday February 21st to Wednesday February 23rd, 2022 at the SMA facilities at Mooi Nooi in Rustenburg Diocese.

**Report by Fr John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw
Photos by Fr Robert, Fr John Baptist & Fr Charlemagne.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and for other reasons we had failed to organize this annual appointment of on-going formation for our young confreres. We are grateful to all the confreres and others who made this meeting possible this year. Of the nine confreres belonging to this Age Group of the young confreres, six participated in this year's encounter. The two invited facilitators were Bro. Francesco Padovan and Fr. John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw.

Bro. Francesco, whose missionary life and service span from 1968 to date, shared with the participants his

interesting missionary experience. An agriculturalist by profession he showed his eco-concern by planting thousands of fruit trees and other trees in the various Comboni missions. He narrated how as a member of the on-going formation team he was involved in the on-going formation of the Brothers - a service for which many confreres appreciated him while some Brothers criticized him. Bro. Francesco also accompanied many young people in vocation promotion and in the postulancy. He insisted that the young confreres were indeed the future of the Comboni Missionaries in South Africa.

Fr. John Baptist gave a talk on the theme: Intergenerational and Intercultural dynamics in our Comboni communities. He began by reiterating the importance of on-going formation for the different age groups especially for the young confreres to initiate them well as they navigate the transition from a protected formative structure to the apostolic life where they assume personally their first responsibilities, which are usually very demanding. Fr. John Baptist also talked of the joys and challenges of community life where the implications of the generational gap and interculturality are at play.

He emphasised that Our Institute comes from a rich charismatic history. From its very humble beginnings, the Institute has grown and developed, welcoming other members from new geographical and cultural contexts, creating new ways of living the charism, new initiatives, and missionary expressions. It is important at this stage to believe in the new geography and composition of the Institute. The 'new geography of vocations' is significantly changing the human composition of our Institute, making it more 'Catholic', as Comboni wanted. From this comes greater sensitivity towards a kind of more intercultural life at all levels, which invites us all to a certain conversion and change of mentality.

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The young confreres were very happy with this on-going formation experience and found it useful as an indispensable component of their missionary activity. They look forward to the subsequent appointment next year.