



8 May 2022 – Feast of the Good Shepherd

*“Let us all toil with no other aim than to gain more
souls for Christ: let us join hands together.
Let the vow, the objective and the commitment
of all who love Jesus Christ be one.”*

(Writings 2182)

Dear Comboni Missionary Women and Men,

We, the members of the General Councils and the Coordinator of the CLM, having gathered together from 22 to 24 of last April, at the native home of Saint Daniel Comboni in Limone, and moved by the desire to make you participants, at least in part, of what we lived and shared, write this letter to you desiring that the communion we experienced may reach all of you, there where Providence has placed you, to serve and give your lives for the sake of the proclamation of our Crucified and Risen Lord.

It was the first meeting that could be held in person, after the time of isolation caused by the pandemic with all that it entailed, with the high price paid, even with their lives, by so many brothers and sisters. Such was the pandemic that it forced the postponement of the General Assembly of the CMS and also the General Chapter of the MCCJ which will be celebrated in June of this year during which the CMS are celebrating the 150th anniversary of their foundation and will have their General Chapter in October. All these reasons have given meaning to this meeting, not least the synodality to which the universal Church invites us, and the very fact of our being a Comboni Family is, in itself, an expression of a synodal Church. Walking as a Comboni Family is not optional, it is not even the meeting of the leaders, but it is life in the communities, in the concrete missions where one lives and works with shared objectives.

Our "coming together" as a family came about quietly but, in fact, it has evolved due, not so much to the result of programming as to the perceived desire and the awareness of belonging to a common root. Coming together is always an opportunity to grow in the awareness of being part of the same charismatic family because this is how St. Daniel Comboni thought of us, and an occasion to strengthen the commitment to continue to feel part of it; the fruits that have grown over time confirm that this is the right path.

Our proclamation and witness, beyond the ministries and services we are called to give, is, first of all, to live as brothers and sisters, members of the same Family: without this witness, even the most beautiful activities lose their value. All those who have experienced collaboration and working together as a Comboni Family know that it is not easy and, for some, this implies a commitment to be able to appreciate the value of collaboration. However, we sincerely believe in it and invite you to keep this horizon as a desirable goal.

We wanted to have this meeting also to evaluate the progress made so far, taking as a basis the letter on collaboration written in 2017 and the work on ministeriality that involved a large number of members of the CF, thanks to the commitment and dedication of the appointed Commission and to other trained and qualified collaborators. We thank the Lord who surprised us with what we were able to achieve and above all for those who participated and enjoyed this journey.

Bro. Antonio Soffientini, sharing the reflection on this theme made by the Italian province of the MCCJ, invited us not to attach an adjective, a "label" limiting ministeriality, because ministeriality has many expressions and is not only towards "the external, ad extra", but also "inward, ad intra" and the latter often escapes any mapping. All the services that the life of the CF requires are

ministerial: training, authority, administration, coordination and accompaniment in every phase of the life of the members, from the beginning of the journey to old age.

A lasting sign

The General Moderators of the four expressions of the Comboni Family wished to express their unity and the desire to see the growth of the seed which the recognition of the Charism of St. Daniel Comboni has generated in them in recent years and which these two days of encounter have revived, entrusting it to an olive tree planted by all of us together, in the soil of the birthplace of Saint Daniele Comboni. Thus, next to the centuries-old olive trees dedicated to various relatives of San Daniele Comboni, one dedicated to the Comboni Family will grow.

Now there remains the challenge of continuing the journey and for this reason, we wish to “pass the baton” to the new General Councils of the MCCJs and CMS who will be elected in the upcoming General Chapters, asking the CMS and CLM to act as a “bridge” and link for the future journey together.

May the Good Shepherd of the Pierced Heart show us the way and, as he promised, walk with us until the end of time.

The General Council of the Comboni Missionary Sisters

The General Council of the Secular Comboni Missionaries

The General Council of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus

The Coordinator of the Central Commission of the Comboni Lay Missionaries



“This Institute, then, becomes like a little Cenacle of Apostles for Africa, a centre of light sending to the centre of Africa as many rays as the Missionaries who go out from it. These rays of light, bringing warmth as well as illumination, cannot but reveal the nature of the Centre from which the spread out” (Writings 2648)