

Message of the XIX General Chapter to all Confreres

Dear Brothers!

Receive our fraternal greetings from Rome. At the end of the XIX General Chapter which we have celebrated from June 1st/July 1st 2022, we wish to send a sign of our communion with you all. In spite of the restrictions imposed on us by the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the news of increasing violence in war and conflict particularly with the murder of Priests and Religious in Tanzania, Nigeria, Mexico, Haiti and the precarious political situation in Ecuador, we have been able to bring our journey to its completion. We are sure that you have been accompanying us with your prayers. In a special way we thank you for the valuable work you did in your different Missions during the preparation for this Chapter. Your answers to the Questionnaire of the Pre-Capitular Commission on the proposed topics and on the revision of the Rule of Life have helped us a great deal in our discernment and discussions.

We had a beautiful experience of being together as brothers called from different parts of the world celebrating our sense of belonging to one another. In fact, we cannot adequately express the beauty of this experience in words, but we have come to confirm that: “It is good when brothers live in harmony” (Ps 133:1). The icon that has accompanied and inspired us in this Chapter has been: ***“I am the vine, you are the branches”*** (John 15: 5). We felt the call of being rooted in Christ with Comboni in order to live a ‘synodal’ journey of fraternity. We hope this characterises us as Missionary Disciples.

Our journey of discernment has been accompanied by Father Gonzalo Fernández from the Claretian Missionaries. We went through three important phases: we dedicated an extensive time to listening to what the Spirit is telling us through the different experiences of Mission in our concrete realities. The ‘appreciative’ approach proposed by our Facilitator helped us to look at our Institute in terms of ‘Seeds of Life’, the sicknesses which afflict us and the call of the Lord in our times. With what we took from the listening phase we were able to choose five priorities that are meant to accompany our Missionary Religious Family over the next ‘Six Years’: ‘Spirituality’, ‘Identity and Community Life’, the ‘Revision of our Formation’, ‘Ministeriality in view of Re-qualification of our Commitments’, and finally ‘Communion of Goods, Sharing and Sustainability’. These priorities came out of an intensive experience of ‘imagining’ our future. In order to realize the ‘dreams’ contained in these five priorities, we have worked out guidelines and commitments.

We are happy that we were able to continue with the work of re-visiting and revising the Rule of Life which we hope will be completed in the near future. Thank you for your contributions in this process over the last four years.

While celebrating the General Chapter, we were all deeply touched by the gesture of the Holy Father to grant an Audience on June 13th 2022 to Cardinal Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, and a number of abuse victims known in the United Kingdom and Ireland as the ‘Comboni Survivors Group’. Some of them spoke of an “experience of healing and transformation” and we hope in the depths of our hearts that this gesture of Pope Francis will alleviate some of their pain and suffering. We too express our pain and participate in the suffering they have experienced, and warmly welcome the wish conveyed by the Holy Father in their regard.

In the Audience we had with Pope Francis in the Vatican on June 18th 2022, we were reminded of the ‘secret’ of the life and mission of every Christian: “... *if we are like branches well attached to the vine, the sap of the Spirit passes from Christ into us and whatever we do bears fruit, because it is not our own work, but it is*



Christ's love working through us". From Pope Francis we received, on your behalf, the blessing which we hope will accompany us as we grow in Christ and be a blessing to all those whose life we share.

We were able to receive God's gift of a new General Council that is going to serve the institute over the next 'Six Years'. We accompany our Superior-General and his Council with our heartfelt prayers and wish them the choicest of God's blessings in their service to the Institute.

We urge you to receive the coming 'Chapter Acts' not as a mere document, but as the fruit of God's Spirit through those whom you sent to represent you in the General Chapter. We hope that the work we have done in the name of the whole Institute meets your expectations and thus, you will accept the recommendations for the next 'Six Years'. We also look forward to engaging in a fraternal sharing with all of you so that, together, we may find the real ways of implementing the decisions made in this General Chapter.

We share the joy of the forthcoming beatification of our Confrère, Father Joseph Ambrosoli, as a sign of the Church's confirmation of our missionary endeavours. May we all be inspired by his undoubted holiness in order to embrace God's sanctifying grace in our work as his Missionaries!

As we continue journeying together, we implore the maternal presence of the Virgin Mary and the intercession of St. Daniel Comboni in our Mission so that we may be authentic witnesses of Christ in the world and bear much fruit for the greater glory of God. Rooted in Christ with Comboni we venture forward with hope!

Rome: July 1st 2022

The Chapter Delegates