

XIX GENERAL CHAPTER

Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus

Rome, June 2022

*I am the vine, you are the branches
Rooted in Christ
together with Comboni*



Comboni
Missionaries

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Abbreviations

AEFJN	Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network
CA	Chapter Acts
CF	Comboni Family
CLAR	Confederation of Latin American Religious
DSSUI	Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
EG	Evangelii Gaudium
FT	Fratelli Tutti
GA	General Administration
GC	General Council
JPIC	Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
LS	Laudato Si'
LSAP	Laudato Si' Action Platform
CWHP	Comboni Work for Human Promotion
Qam	Querida Amazonia
REBAC	Ecclesial Network of the Congo River Basin
REPAM	Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network
RL	Rule of Life
TCF	Total Common Fund
W	Writings of Comboni

Presentation of the General Council

«I am the vine; you are the branches»

Jn 15,5

Dear Confreres,

As we begin this new sexennium, we wish first of all to greet you fraternally and we do this with complete confidence in the Lord and aware that the General Chapter has been for us a visit by his Spirit who will guide us along our journey.

We present to you the Chapter Acts of the XIX General Chapter, having received the document elaborated by the Post-Capitular Commission. We wish to express our Thanks to the confreres who redacted the text for their availability to render this service to the capitulars and consequently to the whole Institute.

«I am the vine; you are the branches » (Jn 15,5) was the inspirational verse which during the Chapter, enabled us to grow in awareness that we are the branches of the vine which is Jesus Christ and the vinedresser is God the Father of all. This awareness must help us in our daily lives to bring to maturity a robust spirituality that will let us live out an experience of faith in the Lord as the lifeblood of our

option for consecrated and missionary life, just as it was for our Founder who trusted completely in God: «Those who trust in themselves, trust in the greatest ass in the world ... all our trust must be placed in God » (Writings 6880-81).

Pope Francis, too, during an audience for the Capitulars on 18 June, emphasised this aspect: «The mission – its source, its dynamism and its fruits – depend totally on union with Christ and on the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus stated this clearly to those he had chosen as “apostles”, those who are “sent”: «Without me, you can do nothing » (Jn 15,5). He did not say: “You can do very little”; no, he said: “You can do nothing” ... Only if we, like branches, are well attached to the vine, can the lifeblood of the Spirit pass from Christ into us and whatever we do bears fruit because it is not our work but the love of Christ which acts through us ».

«The General Chapter has above all the responsibility of fostering the Institute’s faithfulness to its specific mission in the Church and is competent, therefore, to review every aspect of its life and activity » (RL 153). The XIX General Chapter – on the whole – dealt with numerous aspects of the life of the Institute. Despite being celebrated during a pandemic which delayed its opening, and affected the time available and the pace of the work, did not, however, compromise reflection and planning for the next sexennium.

Certainly, the Chapter Acts reflect what was lived out during the General Chapter but, at the same time, we need to bear in mind that they are the fruit of a protracted discernment in which many confreres who played their part in the various commissions, took part: the Pre-Capitular

Commission, the Central Commission, the Special Commission, the Post-Capitular Commission and last but not least, the Commission for Revisiting and Revising the Rule of Life. We would like to express our special thanks to the Facilitator and the Central Commission of the Chapter which coordinated the work.

Reading the Acts, one can observe how the chapter delegates, in their discernment, have formulated conclusions also taking into account the requests expressed by the confreres who responded to the questionnaires and the reflections received from the Circumscriptions and Continents. We hope that many of the indications that have emerged are also the result of your “desiderata”.

We know that the Chapter is a moment of arrival but above all of a new beginning. In the coming months, the guide for the implementation of the General Chapter will be drawn up on which the future six-year plans of the circumscriptions and continents will also be elaborated. We ask each of you to contribute to the drafting of the six-year plans so that what emerged from the Chapter may become - enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit - a commitment capable of stimulating communities, Circumscriptions and the entire Institute to remain faithful to the charism and mission with a renewed and trusting attitude and with the same passion of our Founding Father who, in the mission, was able to grasp the “essential trait of the Heart of Christ the Good Shepherd which is mercy, compassion, tenderness ...” (Pope Francis).

Also, in the meeting on June 18, Pope Francis reminded us that: “we are called to go further and further, to

go beyond, always gazing at the horizon, because there is always a horizon, to go beyond. The thrust of the Holy Spirit is what makes us come out of ourselves ... because you are called to bear this witness of the “style of God” - closeness, compassion, tenderness - in your mission, where you are and where the Spirit guides you “.

This is the invitation we address to all of us. An invitation to go beyond situations of fragility, criticality and vulnerability and to overcome a limited vision in the “provincial” context, which often mortgages our journey, and to build and share - in a perspective of synodality, ministeriality, creativity, responsibility and inclusion - a new mission “presence”.

To conclude this brief introductory message, we make our own the wishes formulated by the Chapter delegates at the end of the work, to all the confreres of the Institute: “As we continue the journey together, we implore the maternal presence of the Virgin Mary and the intercession of St. Daniel Comboni in our mission so that we can be authentic witnesses of Christ in the world and that we can bear much fruit for the greater glory of God. Rooted in Christ with Comboni we launch ourselves forward with hope! ».

Rome 1st September 2022

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Introduction

*“I am the vine; you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him
bears much fruit” (Jn 15,5)*

This is the Word of God that inspired the XIX General Chapter of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus celebrated in Rome from 1st June to 1st July 2022.

1. During the final phases of the preparatory journey, the facilitator chosen to accompany the work of the Chapter proposed as a working method – and the Precapitular Commission adopted it – “A eulogistic (appreciative) enquiry” based on three key attitudes (appreciation, enquiry, dialogue). This approach initially received many personal and community contributions from the Secretariats, the Circumscriptions and the Continents, handing over the fruits of the process to the Capitulars, not in the form of a real *Instrumentum Laboris*, but as a thematic synthesis open to contributions from the assembly through “generative conversations” in groups and in the hall.

2. During its first phase, the Chapter, still listening attentively to the different experiences in the continents and sectors of the Institute, tried to highlight the signs of life, the illnesses and the calls of our missionary experiences in recent years.
3. By listening attentively to one another, in groups, and seeking convergence and harmony, we identified five priorities to work on, to enhance the seeds of life that God has placed in the Institute, to cure the illnesses that afflict us, and to respond to the calls of our mission.

Three of the five priorities had already been identified by the Precapitular Commission, expressing the need to deepen ministeriality at the service of requalification, the revision of formation and the sharing of goods for the sustainability of the mission. To these, the Chapter felt the need to add two other fundamental priorities, concerning spirituality and identity and community life.

4. Each priority was described in the light of a dream, put together during group sharing after a deep moment of *Lectio Divina* and mutual listening.

In an attitude of conversion and relaunching the Five dreams, therefore, tell us how we imagine ourselves in six years' time. They represent the horizon within which to identify and implement possible, necessary and urgent solutions, a reality that we wish to live fully.

5. To render it concrete, the group work of the Chapter, alternating with phases of evaluation in the assembly,

proposed a series of guidelines for each dream, which in turn materialize in specific points, which we have called commitments.

The present situation

6. We live in an unprecedented epoch where world events, which follow one another at a frantic pace, have generated in people a sense of fragility and uncertainty, fears and anxieties that have dimmed many dreams (FT 9-10). We have only to consider the recent pandemic, which has left the population we walk with deeply scarred; internal conflicts and geostrategic wars for the sharing of resources; the serious socio-environmental crisis; the stifled cry of the poor and of Mother Earth; the economy that kills (EG 53) and the greater gap between rich and poor that causes an increase in migration on a global scale.
7. On the other hand, we are witnessing a new global awareness of human rights, socio-environmental justice and democracy. All this, thanks to the urging of young people who - through new technologies - are the first to interpret the opportunities of this change and to direct and support a policy where the citizen is the one who actively contributes to the process of elaborating collective decisions. Neither let us forget the testimony of many simple people, indigenous communities, ethnic minorities and entire peoples who, with a spirit of resilience and hope, struggle in very unstable and violent contexts to affirm the right to life.

- 8.** Within the impetuous wind of change sails the boat which is the Church, supported by the Spirit, towards the conversion traced by Pope Francis: integral ecology (LS), universal brotherhood and social friendship (FT), interreligious dialogue (Declaration of Abu Dhabi) and the synodal journey. Despite the burden of abuse, ageing and abandonment being felt in the Church, many signs encourage us. Among the most important, in Africa, we have very lively Christian communities and an increase in priestly and religious vocations, in Europe more intercultural communities and work with migrants, in Latin America the Amazon Synod and the Latin American Ecclesial Assembly.
- 9.** Many Comboni communities are allowing themselves to be challenged by change and are orienting their mission starting from the intuitions of Pope Francis. For this reason, the urgency to redevelop our commitments guided by the criterion of ministeriality was reaffirmed, which provides for the assumption of specific pastorals through paths of broad collaboration as a style of mission, from the Comboni Family to all the actors involved in the process of transformation of reality in the Kingdom of God. In this regard, we feel solidarity with the confreres who, faithful to the mission, work as “hidden stones” in very difficult and violent contexts.
- 10.** On this journey of conversion, we welcome the increase in vocations to the Comboni life as a sign from God to be guarded with great care. At the same time, we want to regain possession of a profound spirituality

to build communities that truly live in fraternity and interculturality, overcoming all forms of self-referentiality, clericalism and closure.

In the economic field, we trust in Providence and, encouraged by the steps forward made in the implementation of the Total Common Fund, we want to consolidate a sustainable management model for the Institute that follows the principles of ethics, transparency, redistribution and competence, increasingly adopting a lifestyle consistent with the Gospel.



THE PRIORITIES

SPIRITUALITY

The Lifeblood of the Vine in the heart of the branches

- 11. *Rooted in Christ, together with St. Daniel Comboni, we live in constant contact with the Lord in prayer which becomes life and mission, spurs all our work and our priorities, humanizes our relationships, motivates our action and renders it fruitful.***

“If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour. If the lord does not watch over the city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil” (Ps 126,1).

“The omnipotence of prayer is our strength” (W 1969).

DREAM

- 12. We dream of a spirituality that enables us to continue to grow as a fraternal family of consecrated persons rooted in Jesus, in his Word and in his Heart, and to contemplate him in the faces of the poor and in the experience lived by St. Daniel Comboni to be the mission.**

GUIDELINE 1

13. We root ourselves in Jesus and the sentiments of his Heart to announce the Word to the poor.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 13.1** Revive dialogue and a living, creative and quality personal relationship with Jesus Christ (EG 3), made up of prayer embodied in reality, of discipline of life and the sharing of personal experience. This experience becomes growth in the humanity of the person and the community, honesty and authenticity, of closeness to the people and the poor.
- 13.2** Transform prayer, personal and community, into an experience that becomes the mission and that carries the mission within us. Lectio Divina remains a privileged method.
- 13.3** Cultivate the inner life for greater self-knowledge, a deeper awareness of our gifts and our frailties through silence, listening to the Word of God and the help of the human sciences.
- 13.4** Appreciate and live the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist in a lively and constant way.

GUIDELINE 2

- 14.** We gratefully acknowledge the vitality, fruitfulness and relevance today of the Charism of our Father and Founder St. Daniel Comboni as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the world.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 14.1** Rekindle the fire of Comboni's missionary passion and of our living tradition, which has developed in different ways within the contexts in which we are present, and contextualize the charism today in our realities, also through simple aids, to be translated into various languages and distributed.
- 14.2** Actualize the Comboni charism to responding to the signs of the times, to the cry of Mother Earth and the poor (LS 49), and to renew the option for the excluded, animated by the Magisterium of Pope Francis expressed in the encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*.
- 14.3** Raise our awareness of the fundamental aspects of the charism (e.g. the Cross, the Heart of Jesus, the option for the poorest and most abandoned) through Comboni's vision, spirit and sensitivity, to going to the roots of his spirituality and re-appropriating it.
- 14.4** Promote, in the communities, the celebration of some moments and anniversaries particularly significant for our spirituality.

- 14.5** Give the young confreres the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Limone, the birthplace of Comboni, to make his life and his spirituality their own.
- 14.6** Attribute value to the Comboni places as centres of irradiation of the charism. In particular, to safeguard the historical places directly linked to the life and death of our founder, in Africa, such as the church of Cordi Jesu, in Egypt, and Malbes, in Sudan, so that they may enrich the spiritual tradition of the local Church and can also be visited by confreres in particularly significant moments of their lives.
- 14.7** Have in each province a memorial space, that is, a physical space of “Comboni Memory” with documents, symbols and stories of experiences to share and nourish the fruitfulness of our history.
- 14.8** Share the Comboni spirituality with the people we work with, with the local Church and with institutes and congregations.

IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY LIFE

From the roots to the conviviality of the branches

- 15.** *Sent together by the Lord and inspired by the Comboni charism, we live and work as a true “Cenacle of Apostles”. We are missionary disciples united in the passion of Jesus and, animated by the fire of the Spirit, we place the DREAM of the Kingdom at the centre of our life and announce it as a community.*

“Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech” (Ac 2,3-4).

“The 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 are the zealous and virtuous missionaries who go out from its heart: and these rays that both illuminate and give warmth, necessarily reveal the nature of the Centre from which they emanate” (W 2648).

DREAM

- 16.** *We dream of intercultural Comboni communities that live in prayerful fraternity as in the Cenacle of the Apostles, where we take care of each other.*

Welcoming communities, open to collaboration and dialogue, and on a synodal journey of discernment, which transforms life and leads to common commitment in the mission.

GUIDELINE 1

17. We take care of each other in our communities, gathered in the Lord (RL 10), recognizing gifts, welcoming frailties (RL 42) and respecting the rhythms of the life of each confrere, helping each other to be faithful to our consecration.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 17.1** Do everything possible to have communities composed of at least 3-4 members (RL 40.1).
- 17.2** Value the ministry of the local superior as the community animator (RL 107) and the tools already at our disposal (community charter, community council, etc. - cf. RL 39) for a meaningful fraternal life.
- 17.3** Create formal and informal dynamics of sharing life in which the sapiential reading of each one's history and its communication to the confreres is also included. The richness of the grace that the Lord writes in our lives should not be lost.

17.4 Dedicate, in this sexennium, a year of Ongoing Formation to the theme of identity and community life.

GUIDELINE 2

18. We live in communities usually composed of confreres of different cultures and nationalities (RL 18), welcoming one another with gratitude as a gift that is a source of wealth and personal growth (RL 42.2) and as a testimony and prophetic sign of a new humanity.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

18.1 Internationalize the Circumscriptions, reinforcing the 'ad extra' dimension of missionary presences.

18.2 Develop dynamics of Ongoing Formation that can help us to see the cultures of others as an opportunity – a theological place – to enrich our understanding of God and the mission.

GUIDELINE 3

19. Rooted in the territory and in the local Church, in a synodal spirit, our communities - open, sober and hospitable - live the mission as the fruit of shared discernment and commitment, also collaborating with the other forces of the Kingdom present in loco.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 19.1** Share the journey of the Local Church and the social realities in which we live.
- 19.2** To be kind and welcoming towards those who approach us, always open to accepting those who, due to emergency situations, flee their countries and their homes.
- 19.3** Actively promote initiatives of collaboration with the Comboni Family (CF).

GUIDELINE 4

- 20.** We undertake with conviction the synodal path traced by Pope Francis through our involvement in local synodal paths.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 20.1** Promote the constant participation and involvement of all the confreres, of the Christian communities and of the persons / realities with whom we work in the synodal process, with a view to uniting the different voices, sensitivities and forces, to design together the Church of which we dream.

- 20.2** Strengthen mutual knowledge of ecclesial and social realities within the local Churches, community listening to the challenges to be faced together and constant confrontation in view of shared options on the common processes to be undertaken (EG 23).
- 20.3** To cultivate together the spirit of an “outgoing Church” (EG 24) in order to assume, in a collegial way in our realities, the style of the “permanent state of mission” (EG 25).
- 20.4** Respond prophetically to the challenges of our time in a manner that is participation, communion and mission, together with the local Church.

REVISION OF FORMATION

*Giving fertilizer to the roots and pruning the branches
so as to bear more fruit*

- 21.** *The lifelong process of personal and community transformation leads us to live formation as a path of growth, maturation and conversion that requires not only a clear, free and authentic response on the part of the candidate and the individual confrere but also as a dream of the whole Institute.*

“And some seeds fell on good ground and, growing tall and strong, produced crop; and yielded thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold” (Mk 4,8).

“The training of the workers for the mission is the most important mission of the Institute” (1871 Rules, Ch. VI).

DREAM

- 22.** **We dream of being Comboni Missionaries who feel deeply immersed in the love of God, fully identified in our specific vocation and passionate witnesses of the mission.**

GUIDELINE 1

- 23.** The Comboni Missionaries follow the path of missionary disciples who experience God, develop it and cultivate it in order to be his witnesses in the mission.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 23.1** Carry out a year of reflection and prayer on the Word of God, encouraging initiatives to improve its style and method.
- 23.2** Respond coherently to the invitation of the 2009 Chapter (CA 30.1-3), to formulate a personal life plan to be verified regularly during our journey with an appropriate monitoring system. An invitation that we also present in the initial formative journey.

GUIDELINE 2

- 24.** The Comboni Missionaries cultivate their own identity and enjoy fullness of life in their vocation.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 24.1** Dedicate a year to reflection on our Comboni missionary identity, as priests and as brothers, in the light of today's mission.
- 24.2** Use our Rule of Life as an instrument of reflection, of prayer and as a common reference that is appreciated and respected.
- 24.3** Retrieve the documentation on the life and ministry of our missionaries whom we recognize as exemplary confreres in their way of living the Comboni charism, making it present as a source of inspiration for the confreres and for our young people in formation.
- 24.4** Make sure that our formation houses are more closely linked to our missionary reality.
- 24.5** Find moments and means to reflect upon and deepen our Comboni charism, value it and live it in order to pass it on to the new generations and to the Church (cf. RL 3.2; 2 Cor 6,3-10).

GUIDELINE 3

- 25.** The Comboni Missionaries cultivate their growth as witnesses of the Lord for the mission.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 25.1** Devote a year to reflection on the mission of the Institute.
- 25.2** Insist on the professional qualification of the brother candidates before going on to the Novitiate.
- 25.3** To ensure that the confreres are qualified and, if possible, trained in the specific pastoral assigned to them.
- 25.4** Motivate the confreres to embrace the ongoing formation initiatives of the Institute, establishing precisely when to carry out the proposed renewal offered: Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation, Renewal Course, Course for the elderly. They are to be planned in advance and respected by all.
- 25.5** Plan the themes of JPIC in all the phases of Comboni formation.
- 25.6** Pay attention to and deepen the appeal of the Church to conversion to integral ecology and its effects on our missionary style.
- 25.7** To hold continental assemblies of all those responsible for ongoing formation within 3 years. The inter-chapter assembly will evaluate the progress made.

GUIDELINE 4

- 26.** Our candidates in formation are directed towards total self-giving to build up the Kingdom of God.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 26.1** Pay attention to the human dimension throughout our life, right from initial formation.
- 26.2** Continue to offer sound Christian formation to our young people in the early stages of formation.
- 26.3** Systematically strengthen the ministerial dimension in initial formation.
- 26.4** Accompany our young people in formation in a process of discernment in which they actively participate in a gradual manner. In this process, personal, family and ecclesial community histories, and their personal motivations are some of the relevant elements for discerning God's call and their response.
- 26.5** Ensure that the Integration Educational Model is valued in our training structures and that formators are helped with its implementation. The continental assemblies of formators are training opportunities to learn how to use this model.
- 26.6** Reopen a Scholasticate and leave the decision to the GC to open, where necessary, small formative presences of Scholastics, accompanied by a confrere, within Comboni communities to combine prayer, study, community life and pastoral service.
- 26.7** Missionary Service
 - 26.7.1** The Chapter has taken into account the entire evaluation process already underway for some years and listened with gratitude to the beautiful experien-

ces and points of view that speak of the ‘missionary service’ lived out as a positive experience.

26.7.2 During this time, the scholastics can advance in the elaboration of a personal synthesis of the most important elements assimilated during the years of formation.

26.7.3 The “Missionary Service” is also a time in which they can set out on a path of practical initiation into missionary pastoral care and community life in Comboni contexts.

26.7.4 The Chapter also listened to the narratives and points of view that express unease about this learning experience and concludes that the time is not yet ripe to arrive at definitive decisions in this field. It was decided to continue with the missionary service, even if it should be further verified and, if necessary, improved.

26.7.5 The Chapter asks the General Council to continue, within the process of verifying formation, the process of evaluating the “Missionary Service” in view of the next Inter-Chapter Assembly, if necessary by establishing an ad hoc commission capable of taking into account the need, felt by all, that the passage of our young confreres from initial formation to commitment in missionary pastoral care is accompanied and takes place gradually.

MINISTERIALITY AT THE SERVICE OF REQUALIFICATION

The specific and interconnected services of the branches to give more vigour to the whole Vine

27. *Inspired by the life of the first Christian communities, we promote a missionary style that reflects the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, contextualized today by the documents of the Magisterium of Pope Francis: Evangelii Gaudium - the joy of the Gospel -, Laudato Si' - integral ecology - and Fratelli Tutti - universal brotherhood and social friendship.*

“You call me Master and lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master have washed your feet, you should wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you. I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master and no messenger is greater than the man who sent him” (Jn 13, 13-16).

“The qualities required in the aspirants to the Institute are as follows: (...) 5. He must be firmly resolved to consecrate himself to God for the regeneration of Africa in the ministries that will be given to him by obedience, and that until death” (W 2804).

DREAM

28. We dream of a missionary style more inserted into the reality of the peoples we accompany towards the Kingdom, capable of responding to the cry of the Earth and of the impoverished. A missionary style that is also characterized by simpler lifestyles and structures within intercultural communities where we witness fraternity, communion, social friendship and service to local Churches through specific pastoral care, ministerial collaboration and shared pathways.

GUIDELINE 1

29. We allow ourselves to be called upon by the magisterium of Pope Francis (EG, LS, FT, QAM) to respond to the cry of Mother Earth and of the men and women of our time, in communion with the Church and faithful to our missionary vocation *ad gentes* and *ad pauperes*.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 29.1** Encounter, be informed and study the situations of injustice, local and global.
- 29.2** Study the documents of the social teaching of the Church and promote theological reflection on these realities, in the light of the Word of God.

29.3 Integrate the JPIC dimension in our ministries as a transversal element of the mission, in communion with the local Church, with the courage to be a prophetic voice, capable of denouncing injustices.

GUIDELINE 2

30. In response to the challenges of the epochal change we are experiencing, in the light of the Word of God, we take Integral Ecology as a fundamental axis of our mission that connects the pastoral, liturgical, formative, social, economic, political and environmental dimensions.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

30.1 Join the Laudato Si' initiative platform promoted by the Holy See's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (Laudato Si' Action Platform - LSAP) at various levels (community, Circumscription, Institute).

30.2 Develop and facilitate accompanying paths to encourage conversion to integral ecology in our spirituality and formation, enhancing the Comboni initiatives in this sense and thus collaborating in social transformation as indicated by the encyclicals Laudato Si' (LS) and Fratelli Tutti (FT).

GUIDELINE 3

31. We assume the specific pastorals according to continental priorities (cf. CA '15, 45.3) as a reference point for the reorganization of commitments (reduction, focus, collaboration) in the Circumscriptions and on the Continents.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 31.1** Initiate participatory paths to accompany the development of specific pastoral care in relation to continental priorities, with particular attention to priority human groups.
- 31.2** Programme specializations at the continental level to support specific priority pastoral care by coordinating them at the central level.
- 31.3** Evaluate and strengthen dialogue, collaboration and the sharing of personnel between the Circumscriptions in view of the requalification of the missionary presence through the reduction of commitments and the promotion of specific continental pastoral care.
- 31.4** Initiate dialogue and collaboration with the local Churches to develop specific and contextualized pastorals and to network with popular movements.
- 31.5** Monitor and verify the process of the requalification of commitments.

- 31.6** Strengthen the planning of preparation for the Institute's specialized services (e.g., training, economics, communication, care of the elderly and the sick) and ensure its continuity.
- 31.7** Cultivate interreligious dialogue (with Islam, with African and Asian Traditional Religions, with indigenous and Afro-descendant religions) and with local cultures as a fundamental element of the mission, in the spirit of the "Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence" signed in Abu Dhabi in February 2019.
- 31.8** Reaffirm the Institute's commitment to dialogue with Islam, considering the growing presence of Muslim faithful in the human contexts in which we carry out our mission.
- 31.9** Continue the development of an OCPU (Comboni Work for Human Promotion) in every Continent / sub-continent.

GUIDELINE 4

- 32.** We value missionary animation, personal contact and social and digital communication, privileged means for reaching people, in our effort to make use of new forms of proclaiming the Word of God.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 32.1** Accept the challenge of digital transformation that drives us to seek new ways to reach people in a sustainable way and to influence Christian communities and public opinion, collaborating with existing networks and territories.
- 32.2** Make communication plans that help us programme our work in this field.
- 32.3** To prepare missionary animators to promote new ways of missionary animation in the various continental contexts.

GUIDELINE 5

- 33.** We promote ministerial collaboration as a style of mission, starting with the Comboni Family, the local Churches, the ecclesial movements and civil society according to the Comboni charism. The laity are our companions everywhere in the work of evangelization and transformation of society. Like Comboni who dreamed of a “Catholic” work, we try to bring together all the ecclesial and social forces for the Regeneration of Africa with Africa.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 33.1** Promote the ministerial formation of the laity and their insertion in the various pastoral services as partners in the mission and enhance their skills and service.
- 33.2** Promote and participate in experiences of apostolic communities to respond to the new challenges of the territories.
- 33.3** Appreciate the gift of the Comboni Family as the first area of collaboration. In particular, we follow up on the journey already started with the social ministries of the CF and we promote other forms of collaboration.
- 33.4** Strengthen our involvement also at the continental and / or circumscription levels in collaboration with the bodies of which we are members, such as Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) and VI-VAT International, and ecclesial organizations such as REPAM, REBAC, CLAR etc.
- 33.5** Remain committed and meaningful in those areas where our human resources are diminishing, through collaboration and partnerships with other forces, offering a witness of profoundly evangelical life alongside other pastoral agents.

GUIDELINE 6

- 34.** We develop flexible structures of governance that allow speedy decision-making at all levels (local community, Circumscription, General Administration) and a dynamic relationship with local realities and above all those that offer leadership and Institute vision.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 34.1** Re-launch the merger process begun in 2006 (cf. CA '09 n. 128; CA '15 n. 72) empowering the Circumscription Councils, in dialogue with the GC. On the occasion of the Intercapitular, reassess the progress made and take, if necessary, merger decisions to facilitate the establishment of broader Circumscriptions in order to achieve a significant decrease by the end of the six-year period.
- 34.2** Strengthen the internationality of Circumscriptions and grow in interculturality at the community level.

COMMUNION OF GOODS, SHARING AND SUSTAINABILITY

*The circle of resources that nourishes the branches
and gives new life*

35. *The sustainability of the Institute depends on the ability of each one to share all that he is and has, even if apparently insignificant. The heart of a sustainability plan is to give the best of oneself, one's life and one's work as the fruit of a profound conversion.*

"The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common" (Ac 2,44).

"The Vicariate of Central Africa, thanks to the powerful aid of the illustrious Patriarch St Joseph, who after the Holy father proclaimed him Protector of the Catholic Church, became the true Bursar of Central Africa, will never be lacking in resources" (W 4170).

DREAM

36. **We dream of an Institute that is sustainable from an economic, social and ecological point of view, thanks to Providence and an effective sustainability plan.**

GUIDELINE 1

37. We grow in the ability to treat our goods in an evangelical and professional way.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 37.1** Promote the acquisition of basic skills in the field of economics starting from initial training.
- 37.2** Have confreres specialize in the fields of administration, fundraising, projects and social entrepreneurship. In their specific formation, in addition to the values of religious and missionary life, they explicitly cultivate the ability to develop healthy human relationships.
- 37.3** Involve professional consultants in the management and administration of assets and in feasibility studies regarding the sustainability of the Institute.
- 37.4** Accept the indications of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life (cf. *Economy at the service of the charism and mission*, 2018, no. 65) on the convenience of distinguishing the figure of the Provincial Treasurer from that of the Legal Representative, “except in the case in which the civil legislation provides otherwise” (ibidem).
- 37.5** Accept the indication of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life (cf. *Economy at the service of the charism and mission*, 2018, no. 64) to limit the duration of the service of treasurers. The Chapter asks the GC to

establish, with an *ad experimentum* norm, that the appointment of treasurers at the General and Circumscription level be carried out *ad nutum* with a maximum duration of 9 years.

GUIDELINE 2

38. Aware of the dwindling of resources, we follow the new economic guidelines in line with our fundamental values and improve the conditions of long-term sustainability.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 38.1** To seek all together, both individuals and communities, the resources to live and carry out our mission.
- 38.2** Animate and involve the people of God and have commitments of missionary animation in all Circumscriptions to support the mission.
- 38.3** Pay attention to the needs of the Circumscriptions with greater needs to support the costs of formation and the care of elderly and sick confreres.
- 38.4** Make good use of our facilities and not leave them only partly used and make substantial investments for their maintenance.
- 38.5** Create self-sustaining initiatives.

- 38.6** Encourage the mobilization of local resources in our plans for sustainability and investments also through income generating projects and the revision of our agreements with Dioceses.
- 38.7** Continue to support the Circumscriptions that already have a good network of benefactors with the assignment of personnel, to ensure the animation of friends and benefactors themselves.
- 38.8** Professionally prepare confreres for a qualified and paid missionary service that contributes to the income of the communities.

GUIDELINE 3

- 39.** We manage assets with transparency, according to the values of the Gospel and the regulations established by the society in which we live.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 39.1** Be demanding concerning the three fundamental principles for the proper functioning of the TCF: the preparation and compliance with budgets, financial reports and audits.
- 39.2** Include all resources owned in the balance sheets of the Circumscriptions.

- 39.3** Promote the values of transparency, the sense of belonging to the Institute and the vow of poverty right from initial formation.
- 39.4** Introduce the practice of submitting social reports, at least for the more representative missionary works of the Circumscriptions.

GUIDELINE 4

- 40.** We implement TCF with conviction and managerial competence.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 40.1** Fully embrace the spirit of the TCF which invites mutual trust and transparency, common discernment and co-responsibility in the search for resources and the administration of common goods.
- 40.2** Grow in the internal solidarity of the Institute in terms of human and financial resources.
- 40.3** Continue solidarity with needy situations outside the Institute.
- 40.4** Complete the revision of the fund statutes and the net worth ceiling in all Circumscriptions.
- 40.5** Redistribute the “superavit” annually.

- 40.6** Conduct ongoing formation meetings on biblical-theological foundations, the economy of communion and the vow of poverty.
- 40.7** Take the necessary steps, at the level of the GA and of the various Circumscriptions, to create or consolidate the “Sustainability Fund” and the “Elderly Fund”.
- 40.8** To encourage the confreres to make the necessary decisions through specific means (such as the visits of the Bursar and the work of the Secretariat of Finance).

GUIDELINE 5

- 41.** We promote the development of an eco-friendly economy, embracing the criteria of circular economics.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 41.1** To adopt a sober, simple lifestyle guided by ecological criteria according to the context in which people live, both on a personal and community level.
- 41.2** Consider carefully which investments to make:
 - ▶ Study the ethical criteria already present in our investment guidelines and apply them increasingly in investment and disinvestment decisions, attentive to the indications of the Social Doctrine of the

Church, to the reflections, experiences and proposals that emerge from religious life and from the cry of the earth and the poor (LS 49).

- ▶ Take into consideration “impact investment” experiences, also by enhancing the experiences, skills and research already developed in the Institute.
- ▶ Investing in community work and Circumscriptions, promoting forms of cooperation with the people to generate a fraternal and transforming economy.

GUIDELINE 6

42. We make common cause with the people we live with, valuing their initiative and their ability to donate and participate in the missionary journey, avoiding paternalism and protagonism.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 42.1** Pay attention to the life situations around us, avoiding indifference and mobilizing the local community to meet human needs.
- 42.2** Have adequate structures with respect to the social context in which we live, that are useful for improving the lives of the people.

GUIDELINE 7

43. We promote sustainable Circumscriptions that result from journeys of reorganization and renewal.

COMMITMENTS

We commit ourselves to:

- 43.1** Create numerically more consistent Circumscriptions to be able to count on more human resources and skills and, possibly, on economies of scale.
- 43.2** To stimulate the process of unification through the supervision of the GC, while involving the confreres.

SPECIFIC THEMES

The Chapter also set in motion discernment on specific themes.

44. Revision of the Rule of Life

44.1 The Chapter appreciated the process of ‘Revisiting and Revision of the Rule of Life’ made by the whole Institute in recent years (CA 2015, nos. 49-50.1), certain of the call of the Lord who invites us to study within the ‘today’ of the mission the Comboni way of ‘being attached to the vine so that we can bear much fruit’ (Jn 15: 5).

44.2 Continuing the discernment of the ‘DREAM of God for the Comboni Institute’, the Chapter faced the revision of the Rule of Life, seeking to walk a path in triple fidelity:

- ▶ to the founding gift which is the charism of missionary consecration received through the life and word of St. Daniel Comboni;
- ▶ to the mission journey travelled by the confreres who preceded us, a journey that continues to advance today towards new horizons in the life given by all the missionaries - young and old - who make up the Institute;
- ▶ to the transformation that God is bringing about in humanity and in our world also through our

mission which we reaffirm as ad gentes, ad pauperes, ad vitam, ad extra.

44.3 All the changes proposed by the confreres and collected by the Special Commission for the Rule of Life were presented, discussed and voted on in the hall. The decisions taken by the Chapter and the revised text remain in the hands of the General Council which will, through an ad hoc commission, prepare the final text, remaining faithful to the text approved by the Chapter. The Chapter asks the General Council to deliver the new text of the Rule of Life for the examination of canonical experts in view of its presentation to the Holy See, within a reasonable time, for the necessary approval.

45. Code of Conduct Team

45.1 The Chapter is aware of the gravity of certain abuses of authority, conscience and sexual and economic abuses that occur in the Church, from which our Institute is not exempt.

45.2 The Chapter requests that all Circumscriptions establish, in line with the motu proprio “Vos Estis Lux Mundi” no. 13, a Commission of experts - religious and lay - to help us deal with any cases of abuse, according to the indications of the Code of Conduct, in full compliance with the laws of the Church and of the relevant country. If such Commissions already exist in the country where we are present, the Chapter encourages them to be used, in collaboration with the local Church and Religious Associations.

45.3 The Chapter requests that the GC establish a “Code of Conduct Central Team” at the level of the Institute, made up of Comboni Missionaries, coordinated by the Vicar General, assisted by external experts, to support, with the necessary competence, and to help the competent authority in the processes provided for by the Code of Conduct. The internal rules of this team also provide for specific procedures for interacting with the Circumscriptions, in compliance with the civil legislation of each country.

46. Official Languages

46.1 Given the growing number of confreres who speak French as a first or second language, the Chapter considered it important to reflect on the possibility that French may also become an ‘official language’ for the entire Institute. The 2018 Inter-Chapter Assembly had begun the discernment process and entrusted to the Chapter a decision on the matter.

46.2 The Chapter considered the issue from a variety of angles, including the volume of work and extra expense, and considered the experience of other similar or more numerous Institutes that tend to have only one official language that everyone learns to give everyone the opportunity to communicate more easily with everyone else.

46.3 The Chapter, therefore, decided to keep the current three official languages - Italian, English and Spanish -, asking however that, if possible, the current practice of presenting the most important documents in the languages most used in the Institute be continued

47. Limits of extraordinary expenditure (cf. RL 170)

2022	1. Limit Ep. Conf.	2. Limit A	3. Limit B
CURIA		\$ 1.000.000	\$ 500.000
France	€ 2.500.000		
Italy	€ 1.000.000		
Poland	€ 1.000.000		
ASIA		\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
Cina (Macau)	\$ 1.250.000		
Philippines	\$ 100.000		
Taiwan	\$ 1.000.000		
BRASIL	3.000 x min. wage	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
CENTRAL AFRICA	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
COLOMBIA	\$ 600.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
CONGO	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
CENTRAL AMERICA		\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
Costa Rica	\$ 55.000	(\$ 50.000)	
El Salvador	\$ 100.000		
Guatemala	\$ 100.000		
DSP		\$ 1.200.000	\$ 600.000
Austria	€ 1.500.000		
Italy	€ 1.000.000		
Germany	€ 5.000.000		
ECUADOR	1.000 x min. wage	\$ 30.000	\$ 30.000
EGSD		\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
Egypt	\$ 100.000		
Sudan	\$ 100.000		
SPAGNA	€ 1.500.000	\$ 1.200.000	\$ 600.000
ERITREA	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
ETHIOPIA	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
ITALY	€ 1.000.000	\$ 1.200.000	\$ 600.000
KENYA	Ksh 150.000.000	\$ 200.000	\$ 100.000
LONDON PROVINCE		\$ 1.200.000	\$ 600.000
England	GBP 6.500.000		
Ireland	€ 3.560.410		
Scotland	GBP 2.500.000		
MEXICO	\$ 500.000	\$ 200.000	\$ 100.000
MALAWI-ZAMBIA		\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
Malawi	\$ 100.000		
Zambia	\$ 100.000		
MOZAMBIQUE	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
NAP		\$ 1.200.000	\$ 600.000
Canada	CAD 3.500.000		
USA	\$ 5.000.000		
PORTUGAL	€ 1.500.000	\$ 1.200.000	\$ 600.000
PERU	\$ 300.000	\$ 200.000	\$ 100.000
SOUTH AFRICA	Rand 4.220.000	\$ 200.000	\$ 100.000
SOUTH SUDAN	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
CHAD	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
TOGO-GHANA-BENIN		\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000
Benin	\$ 100.000		
Ghana	\$ 100.000		
Togo	\$ 100.000		
UGANDA	\$ 100.000	\$ 100.000	\$ 50.000

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES

Consistory Hall
Saturday, 18 June 2022

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I am pleased to meet you. I thank the Superior General for the words he addressed to me on behalf of all of you who are participating in the 19th General Chapter of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus. You had invited me to your home to celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart, next Friday. I thank you, and I will be there in prayer; but today we are already having our encounter in the perspective and in the spirit of the mystery of the heart of Christ, to which the charism of Saint Daniele Comboni is linked.

The theme and motto of your Chapter also guide us in this direction: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Rooted in Christ together with Comboni”. Indeed, the mission - its source, its dynamism and its fruits - depends entirely on union with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said this clearly to those he had chosen as “apostles”, that is “envoys”: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). He did not say: “you can do little”, no; he said, “you

can do nothing”. In what sense? We can do many things: initiatives, programmes, campaigns... many things; but if we are not in Him, and if His Spirit does not pass through us, all that we do is nothing in His eyes, that is, it is worth nothing for the Kingdom of God.

If, on the other hand, we are like branches that are 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 work, but it is Christ’s love that works through us. This is the secret of the Christian life, and in particular, of the mission, everywhere, in Europe as in Africa and other continents. The missionary is the disciple who is so united to his Master and Lord that his hands, his mind and his heart are “channels” of Christ’s love. The missionary is this, not one who proselytises. Because the “fruit” that He wants from His friends is none other than love, His love, the one that comes from the Father and which He gives us with the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of Christ that carries us forward.

This is why some great missionaries like Daniele Comboni, but also, for example, Mother Cabrini, lived their mission feeling animated and “spurred” by the Heart of Christ, that is, by Christ’s love. And this “push” allowed them to set out and go beyond: not only beyond geographical limitations and borders, but before that, even beyond their own personal limitations. This motto should “make noise” in your heart: going beyond, going beyond, going beyond, always looking to the horizon because there is always a horizon; to go beyond. The spurring of the Holy Spirit is what makes us go out from ourselves, from our closure, from our self-referentiality, and it makes us go

towards others, towards the peripheries, where the thirst for the Gospel is greatest. It is interesting that the worst temptation that we religious people have in life is self-referentiality. This prevents us from going beyond. "But in order to go beyond, I have to think about it, to see". Go, go, go! Go to the horizon and may the Lord accompany you. But when we begin with this psychology, this spirituality "of the mirror", we stop going beyond and we always return to our heart which is sick. We all have a sick heart and God's grace saves us, but without God's grace, kaput, everyone! This is what's important: to go beyond with the Spirit.

The essential trait of the Heart of Christ is mercy, compassion, tenderness. This should not be forgotten: God's style, already in the Old Testament is this. Closeness, compassion and tenderness. There is no organization, no; closeness, compassion and tenderness. And so I think that you are called to bring this witness of God's style - closeness, compassion and tenderness - in your mission there where you are and where the Spirit will guide you. Mercy, tenderness is a universal language that knows no boundaries. But you bring this message not so much as individual missionaries, but as a community, and this entails not only care for your personal style, but also for your community style. Jesus said to his friends: "They will know you are my disciples by the way you will love one another" (cf. Jn 13:35), and the Acts of the Apostles confirms this when it narrates that the first community in Jerusalem was esteemed by all the people because they could see how they lived (cf. 2:47; 4:33): with love. And often - I say this with bitterness - I

am speaking generally, not about you because I don't know you - often we find that some religious communities are a true hell, a hell of jealousies, power struggles.... Where is the love? It is interesting that these communities have rules, they have a way of life ... but love is lacking. There is much envy, jealousy, power struggles, and forgiveness is better. It is the witness of love which is what attracts people: the love among us, not shooting one another but always going forward.

Four aspects on which you have decided to work during your Chapter are important to achieve this goal, so that the lifestyle of the community bears good witness: the rule of life, the formation journey, the ministeriality and the community of property. Discernment has to do with the manner, the way in which to set up and live these elements so that they may respond as much as possible to the needs of the mission, that is, witness. This is very important: it is part of the "ecclesial renewal which cannot be deferred" in a missionary key to which the entire Church is called (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27-33). It is a conversion that begins from the conscience of each person, involves every community and is thus able to renew the whole institute.

I would like to note that here too, even in the commitment to these four aspects - which are interconnected - it is essential that everything be done in the docility of the Spirit so that the necessary plans, projects and initiatives all respond to the needs of evangelization, and I mean also the style of evangelizing: may it be joyful, meek, courageous, patient, filled with mercy, hungry and thirsty for ju-

stice, and peaceful, hence, the style of the Beatitudes. This matters. Even the Rule of life, formation, the ministries and the management of goods, should be structured on the basis of this fundamental criterion. “An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first [...]. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience [...] It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds. [...] The disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line, even to accepting martyrdom, in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, yet the goal is not to make enemies but to see God’s word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed. Finally, an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization” (Evangelii Gaudium, 24).

Dear brothers, I wanted to quote this paragraph from *Evangelii Gaudium*, knowing that you are aware of it, just for the pleasure of sharing with you the passion for evangelization. May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady keep you. Enjoy the rest of your Chapter. I offer my heartfelt blessing to all of you and to your brothers. And I ask you please to pray for me.

Thank you!

GLOSSARY

Eulogistic (Appreciative) Inquiry: the thorough search for the better qualities existing in persons and their organisations for the purpose of identifying the ‘seeds of life’ present in them that give life to the processes of growth and heal possible ‘illnesses’ that weaken the systems (cf. David Cooperrider, in D. Cooperrider and M. Subirana, *Indagación Apreciativa*, Barcelona, 2013, p. 11 ff.).

Integral ecology: this expression is explained in Chapter IV of *Laudato Si’* and recurs nine more times in the Encyclical. It refers both to a way of looking at reality and to a spiritual journey.

It is a holistic view of creation based on the belief that everything is connected, that all beings are interdependent on each other and also on mother earth. Reality is a complex system of social, economic, cultural, spiritual, environmental etc. relationships, integrated as a whole. It follows, for example, that in the face of the environmental problems of our time, there are no urgent, technical and partial answers. “There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm” (LS 111).

Laudato Si' Action Platform: this is a synodal journey that involves the whole Catholic Church, with the commitment to complete the conversion to integral ecology by 2030, involving the whole Catholic world. The Dicastery for the service of integral human development (DSIHD) is in charge of the initiative and has set up a portal to collect memberships, guide and support participants, and connect them in a movement for integral ecology. (<https://laudato-si-actionplatform.org/>)

Generative conversations: group dialogue using the method of 'praiseworthy' / appreciative inquiry, where the 'seeds of life' are sought and recounted so as to 'dream' of a new future together and, in the exchange, the synergies are generated that make possible the journey of the concrete realization of the common 'DREAM' (Cooperrider and Subirana, *Indagación Apreciativa*, 94 ss).

Elderly Fund: This has as its objective to help provide help to the Circumscriptions in which there are no national social security systems to guarantee assistance to elderly confreres. The collection of funds from the Circumscriptions for the establishment of the Fund started in 2020.

Sustainability Fund: the aim of this fund is to finance self-sustaining initiatives in Circumscriptions. It is still under study.



*Group of participants to the XIX General Chapter
Rome, from 6th June to 1st July 2022.*