

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

813

December 2022



HAPPY CHRISTMAS

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Pontifical Appointment

Fr. Fernando Domingues, consultant of the Dicastery of the Clergy

On Friday, 25 November, Pope Francis appointed Fr. Fernando Domingues, a Portuguese Comboni missionary, as a consultant of the Dicastery of the Clergy, as published in the Bulletin of the Press Office of the Holy See.

Since 2020, Fr. Fernando has been Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Portugal. Originally from Vagos in the diocese of Aveiro, he was ordained a priest in 1985. He has a doctorate in theology and has been on the mission in Kenya. In recent years he has been living in Rome where he has been Rector of the Pontifical Urban College and Secretary General of the Pontifical Work of Saint Peter the Apostle.

The Dicastery for the Clergy is formed by three Offices – Clergy, Seminaries, Administration and Dispensations and is also responsible for ecclesiastical affairs and the particular application of Canon Law in administrative matters and for the Institute “*Sacrum Ministerium*”, which publishes the homonymous magazine.

Ordinations

Fr. Mina Anwar Habib Atia	Imbaba (EG)	05.11.2022
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Holy Redeemer Guild

December	01 – 15 PE	16 – 31 U
January	01 – 15 A	16 – 31 BR

Prayer intentions

December – That all the families of the world may welcome with joy and gratitude the gift of life, guarding and protecting it as did the Holy Family of Nazareth. *Let us pray.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

December

- 3 Saint Francis Xavier, priest
Patron of the missions, Feast

Meaningful anniversaries

December

- 1 Blessed Clementina Alfonsina Anuarite Nengapeta
Virgin and martyr (Congo)
- 3 Saint Francis Xavier, priest

Patron of the missions, Feast (Mozambique, Spain)
12 *Our Lady of Guadalupe,*
Patron of the Americas (Mexico)

Publications

Romeo Ballan, *Passi di testimoni. Calendario Missionario Universale*, ed. Velar, 2022, pp. 192, € 9,90. This is the “third enlarged edition” of a book which Fr Romeo Ballan had already given us. “A Calendar which goes beyond the current year and has permanent validity”. This edition is enriched by many new figures of “witnesses”, both Christian and non-Christian – and we are happy to discover them – who brought to the world the announcement, even if not always explicit, of the Gospel of Jesus. It is something of a “spiritual testimony” of a missionary who is open to the whole world, desirous of bringing us to know and remember – through an almost Trappist work of research – some figures who are well known and others less so, of men and women, not exclusively Christian, who made of their existence a gift to all of humanity to render it better than before. We may keep this book close to us just as we keep others such as “diaries”, in such a way, as the author writes in the introduction, as to grant ourselves “a journey in time and space, through the world, to many different countries, with various peoples and cultures for the purpose of finding everywhere signs of life, of mission and holiness”. It is an essential book for anyone with a beating universal heart.

Copies of the book may be had from *Fondazione Nigrizia* in Verona. The Comboni price is € 7,00 per copy (discount for more copies); for Comboni Sisters € 5,00; others € 9.90.

Specialisation

On 4 July 2022, at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, Fr. Bernard Domara defended his doctoral thesis in Philosophy entitled: “Philosophical and social approach to political law: a reading starting from the legal dialectic of Michel Villey and from the African jurisdiction of the word”. The thesis aims to show that the effectiveness of political law, understood as a measure of justice, is related to the context, the ethos and the logos. The legal dialectic in its Villeian and African version highlights the Word as an instance for saying what is right, true and beautiful in conformity with the order of things, that is, the Maât. Therefore, the right sharing of goods in the political space, i.e., the sharing of goods in a globalised world, should have as conditions the possibility given to the recipients to exercise the power of the word, the consideration of the (sociocultural) context and the reference to values. The thesis was greatly appreciated by the examining commission and for

this reason the University awarded Fr. Bernard the medal of merit from the Salesian Pontifical University.

CENTRE FOR ONGOING FORMATION

Communication concerning courses

Next January we will begin the Comboni Renewal Course, which will run until the end of May.

In the meantime, we in the team in charge of the courses are thinking about the next Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation, which will begin next October (2023) and continue until May/June 2024. We therefore wish to address the circumscription superiors, both outgoing and incoming, so that they can plan the participation of the confreres in this course: *"those who have done about ten years of missionary work are called (it is a right-duty!) to experience an intense period of ongoing formation which is normally the Comboni Missionary Year of Ongoing Formation (CFP)..."*. According to the same issue of our Ratio (547), it is the duty of the circumscription superior to prepare the list of confreres who must participate in the various courses, in dialogue with the Superior General and his Council. We also invite the confreres who are in this age group to include participation in this important moment of formation in their programme.

In the handover between superiors this is an area to be taken into account.

CURIA

Representatives of Italian missionary institutes reflect on integral ecology

The Unitary Secretariat for Missionary Animation (SUAM) and the Conference of Italian Missionary Institutes (CIMI) met at the usual annual meeting, from 14 to 17 November, at the Generalate of the Comboni Missionaries in Rome. Alternating moments in common assembly and moments lived at group level, they first shared and discussed the various issues of common interest for the 14 missionary institutes present in Italy, then reserved an in-depth reflection on the theme of integral ecology, starting from Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* on the care of our common home, by Pope Francis, and the *Laudato Si' Action Platform*, of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, which offers a space in which institutions, communities and families can learn and grow together, as we walk towards full sustainability, in the holistic spirit of integral ecology.

Regarding the SUAM meeting, Fr. Giorgio Padovan, the Comboni representative, said: "We lived this meeting in the 'synodal way' and convinced of the need for our commitment to combine the mission with the theme of integral ecology".

For his part, Bro. Antonio Soffientini, a Comboni, coordinator of the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and of CIMI, after confirming the surprising interest in the theme of integral ecology shown by the participants, specified that, among important topics addressed, great involvement was recorded by the verification and evaluation of the second edition of the "Festival della Missione" (29 September - 2 October 2022), promoted by the Lombardy Episcopal Conference (CEL) and organized by the Missio Italia Foundation (CEI) and by the CIMI, in collaboration with the Diocese of Milan. "The event was so popular - he added - that it was decided to start immediately with the planning of the next training activities, in view of our greater participation in the 2023 edition of the Festival".

EGSD

Provincial Assembly – Sudan Zone

The annual provincial assembly for the area of Sudan was held from 26 to 28 October in the provincial house of Bahri. The work of the assembly concentrated on the reception of the Chapter Acts and on an initial reflection for the now forthcoming draft of the Six-Year Plan. The assembly made its own some methodological choices already adopted by the XIX General Chapter: the reports of the communities and of the secretariats followed the eulogical method, focused on the seeds of life, on diseases and on the vision of where God calls us to be in the next six years. The reflection that followed also focused on dreams, guidelines and commitments to be undertaken. This process of reflection will then be elaborated and integrated with the reflection of the Egypt Zone, for the drafting of the Six Year Plan.

Priestly ordination

On 5 November, at the parish of Santa Maria and Santa Teresa in Imbaba (Cairo), the priestly ordination of Fr. Mina Anwar Habib Atia took place. The celebration, in the Coptic rite, was presided over by the bishop of Giza-Fayoum-Beni Suef, Mgr. Tomas Adli, who was happy to ordain another Comboni priest in this parish which has already given the Church various vocations to the religious and missionary life. Also present were Mons. Claudio Lurati, Apostolic Vicar of Alexandria, Mons. Dominic Eibu, newly elected bishop of Kotido, numerous confreres from all over Egypt,

diocesan priests, men and women religious and various lay people, especially from the parishes of Imbaba and Helwan.

Goodbye to Mons. Dominic Eibu

After the appointment as bishop of Kotido, the parish of the Sacred Heart in Cairo and the confreres of the Egypt area wanted to greet Mons. Dominic Eibu all together, thus ending seventeen years of ministry in the Arab-speaking world. The faithful of the parish gathered around him on Friday 4 November for a moment of celebration, in which they expressed their affection for him, and then on Sunday 6 November, with a Eucharistic celebration. The whole province of EGSD wishes the newly elected bishop every blessing and grace for his new apostolate.

COP27: already looking forward to next year

The final curtain has fallen on COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh. The conference ended in extra time in a very tactical match between the Global North and Global South. A match arbitrated with cautious diplomacy by the Egyptian presidency and which only in the end was given a more decisive leadership to direct the process towards the objective of the practical implementation of the Paris agreement.

The negotiations were very intense and exhausting. Ultimately, a key goal for developing countries was achieved: that of establishing a special financial structure to respond to losses and damages associated with the adverse effects of climate change. It was a very tough fight, an indispensable decision for the global South and for climate justice.

It is truly unfortunate, however, that COP27 failed to deliver key outcomes that could have accelerated climate action to avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

This was supposed to be an "African COP", but it failed to meet the continent's needs and priorities. Africa is at the forefront of the climate crisis and is highly vulnerable to its impacts. We are already seeing terrible loss and damage across the continent. We expected to see more action to increase Africa's resilience, but once again financial commitments for adaptation have not been met.

Perhaps most importantly, though, COP27 has highlighted the growing strength of the climate justice movement.

An open civic space not only serves as a necessary counterbalance to the interests of fossil fuel lobbies, but is also a prerequisite for climate negotiations that focus on and support human rights, the rights of indigenous peoples and ecosystems. Indeed, this COP has suffered from the staggering imbalance of power and voices in this process, as

evidenced by the number of fossil fuel lobbyists growing by 25% since the Glasgow COP.

Finally, the big news of COP27, which is going unnoticed, is that for the first time, countries have sent a clear signal calling for the reform of multilateral development banks to support climate-friendly development. This landmark decision will help de-risk fossil fuel investments; to make funds accessible to developing countries; and to unlock trillions in climate finance. (*Bro. Alberto Parise, mcccj*)

ETHIOPIA

Return to Gublak

It is now exactly two years (October 2020-October 2022) since the Catholic parish of Gublak was closed due to the increase in violence in the area. The Comboni Missionaries responsible for this parish have temporarily moved to the sister mission of Gilgel Beles. While at this host mission, however, they always followed the progress and developments in and around Gublak.

Now, the comforting news is that, since mid-2022, the security situation has been improving markedly. The Comboni community of Gublak, after having seriously evaluated the situation, has decided to return to the mission. This will be a source of hope and encouragement for the faithful who are gradually returning to their homes. Once they arrived in Gublak, the Comboni Missionaries found an enthusiastic and warm welcome from the faithful, who had been dispersed for more than two years.

The community arrived in Gublak on September 26, 2022, the eve of the feast of the Holy Cross, according to the Ethiopian calendar. The faithful, gathered for mass and the damera, the bonfire that marks the feast, welcomed Fathers Christ Roi Tomety and Isaiah Nyakundi with songs of joy.

ITALIA

Piccolo Missionario, best Italian comic

The best Italian magazine for and boys girls is from Verona. The PM - Piccolo Missionario received the important acknowledgment of the "Città di Chiavari" National Award which, since 2005, has screened the best publications for the 0/6, 7/11 and 12/17 age groups., the monthly magazine of the Comboni missionaries conceived and created in Vicolo Pozzo in Verona. The PM, awarded the prize for the best periodical in the 7-11 age range, even defeated Mickey Mouse which received an award

for covers and graphics. At the same time, the jury recognized the different qualities of the Comboni monthly.

"Il Piccolo Missionario - the motivation for the Award reads -, a monthly magazine for children of the Comboni missionaries, stands out for its orderly structure which makes consultation easy, for the richness of the contents and the great variety of topics dealt with, with an attentive eye to current events and the training needs of young readers, responding to their interests, satisfying their curiosity and expanding their critical and cognitive horizons. Alongside the excellent columns, the exemplary biographies, in prose and comics, the agile stories of meaningful educational significance and the accurate information/dissemination services are particularly appreciable".

Il Piccolo Missionario, founded in January 1927, continues to accompany from Verona the growth of boys and girls from different parts of Italy. Renewed several times in terms of graphics and content, the Comboni monthly has continued to invest in comics as a tool for approaching the issues of diversity, bullying, correct language, historical memory, migrations and pitfalls combined with new technologies.

Its topics, which are not only religious, but increasingly focused on current events, environmental protection, knowledge of the Constitution, of fairy tales that come from distant worlds, of characters of today and the past, open up young minds to an understanding of what happens, starting from what surrounds them and from the complexity of times and phenomena that are part of our daily life.

The celebration for family members has resumed in the community of Padua

Normality, in the Comboni community of Padua, means resuming the celebrations that Covid had blocked. On Sunday 27, in fact, the feast of the family members of the confreres of the community was again celebrated. About forty family members coming from Ancona, Turin, and especially from Verona, Vicenza and Padua responded to the invitation. It was a beautiful party with three phases.

The first was experienced as if to give an answer to family members who often ask us: what are you Comboni Missionaries doing in Padua? And before coming to Padua where were you? What did you do in Africa or Latin America, where you lived for several years?

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Fr. Gaetano Montresor informed those present of the current Comboni situation in the world: places of mission, the vocational situation, joys, including the beatification of Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli, the hopes, fragilities and difficulties, and also of the composition of the new General Council and the new Provincial Council of Italy.

The floor was then taken by the confreres. Fr. Antonio D'Agostino spoke of his mission in Kenya, Ecuador and Italy and his current commitment to vocational youth ministry (GIM). Fr. Alessio Geraci recalled his commitments with the diocese and at national level with Missio, always linked to youth missionary and vocational pastoral care.

Bro. Renato Dalla Vecchia, after describing his years in Africa, spoke of his commitment as community bursar. Fr. Provvido Crozzolotto spoke of his years in the mission of Sololo, in Kenya, and of his long period in Canada, with periods in the United States, and of his being, now, here in Padua, 'no longer young'. Fr. Luciano Benetazzo spoke of his periods of mission in Central Africa and Tchad, of his commitment in the Pontifical College of Castelgandolfo for the formation of the laity and of his long life in Paris; now he animates the liturgy in the sanctuary of San Giuseppe attached to the house and has been appointed by the bishop of Padua as spiritual assistant of two rest homes in our neighbourhood.

Bro. Simon Tsoklo also spoke and, after describing his missionary past and how his life often crossed paths with that of Fr. Gaetano – in his home parish, Vogan, in Togo, in the parish of Fidjrossè, in Benin, and now in Padua – spoke of his commitments in the community: welcoming groups, guests of various types and the poor; of his contribution to missionary animation and of his being the nurse of the community. Bro. Silvano Bergamini briefly summed up his 43 years in Mozambique, insisting on hospitality, closeness to people, as a style of mission: this is what he continues to do now in community.

The second moment was that of the celebration of Mass, characterized by a simple but very lively gesture: before the recitation of the Our Father, Fr. Antonio presented the sign of Wuipala, that fabric which, with a double rainbow, represents the commitment to peace and community unity of the Andean peoples. Each participant was given the Wuipala and everyone was invited to wear it to pray the Our Father, thus making a commitment to build and live fraternity.

The third moment was, of course, lunch, enriched by excellent wines from our lands and by the "lyrical solos" of a family member. The family members of some confreres were unable to participate for various reasons, including Covid. All in all, it was a memorable day and greatly helped build communion between everyone present. (*Fr. Gaetano Montresor, mcccj*)

MALAWI-ZAMBIA

Golden Jubilee of Comboni Presence

For four different reasons, Sunday 20 November 2022 was an unforgettable day: the solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the universe; the beatification of our confrere, doctor and father Giuseppe Ambrosoli, in Kalongo (Uganda); the official inauguration of our sub-parish of Sant'Antonio, in the diocese of Chipata (Zambia) and the opening of the Golden Jubilee of the arrival of the Comboni Missionaries in what is today the Comboni Province of Malawi-Zambia.

What a great celebration it was! All the local Catholics wanted to be there. "I just had to be there" was the refrain over and over again heard on their lips.

The church was packed to capacity. The choir provided excellent evidence of its singing art. The young liturgical dancers (called "stars" in the local language) were in great shape, and those present punctuated their dances with lively clapping.

The vicar general of the diocese presided over the solemn ceremony, replacing the bishop who was not present due to an unforeseen mishap. Around him, over 30 Comboni priests and brothers, who had just finished their annual spiritual retreat.

A great spirit of communion and true joy was felt by all, especially by the over one hundred special guests hosted in our new Youth Centre in the Comboni community of Chizongwe.

We need days like these, and how! In the end, one feels confirmed in one's calling and more than ever determined to continue tirelessly. We have urged each other to commit ourselves with renewed determination to make 2023, the year of our Golden Jubilee (our missionary ministry began in Malawi in 1973, in the Archdiocese of Blantyre), a time of deep gratitude to the confreres who wrote the first chapters of our history in Malawi-Zambia, and of renewal in order to be able to continue our work of evangelization in these two wonderful countries.

We have various projects planned, which we believe are both good and worthy, and we are determined to do our best to carry them out. May God be praised, and help us to live in synodality with our people to help carry forward the dream of St. Daniel Comboni: "Save Africa with Africa". (*Fr. Carlos Alberto Nunes, mccj*)

POLAND

European Formation Assembly

The European Formation Assembly was held from 7 to 12 November. As everyone knows, this Assembly takes place every two years. This year Krakow (Poland) was chosen as the location and the theme was: "World Youth Day 2023 - Opportunities and challenges for Comboni youth pastoral care for vocations in Europe". Eleven fathers and one brother, from Spain, Germany, Portugal, Italy and Poland (including the representative of the General Council), attended in person. The provincial superior of Portugal, coordinator of the assembly, and two confreres from the London Province participated via Zoom.

The purpose of the Assembly was to share and evaluate the activities carried out or being carried out in the pastoral care of vocations and Basic and Ongoing Formation, and to draw up common policies for the near future.

Even if our Institute has not suffered a drastic drop in vocations, for some time now it has experienced an evident change in the "geography of vocations". At the moment, in all of Europe there are only two postulants (both Italian) and most of the candidates come from Africa (about 85%), but also from South America and Asia (14%). The old continent can today boast only 1% of our candidates, both priests and brothers.

After recognizing and sharing this vocational reality in the Institute, the participants wondered how to revive young people's interest in the mission and help them discern their vocation: World Youth Day, which will take place in Lisbon (Portugal) in the first days of August 2023, offers our vocation directors a unique opportunity

The Comboni Province of Portugal, in collaboration with the other circumscriptions, is ready to face this challenge. The decisions taken by the Assembly were taken by the European Formation Council, which took it upon itself to propose them for consideration by the provincials of Europe (outgoing, new or reconfirmed) at their next meeting, in December, in Spain.

UGANDA

Medical Centre called after Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli

A historic date in the journey of the Institute, 20 November 2022 the day of the beatification of the Servant of God, Fr. Joseph Ambrosoli, in Kalongo, Uganda.

In fact, Fr. Joseph, a Comboni missionary, priest and doctor, dedicated his life to serving the neediest as a doctor of souls and bodies in Uganda.

To mark the event, the Comboni Missionaries of N'Djamena laid the foundation stone of a medical centre named after him. It will be built in a Pastoral Area called "Saint Daniel", of Kilwiti, on the outskirts of N'Djamena, an area entrusted to the pastoral care of the Comboni community of N'Djamena by Archbishop Mons. Edmond Djitangar Goetbe, in 2019.

The ceremony took place after the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Fidèle Katsan and concelebrated by Fr. Marco Vailati and Fr. John Ikundu, in front of an immense assembly.

After Mass, the faithful and the missionaries went to the site of the future Medical Centre amid songs and dances for the blessing of the foundation stone.

After the ceremony, the participants reached the sacred place of the Pastoral Area, where they listened to a brief biography of Blessed Giuseppe Ambrosoli, read by the Comboni novices who are in this area for their pastoral experience.

The faithful expressed gratitude to God and to the Comboni Missionaries whom they called "good Samaritans" for the initiative. Now we just have to count on the benevolent intercession of Blessed Giuseppe Ambrosoli to carry on the project.

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE MOTHERS: Luigina, of Fr. Giuseppe Pellerino (SS); Rosario, of Fr. Gonzalo Dasilva Fernández (†); Marianna, of Fr. Giampietro Pellegrini (DSP); Assunta Juyee Longo, of Mons. Matthew Remijo A. Gbitiku; Deolinda, of Fr. Serafim Xavier da Costa Dias (P).

THE BROTHERS: Gino, of Fr. Andrea (†) and Fr. Tarcisio (†) Pazzaglia; Erich, of Fr. Anton Pramstrahler (†); Ettore (Franciscan) of Fr. Pinuccio Floris (I); Annibale, of Mons. Giuseppe Franzelli.

THE SISTERS: Gina, of Fr. Tonino Falaguasta Nyabenda (I) and aunt of Fr. Giorgio Padovan (I).