

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

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16 June 2023



A matter of the Heart

APPOINTMENT BY THE HOLY SEE

Father Léonard is appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Kisangani

On 13th May, Pope Francis appointed Father Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate, mcccj, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Kisangani (Democratic Republic of Congo). At the time of his appointment, Father Léonard was the provincial superior of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was assigned the titular see of Case di Numidia (in Latin: Casæ in Numidia), an ancient episcopal see of the Roman province of Numidia, identifiable with El Madher, in today's Algeria. Bishop Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate was born on 2nd January 1976 in Yanonge, in the Archdiocese of Kisangani. Yanonge is a locality located 55 km downstream from Kisangani, on the Congo River. He attended junior and secondary school in Kisangani. In 1995 he came into contact with the Comboni missionaries. A little later, he asked to enter the postulancy of the Comboni Missionaries in Kisangani. He attended the philosophical three-year course in what would become the Edith Stein Philosophical Centre where he obtained a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

In October 2000, he entered the "Saint Peter Claver" Novitiate in Limete-Kinshasa, which he concluded with his first vows on 5th May 2002, made in the presence of Father Venanzio Milani, the then Vicar General.

Having entered the Comboni Scholasticate of Kinshasa, he followed theology courses at the Saint Eugène de Mazenod Institute in the capital. On 10th October 2005, he made his final profession in Kinshasa and was ordained a priest on 13th August 2006 in Kisangani.

On 1st July 2006, he was assigned to what was at the time the Comboni province of the Central African Republic. He spent a few months in Mbata to study the language before being assigned to "Our Lady of Fatima" parish in Bangui, soon becoming its parish priest. From February 2011 to December 2012, he was vice provincial superior.

In January 2013, he began a specialisation course in Spiritual Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. On 1st July 2015, he was assigned to the International Novitiate of the Comboni Missionaries for Francophone Africa, in Cotonou, Benin, as Father Master. He was elected provincial councillor of the province of Togo-Ghana-Benin.

At the end of 2019, his Congolese confreres, eager to have him back in their homeland, elected him provincial superior of Congo on 1 January 2020. At the end of 2022, he was elected provincial superior for a second term starting on 1st January 2023. Four and a half months later, Pope Francis called him elsewhere, naming him Auxiliary Bishop of Kisangani, his diocese of origin.

First professions

	NAME	Prov.	Place	Date
Sc	John Baptist Phan Van Hoi	A - VN	Manila	6 May
Sc	Peter Tran Minh Thong	A - VN	Manila	6 May
Sc	Simone Catani	I	Manila	6 May
Sc	Agama Etse (Jean-Paul)	TGB T	Cotonou	6 May
Bro	Apaloo Koami Emmanuel	TGB T	Cotonou	6 May
Bro	Bakodu Gbotea Michel	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Ilolube Tandir Blondel	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Kambale Kawungu Bienfait	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Katika Manani (Charles)	TGB T	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Kpekpe Kossi Pascal	TGB T	Cotonou	6 May
Bro	Kumbi Miangemba Rodi	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Mayepa Nkosi Beni	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Mbwiti Mavumu Aristarque Joachim	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Ngassa Mambabua Joseph	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Nzaba Ebampum Michel	DRC	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Olobi Kwami Inyeza Alexis (Herve)	TGB T	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Tehou Akouètè Patrice	TGB B	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Vomi Anderson Merveille	RCA	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Vongoulouma Zacharie Excellence	RCA	Cotonou	6 May
Sc	Vlamindi Clement Dieu Merci	RCA	Sarh	7 May
Sc	Mbedi Nzofo Josue	DRC	Sarh	7 May
Bro	Babaya Moga Jean de Dieu	DRC	Sarh	7 May
Sc	Mbaiornom Denis	TCH	Sarh	7 May
Sc	Arroyo Gálvez Roy Manuel	PE	Xochimilco	13 May
Sc	Bermúdez Úsuga Didier Alonso	CO	Xochimilco	13 May
Sc	Loor Vera Carlos Enrique	EC	Xochimilco	13 May
Sc	Mejía Sánchez Emmanuel Alejandro	M	Xochimilco	13 May
Sc	Osuna Félix Jesús Daniel	M	Xochimilco	13 May
Sc	Rodríguez Robalino Jhonaton Fabricio	EC	Xochimilco	13 May
Sc	Rosado Cobeña José Leonardo	EC	Xochimilco	13 May
Sc	Xalamihua Zopiyactle Martín	M	Xochimilco	13 May
Bro	Umir James Ukongo Jenesio	SS	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Geme Towongo Isaac Nicholas	SS	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	George Ibrahim Naguib Nasrallah	EGSD	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Gerard Paul Hieronimo	MZ	Lusaka	13 May

	NAME	Prov.	Place	Date
Sc	Achim Ibrahim Mdala	MZ	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Cornelius Zindikirani	MZ	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Aaron Chileshe	MZ	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Rutarembwa Cleophas	U	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Mugisha Julius	U	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Okello Ronald	U	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Elisha Irungu Njoroge	KE	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Wilson Njoroge Wairimu	KE	Lusaka	13 May
Sc	Amanuel Mahder	ER	Decamere	13 May
Sc	Doler da Anifa Bento	MO	Nampula	27 May
Sc	Felizardo António	MO	Nampula	27 May
Sc	Harmin Gabriel	MO	Nampula	27 May
Sc	Jackson Constantino	MO	Nampula	27 May
Sc	Tonito Adriano Teaneque	MO	Nampula	27 May
Sc	Viegas Arnaldo Viegas	MO	Nampula	27 May

Ordinations to the priesthood

Fr. Biro Jexis Berlin (RCA)	Grimari (RCA)	2 October 2022
Fr. Valverde Arce Byron José (PCA)	San José (PCA)	25 March 2023

Holy Redeemer Guild

June	01 – 07 ER	08 – 15 LP	16 – 30 P
July	01 – 15 KE	16 – 31 M	

Prayer intentions

June – That, in our pastoral activity, we may know how to integrate care for our common home and the protection of the environment as an expression of our recognition of ourselves as God’s creatures, recognising the provident hand of God in creation. *Lord hear us.*

July – That the first anniversary of the memorial of Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli (on 28th July) may help all Comboni missionaries in the service of the most fragile to renew their commitment to a journey of holiness in faithfulness to the circumstances of daily humble service to the sick, the suffering and the fragile. *Lord hear us.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

JUNE

16	The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus <i>Titular of the Institute</i>	Solemnity (Togo-Ghana-Benin)
17	The Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary	

Meaningful anniversaries

JUNE

1	Anniversary of the founding of the Institute	
3	Saint Charles Lwanga and companions, martyrs	Uganda
5	Saint Boniface, bishop and martyr	Memoria – DSP (South Tyrol, Austria, Germany)

Publications

On 18th May last, in the “Father Fare Hall” at the provincial headquarters of the Comboni Missionaries in Madrid, the book *Habari za Francisco* (Kiswahili for “Words and Messages of Francis”) was presented. It is published by the Mundo Negro Publishing House. The subtitle: “Africa in the Magisterium of the Pope (2013-2023)”.

The book covers ten years of Pope Francis’ teaching on Africa. It was edited by Javier Fariñas Martín, editor-in-chief of Mundo Negro magazine. In the ten years of his pontificate, Pope Francis has addressed his message to Africa and to Africans on more than 400 occasions. The first time was during the general audience on 27th March 2013, when he launched a strong appeal for the world to intervene to put an end to the violence that was ravaging the Central African Republic.

The examination of the texts collected in this volume allows us to get closer to a continent systematically silenced by the powerful ones of the world and, on many occasions, completely ignored by the mass media. *Habari za Francisco* is not only a compendium of the Pope’s thoughts on the continent, but also an x-ray of Africa through his words.

On the day of the presentation of the volume, Javier Fariñas Martín received a personal letter of thanks from Pope Francis, which was read during the ceremony.

AMERICA/ASIA MISSION COUNCIL

“Integral Ecology Forum” of the Comboni Family in America

On May 22, the “Integral Ecology Forum” of the Comboni Family in America was held online, on the theme “*Towards missionary ecological conversion*”. More than 75 Comboni missionaries (brothers, priests, sisters and lay people) shared, for a full four hours, their pastoral activities in the field of integral ecology as part of their missionary vocation. It was a day of awareness and sharing of commitments, challenges, proposals and strategies launched to raise awareness of the planetary emergency and the urgency of tackling serious environmental degradation, as well as the scandalous inequalities that still haunt the whole of humanity.

Encouraged by the “Pact for the Common Home” stipulated during the Synod for the Amazon (celebrated in Rome from 6th to 27th October 2019 on the theme “New paths for the Church and for an integral ecology”), the Comboni Family in America intends to promote the “Common Pact for the Common Home”, which Father Dario Bossi (A Comboni Missionary who attended the Synod for the Amazon and was the speaker of the Italian minor club “A”; today he is the coordinator of the America/Asia Mission Council) presented in an in-depth article also published on the website <https://www.comboni.org/contenuti/113470>.

This “pact”, which is an invitation to all Comboni missionaries both to undertake a profound reflection on the theme, through study and prayer, and to assume attitudes consonant with integral ecology to be translated into concrete gestures, had already received a strong impetus from the Comboni Social Forum, held in Belém do Para (Brazil), in August 2022, immediately after the X Pan-Amazonian Social Forum, from 28th to 31st July. On that occasion, the resistance of indigenous peoples, women and young people to the violence perpetrated against the Common Home in the most varied forms was highlighted.

Father Juan Armando Goicochea Calderón presented the importance of the Laudato Si’ Centre in Lima as a place for training, research and planning. A training school in integral ecology is being organised there for Comboni and diocesan pastoral workers. The publication of the book *This land is in your hands* was an excellent initiative in terms of training young people. Two other sustainable production projects are underway: bee-keeping (which protects biodiversity from industrial monoculture) and the export of organic coffee to Europe.

Odile Nkoy Mputu Booto, director of the Laudato Si’ Mission Centre in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, who was asked to participate in the online forum, presented the Centre’s activities, all aimed at helping

people internalise the approach taken by *Laudato si'* and to share initiatives to promote the care of the Common Home. The Centre's activities include annual meetings which provide for an exchange of ideas and experiences between civil institutions and local administrations. Some of its members were present at the X Pan-Amazonian Social Forum.

Ms. Odile underlined how the Centre is truly an opportunity to question ecclesial pastoral care and promote common work between laity and religious, favouring a "critical ecological citizenship" in defence of Mother Earth. The Centre has given itself the main task of disseminating the contents of Pope Francis' encyclical in simple language that is understandable to all, and of bringing ecological education to both public and private educational centres.

Flávio Schmidt, a Brazilian Lay Comboni who has worked in Piquiá de Baixo (Maranhão) in recent years, and the Spanish layman Xoan Carlos Sánchez collaborated in the organisation of this "online forum". Speaking of their community of Piquiá, the two spoke of the many sufferings endured by local people due to mining pollution, but also of the great capacity for resistance present in the community and its determination to fight for the defence of the Common Home and human rights.

CHAD

Four young Combonis take their first vows

Sunday 7th May was a day of great celebration for the Comboni family in Chad. What made the day special was the first religious profession of four young men, who had reached the end of their novitiate. Their names: Dénis Mbaïornom, originally from Chad; Clement Dieu Merci Vlamindi, from the Central African Republic; Josuè Mbedi Nzofu and Jean de Dieu Babaya Moga, both from DR Congo. Jean de Dieu is a brother candidate. The solemn ceremony took place in the Comboni parish of Saint Kizito, in Bégou, on the outskirts of Sarh. Their vows were received by Father Marco Vailati, provincial delegate of Chad, representing the superior general and the superiors of the circumscriptions of the Central African Republic and the DR Congo.

Also present at the ceremony were many confreres from Chad, a good number of priests, diocesan men and women religious, and many parishioners, together with a large number of friends and Catholics from the "Saint Daniel Comboni" pastoral area of Kilwiti, in the outskirts of N'Djaména.

One after the other, the four young men clearly and with conviction, proclaimed their willingness to consecrate themselves to the mission with the

vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, according to the charism of St. Daniel Comboni, earning joyful, warm and encouraging applause.

In his homily, Father Marco encouraged them to remain faithful to Christ, so as to realise Comboni's prophetic dream: «Save Africa with Africa». The ceremony took place in a colourful joyful atmosphere, embellished with songs and dances performed by the Christian community of Bégou. The path of discernment undertaken by the four young men was almost identical: it began in their countries of origin with a year of preparatory study and two years of postulancy combined with the study of philosophy and the deepening of religious life. This was followed by two years of novitiate spent in the "Holy Cross" interprovincial novitiate of Sarh, during which they deepened the Comboni charism, under the guidance of the Father Master, Father Stéphane Kamanga. During that time, they also began to taste mission life through brief experiences of a few months in the various Comboni communities in Chad.

After the solemn celebration, the day continued with a shared lunch and a time of celebration enlivened by traditional dances and songs.

The journey of the four young people will now continue with the years of theological studies at the international scholasticates of the Institute. They will meet new cultures, they will have to learn new languages, and they will open up to the internationality of today's Comboni communities. The hope is that they will continue their journey of faith and formation with joy to become authentic evangelisers, ready to make "common cause with the poorest and most abandoned", as authentic followers of St. Daniel Comboni.

CONGO

***Afriquespoir* celebrates its Silver Jubilee**

On Saturday, 29th April 2023, the "Afriquespoir Centre" celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its foundation. The ceremony took place in Kinshasa, at the headquarters of the Centre which was inaugurated by Father Neno Contran with the publication of the first issue of the magazine *Afriquespoir* in April 1998. Father Neno (RIP) has only recently returned to the home of the Father (23 March), but many will long remember him for his goodness, generosity, joyfulness, selflessness, affability and thoughtfulness.

Since the publication of that first issue of *Afriquespoir*, the Centre has never ceased to animate the local Churches of Francophone Africa, through its magazine and its many publications. And it is exactly this intense and indispensable propagation and distribution of the "Good News" that we wanted to celebrate.

Over two hundred people took part in the celebratory event, including Comboni missionaries, Comboni sisters, Comboni lay people, collaborators, various longtime subscribers to the magazine *Afriquespoir*, friends, acquaintances and neighbours.

The celebration had three main parts. First, a documentary on the life and activities of the Centre was shown, from its creation to the present day. Then, two very interesting conferences followed.

The first to speak was Ms. Laeticia Muabila, a project manager at the Institut Facultaire des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication (IFASIC). She offered a precise vision of the challenges that communication encounters in today's world, especially in Africa. Taking as a starting point the last two messages of Pope Francis for the World Day of Social Communications [2022, 56th Day, on the theme "Listening with the Ear of the Heart"; 2023, 57th Day, on the theme "Speaking from the Heart – According to the Truth in Love" (*Eph* 4:15)], she emphasised the need to speak and listen "with the heart" for constructive and non-violent communication. She also invited the participants to make good use of social networks, warning them against certain harmful techniques which pollute the world of communication with *infox* and *intox* (two neologisms, two "fruit cocktail words", formed by the fusion of "information" and "intoxication", to indicate the systematic diffusion of opinions, both true and false, and more or less alarming; *intox* would seem to further highlight the negativity and toxicity of the phenomenon).

The second conference was held by Brother Lwanga Kakule, a journalist and member of the editorial staff of *Afriquespoir*, who explained the "mission" of *Afriquespoir* Centre: "to inform" and "form", to "evangelise" through the media and "animate" the local Churches so that they become aware of their missionary vocation. He also briefly described the history of the Centre, highlighting its strengths, without ignoring its weaknesses, and then finished with the presentation of its future prospects.

After the two conferences, there was the Eucharistic celebration, presided over by Father Léonard Ndjadi, provincial superior of the Comboni Missionaries in the DR Congo. After recalling the basic elements of the Comboni charism, Father Léonard returned to the genesis and mission of the Centre *Afriquespoir*. For him, the magazine *Afriquespoir* is perfectly in line with the other Comboni magazines in the world (*Nigrizia*, in Italy; *Mundo Negro*, in Spain; *Além-Mar*, in Portugal, *New People*, in Nairobi for English-speaking Africa, etc.), whose task is to proclaim the Gospel through the media, following the example of Comboni, who, as is stated in our *Rule of Life*, "Considered as an essential aspect of his vocation the

task of reawakening the missionary awareness of the whole Church » (RV, 71.1), for the evangelisation of the African continent.

Concluding his homily, the provincial superior invited the participants to subscribe and get others to subscribe to the magazine *Afriquespoir* and to purchase the books published by the centre for their spiritual, intellectual and missionary formation.

It should be remembered that in addition to the 102 issues of the magazine (published continuously), the *Afriquespoir* Centre has published more than forty books, all highly appreciated by readers for their educational content.

After the Mass, there was also a joyful “competition” among those present about facts, people and other things concerning the Centre, to the great satisfaction of all. To crown it all, a fraternal meal followed, offered to all those present. The Silver Jubilee will continue throughout 2023 through other initiatives. Long live *Afriquespoir!*

The death of the novice Bemvide Zabele Dieudonné

Dieudonné was a healthy young man, over 1.90 m tall, with an open and cheerful character. Among the various tasks assigned to him in the community was sport, a task he carried out with enthusiasm and joy.

Wednesday 10 May began like any other day in the life of the novitiate with morning prayer, Eucharistic celebration, housework, breakfast, meetings and formation lessons, work... Dieudonné participated in all these tasks without showing the slightest sign of tiredness or malaise.

After lunch, for a few minutes, I stayed with him talking and chatting about some liturgical hymns since he was also in charge of music in the community. Then, like everyone else, he retired to his room to rest a bit.

At 15:00, as on every Wednesday, all the novices went to the football field of our parish of Santa Anna for the usual football match. And it was Dieudonné himself who organised everything. For almost two hours, everyone ran, playing football, laughing and joking. Dieudonné was extremely happy, also because his team had won the match. Finally, he approached the young man who had acted as referee, thanked him for the service rendered and congratulated him on the excellent way in which he had performed his task.

Then everyone lay down on the ground to rest a little before going to pray in the church and returning to the novitiate. It was at that precise moment that Dieudonné seemed to let himself fall backwards. At first, the other novices thought he was joking. But since he wasn't moving, they hurried to see if he was sick. They tried to shake him, but he didn't react. They

then picked him up and took him to the parish where Brother Duilio, a nurse by profession, began to give him a cardiac massage, also with the help of some novices. Since the young man did not come to, they took him to the nearby hospital where doctors tried for a long time to revive him, but without success. Eventually, they pronounced him dead due to a heart attack.

I myself had stayed at the novitiate and when some novices came to give me the news of Dieudonné's illness and subsequent hospitalisation, I rushed to the hospital, but he was already dead. I immediately communicated the news to Father Provincial, Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate, and to the Vice Provincial, Father Emery-Justin Kakule Muvawa. Following Father Léonard's instructions, we began the delicate process of consulting the family in Kisangani in view of the funeral and burial.

The sudden death of Dieudonné has left us all in deep sorrow. It seemed impossible to us that he was no longer with us. Never once had he shown the slightest problem with his health!

Thinking back, we went over the entire day of Wednesday several times, trying to remember what he had done and wondering if we had noticed a sign, a gesture, or even an expression out of the ordinary. Nothing!

In the face of his death, we can only appeal to faith and say with Job:

«The Lord has given, [or gives, or, more exactly, lends]
the Lord has taken away [or taken it back]!

Blessed be the name of the Lord" (*Job* 1:21).

Because if what was taken from us had not been taken back by God, we would have no hope. But to the extent that Dieudonné was "taken back" by God, now our friend is in his hands. (*Father Juan Antonio Fraile Gómez, mccj, Novice Master*).

ETHIOPIA

The Six-Year Plan

Twenty Comboni missionaries working in Ethiopia met from Tuesday afternoon, 9th May, to Friday 12th, at the Comboni House in Hawassa, to prepare the *2023-2028 Plan*, taking the *2022 Chapter Acts* as a guideline. The meeting began with a reflection on community life presented by Father Hippolyte Apedovi Awoumessi. Then, Father Asfaha Yohannes Weldegiorghis, Provincial Superior, presented his report on the state of the Province. Both presentations were followed by a period of discussion and sharing. Father Juan González Núñez, Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Hawassa, closed the day's work by presiding over the Eucharist.

The morning of the second day was dedicated to the presentation and study in groups of the draft of the *Six Year Plan* prepared by the ad hoc commission, making use of the reflections and suggestions coming from the work carried out in the communities. The aim was to choose, among the 120 commitments proposed by the Chapter, those deemed most relevant for the Province today.

The afternoon of the second day and the entire third day were dedicated to reflections and discussions, in plenary assembly, on the five priorities proposed by the General Chapter [Spirituality, Identity and community, Review of formation, Ministeriality at the service of requalification, Communion of goods, sharing and sustainability], and we then moved on to choosing the commitments that the Province intends to implement over the next six years.

Father Nicola Di Iorio, Vicar Delegate and financial administrator of the Diocese of Hawassa, presided over the Eucharist, while Father Abreham Woldetinsae Hailemariam, ordained a priest on 3rd December, presided over the mass on the evening of the third day.

Thursday, after supper, there was a “social evening” to celebrate both the ordination of Father Abreham and the graduation and return to Ethiopia of Father Pedro Pablo Hernández. The Comboni Sisters of the Community of Hawassa also took part in the celebration.

On the morning of the last day, Father Juan Núñez and Sister Marisa Zorzan shared with the assembly some important information about the Vicariate of Hawassa and the Province of the Comboni Missionary Sisters. Father Asfaha concluded the assembly, presiding over the closing Eucharist.

There are 25 Comboni Missionaries in Ethiopia, divided into nine communities in the Eparchies of Addis Ababa (two), Bahir Dar-Dessie (two), and in the Vicariate of Hawassa (five). They work among the Sidama, Guji and Gumuz groups in five missions.

In Hawassa, two confreres are completing the establishment of the Comboni Youth Centre; two others lead the Vicariate pending the appointment of a bishop. In Addis Ababa, the Comboni Missionaries have two communities: the Provincial House and the Postulancy.

ITALY

Congolese art exhibition at the African Museum in Verona

On Friday, 28th April, the inauguration of the exhibition “*In the Heart of the Congo*” took place at the African Museum (“AM”) in Verona. This art exhibition presents an artistic and cultural overview dedicated to the

Democratic Republic of the Congo. It consists of over 60 sculptures and traditional art objects, with sculptures and masks, including large ones, as well as a rich selection of statuary, such as fetishes, stools and other representative objects in different styles. The exhibition brings together a sampling of pieces from 27 villages in the DR Congo, representing 12 cultural groups.

The Provincial Superior, Father Fabio Baldan, after greeting the numerous participants, first of all thanked the African Museum of Madrid, which granted the loan of the exhibition, and the Spanish Ambassador José Antonio Bordallo Huidobro, who donated to the Combonians of Spain his important collection of artistic objects collected during his many years of diplomatic service in the DR Congo.

Father Fabio praised this significant collaboration between the two Comboni museums, hoping that this cooperation will continue through other similar initiatives.

The coordinator of the Nigrizia Onlus Foundation, Father Pietro Ciuciulla, said: «The aim of the exhibition is to make African art known – in this specific case, Congolese art – offering visitors the opportunity to discover the contexts and meanings that unite material culture with the religious fabric which the exhibits represent. These artifacts, some truly artistic, are clear indications of a search for and discovery of the spiritual world, of an openness to religion and to communication with God, spirits and ancestors, with whom to get in touch through prayers and libations, and to a feeling of being an integral part of nature and of Mother Earth».

Present for the first time at the opening of an art exhibition at the “AM” was the Councillor for Culture of the Municipality of Verona, Dr. Marta Ugolini, who brought greetings from the municipal administration and demonstrated great sensitivity and attention towards the themes of the exhibition and the cultural initiatives of the Nigrizia Foundation.

For the occasion, the entire staff of the African Museum in Madrid was present, having come to Verona to demonstrate their friendship and desire for collaboration and exchange with the staff of the “AM” in Verona. Many guests were present, including many of the usual visitors to the Museum and previously invited citizens of Verona. Noteworthy was the large presence of Comboni fathers and brothers, Comboni sisters and, among these, a small group of young sisters who are preparing for perpetual vows.

In the days following the inauguration, the exhibition was visited by the students of the Cultural Anthropology Course of the Bicocca University of Milan, accompanied by their professor. Other universities, such as Ca’ Foscari in Venice and the Alma Mater in Bologna, immediately booked

guided tours. Not to mention schools of all levels in the city and Province of Verona.

The exhibition will remain open at the “AM” in Verona until 19th November 2023. But preparations are already underway to transfer the exhibition and set it up at the University of Varese in January 2024. Father Pietro has already contacted some Comboni communities, offering them the opportunity to host the exhibition in their cities.

ACSE celebrates again

Last 21st May, after ten years, the Feast of the Comboni Association for Emigrants and Refugees Service (ACSE) was again celebrated in the presence of a large number of its members, volunteers, migrants and university students receiving scholarships, at the headquarters of the General Curia, EUR, Rome. People missed the ACSE celebration and wanted to resume it. The Covid-19 pandemic further extended the delay.

Finally, it was possible to gather the entire ACSE community “in person”, to get back to socialising and sharing journeys paths and experiences. «Above all, to continue reflecting on the service of the association in relation to the profound changes underway - Father Venanzio Milani, president of the ACSE, pointed out - both as regards migrants and historical and social situations. It is important to ask who are the migrants of today and what expectations they have, and to support migratory projects that start from the subjectivity of migrants and refugees”.

Father Camillo Ripamonti, a doctor and priest of the Society of Jesus, president of the Centro Astalli in Rome, was invited to facilitate the reflection. With eight offices and 500 volunteers, it assists 17,000 users with projects ranging from initial reception to cultural activities.

Father Camillo offered a key to understanding an increasingly complex reality in Italy in relation to migrants. He highlighted the political trends regarding people entering Italy and the key issues of work, housing and vulnerability, underlining how a constructive approach requires addressing these issues by considering the areas as a whole, i.e., addressing the issues of needs and of rights inclusively.

To round off the feast, there was a celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by Father Tesfaye Tadesse, superior general of the Comboni Missionaries, who thanked all the volunteers and participants for their service and collaboration – «You are a clear testimony of the presence of Jesus among us» – emphasising how their commitment must always be motivated by their faith, over and above other valid reasons, both humanitarian and political.

Among the comments of the participants, we would like to mention the following: «The great generosity and sense of fraternity that the ACSE community expresses through relationships and service are a sign of great hope and of the life that comes from the Kingdom of God».

“Beyond the Walls” an exhibition at Castel Volturno

“*Beyond the Walls*” is the title of the exhibition proposed by the Comboni Missionaries, in a network with various local realities, in Castel Volturno (Caserta), from 11th April to 12th May 2023, to invite everyone, young people, children, students, migrants and Italians to “extend their gaze” and to understand what hinders a path of shared construction of the present and the future.

The first to visit us were the young Roma people from the Campo di Scampia, north of Naples, who experience the wall of distrust and hatred first hand. Then, there were visits by the many schools that allow their hearts to be moved by the videos of migrants who have to surmount the walls of borders and seas, by the photos of the victims of the migratory routes, and, above all, by the direct testimony of Appiah Kwasi, originally from Ghana, today a cultural mediator of our Black&White Association. Appiah left his country, crossed the Sahara Desert and lived in prisons in Libya; in the end, he crossed the Mediterranean on a boat.

During the exhibition, some events accompanied the process to give life, voice, flavour and provide testimonies of renewed awareness of far-reaching issues.

Once the panels and various materials have been dismantled, the exhibition continues through daily work and dreams. In fact, the goal of “building bridges” for a radically different humanity through the faces, stories and tales of the victims of the walls is an urgent one. Some construction is already underway: the project connected to the Exhibition, towards which the offers received from over a thousand visitors are channelled, bears the title “*Beyond the walls... let’s build bridges*”. It is the dream which we have cherished for some time, of having a community space for children, young people and adults in the Destra Volturno area, the most disadvantaged portion of this land of suffering, where there are no meeting points. A space to live among different people, migrants and Italians, to meet, make friends, play games, watch a film or a play, listen to a concert or to pray together... (*Father Filippo Ivardi Ganapini, mcccj*)

MALAWI-ZAMBIA

Twelve newly professed in Lusaka

On 13th May last, the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima, twelve Comboni novices made their first religious profession in the chapel of the Interprovincial Novitiate of Bauleni, Lusaka. Eleven of them will be appointed to international scholasticates with a view to the priesthood while one will go to an international centre for Brothers. They are from Uganda, Egypt, Kenya, South Sudan, Malawi and Zambia (*See the table on page 3*).

Deep emotion, mixed with evident joy, was very visible on their faces, especially at the moment in which, one after the other, they read the formula of consecration, invariably framed by sentences full of very personal biblical-theological reflections. Warm applause crowned the “yes” with which they expressed to the Lord their will to consecrate themselves to the Mission in the Institute of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.

The event was solemnised by the presence of the provincial superiors of Uganda, Malawi-Zambia, Kenya and Egypt-Sudan. The tone for the entire celebration which was presided over by Father John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, superior of the Province of South Africa, was the constant sense of thanksgiving to God for the gift of these new Comboni confreres.

At the end of the ceremony, the newly professed were officially informed as to which international scholasticate or international centre for brothers they would go to complete their formation.

“The twelve”, unable to hold back the joy they had in their hearts, wanted to thank the Lord for having been close to them during the long formative period and, in particular, in the last two years of the novitiate.

The serene, joyful and prayerful atmosphere made the entire celebration a moment of grace felt by all those present. The already great sense of brotherhood and communion with the newly professed was increased all the more by the large presence and lively participation of representatives of the various religious congregations with which the novices cultivated friendships and collaboration during the two years spent in the novitiate. The excellent singing of the choir of the Comboni parish of Lilanda-Lusaka helped to reawaken and keep alive in everyone the joy of being part of a lively and hopeful Church.

Although solemn, the celebration was characterised by simplicity and sobriety, two aspects appreciated by all the participants. Someone commented: «It was not just the feast of the newly professed, but of all those who accepted the invitation of the novitiate community to join them on

their big day. In the end, everyone was able to say in their hearts: “This was truly a day made by the Lord – We rejoiced and were glad” ».

There was also a moment in which the Lord was thanked for the parents and relatives of the newly professed and for the generosity they have shown in offering their children to the service of the Kingdom of God.

All promised to continue to pray for the perseverance of the newly professed, so that they may continue to serve the mission, remaining grafted like branches onto the vine, which is Christ, always ready to give their best in making common cause with the poorest and abandoned.

And may the Lord “bless and keep them; let him make his face shine upon them; and may he grant them peace” (cf. *Numbers* 6: 22-27), and make them “holy and capable”, as our Founder, St. Daniel Comboni desired.

PORTUGAL

A packed Provincial House

As everyone knows, the XXVIII World Youth Day will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 1 to 6 August 2023. Father Fernando Domingues, Provincial Superior of Portugal, wishes to inform all Comboni confreres, as well as their relatives and friends, some of whom would like to participate in the event, that the rooms used to welcome guests are already fully booked from 24 July to 7 August.

RCA

Father Elias and Father Gigi come to visit

From 28th April to 16th May, our Delegation received the visit of the two General Assistants, Father Elias Sindjalim and Father Luigi Codianni. For both, it was their first time in these lands of Oubangui-Chari. It was also the first official visit to the circumscription by members of the General Council after their election in June 2022.

Upon their arrival at the airport, they had no difficulty memorising the password that allowed them to leave without any baggage checks at customs: “*Pères de Fatima*”

The heat was really suffocating (they landed at 3:00 in the afternoon), but it was also a way to warn them that the fifteen days they would spend in Central Africa would not get any better.

The next day, they could see how “real” the password was. We actually went to visit the parish of Notre Dame de Fatima and to greet the two confreres who work there. The parish, the focal point of sad events during the various armed conflicts, invites us to “remember” so as not to forget

the history that binds us so strongly to the population. It is a land of martyrs, of courageous fidelity, to the point of remaining even when there was hardly anyone left. And it is perhaps precisely for this testimony that the majority of the inhabitants of Bangui know us as *Pères de Fatima* (Fatima Fathers).

There was also a visit and fraternal greetings to the confreres of the community of the Maison St Joseph (Postulancy). They were happy to see up close the faces of the Fathers they had only seen on the official photo of the General Council, received a few days earlier.

Our “adventure on the roads of the mission in Central Africa” began on May 1st. Mongoumba, Mbaïki and Boda awaited us. It was truly a “*missionary safari*”: many hours of travel with lots of dust, mud and potholes along the road, as well as the beautiful equatorial forest. In Mongoumba, the community of Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Lay Missionaries were waiting for us.

After Mongoumba and the brief visit to Mbaïki, where there is the episcopal residence of Mons. Jesús Ruiz Molina, we went to Boda, where we met Father Norbert Rangu and a member of the diocese. We arrived in the evening and left quite early in the morning.

We returned to Bangui on 5th May. The following day we took the road to Grimari and Dekoa. “It’s madness to make such a long journey in just a few days,” we were told. Maybe it was true, but we had to follow that “madness”, because we wanted to meet all the confreres where they work amidst a thousand difficulties, and listen to them all, so that they won’t feel alone, isolated and abandoned in a place almost right on the equator. After the visit to the distant communities, it was the turn of the communities present in the capital. In the end, each confrere – including our two bishops, Mons. Juan José Aguirre, of Bangassou, and Mons. Jesús Ruiz Molina, of Mbaïki, and the CLM – was able to have a moment of dialogue and listening with the two general assistants and each community had the opportunity to enjoy a Eucharistic celebration with them.

There were three verbs that dictated the “style” of the visit of Father Elia and Father Gigi, and gave a certain “flavour” to their meetings with the communities: *listening*, *knowing* and *accompanying*. The mission is a story of faith and each confrere has a completely personal way of telling and sharing it. *Listening* (dutifully reciprocal) enriches us and brings us back to the passion for the mission. *Knowing* the reality of the Central African Republic is essential to really understanding what we are experiencing, and this cannot leave us indifferent. *Accompanying* the circumscription is the challenge that the two assistant generals took with them

when they left. They have seen our reality with their own eyes. Now we are waiting for them to “accompany” us.

Some confreres were surprised by the fact that, after so many years, this was the first time (according to some) that the general assistants actually visited *all* the communities of the Delegation. The timing of this visit was very appropriate, and we all appreciated that. We also admired their willingness to adapt to circumstances. The general impression was excellent.

The visit concluded with three characteristics that qualify the group of Comboni Missionaries in Central Africa: the *joy* of “living the mission” and of “being on a mission”; the *positive atmosphere* which characterises the spiritual life of the communities and of the whole province, despite the many difficulties; a *passionate commitment to the mission*, despite the lack of personnel (*Father Victor Hugo Castillo Matarrita, mccj*).

TGB

First professions in Cotonou

On Saturday, 6th May last, 16 young men crowned their two years of novitiate, spent in the “St. Daniel Comboni Novitiate” in Cotonou, with their first religious profession.

The solemn ceremony took place in the parish of St. Francis of Assisi, in Fidjrossé.

Of the newly professed, eight are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, six from the Comboni province of Togo-Ghana-Benin, and two from the Central African Republic. Thirteen are scholastics on their way to the priesthood; three are Brother candidates (*see table on page 3*).

Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate, Provincial Superior of the DR Congo recalled in his homily that, like Jeremiah he was called to the triple role of announcing the primacy of God, denouncing evil and denying himself. He added that even the newly professed – like all missionaries – are called to mission in today’s world through the practice of the evangelical counsels. He also said that, for us Comboni Missionaries, the vows are to be lived in the context of community life: “It is as members of a community and as a community that we are called to evangelise, as desired by our Founder, St. Daniel Comboni”.

He then thanked all those who participated in the formation of the newly professed young men: parents, formators, confreres, friends and benefactors.

The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Father Timothée Hounaké Kouassi, provincial superior of the province of TGB, who also

received the vows of the novices of his province and those of the delegation of the Central African Republic. He too thanked all the candidates for their willingness to respond to God's call and exhorted them to entrust themselves to God and to continue on their journey. The ceremony ended with a fraternal agape.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Paul Joseph Ewers (14.2.1937-14.5.2023)

Born on 14th February 1937, in Cincinnati, Ohio, Paul Joseph Ewers grew up in a Catholic family. He had the grace of having a very happy childhood, something he often mentioned throughout his life.

During junior school one day, a teacher asked the class: "What would you like to be when you grow up?". Paul raised his hand and said, "I want to be an air force gunner." Later he would explain: "It was soon after the Second World War, and those guys were our heroes." But it was the replies of two of his classmates that impressed Paul most of all. They said they wanted to become priests which made Paul think: "Of course, that is a more useful mission in the world than that of an air force gunner". And he let the idea of becoming a priest occupy his mind and his heart. Shortly thereafter, Paul came across a missionary magazine about Africa and that made him alter his ambition and he said to himself: "I will become a missionary priest".

He entered the Sacred Heart Seminary run by the Combonis in Cincinnati where he continued his schooling. In July 1956, he began his Novitiate in Monroe, Michigan. On 9th September 1958, he made his first religious vows and began the scholasticate for philosophical studies.

In September 1961, he went to Venegono Superiore, Italy, to study theology. On 9th September 1964, he made his perpetual profession and on 26th June 1965, he was ordained a priest by Cardinal Giovanni Colombo in the cathedral of Milan.

He had always looked forward to going to Africa. The following month, however, his first appointment arrived: the United States, to work as a vocations promoter. On 1st September, he started work in Yorkville, Illinois, as a vocation promoter in the apostolic school. After a few months, he was transferred to the Indian Mission of Santa Ysabel, California, as assistant to Father Ugo Riva.

In September 1968, he was at last able to leave for the mission, not in Africa, but in Ecuador, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas, as assistant pastor of the quasi-parish of Atacames.

In Ecuador he remained until June 1978, successively serving the parishes of San José Obrero, in Esmeraldas, of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in Rocafuerte, and of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in Borbon. From Rocafuerte (1970-73), he organised a fundraiser for the construction of a secondary school with friends and acquaintances in Cincinnati, where he then taught English and religion.

In July 1979, Father Paul returned home, assigned to the community of Montclair, New Jersey, in charge of missionary animation. Three years later, he moved to the seminary in Monroe, Michigan, as a teacher and bursar.

In July 1988, he was able to return to Ecuador, as assistant pastor of the parish of Quinindé, in the Diocese of Esmeraldas, and remained there until June 1996, when he was called back to Montclair, to the Centre for missionary animation and justice and peace ministry.

In January 2008, Father Paul was assigned to the community of Blue Island, Illinois, ministering in the parish of Saint Donato, in the Diocese of Chicago, where he remained until June 2011.

In September of the same year, he was in La Grange Park, a centre for missionary animation and vocations promotion, also open to pastoral care for African-American youth. Father Paul was given the care of the nearby parish of Saint Martin de Porres. In January 2013, he moved to the community of Covina, California, as superior of the Centre for missionary animation and the Centre for Elderly Confreres.

On 1st January 2019, he “retired” and withdrew to the Provincial House in Cincinnati, where he remained until his death on 14th May 2023.

What Father Paul’s confreres remember most about him was his desire to tell people all he had experienced. Among these, there was often the story about a small fishing village in Ecuador, where the local Catholic community, encouraged by him, decided to build a junior school and a high school. Father Paul also taught religion in both schools. The students called him good-naturedly “Father Gringo”, in reference to his North American origins.

One day, a man from that small village stopped Father Paul and said to him: “I am the father of 12 children. Like every other breadwinner in this place, I had already planned to bequeath \$800 each to my sons and daughters, which they could use for a few drinks with friends in my memory. Today, however, thanks to the two schools you built, I no longer have dollars to leave them, because I used them all for their school education. But I’m proud to leave them something that no one can take away from them.” (*Lindsay Braud, and F.M.*)

Father Benno Singer (14.3.1936 – 16.05.2023)

Benno was born on 14th March 1936, in Schwäbisch Gmünd (Germany). In 1950 he entered the Comboni Seminary of Ellwangen. In May 1957, he began his novitiate in Bamberg and on 1st May 1959 he made his first vows. He continued with his theological studies while still in Bamberg, where on 29th June 1962, he made his perpetual profession. On 28th July 1963, he was ordained a priest in the city cathedral by Archbishop Josef Schneider.

Father Benno dreamt of the mission in Africa and the superiors agreed, sending him to South Africa where he arrived in February 1964, at Maria Trost, the first missionary station opened in 1924 by the German Comboni Missionaries, in the Diocese of Lydenburg, and for a long time the provincial residence. He stayed there until the end of the year, dedicating himself to the study of the language.

On 1st January 1965, he was assigned to the parish of Middleburg as assistant pastor. Two years later, he moved to Belfast as the Parish Priest. From July 1972 to June 1976, he was the Parish Priest of Burgersfort, and from 1978 to 1983, of the parish of the Sacred Heart in Witbank. In 1987, he became vice provincial of the unified Comboni province of South Africa (MFSC and FSCJ).

After 19 years of uninterrupted presence in South Africa, in June 1983 Father Benno received a letter from Father Salvatore Calvia, superior general, with his new appointment: the German-speaking Comboni Province (DSP).

On 1st July 1983, he was superior of the Missionshaus Josefstal, in Ellwangen. In 1985, he was the vice provincial. In 1990, he was appointed provincial secretary of formation. In July of the same year, he was superior of the Neumarkt Mission Animation Centre. In November, he returned to Ellwangen, in charge of vocations promotion until December 1991.

On 1st January 1992, Father Benno was sent to inaugurate the new Comboni house in Halle, in former communist East Germany, in the Diocese of Magdeburg, intended as a centre not only for mission promotion among the Catholic community, but also for welcoming and human promotion among the “non-EU citizens” (immigrants from outside Europe). He remained there until the end of December 1998.

Meanwhile, the superiors proposed to Father Benno that he return to Ellwangen, as head of the missionary animation program of the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, but Father Benno, after 15 years given to his home province, felt he ought to return to South Africa. On 1st January 1999, he was assigned to the parish of the Holy Trinity of Elukwatini, in the Diocese of Witbank, devoted to ministry. Six months later, he was

appointed parish priest. In January 2002, he was vice provincial. In July 2003 he became pastor of Witbank Cathedral and on 1st January 2005 he began his service as the provincial of South Africa.

On 1st July, he became the superior of the Missionshaus Josefstal, in Ellwangen. In 1985 he was vice provincial. In 1990, he was appointed provincial secretary of formation. In July of the same year, he was superior of the Neumarkt Mission Animation Centre. In November, he returned to Ellwangen, in charge of vocation promotion until December 1991.

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“I met Benno for the first time when he was provincial superior in South Africa – writes Father Jeremias dos Santos Martins in his testimony –. From the start he seemed very jovial and welcoming. He was passionate about everything related to evangelisation, vocations promotion and the ongoing formation of the confreres. He loved people and lived for them: he appreciated their stories, shared their challenges, and encouraged them. He was very keen on friendship. He was ready to travel many kilometres to meet a friend and enjoy a brief moment of leisure and friendship with him. In addition to being a ‘singer’ in name and in fact, he was also a very skilled violinist. And he has always loved beekeeping: his usual gift to the communities he visited was inevitably a large jar of good honey from his hives!” [...]

“The Marriage Encounter movement in South Africa was also very close to his heart and he had many good friends among those couples. ‘Every time I organise one – he said – it is always a joyful experience for me. I know it is a very important apostolate because a good family is truly a ‘small church’ and a splendid living cell of society’. When Benno got passionate about something or considered a certain topic relevant, you could

be sure that he would never give up and he would bother you every time he met you in order to clarify his point of view with you. He was always exceptionally positive and creative!”.

In June 2007, the poll (straw ballot) was held in view of the consultation for the election of the new provincial. The survey indicated the clear will of the confreres to confirm Father Benno at the helm of the province, but he promptly gave up his “passive vote”, saying that the province needed “new” leadership.

On 1st January 2008, Father Benno was engaged in ministry in the parish of Waterval. Shortly thereafter, he was assigned as superior to the community ministry of Zola Soweto parish. He was granted permission to attend some refresher courses in South Africa. On 29th July 2009, the Comboni community of Zola moved to Phiri, also in Soweto, where Father Benno was appointed superior. He remained there until the end of December 2014. On 1st January 2015, he was assigned to the parish of Orange Farm, in the Diocese of Johannesburg, as community bursar. On 1st June 2016, he was chosen as the probus vir of the province.

In February 2018, the provincial superior proposed that he take over the pastoral care of the small community of Mahube Valley, in the township of Pretoria. He asks for two days to think about it. Finally, he replies: «I’ve thought about it. I am 82 years old, but in excellent health. I accept”.

He remained in Mahube Valley until the end of 2022. On 1st January 2023, Father John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, first formator of the international scholasticate of Pietermaritzburg, was elected provincial superior. Father José Aldo Sierra Moreno, the second formator, left alone, asked to be accompanied by a confrere. Who better than Father Benno? The superiors offered him the post which Father Benno, as usual, accepted. After all, the nearby parish would give him ample room for apostolate. Father Jeremias recalls: “Even among the young candidates, Benno was always joyful, always aware of his limitations and ready to recognise them. What a good example for scholastics!”

In May 2023, Father Benno suffered a stroke and was taken to hospital. On the 15th, he was discharged and returned to the community where he could begin a period of convalescence but he died there on the 16th. On his desk was a plane ticket to Germany, where he had organised the 60th anniversary of his priestly ordination, in Bamberg Cathedral. The date of the flight: 16th May 2023 but God had another destination for him.

«With Benno – concludes Father Jeremias – we have lost a special friend and a first-rate Comboni missionary. He loved his vocation and was passionate about the mission. I truly believe that Benno fulfilled in his life –

and in a special way – the words of Saint Augustine: “You made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you”». (Father Franco Moretti, mcccj)

Father Anastasio Tricarico (23.6.1936 – 28.5.2023)

Anastasio was born in Troia, in the province of Foggia (Italy), on 23rd June 1936, into a very religious family. His father Michelangelo and mother Tecla were blessed with 9 children: 5 boys and 4 girls.

In September 1946, he entered the “Minor Seminary” that the Combonians run in Troy, to attend sixth grade. Three years later, he joined the Apostolic School of Sulmona and on 20th August 1951, he wrote the official letter to Father General, «to ask for the greatly desired grace of being admitted to the Novitiate of the Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus». On 1st November, he went to Florence to begin the Novitiate and, on 6th September 1953, he took his first vows. On 9th September 1959, he made his perpetual profession and on 10th April 1960, he was ordained a priest in the cathedral of his city, Troia, by Bishop Antonio Piroto.

Like any other newly ordained Comboni Missionary, Father Anastasio longed to go to Africa and asked as much. However, a month after his ordination he was sent to the Apostolic School of Sulmona, as a French teacher for 90 “Little Apostles”. He champed at the bit for two years and, on 7th July 1962, he received a new letter of assignment, not yet to Africa, but the editorial staff of the magazine *Nigrizia*, at the General Curia of Verona. There he discovered his talents as a skilled and convincing writer but remained there just for one year.

That was in the early sixties of the last century. The expulsion of the Comboni missionaries from southern Sudan and the frequent contacts of the General Management with the African Bishops present at the Second Vatican Council contributed to accelerating the opening of the Institute towards new mission territories in Africa. In June 1963, Father Anastasio was appointed to Burundi: he was part of a group of eight Comboni Missionaries who would have to start the Comboni presence in that African nation.

On 8th December, the eight “Burundians” took off from Rome. When they arrive in Bujumbura, they were greeted triumphantly by the White Fathers, who had already been present in Burundi for years. The new arrivals were assigned to four parishes, managed by long-standing missionaries or by the local clergy.

Father Anastasio spent the first five months in Bukeye to learn Kirundi, a very difficult local language. Then he was assigned to the Mabayi

mission, one of the most remote in the far north-west of the country; two years later he was asked to go and found the Butara mission, which he inaugurated on 2nd September 1966. In June 1967, he was transferred to Cibitoke as superior and parish priest.

In April 1972, the demons of hatred and violence were unleashed in Burundi. A selective genocide took place in the country: the “strong” Tutsi (although a minority: 14% of the population) massacred 200,000, perhaps 300,000 Hutu (84% of the population). Father Anastasio cried out, begging them to stop; he recalls: “I could not let innocent people be massacred without protesting.”

Since the bishops do not intervene, the representatives of some missionary institutes prepared an “informative note”, which was delivered to the bishops, specifying that it is a “reserved and confidential document”. The text ends up in the hands of the Mayre state and the local governor. The authorities are convinced that the Comboni Missionaries are behind the document; the bishop considers Father Anastasio the mastermind of everything. The Comboni Missionaries are forbidden to leave the territories of their respective missions. A couple of times, Father Anastasio was interrogated by the police and sentenced to house arrest for a few days but he never stopped helping Hutu people to save themselves. On 12th September, for the umpteenth time, he was summoned by the authorities who imposed forced domicile on him for the third time: he remained locked up at home for 42 days. The authorities hoped that he would give in and spontaneously ask to leave the country but he did not budge. On 25th October, he was notified of the expulsion decree, and on the 28th he took a flight to Rome.

On 3rd March 1973, he was already in the community of Bari as superior. He was a virtual boiling pot of ideas: missionary and vocational animation initiatives, meetings with young people, visits to parish groups...

In January 1977, he was assigned to the Community of San Pancrazio, in Rome, engaged in ministry in Roman parishes and in various services rendered to the Comboni Association of Emigrants and Refugees Service (ACSE).

The four-year period 1977-1980 was a period of intense activity for Father Anastasio: he was a member of the General Secretariat for missionary animation; member of the General Committee for the Centenary of Comboni; councillor of the Secretariat for the missions of the Italian province; a member of the Missionary Office of the Diocese of Rome; from May 1977 to September 1980, he participated in the meetings of the National Missionary Council of the CEI as a representative of the national Caritas.

What excited him most of all, however, was being called by the General Curia, in July 1980, to work with Father Pietro Chiocchetta and Father Aldo Gilli in the demanding cause of beatification of Daniele Comboni. Then appointed to Malawi-Zambia, at the end of October 1981 he went to London to learn English. In July 1982 he was in Zambia, where he immediately threw himself into learning the local language, Chichewa. In March 1983, he was already parish priest in Phalombe, in the Diocese of Blantyre (Malawi), where he remained until 1992. From 1987 to 1989, he was vice provincial of Malawi-Zambia. In 1993 he moved to the mission of Chipini, in the Diocese of Zomba (Malawi). In February 1997 he became parish priest of Chipata (Zambia) and superior of the community. He stayed there until April 2011, when he moves for a year to Lisungwi, in the Diocese of Blantyre. In July 2012 he was assigned to nearby Lirangwe until April 2013, when he returned to Lisungwi, until 1916, also becoming the community bursar.

In 35 long years, Father Anastasio became a real star performer of the Comboni mission in the province; he also launched the “Mary’s Meals” project, a concrete initiative in favour of primary school children: to provide each of them with a meal a day.

On 1st February 2016, Father Anastasio was assigned to Italy, in charge of missionary animation in the parish of Troia. He was a “personality” in the diocese, where everyone knew him as a great missionary, supported in so many ways in his work in Africa.

He was always happy to speak with enthusiasm about the Africa he once knew. However, when it came to new views of mission, new paradigms of evangelisation, of ministeriality, or new priorities adopted by the Institute, he appeared rather inflexible, traditional and suspicious of any openness... Living with him in community was not always easy.

In 2017, his health began to fail. On 1st April 2022, he was forced to retire to a “care home” in Troy, run by the Friends of Lourdes Union (UAL) for non-autonomous people. In mid-May, following a deterioration, he had to be hospitalised at the Ospedali Riuniti of Foggia, where he passed away on the evening of 28th May. His funeral was celebrated on 30 May at the Parish of Maria Santissima Mediatrix, in Troia, the seat of the Institute.
(Father Franco Moretti, mcccj)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHER: Rafael, of Fr José Rafael Pérez Moreno (PCA – Guatemala).

THE MOTHERS: Luisa, of Fr Balda Echarri Martín José (E); Misonia Angel, of Fr Katembo Muhandiro Jean-Paul (KE); Magdalena, of Fr Enrique Ibarra Hernández (M).

THE BROTHERS: Javier, of Fr Padilla Rocha Ruben (LP); Ottavio, of Fr Pinuccio Floris (I).

THE SISTERS: Anna Maria, of Bro Mariano Zonta (I); Teresina, of Bro Gino Baldo (I), Bro Guerrino Baldo (I) and Sr Irene, smc (I); Giacomina, of Fr Luigi Sala (I).

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Suor Rachele Beretta; Suor Rina Paola Caliarì; Suor Anna Luisa Massagrande; Suor M. Camilla Andreatta.