

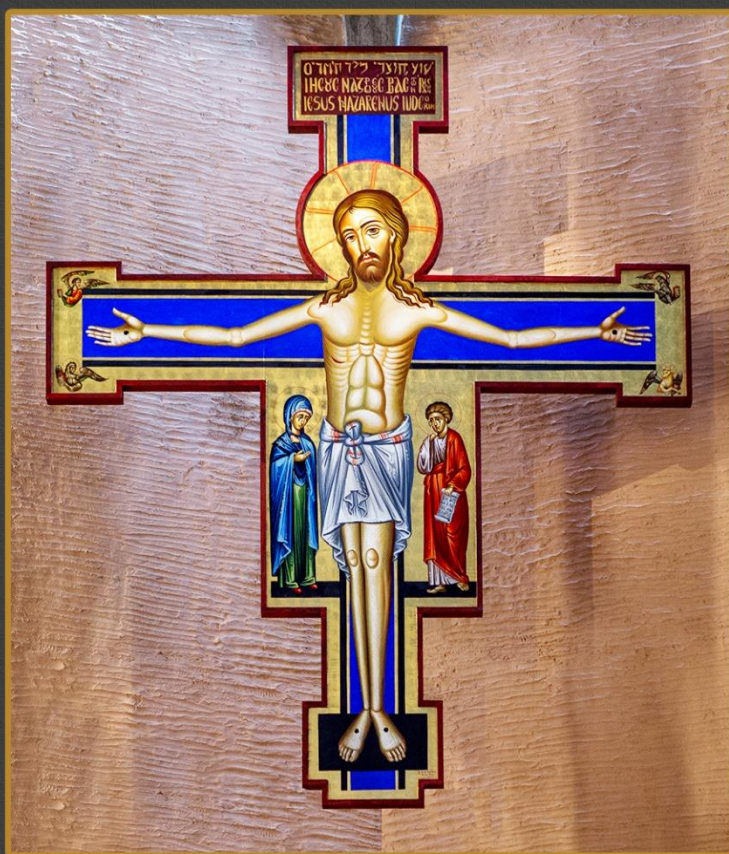
Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES
OF THE HEART OF JESUS

821

September 2023

14th September 2023 Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross



**“The Cross is such a friend and is always so close to me
that I have chosen it for my inseparable and eternal Bride” (Comboni).**

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Official visit by Brother Alberto Lamana to the Province of Ethiopia

Assistant General Bro. Alberto Lamana, has made an official visit to the Province of Ethiopia. He arrived in Addis Ababa, the capital, on 26th June and returned to Rome on 15th July.

In the course of his three-week stay in Ethiopia, which is the cradle of such an ancient culture as to be rightly called 'the land of origins', Bro. Alberto visited the eight Comboni communities: four in the Vicariate of Hawassa (one in the seat of the Vicariate, devoted to missionary and vocational promotion, one in Daye among the Sidamo, and two in Haro Wato and Qillenso among the Guji); two in the diocese of Bahir Dar-Dessie (Gilgel Beles and Gublak, among the Gumuz); and two in Addis Ababa (the provincial house and the postulancy).

Bro. Alberto also met Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel Demerew, Archbishop of Addis Ababa, the Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, the head of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, the Apostolic Administrator of Hawassa, Msgr. Juan Antonio González Núñez, and his vicar, Father Nicolino Di Iorio.

During the visit to the communities, Bro. Alberto spoke with each missionary individually and met with each community to understand the current situation of the Institute, both at the level of the staff and that of the ongoing post-capitular processes. These meetings were important moments of true communication and communion. All the confreres confided to Brother Alberto that they truly felt at one with the entire Institute.

Br. Alberto also visited some chapels in each of the missions he was in, meeting numerous groups of faithful. This allowed him to see the missionary pastoral vision implemented, strongly based on ministeriality, carried out by the confreres of the province.

Before concluding his visit, he met the Provincial Council, in the Comboni House in Hawassa. He told them that he felt warmly welcomed by all the confreres. He then explained that his visit to Ethiopia was truly an opportunity to meet "all the confreres, without exception", and learn about the ministries to which they dedicate themselves. He said he was happy to have found an intercultural and serene Province, characterised by a strong sense of unity and clear common objectives, and made lively by the presence of many young missionaries "full of the fire of the mission". He repeated several times: "The Comboni mission is very alive in Ethiopia."

However, the general assistant did not gloss over some 'weak points' he noticed in the circumscription, in particular, the disproportion between the excessive number of commitments undertaken and the limited number of

available personnel, and the surprising scarcity of missionary brothers (only three, out of a total of 26 members). However, he concluded that he had found “Happy missionaries committed to the mission” in the province. The provincial superior, Asfaha Yohannes Weldeghiorghis, and his councillors thanked Bro. Alberto for sharing his spirit of optimism, braving the cold of the missions high up in the mountains and the mud on some of the roads, as well as successfully overcoming the fatigue of the long journeys. Brother Alberto responded with a smile: “I wanted to speak with each of the 26 brothers to thank them for their ministry and encourage them to remain faithful to the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni.”

Perpetual professions

Sc. Mikozama Bienvenu Clémy (CN)	Isiro (RDC)	29.07.2023
Sc. Cerritos Abarca Roger Alexander (PCA)	San Salvador (ES)	29.07.2023
Sc. Mbusa Mathemwero Moïse (CN)	Bondo (RDC)	30.07.2023
Sc. Alule Deogratius (U)	Mbuya (UG)	30.07.2023
Sc. Mukaaya K. Achireo (U)	Mbuya (UG)	30.07.2023
Sc. Bimbo Ngoabide Esdras Ulrich (RCA)	Mongoumba (RCA)	12.08.2023
Sc. Agbeli Koffi Crépin (T)	Lomé-Cacaveli (TG)	15.08.2023
Sc. Gbedenya Kodzo Daniel (T)	Lomé-Cacaveli (TG)	15.08.2023
Sc. Sichongwe Romanos (MZ)	Lilongwe (MZ)	20.08.2023
Sc. Got Tob Emmanuel (KE)	Nakwamekwi (KE)	23.08.2023
Sc. Atara Ababayehu Joseph (ET)	Qillenso (ET)	25.08.2023
Sc. Tanga Tamirat Tegegn (ET)	Qillenso (ET)	25.08.2023

Ordinations

Fr. Idro Keny Denis (U)	Gulu (UG)	15.07.2023
Fr. Kasereka Valyene Edgard (C)	Butembo (RDC)	02.08.2023
Fr. Adanlesossi Koku Delanyo (T)	Lomé (TG)	05.08.2023
Fr. Djato Wilfried (T)	Lomé (TG)	05.08.2023
Fr. Ochieng David Oduor (KE)	Sigomre/Kisumu (KE)	05.08.2023
Fr. Nsinga Robert (U)	Kabale (UG)	12.08.2023
Fr. Etabo Lopeyok Josephj (KE)	Lokichar (KE)	25.08.2023

Holy Redeemer Guild

September	01 – 15 NAP	16 – 30 PCA	
October	01 – 07 RCA	08 – 15 TCH	16 – 31 RSA

Prayer Intentions
September

That, in our pastoral practice, we may be ever more aware of the situations of sexual exploitation and the spread of the phenomenon of the trafficking of women and children, giving attention and support to those who work to eliminate these situations of suffering and injustice. *Let us pray.*

October

That the synodal journey of *communion, participation and mission* we are celebrating may involve us as the Church, so that she may truly become the home of all. May the breath of the Spirit keep the communities alive in their pastoral and missionary journey. *Let us pray.*

Comboni Liturgical calendar

SEPTEMBER

9	St. Peter Claver, priest	Patron of the Institute	Solemnity
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OCTOBER

1	Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church	Patron of the Mission	Feast
10	Saint Daniel Comboni, Bishop	Founder of the Comboni Family	Solemnity
20	Blessed David Okelo and Gildo Irwa	Martyrs	Optional memorial. Northern Uganda

Meaningful anniversaries

SEPTEMBER

9	Saint Peter Claver, priest, <i>Patron of the Institute</i> , solemnity	Chad, Colombia
14	Exaltation of the Holy Cross	general

OCTOBER

12	Our Lady of Aparecida	Brazil
16	Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, virgin	general
19	Saints John Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and companions, martyrs	NAP (USA and Canada)

Publications

Manuel Augusto L. Ferreira, *Modelli di missione – La riconfigurazione della missione con papa Francesco*, Edizioni Messaggero Padova, 2023, pp. 228.

The author describes the reconfiguration of the mission taking place in the post-conciliar Church, emphasising especially the pontificate of Pope Francis, using the concept of *model*. His aim is to provide a more open narrative that is also more respectful of the nature of the mission and its characteristic variety.

There are six models reviewed: mission as Announcement, Encounter, Service, Liberation, Fraternity and Integral Ecology. The text offers a brief presentation of each model, starting from the current situation and the interest it arouses; recalls its biblical and theological foundation; makes brief references to its historical journey in the Church; presents Pope Francis' contribution to each model, recalling above all his doctrinal teaching; finally, it identifies the points of contact between the models, in the context of a multifaceted mission and an ecclesiology of communion.

BRAZIL

Continental Assembly of Provincial Treasurers of America/Asia

Father Luigi Codianni, Assistant General in charge of the economic sector, and Father Angelo Giorgetti, General Treasurer, visited the Comboni Province of Brazil last July. During their stay, they organised various activities. Among the most relevant there was an economics training course, which was held at the São Paulo scholasticate from 3rd to 7th July.

Seven scholastics and five other confreres participated in the course. The objective of the course was to gradually introduce participants to the complex world of economics.

The following week, from 10th to 15th July, the Continental Assembly of American-Asian Bursars was held. The provincial treasurers of eight jurisdictions participated: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, NAP, PCA, Peru and Asia.

Various topics were debated: the organisation of the “economic sector” in one’s own constituency; the implementation of the Chapter Acts, with particular attention to the section dedicated to the economy; the care of elderly and sick confreres; the chart of accounts and its impact on data aggregation; the usability of information useful for discernment at various levels; the continental coordination of the “economy sector”.

The group had the grace of making a Marian pilgrimage to the Santuário Nacional da Basílica de Nossa Senhora da Conceição Aparecida, the

most important Catholic place of worship in Brazil. It was a day of relaxation, fraternal sharing and entrusting the work of the Assembly to Mary.

When about to return to their various provinces, the Assembly felt duty bound to express their heartfelt thanks for the warm welcome given to them by the confreres of the Brazilian province and by the Brazilian people.

CONGO

First Comboni deacon from Congo-Brazzaville

Last July 29, the Comboni scholastic Mikozama Bienvenu Clémy made his perpetual profession and, the following day, was ordained to the diaconate at Isiro, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The new deacon was born in Brazzaville in 1993 and is the first - and so far, the only - Comboni missionary originally from the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), a country where there are no communities of the Comboni Family.

When Clémy met the Comboni missionaries and asked to join the Institute, he did not know what to expect because candidates from countries where there is no Comboni presence are not usually accepted. But, given the proximity between Brazzaville and Kinshasa, the two closest capitals in the world - they are separated only by the Congo River - his request was accepted.

Clémy did his novitiate in Sarh (Chad) and took his first vows on 13th May 2018. After finishing his theology studies in Cape Coast (Ghana) in 2022, he was assigned to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In a few months' time, Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo, would witness the first priestly ordination of a Comboni missionary.

Mons. Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Kisangani

Three months after being nominated auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of Kisangani, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (13th May 2023), Father Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate, Comboni missionary, on 13th August, the Sunday on which the Assumption of Mary into heaven was celebrated, was ordained bishop, becoming the first Congolese Comboni bishop.

Hundreds of people participated in the solemn Eucharistic celebration, including many faithful of the archdiocese, civil, military and religious authorities, as well as people from other locations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and from foreign nations. The Eucharist was presided over by Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, Metropolitan Archbishop of Kinshasa. In his homily,

after thanking Pope Francis for his pastoral concern towards the archdiocese of Kisangani, the cardinal congratulated Msgr. Léonard for his appointment, and thanked the Comboni missionaries for “the generous willingness of their brother to serve the Church of Kisangani”.

His Eminence Fridolin urged the new prelate to “behave like a good shepherd, who sometimes stands in front of the flock to indicate the direction to follow, sometimes in the middle to ‘get a whiff’ of it in order to understand its situation, its joys and its sufferings and sometimes behind to carry the weak forward or push the capricious who are tempted to waver to the right or the left in the common direction,” And he added: “Your ministry will be fruitful if you are a passionate bishop, a bishop who suffers when his people suffer, a bishop who rejoices when his people celebrate... A bishop is a father for all, even for those who hate him, criticise or insult him.”

Father Léonard entered the Comboni Institute when he made his first religious profession in 2002 and his final vows in 2005. After being ordained a priest on 13 August 2006, in Kisangani, he was sent to the Central African Republic, where he remained until 2013. He spent from 2015 to 2019 in Rome to obtain a Licentiate in Spiritual Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Soon after, he was appointed father master of the Comboni international novitiate in Cotonou, Benin. In 2020 he was elected provincial superior of the Comboni missionaries of Congo for a three-year mandate. His appointment as bishop was communicated to him a few months after his re-election to the same service.

With a surface area of 150,123 km² and a population of approximately three million inhabitants, the archdiocese of Kisangani is the largest of the 48 dioceses of the DR Congo. According to Msgr. Marcel Utambi, Metropolitan Archbishop of Kisangani, the pastoral, sociopolitical and cultural realities of this local Church are rich and complex. The archdiocese therefore expects Msgr. Léonard, 47, to truly bring “a breath of fresh air to the apostolic work already under way”.

Monsignor Léonard will assist Archbishop Utambi in the sectors of education, the economy and diocesan finances, and will deal in particular with the Pontifical Mission Societies, social pastoral care (Caritas, media and integral ecology) and movements linked to Catholic Action.

The new bishop, whose motto is *Delectare in Domino* (“Find your joy in the Lord”), thanked all those who contributed to his human, spiritual and missionary formation, and urged the faithful to pray for him, so that he may faithfully carry out his arduous mission as pastor of God’s people in Kisangani. (*Brother Lwanga Kakule, mcci*)

Provincial Assembly

The Comboni Missionaries of the DSP held their annual Provincial Assembly from Monday 26 to Thursday 29 June 2023 in Ellwangen. This year, the assembly focused on the preparation of the six-year plan.

Before the provincial, Fr. Hubert Grabmann, opened the meeting and welcomed the 34 confreres, the sad news arrived of the death of our confrere, Father Hilmar Gulba, after only three days of hospitalisation. The confreres therefore had the opportunity to give a final farewell to Father Hilmar in the celebration of a mass in his memory.

The provincial welcomed not only the confreres of the province, but also the brothers in their homeland for holidays: Father Josef Schmidpeter, Brother Hans Dieter Ritterbecks and Father Alois Deflorian.

In his report, the provincial focused in particular on the degree of implementation of the tasks established in the latest six-year plan. It was noted with regret that the internationalisation of the province is proceeding very slowly, while the advanced age of the confreres of the province is a growing concern.

It was also pointed out that pastoral care for refugees and migrants was sometimes well implemented. However, due to the lack of suitable confreres, in recent years this activity has been reduced to a few personal initiatives. The collaboration of the Comboni Lay Missionaries, always available to work with us, was positively noted. The social commitment of the Vintlerhof in Milland/Bressanone for people with social problems was also recognised in the provincial's report.

During the three days of the assembly, there were many opportunities to exchange views and make plans. The final objectives to be set in the new six-year plan will have to be elaborated by a commission by the end of the year.

We also celebrated a Mass for our confrere Father Benno Singer, who died in South Africa, which was attended by relatives and friends from the area who met Father Benno during his stay in Ellwangen. Father Günther Hofmann, who worked with him in South Africa for several years, added some personal reflections during the homily.

We concluded the assembly with a Eucharistic celebration at the Marian sanctuary "Maria Brunnlein" in Wemding, followed by a fraternal dinner near the sanctuary.

ECUADOR

Visit by Father David Domingues

Father David was with us from 6th to 25th July and had the opportunity to get to know the seven communities that make up the province and their respective members. With the desire to fit into the new reality, he dedicated the first day of his visit to getting to know the city of Quito. He first visited the historic centre, in colonial style, very significant and well preserved, then, on the outskirts of the city, the Monumento a la Mitad del Mundo (“Equator Monument”), 30 meters high and built between 1979 and 1982.

Regarding the political and social context of the country, Father David found a situation of great instability, dissatisfaction and violence, which is also clearly experienced in the places where our Comboni communities operate.

As a first stop, he met the communities of Quito: The Provincial House and the Postulancy. The Provincial House is dedicated to provincial services, missionary animation and ministry in nearby parishes. The CAM with the magazine *Sin Fronteras* is based here. Recently, the community has made the commitment to reactivate the “San Daniele Comboni” missionary animation centre in Carcelén, inaugurated in 1998, very active during the first years and subsequently suspended due to various circumstances.

As regards the Postulancy, we have just presented the application for entry into the Novitiate of the latest postulant, with the hope that other young people may follow his example. The Afro Centre has its headquarters here. For two years, the Postulancy community has also taken charge of the pastoral care of a parish. Father David was able to learn about all these realities and meet all the members of the two communities.

The second stage saw Father David meet the community of Guayaquil, the most populated city in the country, where a Comboni Project for Human Promotion (OCPH) is based. The community, made up of two brothers and two fathers, is dedicated to various social and African pastoral initiatives. A little over a year ago it took charge of a parish.

The third stage consisted in a visit to the community of El Carmen, in the province of Manabí. It is the most populated parish among those entrusted to the Comboni Missionaries in Ecuador. Arriving on the days of the festivities of the Patroness, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Father David not only had the opportunity to meet the missionaries who work there but also to concelebrate a solemn Eucharist, in honor of the Virgin Mary.

The fourth stage involved visiting the three communities that form part of the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas, where, for several years, a large number of Comboni missionaries have been concentrated. The three communities are La Merced (in the city), where the parish is also a sanctuary; Borbón, a parish with a large number of villages in rural areas that are difficult to reach, and San Lorenzo, an urban parish with many villages in rural areas.

After the long journey through the communities, Father David returned to Quito where he had a very fraternal meeting with the provincial council. On the final day, before leaving, with the members of the communities who were able to be present, Father David had the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist and participate in a moment of celebration, in which we congratulated him on his 25 years of priesthood, and we thanked him for his visit to our province.

Father David encouraged us with his cordial and fraternal style, made us experience communion with the entire Institute, stimulated us to live the message of the General Chapter, and strengthened us in our service to the mission. Thank you very much, Father David. (*Father Ottorino Polletto, mcccj*).

Mons. Arellano receives an honorary doctorate

Last June, Mons. Eugenio Fernández Arellano was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Catholic University of Esmeraldas (PUCE) for his work in favour of the most vulnerable human groups in the province of Esmeraldas.

The doctorate *honoris causa* was awarded on the occasion of the commemoration of 42 years of institutional life of the PUCE. Father Fernando Ponce, S.J., Rector of the University, conferred the award.

The motivation reads: “Since 1977, for 45 years, Bishop Arellano has worked tirelessly for the poor, promoting education, healthcare and environmental protection”. Furthermore, “he has been a tireless supporter of the rights of indigenous populations and communities of African descent, supporting them in education, in the legalisation of lands and in the conservation of their culture”. Finally, “he exercised his ministry of service in prisons, seeking the redemption and rehabilitation of prisoners and gang members.”

In 1978, Father Arellano was sent by his superiors to the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas, in Ecuador, in the far north of San Lorenzo. In 1982 he moved to the city of Esmeraldas as parish priest of Santa Marianita where he cultivated a close relationship with the poorest families of the

La Ribera neighbourhoods. On 1st July 1984, he was elected provincial superior of Ecuador.

On 1st June 1995, he was appointed Apostolic Vicar of Esmeraldas; on 25th August he was ordained bishop. On 27th April 2017, he was elected president of the Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference for the three-year period 2017-2020. On 5th July 2021, Pope Francis accepted his resignation from the pastoral governance of the Vicariate since he had reached the age limit.

After concluding his service as bishop of Esmeraldas, Msgr. Arellano asked to be sent on a mission to Tumáco, one of the poorest areas of southern Colombia; this municipality is characterised by the precarious living conditions of its inhabitants due to the poor provision of basic services such as clean drinking water and energy.

Today, Msgr. Arellano lives there, faithful to his vocation of serving the poorest, with no comforts other than those available to any other family in the area. Although his health continues to decline, his passion for mission, brotherhood and justice continues to inspire others to continue his legacy.

We remember that in February 2022, Msgr. Arellano had received the Carisma de Misión y Cooperación Award from the Spanish Confederation of Religious (Confer), “In recognition of his 26 years of work in the Vicariate of Esmeraldas at the service of Afro-descendant communities, and of his commitment to peace in an area which had its share of conflicts” (see *Familia Comboniana*, n. 805, March 2022).

ITALIA

Oh! What a Summer!

Once again, this year, in July, *Oh! What a Summer!* lit up the city of Verona from the beautiful park of the Comboni Missionaries in Vicolo Pozzo, in San Giovanni in Valle. This is a cultural initiative that has continued since 2006 and is organised by the Nigrizia Foundation and the Comboni Missionaries. Right in the middle of summer, it is a real celebration with the African communities and those of African descent.

There were three evenings full of events, which took place from 14th to 16th July, where it was possible to listen to music, meet the cultures of Africa, visit the African Museum, sample traditional food, visit craft stalls, be enchanted with animated readings and simply be together in a place in Verona where meeting, “different” information and multiculturalism have always been practiced. An event to encourage interaction and

integration between communities and combat Afro-phobia through culture and encounter.

The first evening was dedicated to talented under-35 musicians emerging especially on the Afro scene. On the second evening, the stage was given to professional musicians. On the third and final evening, the program was very full, with lots of music, comedy and a fashion show, a consolidated and highly anticipated event.

The evening also saw the participation on stage of all the associations and craft stands present at the party, who were able to present themselves and enrich the program with their presence. During the three evenings, great appreciation was given to the food stands of the communities from Morocco, Eritrea, Guinea Conakry, Cameroon and Ghana.

Enthusiastically, the volunteers and employees of the Nigrizia Foundation welcomed the conclusion of this festival, certainly very challenging to carry out, but equally enriching.

KENYA

Father Mitiku Habte Cheksa celebrates his Silver Jubilee

Dances and shouts of jubilation characterised the Eucharistic celebration on 29th August, the memorial of the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist, at the Risen Christ Parish of Nakwamekwi, in the diocese of Lodwar, when Father Mitiku Habte was celebrating 25 years of priesthood.

The Silver Jubilee celebration was enlivened by the presence of numerous religious men and women belonging to different institutes. The priests of the diocese were represented by Rev. Daniel Muhame, judicial vicar of the diocese and vicar of the religious of the same diocese.

Also present were Father Andrew Wanjohi, Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Kenya, Father Pius Duniya, of the Missionary Society of St Paul, Father Gideon Goma and Christians from the parish of Christ the King of Lokichar, where Father Mitiku served when he was assigned to the diocese of Lodwar.

During the thanksgiving song, Father Mitiku could not help but dance to the typical rhythm of the songs of the Turkana festival.

Ordained a priest on 29th August 1998, Father Mitiku was sent to South Sudan where he remained for 9 years serving the people of that nation. In 2008, he went to England to follow a formation course. Soon after, he was assigned to Ethiopia, where he worked until 2015. Since 2016, he has been working in Kenya.

PCA

Perpetual profession

On 29th July, in the parish of Saint Daniel Comboni, in San Salvador (El Salvador), a special ceremony took place with the participation of a large number of faithful and in the presence of the entire provincial council. The scholastic Roger Alexander Cerritos made his perpetual profession of chastity, poverty and obedience before the provincial superior.

After many years of training in Costa Rica, in the novitiate in Mexico City and after his theology studies in Nairobi, Kenya, he happily reached the moment of his priestly ordination.

Holiness surrounds us, in San Daniele Comboni, in San Oscar Romero, in Blessed Rutilio Grande and in the lay Salvadoran martyrs, in Giuseppe Ambrosoli, recently beatified. Roger was encouraged to follow these and other saints who have marked his Comboni journey to this day.

The Province of Central America rejoices with the entire Institute for this professed son of his. We ask God that there are more and more young people who respond yes to the voice of him who calls them to the mission.

PORTUGAL

Annual Comboni Family Pilgrimage to Fatima

On Saturday 8 July, a large group of Comboni Missionaries from our communities, in the company of some Comboni Lay Missionaries, numerous Comboni Missionary Sisters and several Comboni Secular Missionaries, went to Fatima. With us, there were also several hundred lay people - men and women - from various regions of Portugal, who collaborate in our missionary work and feel motivated by our common Comboni spirit.

The usual date of our Marian pilgrimage is the last Saturday of July. This year we decided to bring it forward to the second Saturday, so that it would not coincide with World Youth Day (August 1-6), an ecclesial event destined to profoundly mark the life of the Church in Portugal.

On Saturday morning, we joined the faithful and clergy of the diocese of Coimbra - also on pilgrimage to Fatima - for the recitation of the Rosary in the Chapel of Apparitions and for the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by the bishop of that diocese, in the (new) Basilica of the Holy Trinity.

After a packed lunch, the "Comboni pilgrims" gathered at the Paul VI Pastoral Center in Fatima for a session of missionary animation and information, animated by the Comboni Family Commission, made up of representatives of the four Comboni institutes.

In turn, each group shared with those present some of the most significant moments of the activities carried out in the current pastoral year.

The Association of Comboni Lay Missionaries, after recounting the deeply felt celebration of the 25 years of their presence in Portugal, listed their relations with the other groups of the Comboni Family in terms of service *ad gentes*, and set out the new guidelines for training new members.

The Comboni Missionary Sisters spoke of the efforts they are making in the difficult task of assisting the elderly sisters, and presented the new dynamics of restructuring their institute both in Portugal and in the other provinces.

The Secular missionaries shared the great joy of the birth of a new group of four young Kenyan women, who have recently made their first vows.

The Comboni Missionaries shared a presentation on Blessed Giuseppe Ambrosoli by one of the journalists they sent to Uganda for the beatification. They then introduced the Jubilees (Silver and Golden Jubilees) that some confreres will celebrate in these months. Finally, they presented the “missionary solidarity project” that they support every year as the Comboni Family. The project supported this year is in Ecuador.

The Comboni Family Commission also presented the journey being made together in the context of World Youth Day, as indicated in the theme chosen for the pilgrimage: “The mission calls. Rejoice in God and set out with Mary.”

The WYCG at World Youth Day 2023

The Comboni Family was present at the 2023 World Youth Day (WYD) in Lisbon through the initiative called The World Comboni Youth Gathering – WCYG), made up of young people from as many as seven nations: the United States, Spain, Panama, Italy, Macau, Germany, and Portugal. Altogether, there were about 140 young people and leaders who, though from different parts of the world, easily overcame the language barrier with “the language of love”.

Before separating and returning to their respective countries, on Monday 7 August, the young people of the WCYG assembled at the Comboni community of Santarém to take stock of what they experienced in Portugal, especially in Lisbon.

One of the experiences that most struck all the participants was the impressive silence “felt and experienced” in front of the Sacrament of the Eucharist during the prayer vigil on Saturday evening. Also seen as impressive were some words from the Pope, who repeatedly urged young

people not to be afraid and to follow Jesus in an inclusive way: “Everyone, everyone, everyone! There is room for everyone in the Church.” During the meeting day in Santarém, there was also a moment of individual reflection during which each young person had the opportunity to reflect on the resolutions made during WYD and to define them in a concrete way, and then share them with others in small language groups. The last moment of this evaluation meeting was the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by Father David Domingues, vicar general of the Comboni missionaries.

RCA

Perpetual vows and ordination to the diaconate

August 12th and 13th 2023 are unforgettable dates for the Christians of the parish of St Georges of Mongoumba, in the diocese of Mbaïki (Central African Republic). One of our young Combonians in missionary service - and adopted by the parish - made his solemn vows on Saturday the 12th and was ordained a deacon on Sunday the 13th.

Expectations were very high. The parishioners had prepared for a celebration and they were keen to make the most of it. They knew that on Saturday Esdras Bimbo Ngoabide would commit himself to following Christ “forever”, before the superior of the Comboni Missionaries, and that the following day their former parish priest, Jesús Ruiz Molina, who had become bishop of Mbaïki, would lay his hands on him and ordain him a deacon. This had never happened before in that place!

Mongoumba experienced two solemn celebrations within 24 hours, each marked by its liturgical particularity. About fifteen Comboni confreres, diocesan priests and priests of other religious institutes priests concelebrated the Mass of solemn vows, presided over by Father Victor-Hugo Castillo.

In his homily, Father Victor-Hugo helped those present to tune into the path that Esdras has travelled since he felt called and began to seek God’s will in his life. It was a journey of growth, of hardships and temptations, of decisions and beautiful testimonies encountered during his eleven years of training. Father Victor-Hugo invited Esdras to treasure these good testimonies and become a servant of his brothers and sisters, without exclusivism and according to the charism of St. Daniel Comboni. The next day, during the diaconal ordination, Esdras was surrounded by 25 priests. In his homily, Msgr. Jesús Ruiz invited him to become a friend and servant of the poorest and most abandoned, not to be afraid and to place his trust in the Lord who called him.

At the end of the celebration, Father Victor-Hugo spoke and kept the numerous faithful in suspense, because, addressing the new deacon, he told him that the period of missionary service was over and the time had come for his first assignment.

All those present held their breath until Father Victor-Hugo said: "The parish to which I am sending you has great wealth that you must guard well with all your strength. I am speaking of the parish ... Saint Georges in Mongoumba!". The congregation exploded in a cry of joy and rose to their feet in a real standing ovation, songs, ululations of joy and dancing.

There is something extraordinary about our Christians – and people, in general – in the Central African Republic: joy. The joy of meeting one another, of celebrating, of being together. And we feel challenged by this richness, which is a treasure to be safeguarded and which gives meaning to our mission.

Thank you, Mongoumba, for the joy of your Christians and all your inhabitants! (*Father Victor-Hugo Castillo Matarrita, mccj*)

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father José Luís Martínez Acevedo (25.09.1955 – 24.06.2023)

Father José Luís was born on 25th September 1955 in Huajuapán de León, Oaxaca (Mexico). He was a simple and kind man. This simplicity and kindness, which characterised his whole life and his missionary service, he had learned in his family, where the Christian spirit has always been profound. From an early age, he felt the call to priestly and missionary life. When he was 12, he entered the seminary of the Comboni missionaries in San Francisco del Rincón, Gto, on 20th November 1967, where he attended secondary school and then finished high school in the seminary of Guadalajara.

He continued his priestly training in the Comboni postulate of Xochimilco, where he studied philosophy, before moving on to the novitiate of Cuernavaca, Morelos, where he made his first religious profession on 22nd April 1978.

In the same year, he was assigned to the scholasticate of Chicago, in the United States where he studied theology and prepared for his final profession which took place on 24th November 1982. On 28th May 1983, he was ordained a priest.

After his priestly ordination, he began his missionary work, which lasted 40 years and which he carried out in pastoral care, dedicating many years of service to indigenous communities. His first experience was in the

mission of San Felipe Usila, in the current diocese of Tuxtepec. Father José Luís was a polite and respectful person, he didn't like discussions and, when he felt moments of tension in relationships, he preferred to withdraw in silence. He was a man of few words and for this he gave the impression of being very serious and reserved, but, in truth, he liked being in the company of the confreres. He was kind and helpful, always attentive to those around him.

José Luís was also a studious person. In 1991 he was sent to Rome for studies and had obtained a specialisation in pastoral theology and catechesis at the Salesian University. In those years of dedication and hard work, he had demonstrated the desire to prepare himself to best carry out his missionary work.

After completing his studies in Rome, he was assigned to South Sudan, at a very delicate moment in the country due to the ongoing war. In that period, he shared the suffering and insecurity of the people, with a great passion for the poorest and a lot of perseverance in a situation that compromised his health: he spent ten years in the missions of Nzara, Marial Lou and Yirol, where many Comboni Missionaries gave their lives so that the first Christian communities could form in the midst of the permanent suffering caused by violence and war.

From 2001 to 2005, he returned to Mexico and was assigned to the missions of Guerrero, in the diocese of Tlapa, where the Comboni Missionaries were setting up a missionary presence in the mountains, among the Mixtecs. Once again, José Luís returned to work with the Indios until, in 2006, he was again assigned to South Sudan.

In those years of exhausting safaris from one mission to another, his illness also appeared, and he handled it by always carrying his cross in silence, without others noticing it.

When he returned to Mexico, he always showed great willingness to go wherever his superiors sent him. He spent a few years in Baja California, in the parishes of the Sacred Heart in 2001 and of Vizcaino in 2009, shortly before the Comboni Missionaries handed over the parish to the diocese of La Paz.

From March 2011 to December 2016, José Luís was assigned to the parish of San José Comalapa, in the diocese of Orizaba in Veracruz, always taking up his commitments with enthusiasm.

At the end of 2016, he left for the missions of Peru. Upon his arrival, he was sent to the Pangoa mission, in the Peruvian Amazon jungle. In 2020 he was in the parish of Trujillo. That year he went to Mexico for a few months of vacation and, when he was supposed to come back, he couldn't do it, due to Covid-19. During the epidemic, he remained in the

provincial house waiting to return to the mission. In those months, once again, his great humanity emerged: he was always available and eager to help everyone feel good. He also became an assistant chef, and was exemplary in his generosity, kindness and simplicity.

Upon returning to Peru, he was asked to go to the Baños mission, in the mountains of the Peruvian Andes. From there the Lord called him to his final destination on 24th June 2023, while he went to one of the villages of his parish to celebrate Mass on the occasion of the feast of St. John. (*Father Enrique Sánchez G. mccj*)

Father Hilmar Gulba (05.09.1933 – 26.06.2023)

Father Hilmar was one of the first pupils who, after the Second World War, came to the Josefinum seminary in Ellwangen with the desire to become a priest. Born on 5th September 1933 in Ratibor, Upper Silesia, after the war he had to leave his homeland with his mother, brothers and sisters.

Hilmar was thirteen years old when, in January 1946, he showed up at the Josefinum together with his younger brother Werner. For a time, the students had to stay in the Josefstal House, because the seminary in the centre of the city, which had been destroyed during the war, was still being rebuilt.

Later in life, Hilmar would often mention that the students had to clean the bricks of the old building, burned by the German soldiers, as they were to be reused for the new building. The elderly Father Lehr Jakob (he had been superior general of the Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - MFSC from 1923 to 1932) gave them private lessons so that they could make up for lost time and be able to attend high school, in accordance at their age.

In the Ellwangen seminary, Hilmar was not only a good student, but also an excellent football player and a good organist. Later, however, he never had the opportunity to play that instrument that fascinated him, because there are no organs in churches in Peru.

Having passed his high school exams, he entered the novitiate in Bamberg in September 1954. Two years later, on 11th November 1956, he took his first religious vows. After completing his studies in philosophy and theology, again in Bamberg, he made his perpetual profession on 6th January 1960 and was ordained a priest on 17th July of the same year. In Bamberg, he was director of the *schola cantorum* of the scholasticate which was often called upon to give a touch of solemnity to the functions in the cathedral.

After ordination, Father Hilmar went to Peru, where he would spend 48 years, working primarily in the Andean highlands.

In 1958, the Holy See had erected some Apostolic Prelatures in Peru, including that of Tarma, which was entrusted to the Comboni missionaries present in the area (still MFSC at the time). There was therefore a need for young confreres to initiate and organise pastoral work, and Father Hilmar was among the first to devote himself to it full-time and with youthful enthusiasm.

For most of the time, he worked in the diocese of Tarma, especially in parishes at an altitude of 4,000 meters: Huánuco, Junin, Huariaca, Palca and others. These were very large parishes with numerous villages.

In addition to pastoral work, Father Hilmar worked hard to help the population also in the social field, although not always with the hoped-for success. For example, he started a fish farm in Lake Junin and bought a gold mine, but both ventures failed to produce results.

In 1977, the Comboni Missionaries received a request to make one of their missionaries available as a military chaplain for a few years in Germany. Father Hilmar, who was on vacation at the time and was always open to new ideas, readily accepted. For six years, until 1984, he was a chaplain in Ellwangen and Dornstadt, near Ulm. During this period, he also had to go abroad, even to the United States. However, it was not his intention to carry out this ministry permanently. For this reason, in 1984, he asked to return to Peru, even though he maintained contact for a long time with the various military chaplains he had known.

In Peru, he experienced a terrible period of terror caused by *Sendero Luminoso*, a Maoist-inspired Peruvian guerrilla organisation founded between 1960 and 1970. In December 1989, together with his confrere Father Eduard Falk, Father Hilmar miraculously escaped an attack: their car passed over a mine in the road, but it failed to detonate. A hundred meters further on, they were stopped by terrorists with guns levelled. Realising that they were not the people they were expecting but ordinary priests, they let them go, but not before having robbed them of the car. When the terrorists then went to see why the mine hadn't worked, it exploded, killing two of them. It was a traumatic experience, but it did not prevent Father Hilmar and Father Eduard from continuing to work as pastors and missionaries in that country which they loved so much.

Father Hilmar and, more or less, all the members of his family were – and still are – quite non-conformist people in many things and open to new – even surprising things. This was seen very clearly on the occasion of his 'Golden Jubilee' of priesthood, celebrated in July 2010 in Mannheim. During the celebration, Father Hilmar was assisted by two of his nieces,

Lutheran pastors. To tell the truth, this 'original' attitude characterised all his missionary work, especially in the social field, where he always loved experimenting with 'new methods', even if they didn't always work.

Father Hilmar spent the last phase of his life in the community of Huánuco (2015-2021) and in the provincial residence in Lima. In October 2022, at the age of 89 and in poor health, he returned to Germany and died on 26th June 2023 in the home for elderly and sick Comboni Missionaries in Ellwangen. (*Father Reinhold Baumann, mccj*)

Father Graziadio Mengalli (4.5.1942 – 16.7.2023)

Graziadio (better known as Graziano) was born in Caselle di Sommacampagna (Verona) on 4th May 1942, to Angelo and Assunta Bonesini. He attended elementary school in the village. In 1953 he entered the episcopal seminary of Roverè Veronese. It's no surprise: his brother Cesare was already in a Comboni seminary, determined to become a missionary.

Graziano attended two years of middle school with good results, but the sudden illness of his father forced him to leave the seminary and return home, to help out with the work in the fields and thus help the family. He still managed to get his middle school diploma.

In 1958, his father died. The weight of the family now fell on Graziano's shoulders. Since the small farm was not enough to support the family, in 1960 he took on his first job.

In 1962, he enrolled in the course for general nurses in a hospital in Verona. The following year he began to practice at the Geriatric Hospital of Verona and worked there until 1968. Taking care of the sick and elderly satisfied him and considered it an important service for society. This option will remain a constant in his life. Meanwhile, his brother Cesare became a Comboni priest (1965) and left for the missions of Uganda.

On 10th October 1968, Graziano also entered the Institute, at the Apostolic School of Pordenone, as a postulant brother. In March 1969 he entered the novitiate in Florence, and, on 9th September 1970, he took his first religious vows.

In the meantime, a change of perspective on his missionary vocation had developed in him and he asked to become a priest. The judgment of the formators was favourable.

Graziano then moved first to the seminary of Carraia for two years of high school before moving to Crema to begin his philosophy studies. In September 1972, he went to the scholasticate in Rome to begin his theology studies. In August 1974, he was sent to the international scholasticate of

Granada (Spain) to complete his theology. On 9th September 1975, he made his final profession in Verona. Finally, on 14th October 1978, Graziano was ordained a priest in the parish church of Rebbio by Bishop Teresio Ferraroni.

On 12th December 1979, Father Graziano left for Peru. From 1980 to 1984 he was parish priest in Huánuco mission, in the Andes Mountain range, at an altitude of 2,000 metres. The parish, named after San Pedro, had 75,000 inhabitants, and covered a vast mountainous territory, with many “pueblos” (small villages), some of which were located at an altitude of 4,000 metres. In turn, the six Comboni Missionaries present would visit them all, celebrating Mass and administering the sacraments.

To visit the nearest villages, Father Graziano and his brothers use a Volkswagen ‘Beetle’. But where there were no roads, they had to go on horseback. Father Graziano often found it hard to cope with the rarefied air lacking in oxygen.

The area was infested by *Sendero Luminoso* terrorists who were very active at that time. On several occasions, they threatened the missionaries, including Father Graziano but he feared nothing and no one.

Father Graziano was called to work at the Provincial House in Lima as bursar of the province of Peru-Chile from 1984 to 1994 and was in charge of missionary animation (1994-1996).

At Christmas 1988, in a long letter to Father General, Francesco Pierli, he took stock of his first 10 years of mission. “I have spent these years as the ‘patient sower’ who throws the seed into the earth... Seed which then sprouts, grows, and bears fruit. I decided to become a missionary precisely for this reason: to sow the Word of the Gospel among people who do not yet know it. I am profoundly happy with this ‘election’ of mine. If necessary, I’d start over. I feel fully fulfilled... Like in a film, I see these ten years pass before my eyes: all the work done, the many initiatives carried out, all the people I have met along my journey: the catechism children, the young people of the various groups of the Word, the groups of spouses who were my traveling companions... So many people!”

In 1992, he took a sabbatical in Rome, then returned to Lima for missionary animation until December 1995.

From March 1996 until Christmas 2000 he served in the Mother House of Verona as head of the Centre for the Sick and Elderly. In 2001 he returned to Peru. From 2002 to 2007 he was parish priest of the new parish/mission Señor de los Milagros, in the very poor suburbs (the so-called *pueblos jóvenes*) of Trujillo (central-northern Peru). In 1993 he was appointed vicar general of the archdiocese of Trujillo by Monsignor Héctor Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte. The archdiocese has 1,400,000 inhabitants.

From 2007 to 2010 he was responsible for the Missionary Animation Centre in Lima. Since 2011, he worked at the Provincial House of Lima as vice-superior. Later, he was appointed superior of the community, and would remain so until the day of his death, which occurred on 17th July 2023. (*Father Gianni Gaiga, mcccj, and FM*).

Fr. Robert David Hicks (30.06.1938 – 24.07.2023)

Father Robert (“Bob”) was born on 30th June 1938, in a working-class area of West Belfast, the first of six children. He attended secondary school at St. Malachy’s College in Belfast, run by the Christian Brothers. He would always say how proud he was of this ‘imprint’ received from the Christian Brothers and always speak highly of them.

In his boyhood, Bob was a fervent altar boy at the nearby Clonard Monastery. He soon discovered his vocation and applied to enter the House of Studies – of the Comboni Missionaries in Sunningdale, where he took his first vows on 9th September 1957, the feast of Saint Peter Claver.

Bob remained in Sunningdale until 1959, when he moved to Italy, first to the Verona scholasticate, then to that of Venegono Superiore, to study theology, where he distinguished himself, eventually obtaining a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Theological Faculty of Milan.

After completing his studies, he was ordained a priest in the Votive Temple of Verona, on 28th June 1964, by the hands of Card. Gregorio Pietro Agagianian, Prefect of Propaganda Fide. That day was a historic one in Comboni annals: Father Bob, in fact, was one of 54 new Comboni priests, the largest group of ordained in the history of our Institute! And he never tired of repeating it: “It was a wonderful day, made so also by the presence of my parents, brothers and relatives.”

In the first two years of ministry, Father Bob was in the London community, in Dawson Place, as vocations promoter and director of the Comboni missionary magazine in English, *Missions*. During this time, he visited primary and secondary schools across the country, recruiting several candidates, including the late Father Paul Felix. Above all, he proved instrumental in giving new impetus to the magazine, creating a tradition that continues to this day. For two years (1968-1969), he was vice-rector at the minor seminary of Mirfield, West Yorkshire.

From October 1969 to 1972, Father Bob worked among the Lango people of northern Uganda, in the diocese of Lira. He took care of the parish ministry and, in his free time, the editing of a monthly diocesan newspaper that he founded at the behest of the local bishop, Caesar Asili.

Upon returning to his homeland, he was appointed rector of the minor seminary of Mirfield, where he remained for four years. From 1975 to 1981, Father Bob was provincial superior of the London Province: a task which he carried out with wisdom and great dedication.

At the end of this period, he was sent to the missions of Brazil, where he remained until 1990. After a short period of studying the language in São Paulo, he moved to the parish of Ouro Preto do Oeste, a city in the state of Rondônia. Father Clark still remembers: "The parish of Our Lady Aparecida, in Ouro Preto do Oeste, was his first parish. People loved his homilies, his conferences and his retreats. Everything he said was simple and profound at the same time." Later, Father Bob became pastoral coordinator and even vicar general of the diocese of São Mateus, in the state of Espírito Santo.

After his return in 1990, he worked in the field of missionary animation and was again elected Provincial Superior from 1992 to 1998. He was always convinced that the Comboni Province of London should make its contribution to the Institute, financially supporting our missions and our missionaries abroad.

With the exception of a few years spent in communities in central London, Leeds and Dublin, Father Bob happily spent much of his time in Sunningdale, where he had begun his missionary life in 1955. From 1992 onwards, in addition to being the superior or the provincial bursar, he loved to spend the afternoons taking care of the gardens. He particularly loved this community where he spent the last twenty-six years of his life, admired and loved by the faithful who attended the Church of the Sacred Heart. It was 'fitting', therefore, that he died peacefully in his room, in the early morning of 24th July 2023.

Although he was not, in life, what one might call 'overly pious', in his last years, Father Bob was exemplary in his dedication to the divine office, in his assiduous reading of the Holy Scriptures and in his faithful daily celebration of Mass. Although he had retired from public ministry due to memory loss, he was always available to hear the confession of anyone who knocked on his door.

To his family in Belfast, he was always a loving son, brother, and uncle. For the Comboni Family, he has always been the wise and loved brother. For the faithful he was an exemplary priest and missionary. To many others, he was simply a friend, admired and loved for his kind and polite ways, and appreciated for his wit and that special charm typical of the people of Belfast.

Father Bob left a legacy of great faith and dedication to the Gospel, and we all thank him for this richness that he passed on to us and that we

would like to live in our daily lives. We will miss him. We pray that he may rest in peace, joy and light, and be resurrected in the glory of God. “*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis*” (“May his faithful soul be at God’s right hand”). (*Father John Downey, mccj*).

Father Luigi Bianchini (15.01.1947 – 21.08.2023)

Luigi was born on 15th January 1947 in Berbenno di Valtellina, in the province of Sondrio. He attended the first four elementary classes in the village but for the fifth class he was already in the Comboni seminary in Rebbio di Como. A meeting with a missionary visiting his village was enough for him to make this decision.

From Rebbio, Luigi went to the Crema seminary for middle school and high school. He will also spend three years of high school in Crema where the students attended city’s diocesan seminary. On 1st October 1968, he entered the novitiate in Gozzano for the first year. In July 1969 he was sent to Sunningdale (England) for the second year. The final report, signed by the novice master Father Aleardo De Berti, is a series of warm praises and approvals: “Good, docile, open and generous, frank, joyful, hardworking, committed, enthusiastic about music, sport and apostolic work – Overall opinion: very positive.” On 9th September 1970, the feast of Saint Peter Claver, patron of the Comboni Institute, he took his first religious vows. Immediately afterwards, he moved to Elstree (Herts, UK), for the scholasticate, attending philosophy and theology courses at the Missionary Institute of London (MIL).

On 8th December 1973, he made his perpetual religious profession and, at Christmas, was ordained a deacon. He then returned to Italy where he was assigned to the community of Troy for four months of pastoral service. On 29th June 1974, he was ordained a priest in his parish of Berbenno by the Comboni bishop Monsignor Diego Parodi.

Father Luigi would like to leave for the mission immediately, but his superiors assign him to the Italian province, as a formator in the minor seminary of Brescia and missionary animator in the diocese. For Father Luigi, those were splendid years, characterised by self-giving and great creativity in accompanying adolescents on their journey of missionary formation.

Finally, in April 1981, Father Luigi was assigned to the province of Khar-toum. Once in the Sudanese capital, he threw himself headlong into the study of Arabic, a language that he found extremely difficult. Unfortunately, after only two years, Father Luigi suffers a serious setback to his health in the form of a deep nervous breakdown. Those who knew him attribute this mental breakdown partly to the fact that he had been on a

mission alone for a long time, and partly to the severe stress he felt in learning Arabic and dealing with the harsh climate of the Red Sea.

A person prone to perfectionism, Father Luigi felt deeply wounded by the illness which would affect him for the rest of his life. However, he sought refuge in his faith. In the last letter he wrote to his family from Port Sudan he said: “Now I know what it means to live the following of Christ first-hand: it infallibly involves carrying the cross”.

With death in his heart, Father Luigi was forced to return to his homeland. He stayed a year (July 1986 – June 1987) in Verona for treatment but he showed no signs of improvement. As from 1st July of the same year, he was assigned to Italy and he moves to the community of Rebbio, a place not very far from his family. It is a home for sick missionaries but offers the residents the possibility of devoting themselves to small ministerial services in nearby parishes. In July 1988, he was assigned to the postulancy of Florence: it was thought that in a youthful environment he would gradually find his previous the energy and enthusiasm for the missionary life. He remained there for 18 years!

In 2006, Father Luigi said he felt “much better” and was ready to leave for a second mission experience in Africa. He kept repeating it to many brothers, and the news reached the superiors in Rome who had their doubts. However, he was determined: he felt fit to leave for the mission and asked permission to do so. The superiors say ‘yes’ verbally. In October 2006, he boarded a plane to Cairo where he was welcomed with open arms by the brothers of the Zamalek community. He then resumed his study of Arabic, but with less keenly. In Zamalek he also had the possibility of serving in the parish, sometimes through English or French. Father Richard Kyankaaga writes: “I remember how happy Father Luigi was to come to Egypt. He radiated joy from every pore. He was always cheerful and always ready for this or that service. He knew how to measure his strength and was very careful not to overdo things. His presence was constantly felt, and positively.”

Thus, on 1st July 2007, he was officially assigned to the Delegation of Egypt and was immediately assigned to Aswan, where he remained for six years. In 2013 he was called again to Zamalek, where he remained until 2018, as local bursar and an esteemed animator of the liturgy.

In March 2019, Father Luigi returned to Italy for his holidays. He underwent routine medical tests which revealed a very aggressive malignant tumour (*melanoma*). In May, he went to the Centre for Sick and Elderly Confreres in Brescia.

Father Girolamo Miante, superior of the CAA of Brescia, writes: “The four years that I lived with Father Luigi were beautiful. Despite his illness, he

lived them with commitment and joy. He always tried to give the best of himself in community life, in the pastoral services that were possible for him, in his missionary testimony.”

Towards mid-August 2023, Father Luigi underwent careful tests, and his diagnosis was “A violent malignant resurgence of melanoma”. Given the impossibility of continuing the specific therapies – now ineffective –, he opted for inclusion in a community equipped for palliative care. On 21st August, he was urgently transferred to Castel d’Azzano, but already suffering from illness, he passed away two hours after his arrival. His funeral was celebrated on the 23rd, in the CAA chapel in Castel d’Azzano.

After the funeral, the remains were taken to Berbenno di Valtellina. On the 24th, a memorial mass was celebrated in the parish church and, then, his body was interred in the family tomb. (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj, Father Diego Dalle Carbonare, mccj, Father Girolamo Miante, mccj, et alii*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHER: Martin Ngartambaye, of Fr Alfred Mbaïdjide (TCH).

THE MOTHERS: Magdalena Giacomini, of Fr Alcides Costa (E); Rita, of Mons. Damiano Guzzetti (U); Maria, of Fr Renzo Piazza (I).

THE BROTHERS: Gianni, of Fr Giuseppe Brunelli (I) and Sr Anna (CMS in RD Congo) (I); Mariano, of Fr Ignacio López Toro (M); Miguel Ángel, of Fr Luis Francisco Arellano Pérez (M); Domenico, of Bro Giuseppe Lagattola (I).

THE SISTER: Teresa Battistella, of Fr Alfonso Zulianello (T).

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Sr. Iolanda Mazzocchi (I); Sr. M. Angela Colombara (I); Sr. Claudina Racano (I); Sr. M. Maddalena Vergis (I).

THE SECULAR COMBONI MISSIONARY: Filomena Ninivaggi (I).

**“The Cross is the standard
to plant the work of God ...
and the road to
the resurrection of Africa”
(Comboni, *Writings* 3128, 5559)**

