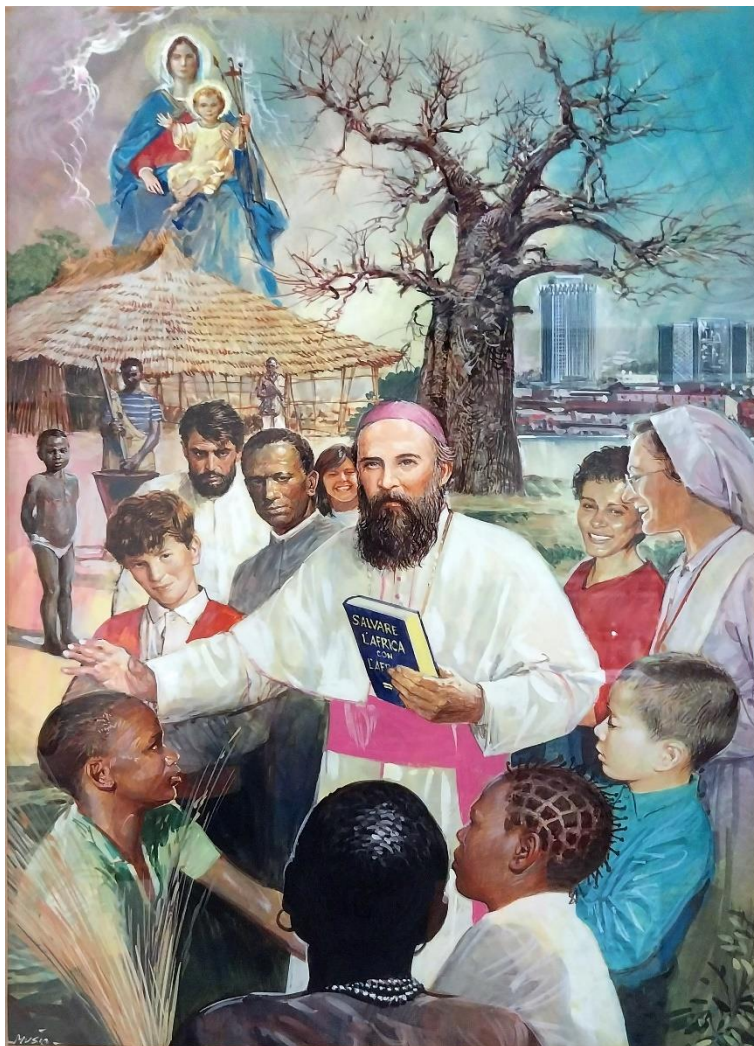


Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

831

July-August 2024



GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL NOTES OF THE 27TH GENERAL CONSULTA May-June 2024

Appointments by the General Council

During the 27th Consulta the General Council appointed:

- Fr. Mboka Ngere Faustin (Beirut) superior of the formation community of Beirut as from 1.9.2024.
- Fr. Giudici Stefano (Casavatore) superior of the scholasticate of Casavatore as from 1.9.2024.
- Fr. Dimonekene Sungu Edmond (Cape Coast) formator and bursar of the scholasticate of Cape Coast as from 1.9.2024.
- Fr. Zimba Brighton Multiply (Beirut) formator and bursar of the formation community of Beirut as from 1.9.2024.
- Fr. Antonio Lopez (La Grange Park) formator of the formation community of La Grange Park as from 1.7.2024.
- Bro. Degan Alberto (C-CFP) bursar of the Ongoing Formation Centre as from 1.9.2024.
- Fr. Tesfamariam Ghebrecristos Woldeghebriel (C), superior of the Student Brothers Community as from 1.9.2024.
- Fr. Miniero Pasquale (EC) member of the Finance Council of the America Asia Continent as from 1.7.2024, for three years.
- Fr. Kakule Muvawa Justin (CN) member of the Mission Council for the sub-Continent of Francophone Africa (ASCAF) as from 1.7.2024, for three years.

Rotation of personnel

The GC expresses a certain degree of unease with regards to dialogue on the rotation of confreres within the Institute. At times, at the point of rotation, when confreres are contacted, it is found that dialogue has already taken place between provincials of different circumscriptions and those directly involved, without having communicated with the GC. In some cases, this includes offers of posts of responsibility. This manner of proceeding does not, in fact, assist the planning of personnel since it does not allow the organisation and optimum deployment of confreres in various activities, both within the Institute and in the provinces. And there is more. The lack of correlation between the proposals made by provincials and those of the GC causes delays in making assignments since it is necessary, in different phases, to recommence the dialogue and again motivate the confrere so as to reach a final decision. All these

automatisms cause frayed and strained relationships and condition responses. It is true that the *Rule of Life* (116) and the *Vademecum of Continentality* leave room for the exchange of personnel and facilitate the passage of personnel from one province to another, but this must always take place under the supervision of and dialogue with the GC. It is therefore good for a provincial who intends to start a dialogue with a confrere of another juridical affiliation to first ask for the opinion of the General Council and then, if he obtains approval to proceed, while making sure to involve the provincial of the circumscription to which the confrere belongs by right.

General Assembly of Missionary Animation

From 22nd to 26th April, the General Assembly of Missionary Animation (AGAM) was held in Rome. We invite the participants to share the material and conclusions of this Assembly with the confreres of their circumscriptions. The AGAM was a starting point to motivate all the confreres to renew their contribution to this missionary service in the various current contexts. AGAM material, in three languages, is available on the website of the General Secretariat of the Mission (SGM):

- IT <https://combonimission.net/language/it/azione-missionaria/>
- EN <https://combonimission.net/language/en/mission-animation/>
- ES <https://combonimission.net/language/es/animacion-misionera/>

The SGM is available to assist the circumscriptions in the distribution of this material.

Reunion of the General Councils of the Comboni Family in Verona

The General Councils of the Comboni Family (FC) - Comboni Missionaries, Comboni Sisters, the Seculars and also Alberto de la Portilla, coordinator of the central committee of the Comboni Lay Missionaries - met for their annual meeting from 14 to 16 June, at the new headquarters of the Secular Comboni Missionaries in Verona. The main theme of the meeting was "The charismatic family". To help reflect and delve deeper into this theme, the concrete testimony of the experience of the Family of San Giovanni Calabria of Verona was heard. The Comboni Family brings a precious common charism that has grown and developed in ever-renewed ways. Even today, Comboni's inspiration is updated throughout history to respond to the challenges of the mission of today. We are all invited to grow in this essential dimension of our charism and to create living collaboration in the concrete realities of our missions at all levels, both at community level, through the various works we carry out together, and at provincial level.

First professions 2024

With heartfelt gratitude, the GC informs all the confreres that this year 51 novices made their first profession in the Institute. Of these 51, 5 are brothers. 14 come from the novitiate of Magambe (Congo), 5 from Nam-pula (Mozambique), 23 from Namugongo (Uganda), 2 from Manila (Philippines), 7 from Xochimilco (Mexico). The GC is grateful to all the vocational promoters and formators who accompanied these newly professed and entrusts them to the grace of God for their future journey.

General Assembly of Formation - Rome 8-27 July 2024

The GC reminds the entire Institute that the General Assembly of Formation, which is celebrated every six years, will be held in Rome in July. The participants in this assembly are: the provincials in charge of the formation sector of each continent, the formators of the scholasticates, of the formation communities and of the CIF, the formators of the novitiates and a representative per continent of the formators of postulants. To all these formators are added the members of the General Secretariat of Formation and some members of the General Council. During this assembly the participants will also make proposals for the revision of formation in the Institute according to the chapter mandate. The GC asks all members of the Institute to accompany this event with their prayers.

The *memorial* of Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli

Almost two years have passed since the beatification of Father Giuseppe Ambrosoli, which took place on 20 November 2022 in Kalongo. The apostolic letter, in fact, set his "annual memorial" for 28 July. This year, being a Sunday, the *memorial* cannot be celebrated liturgically; *however, there is no impediment, if one wishes to remember it* with an appropriate intention in the invocations of the Holy Mass and also in the canon. When we mention our holy Founder, Saint Daniel (Comboni), we can also do so for Blessed Joseph (Ambrosoli), the first to be beatified among the Comboni Missionaries. It is superfluous to reiterate the great significance of Blessed Joseph, both for his joyful sense of belonging to the Comboni Family and for his privileged missionary testimony which inextricably unites theology of inculturation and theology of liberation. If anyone would like to know more, the latest text produced on Father Dr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli, "Announcement beyond words", is a useful aid to read, consult and translate.

Perpetual professions

Sc. Muyisa Kapitula Mumbere	Isiro (CN)	12.05.2024
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Ordinations

Fr. Gabriel Panguanito Hilário	Ribaué (MO)	11.05.2024
Fr. Tekle Melaku Wolde	Gura Awiyate (ET)	01.06.2024

Holy Redeemer Guild

July	01 – 15 KE	16 – 31 M
August	01 – 15 MO	16 – 31 MZ
September	01 – 15 NAP	16 – 30 PCA

Prayer Intentions

July – For those taking part in the Formation Assembly of the Comboni Missionaries: that the Holy Spirit may grant them an abundance of wisdom and discernment, creativity and service, communion and concord of vision. *Let us pray.*

August – That, in a world that is increasingly “a global village due to the migrations of peoples, our multicultural communities may be examples of understanding, hope and interior richness. *Let us pray.*

September – For the Secular Comboni Missionaries who, from 20th September to 1st October are celebrating their Extraordinary General Assembly for the approval of their reviewed and updated Constitution. May the Holy Spirit accompany them and may St Daniel Comboni intercede for them so that the event may be a sign of renewal and new vitality for their mission in the Church and in the world. *Let us pray*

Comboni liturgical calendar

JULY

28	Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli	Memorial
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SEPTEMBER

9	St Peter Claver, priest <i>Patron of the Institute</i>	Solemnity
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Meaningful anniversaries

AUGUST

2	St Frumenties, bishop	Ethiopia
15	The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	South Africa
23	St Rose of Lima, virgin	Peru, Chile
28	St Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church	Kenya

SEPTEMBER

9	St Peter Claver, priest <i>Patron of the Institute</i>	Chad Columbia
14	The Exaltation of the Holy Cross	general

CURIA

Feast of the friends and benefactors of the Generalate in Rome

On May 5th, the friends and benefactors of the Comboni missionaries of the community of the Generalate met to celebrate a half day on the theme of the mission.

There were two most significant moments of the gathering. The first was the testimony of Father Brighton Zimba, originally from Zambia, who spoke of his life and his missionary work in the complex reality of Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, which was created after the outbreak of the civil war in the country on 15th April 2023.

Father Brighton described the situation as terrible. The conflict has already caused at least 20 thousand deaths and over 100 thousand injuries. Internally displaced people now exceed eleven million. Refugees in neighbouring countries – Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Libya and Egypt – number more than three million. The entire population of Sudan (45.5 million) is suffering a devastating humanitarian crisis, which has led to frequent calls from Pope Francis and the international community for an urgent ceasefire, to give space for dialogue and resolution of the conflict.

After of Father Brighton's testimony, the painting by Nicola Maciarelo, depicting Saint Daniel Comboni, entitled *I Remain with You Forever*, was presented. This was followed by a well-attended Eucharistic celebration presided over by Father Brighton.

The painting (150 cm x130 cm) is the work of the talented painter Nicola Maciarelo, a friend of the Curia community and expert in the artistic

settings of Neapolitan nativity scenes. The author, struck by the holiness and apostolic zeal of Saint Daniel Comboni, wanted to donate this painting to the Comboni community, saying that he was inspired by the splendid homily that Comboni held in the cathedral of Khartoum on the day of his installation as apostolic provicar, on 11th May 1873 (*Writings*, 3156–3164).

The painting depicts Comboni, not in Khartoum Cathedral, but outdoors, surrounded by a small crowd of people, adults and children. He has a piece of paper in his hand, on which the incipit of the homily can be read. The variety of conditions of his ‘listeners’ – the style of their clothes tells us that they are not members of the capital’s high society – suggests to us what kind of people Saint Daniele Comboni was addressing when he gave that famous sermon of his. It is to them – or people like them – that the future saint promised that he would remain with them forever, until his last breath on this earth and again, as their ‘father’, after his arrival in



heaven.

Comboni kept the first part of his promise when he died in Khartoum, on 10th October 1881, at the age of 51.

That he is keeping the second part of his solemn promise was confirmed by the Church with his canonisation on 5th October 2003, by Pope John Paul II.

His message – “I remain with you forever” – continues to inspire the missionary consecration of many

men and women who have made the original charism of the Founder their own, and his life remains an example – challenging, ambitious and, often, arduous – of a style of evangelisation worthy of being followed even today in the many difficult situations in which we Comboni men and women find ourselves operating.

Feast of the Sacred Heart

The community of the General Curia celebrated the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart on Friday, 7th June, with, a number of Comboni Missionaries present in Rome, some Comboni Sisters, Sisters from other Institutes and a nice group of friends and benefactors. The Mass was presided over by

His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, Pro-Prefect of the Section for First Evangelisation and New Particular Churches.

In the two brief reflections that he proposed, Card. Tagle spoke first of all about “the symbolism of the heart, which has always been present in cultures and religions, but which is also constantly evolving or changing... We often think we can control our heart and command it. But perhaps it is truer to say that it is our heart that dictates the rules. And then we should ask ourselves: what desires, spirits or movements in my heart determine the person I am? Only with the Spirit can our heart be like the heart of Jesus.”

As a second point, he recalled the fact that the Pierced Heart of Jesus was venerated as one of his holy wounds and urged us to ask ourselves: “Can a poor and suffering person still make a breach in our heart to bring out tenderness? Does the beauty of creation still pierce our hearts, so that we can praise God and share the goods of the earth with others? Is my heart a heart of flesh that can easily be pierced or is it a heart of stone that breaks any spear? Saint Daniel Comboni allowed his heart to be pierced by the suffering populations of Africa. The love of Jesus flowed from his heart, and this love continues to flow through the missionary testimony and commitment of his religious brothers and sisters. A heart full of the Spirit never tires of loving and serving.”

After the Eucharistic celebration, all those present were invited to share a buffet in the Curia refectory.

EGYPT-SUDAN

El Obeid – Responding to the need for good health

Ever since the war began in April 2023, life in Sudan has become much more complicated, especially when it comes to healthcare. The lack of food and the continuous increase in the cost of living have made everything more difficult. In response to this, some young people from the parish, professionals in the healthcare field, thought of a project to help the community. The aim is to provide basic medical check-ups and share some elements of medical knowledge to alleviate some of the daily suffering. The project is also concerned with responding to the trauma that many children have suffered through exposure to violence and often the loss of loved ones due to war. Many families have left their homes and sought refuge in the parish. This initiative is a clear example of the resilience of the Sudanese people and their solidarity – two qualities emerging in such a difficult time. *(Father Mina Albeer, mcci)*

Beirut – Workshop on finance

The workshop was held from 10th to 14th June, in the ‘Fr. Daniel Sorur’ formation house in Lebanon, and was led by the General Bursar, Father Angelo Giorgetti, with the participation of the Provincial Bursar, Father Lorenzo Baccin. Father Bonifacio Apaap also contributed with his online sharing from Helwan. The title of the workshop was *Caring for Creation – Administration and Responsibility*. Theoretical inputs were alternated with practical sessions using Excel.

An observation made by Father Angelo greatly impressed the scholastics: “If today the Church is under the scrutiny of public opinion due to errors against chastity, very probably in the future it will have to give an account of how it experienced poverty.”

Among the issues addressed, emphasis was given to the nature of the Total Common Fund and the need to find and administer human and economic resources in every province in which we are present. This formation moment was certainly much appreciated and remains an experience to be encouraged and repeated. (*Sc. Cristal Mamadou, mccj*)

Pastoral life in Kosti in wartime

The Kosti community is located in the pastoral region of Kosti, 360 km south of Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. The community has been made up of two Brothers since January 2023. The current situation is very fluid. However, we can compare it to Noah’s generation in the Old Testament, when people married, did business, farmed, planned for the future, while others were at war and mourning.

Regarding security, so far the situation seems to be under control, apart from the months of May and June, when we were visited by two drones that targeted the military base. The first killed one person; the second was intercepted by the army. Naturally, these two incidents created panic among the population. Even now, gunshots are often heard at night, but it seems that people have become used to it and are ready for whatever happens.

In May and June, the municipality of Kosti saw an influx of people from rural areas. The reasons were varied: lack of security, shortage of food or lack of work. Also, with the onset of the rains, many people prefer to come to the city. Unfortunately, given their growing numbers, many are living in the open air.

The number of our faithful has decreased somewhat. Those who remained are mostly young girls between 10 and 20 years old and some adults. (The boys fear being recruited by the conflicting parties, and many of them have moved to South Sudan.) However, despite everything, we

continue with our normal pastoral care: catechism, child care, the youth group, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist every Sunday or during the week in the two chapels we have at the moment. Furthermore, we take care of the nearby parish of Rabak, where there are currently no priests. (*Father Oswal Baptist, mccj*)

ESPAÑA

Meeting for the *Under 50s*

From 14th to 16th June, the annual 'Under 50s' meeting of the Comboni provinces of Spain and Portugal was held in the Comboni community of Madrid. Eight Fathers and one Brother participated – all the Comboni Missionaries of the two provinces under 50 years of age: three Congolese, two Portuguese, one Central African, one Mexican, one Mozambican and one Kenyan.

The purpose of the meeting was to encourage dialogue and create a space in which these 'younger' missionaries could freely share their experiences.

Friday 14th, dedicated to formation, was animated by the Claretian missionary Fr. Antonio Ballella. On Saturday 15th, the nine missionaries went to Segovia to visit the city, while Sunday 16th was dedicated to an exchange of experiences and the concluding Eucharistic celebration.

ETHIOPIA

Ordination of Father Melaku Wolde Tekle

Last June 1st, in the parish of San Salvatore in Gura Awiyate, in central Ethiopia, the priestly ordination of Deacon Melaku Wolde Tekle took place at the hands of Bishop Musei Ghebreghiorghis, outgoing Eparch of Emdiber. Also present were Bishop Luka Fikre, his successor, around 30 priests – including a group of Comboni Missionaries –, some Sisters, including the coordinator of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Ethiopia, with three candidates in formation, the Comboni pre-postulants and postulants, with their formators. The Eucharist, celebrated according to the Ethiopian Catholic rite, lasted three hours, was sung in Ge'ez (the ancient liturgical language) and in Amharic, creating a dialogue of prayer between celebrants, cantors and the faithful.

Father Melaku, 30 years old, entered the Postulancy in Addis Ababa, and then moved to the Novitiate of Lusaka (in Zambia) where he took his first vows on 6th May 2017. Having completed the theology courses in Naples

(Italy), he spent one year of missionary service in Gublak mission, among the Gumuz, in Ethiopia.

In his homily, Msgr. Musei said that the new priest had a long journey ahead of him as a messenger of Christ: "He no longer belongs to his family, because now he is a 'universal' person. We will pray for him and for his missionary activity. He will announce the Good News and practice interreligious dialogue."

At the end of the ceremony, Father Melaku said: "My heart is full of joy for the great gift that the Lord has given me. The Lord bent down over me, took my weaknesses and transformed them into grace... Being a minister and pastor of his beloved Church, through the Institute of the Comboni missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, is an immense gift from the Lord." The Provincial Superior, Father Asfaha Yohannes, after thanking all those present, announced that Father Melaku would begin to exercise his missionary priesthood in Mexico.

After the liturgy, everyone took their seats outside the church to share refreshments and offer some gifts to the new priest. A light rain blessed the occasion. All the guests then enjoyed a hearty lunch, with various traditional dishes.

Father Melaku celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving on Sunday 2nd June. Brother Desu Yisrashe organised everything beautifully. In the previous days, he had held missionary and vocational animation meetings with the faithful and young people of the parish of Gura Awiyate and the cathedral of Emdiber. (*Father Joe Vieira, mccj*)

The Bible in the Guji language

The *Kitaaba Woyyicha*, the Holy Bible in the Guji language, was presented to the public in a well-attended ceremony in Addis Ababa on 12th May 2024. The ecumenical translation of the entire Bible into the Guji language began in 2000 and took more than two decades to complete. The New Testament in Guji was published in 2007.

The core group of translators consisted of members of the Catholic, Lutheran, Light of Life, and Word of Life Churches. Many other Churches also participated in the project, offering technical and financial support.

During the ceremony, Father Pedro Pablo Hernández, a Comboni missionary who has worked among the Guji in Galcha, Haro Wato and Qillenso-Adola for over twenty years, read a message from Father Juan Antonio G. Núñez, mccj, Apostolic Administrator of Hawassa. "From now on, Gujis will be able to read the Word of God in their native language. This makes it more familiar and close to them, more intimate and dear to believers," wrote Father Núñez. The Apostolic Administrator underlined

the ecumenical character of the translation, “the fruit of collaboration between different Christian confessions.”

Tsegaye Hailemichael Barisso, the Catholic translator, resident in the Galcha mission, explained that the team used four main sources in its work: the *Good News Bible* (English), the old and new translations of the *Bible in Amharic* and the *Oromo Bible* (in the Oromo language of Wollega, western Ethiopia). The famous *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* was also used. The group of translators were assisted by some international consultants who prepared them for the work.

“The translation was not an easy undertaking,” acknowledged Tsegaye. “I started when I was little more than a boy and now I am a mature man. At the beginning, the work was also boring: it was necessary to search and find the exact common word, which is not always easy and takes a lot of time. Sometimes, it also cost suffering, such as when the available budget was not sufficient or was totally wanting. However, when I saw how people welcomed the Holy Bible in Guji, I felt great joy and all the old wounds were healed.”

The Ethiopian Bible Society had planned to print 50 thousand copies. But then many Churches joined the initiative and, thanks to the help of some donors, it was possible to print 200 thousand copies in two different formats.

The *Kitaaba Woyyicha* is a joint edition of The World for the Word-Ethiopia and the Bible Society of Ethiopia. The translation follows the Protestant canon. It is illustrated with a series of drawings that explain certain biblical passages or concepts. It has 1,650 pages. Biblical maps are in colour. The volume also contains a five-page glossary, which explains the origin of some words and their meaning.

The Guji people are part of the Oromo family and number two million people, divided into three main groups. They live in the mountains and lowlands of southern Ethiopia. In the past they were shepherds. Today, however, they also dedicate themselves to agriculture.

The Comboni missionaries began working among the Guji in 1976, occasionally providing apostolic assistance to some Sidama Catholics from Teticha, who had emigrated to Qillenso and Gosa. When the Sidama were expelled, the missionaries opened a mission in Qillenso and began evangelising the Guji in 1981. From Qillenso they then moved on to Soddu Abala (1984), Haro Wato (1995) and Adola (2016). The Jesuits, together with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) Sisters, opened a mission in Gosa in 1985, which today is an outstation of Qillenso. (*Father José Vieira, mccj*)

***Lectio Magna* of Father Scattolin at the PISAI**

On Friday, 31st May 2024, Father Giuseppe Scattolin held a conference at the Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (PISAI), during the closing ceremony of the 2023-2024 academic year.

Father Scattolin is a professor emeritus of the Institute and has worked for over 40 years in the Arab world, particularly in Lebanon, Egypt and Sudan. The title of his speech, suggested to him by the PISAI itself, is therefore obvious: "My personal experience as a witness to Christ in a world dominated by Islam." A world that he knows very well, where he has also received numerous awards for the rich and highly appreciated contributions he has offered, in particular on Sufi spirituality and literature, which represents the most mystical current of Islam.

Father Scattolin immediately said he was grateful for having attended classical high school 'in his time' which helped him develop an open-mindedness that proved fundamental in his journey towards the Islamic world.

He also praised the Second Vatican Council, which served as an invitation and encouragement to embrace modernity and diversity without prejudice. In this regard, he insisted on underlining that 'diversity' is a great resource which, if well exploited, can truly enrich our different identities. In terms of 'diversity in dialogue', however, he was keen to point out that the meeting and dialogue between Christians and followers of Islam requires a sincere need for conversion on both sides. To be honest, we must recognise that every person harbours within himself some type of violence that could explode at any moment and, therefore, must absolutely be recognised and denounced with courage.

He went on to state that true faith must necessarily pass through reason (mind) that is healthy and purified of all ulterior motives. Otherwise, faith can only degenerate into fideism, fanaticism, or extremism. The starting point of every fruitful dialogue is to courageously free us from the mask of preconceived knowledge of the other', which, in many cases, prevents us from knowing the other in depth.

One very stimulating part of Father Scattolin's delivery was that in which he reiterated that true dialogue includes the search for the five fundamental pillars present in every human culture and religion. The expression 'five pillars' surprised many. Everyone present was aware of the 'five pillars' of Islam: testimony of faith (*shahada*), prayer (*salat*), almsgiving (*zakaat*), fasting (*sawm*) and pilgrimage (*hajj*). For Father Scattolin, the five fundamental pillars of every culture and religion are: Mercy, Love, Truth,

Justice and Peace. Concluding his Lectio, Father Giuseppe urged all PISAI collaborators and students to continue to be “sentinels of encounter and dialogue” at different levels. (*Father Brighton Multiply Zimba, mccj*)

The Padua community remembers Father Valentino Saoncella

On the weekend of 14th-16th June 2024, the charismatic figure of Father Valentino Saoncella (1920-2011) was celebrated in his parish of Casale di Scodosia (Padua). The initiative, started by Father Gaetano Montresor, was supported by the family members of Father Valentino, the parish community with its parish priest Don Claudio Bellotto and his fellow villagers, also represented by the mayor.

On Friday, Father Montresor introduced the evening by presenting the most important biographical notes of Father Valentino. Father Giuseppe Caramazza explained the exhibition, which he prepared, which illustrates the missionary stages of our brother. Father Teresino Serra presented the man, the missionary and the three loves of Father Valentino: God, the Comboni vocation and the mission.

It was remembered that Father Valentino was a man of spontaneous and simple human relationships, a humble, but active and creative missionary. He was also, and above all, a man of prayer: he followed in the footsteps of Comboni who had taught his missionaries that prayer is the surest way to succeed in the mission, that prayer is talking to God about the mission (cf. *Writings*, 3615).

Father Teresino then spoke of a wound in Father Valentino’s heart, a wound that bled for years, despite his faith in God, a wound that is called ‘6th March 1964’, the date on which he, with all the Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Sisters, were expelled from Sudan.

The event ended with the sharing of a lunch, offered and organised by the parish priest and his community. It is indeed true that it is a grace to meet a parish priest with a missionary heart, who knows how to go beyond parish boundaries to scrutinise missionary horizons *ad gentes*. The Saoncella family was happy for the days dedicated to their missionary: “We have always been on the mission with our uncle and this weekend we returned to the mission with him,” said one of his great-grandsons. (*Father Gaetano Montresor, mccj*)

Verona: from the “O what a Summer” to “Africae” festival

Over the weekend from 14th to 16th June, the park of the Verona Motherhouse of the Comboni Missionaries and the halls of the African Museum became places where the first *Africae* festival took place.

This year, in fact, the Nigrizia Foundation wanted to expand the proposal of the now traditional "O what a Summer" festival, offering the city of Verona not only good music but also meetings and debates on topics relating to the African continent and proposals for meetings and knowledge with its literature.

And it was immediately clear that the combination of music and meetings would be a success, right from the first conference and the first musical evening: the seats in the hall of the African Museum used as a meeting room were sold out and many people were present for a much-appreciated musical program and for an equally-appreciated culinary program. The same thing was repeated on the following two days, both as regards the various debates (all sold out) and the musical and ethnic food.

A complete success, therefore, was this first edition of *Africae*, a place of celebration and meeting but also a space for debate and reflection. An open road to follow. Until next year. (*Bro. Antonio Soffientini, mccj*)

MOÇAMBIQUE

Five newly professed

On May 25, in the novitiate of São Francisco Xavier, in Nampula, the ceremony of the first vows of five new Comboni missionaries took place, at the end of the important two-year novitiate: Alves Martinho Sabonete, Dioqueltino Jaime Rodrigues, Manuel Elias Pahar Vermelho, Alberto Ramos and Télió Ernesto Maculane. The first four come from the archdiocese of Nampula; the fifth, from the archdiocese of Maputo.

For the "magnificent five" the important event marked the conclusion of the second stage of the demanding training journey which will end with priesthood. The motto chosen for this moment is significant; it opens before them the last phase of preparation, the one dedicated to theological studies: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (*Gal 2.20*). These words resounded several times during the ceremony, as an appeal for those who are called to respond with their own lives, making Paul's statement their own.

The celebration was presided over by Father José Joaquim Luís Pedro, provincial superior. Addressing the newly professed, he said: "You are consecrated by God, for God and for the poorest and most abandoned, according to the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni." The ceremony, which took place in a very familiar atmosphere, was attended by more than one hundred guests, including some confreres - priests and brothers -, Comboni Sisters and relatives and friends of the newly professed.

PROVINCIA DE CENTRO AMÉRICA

Ordination to the diaconate in Costa Rica

“I have not come to be served but to serve.” To say ‘Jesus the servant’ is to reaffirm Jesus as a deacon: these were the first words with which Msgr. Vittorino Girardi, a Comboni bishop, introduced the celebration of the diaconal ordination of the scholastic Chávez Ixchacchal Mynor Rolando, in the parish of Medalla Milagrosa, in San José, Costa Rica.

Mynor, a young Guatemalan who spent his formative years in Costa Rica, Mexico and South Africa, was ordained deacon on Saturday 15th June, in the presence of his parents and a brother, who travelled from Guatemala. Raised in a large family, he was grateful for the education he received, for the values and for the faith, because it was in his family that his call to the mission developed. Every place and every person was important to his life, he said.

And this was also evident in the participation of the Comboni Missionaries and their families in Costa Rica, of the Comboni Sisters and other religious of the Institutes who work in the area, of the Secular Comboni Sisters, of the Lay Comboni Missionaries, of the numerous faithful of the parish, of collaborators and friends of the mission: everyone contributed to making the ceremony solemn and moving.

The Province of Central America rejoices at the fact that a young man from our land is consecrated to the mission and is moving towards the priesthood. As Msgr. Vittorino said to Mynor, now a deacon: “May your joy infect other young people so that they think that this long journey is worth it.”

TOGO-GHANA-BENIN

Silver Jubilee of Radio Speranza

On 19th May 1999, a group of high school students from the Saint Esprit parish of Tabligbo (including John Hammond, now a Comboni priest in Florence) equipped with a microphone taken from the sacristy and a rudimentary antenna began to broadcast the first signal from a new radio, *Radio Jeunesse Espoir* (Radio Youth Hope). It was during the Pentecost novena, “a fruit of the Holy Spirit”, they said. And this year, on 19th May 2024, the solemnity of Pentecost, this radio celebrated its Silver Jubilee. In the meantime, it has changed its name; now it is called *Radio Speranza, la voix de la jeunesse* (Radio Speranza, the voice of youth). But its mission has not changed: to be an instrument of evangelisation and human promotion.

The parish priest at the time, Father Bruno Gilli, and the superior of the community, Father Elio Boscaini, although surprised by the audacity of those young people, decided to support the initiative: some classrooms of the old school were renovated, an antenna was erected (which today measures 60 metres), an adequate studio was prepared and, most importantly, the parishioners committed themselves to supporting, motivating and directing the radio station.

Today, after 25 years, that small seed that the Holy Spirit had sown in the hearts of those young people has become a large tree that bears fruit, far beyond the limits of our parish. This is therefore an opportunity, first of all, to say thank you! To God, first of all, because by inspiring this work he has demonstrated, once again, that he has faith in us and that, despite our poverty, he continues to entrust us with his mission of love. Then, to those who welcomed this gift from God into their hearts and minds and had the courage to believe that it was possible. To the brothers who have accompanied the radio in various ways and who continue to do so. To those who have given their availability to direct the radio, to those who are involved in the various broadcasts and work every day in the studio. And finally, to all the benefactors who never cease to support Radio Speranza.

What are the prospects today? The first is decidedly practical: achieving self-sufficiency. The expenses are considerably (1,000 euros per month, ordinarily) and resources are very limited: we are studying the creation of Income Generating Activities so that the Radio can support itself but can also plan and follow new paths. The second perspective is more pastoral and wants Radio Speranza to rediscover its vocation of being the 'voice of young people'. It was born at the initiative of the young people of 25 years ago, it is right now that the young people of today (of our parish but also of the city of Tabligbo) should see Radio Speranza as a companion on their journey, a possibility, a resource for their spiritual and human life...

We are aware that, like any human undertaking, *Radio Speranza's* journey has not been perfect or easy, but the enthusiasm and desire to respond to its vocation are still present. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit: therefore, let us be guided along the paths that the Spirit of God opens before us, with confidence, audacity and joy. Happy Birthday Radio Speranza! (Father Manuel Ceola, mcccj)

IN PACE CHRISTI

Brother Cosmas Ochan Okech (17.06.1991 – 07.04.2024)

Cosmas was born on 17th June 1991 in the village of Camgweng, in Kitgum district, in northern Uganda. He was the third of four children of Anthony Okech and Sabina Mego Anek. Anthony was a catechist in the Namokora parish and Sabina a committed Catholic. His family embodied the Christian faith.

In 2011 he was a student at the Daniel Comboni Vocational Institute in Layibi, Gulu, and in December 2012, he obtained a certificate in mechanical engineering. He then began to frequent the nearby Comboni postulancy: he made himself known to the formators who invite him to take part in events and initiatives that take place in the formation house. He began to get to know Daniel Comboni, the history of the Institute and the charism that animates the many Comboni missionaries who pass through the postulancy.

In August 2013 he 'officially' entered the Comboni postulate of Layibi, and continued his studies in mechanics.

What struck his formators was that Cosmas was almost the only one among the new postulancy candidates to be fully familiar with the life and activities of the Church. He was at ease in the liturgical celebrations, not only as an active participant but also as an animator.

On 16th April 2016, Cosmas – then 25 years old – wrote to Father Sylvester Hategek'Imana, provincial superior of Uganda, asking to be admitted to the novitiate. The answer was affirmative and on 23rd August 2016, he went to the novitiate in Namugongo. The two years of novitiate flew by. He did not mind working and always found something to do. With Brother Rinaldo Pendin, he completed many repairs and renovations of the house. On 1st May 2018, Cosmas took his first temporary vows.

In September, he flew to Bogotá, at the International Brothers Centre (CIF). Cosmas would have liked to continue his mechanical engineering studies, but the trainers did not agree. He then dedicated himself with all possible commitment to other courses that the scholasticate prescribes and to the apostolate among Afros, touching the lives of many young people and families.

At the end of March 2021, he received his final destination in Uganda: the provincial council is looking for a person like Cosmas for missionary animation, vocational promotion and apostolate among young people.

At the end of 2021, Cosmas went to Kampala as a member of the community of the parish of Mbuya, but resident in a community in the sub-

parish of Banda, 7 km from Mbuya, where the Centre for vocational promotion and missionary animation is located.

Brother Cosmas immediately enrolled in the first level degree course in Mechanical and Production Engineering at the University of Kyambogo where, a few weeks later, he was chosen as spokesperson for the Acholi Students' Association. In the parish he dedicated himself to the apostolate, animating Catholic associations and imparting splendid catechesis to students who wished to receive the sacraments.

In January 2023, the Comboni Missionaries of Uganda created the *Laudato Si'* Comboni Centre (LSCC) to coordinate the activities of the newly formed organisation called *Combonian Action for the Environment and Human Promotion* (CAEHP in the English acronym), and entrusted it to Brother Cosmas, appointing him director.

On 7th October 2023, Cosmas organised the '*Laudato Si'* Mbuya Symposium' in the large (and important) parish of Mbuya. Its success was amazing: the next day, the radio, TV and newspapers were full of it.

On the afternoon of Saturday 6th April 2024, Brother Cosmas had to go to Mulago Medical School, where he was called to attend an important function of the Acholi Students Union Association but the boda-boda on which he was traveling collided head-on with an oncoming van at high speed. Cosmas suffered numerous fractures and wounds and lost a lot of blood. He is taken to the nearby hospital of Naguru but his wounds were serious and he had to be taken to larger Mulago Hospital where he was operated on; he seemed to be out of danger but on Sunday 7th, at 10.00, he has a sudden internal haemorrhage. The doctors rushed to help but nothing could be done and he died a short time later.

That same evening a memorial Mass was celebrated at the Banda Vocational Centre. On the 8th, a memorial mass was celebrated in the parish of Our Lady of Africa in Mbuya. The funeral took place on the 10th, in the parish church of Namokora after which he was buried in the local cemetery. (*Father Anthony Kibira, mccj, Father John Kennedy Onoba, mccj, Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Brother Giuseppe Redaelli (10.03.1948 – 27.04.2024)

Giuseppe, known to all as 'Peppo', was born in Casatenovo in Como Province on 10th March 1948. He attended primary school in the village, then enrolled in the secondary vocational school, where he obtained his diploma in September 1962.

The following year, the family moved to Milan, where a new parish dedicated to the Guardian Angels was being built. Although only fourteen

years old, Peppo spent all his free time in the new oratory: for over 15 years he would carry out a real service as an 'oratory assistant', not disdaining even act as a sacristan. A *factotum* sacristan, to be honest. In the parish youth group, he promoted and organised monthly meetings for the study of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. He attended courses offered by the diocese for the preparation of the Sunday liturgy, becoming a true 'expert'. And he was always the first to take on the necessary manual work. He soon became known jokingly as '*perpetual motion*'.

All the youngsters (and their parents) looked to him as a guide and reference point, because in the oratory he knew how to be a companion for everyone in games, prayer meetings and summer camps.

In 1973, thanks to Peppo's initiative, the parish missionary group was founded with the commitment of a real twinning – which lasted several years – with Father Bruno Maccani, a Comboni missionary in Ethiopia, in the mission of Fullasa, among the ethnic group of the Sidamo. Once he had met Father Bruno, Giuseppe wanted to become a Comboni member too. In 1977 he was in Venegono for a GIM meeting. He was enthusiastic about the GIM and never missed a single meeting for a whole year. In June 1979, he began the novitiate in Venegono.

At the end of this second stage of the formation course, the opinion is flattering: "He has a mature personality. He is sensitive to people. It enjoys a transparent character. He carries out his commitments with a great sense of responsibility... He is eager to live and bear witness to his faith with joy... His need to keep up to date on the problems of the mission is strong and he does not miss the opportunity to learn more about the "specific mission of the Brother" and on his particular working style. His practical sense, his amazing ability to learn and his past experiences allow him to be versatile in his performances."

On 6th June 1981, he made his first religious profession. In July he went to Elstree, England, to study English, which he learned well and quickly. In June 1982 he gained an English language certificate at the University of Cambridge. In the meantime, he continued his carpentry and mechanics courses at a technical institute. He was now ready for the scholasticate.

In August 1982 he was at the International Brothers' Centre, recently opened in Gilgil, Kenya. He threw himself into studying Kiswahili, so as not to have to limit himself to the specialisation courses offered at the Village Polytechnic, held in English. He also wanted to go to the villages, meet people, and participate in the life of the Christian communities, and he wants to know the language that everyone speaks.

When he was asked to express his option for the future mission field, he chose South Sudan and was assigned there from 1st January 1984. For the ceremony of his perpetual vows, the community of Juba opted for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, on 26th May 1987.

In July 1988, Brother Peppo was assigned to the community of Wau, as bursar of the community and of the various health and educational institutions present in the vast parish. In a short time, he settled with admirable dedication into the various jobs entrusted to him also by the diocese: director of the Development Office, assistant in the diocesan administration and manager of the workshops scattered in the various missions. On 1st January 1990 he was elected provincial councillor; he would be re-elected in 1993.

In September 1991, he was in Rome for the General Chapter, as a representative of the brothers of his macro-region. He listened to talk that worried him somewhat and there was talk of his return to his home province. In fact, in March 1992, Father David Glenday, the new superior general, sent Brother Giuseppe an official letter in which he assigned him to the Province of Italy from 1st July 1992.

In July 1992, Brother Giuseppe was already in Verona, ready to take over from Brother Bruno Guardini. He soon settled into the new job. He had his own way of doing things, but the procurator's services showed no signs of diminishing; on the contrary... The confreres of the Mother House welcomed him with open arms and it didn't take them long to discover the qualities of the new arrival.

Often, during the weekends, Brother Giuseppe escaped to Milan to visit his sisters and spend some time in the parish. There he would speak and share information on the situation in Sudan. He met the missionary group to which he always presented new small projects to sponsor. And for their beloved '*perpetual motion*', all parishioners were ready to go into action. On Mondays, as always, he would send a message to the brothers in Wau with the notification: "Project accepted and approved. Get started. Funds ensured."

In January 1996, Brother Giuseppe was elected a provincial councillor. He would remain so until October 1999, when he also leaves the office of provincial procurator to go to Germiston, in South Africa, to participate in the Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation, until June 2000. It was while he was in Germiston that, in March 2000, he received a letter from the Superior General, Father Manuel Augusto Ferreira, assigning him to the province of Khartoum starting from 1st July of the same year.

From Germiston he went directly to the Sudanese capital, where he was welcomed at the Comboni College to study Arabic: he learned enough to

enable him to communicate (he would continue to study Arabic and achieved a fairly good standard). His reputation as a good administrator also preceded him in Khartoum. Already in April 2001, the bishop wanted him as a member of the diocesan finance control commission. In July 2001, the provincial council appointed him bursar and provincial procurator, and he moved to the provincial house. In March 2003, the Superior General appointed him a member of the General Council for the Economy, for Anglophone Africa and Mozambique.

For a good eight years, Brother Giuseppe managed the difficult task of maintaining relations between the various Comboni communities operating in the vast territory, of following their projects and dealing with the movements of the missionaries and their relationships with the local authorities and with various humanitarian organisations, apart from those that were religious.

In November 2008, the Khartoum provincial council assigned him to the parish of Wau as the local bursar, but Bishop Rudolf Deng Majak immediately requested him as diocesan administrator. In December 2010, the provincial council accepted the request of the bishop of Wau to extend the service that Brother Giuseppe was providing to the diocese for another two years. On 1st July 2011, he was reconfirmed administrator of the diocese of Wau until 31st December 2013.

On 1st January 2014, he was called to Juba, the capital of the new state, to the Comboni House, which served as the provincial headquarters, as bursar and provincial procurator, a service he held in an excellent manner until the end of 2020. In June 2022, he was again appointed as a member of the General Financial Council for Anglophone Africa and Mozambique. In July, the archbishop of Juba asked him to become a member of the financial council of the diocese.

In January 2024, Brother Giuseppe did not feel well. The bishop and his confreres invited him to slow down the pace of the work. He promised to do so but ... On 23rd April, he complained of feeling unwell. The superior of the community, Father Gilingere Limingere Lwanga, took him to the hospital. He had a high fever. He was tested for malaria with a positive result. He was given antimalarials but the fever shows no signs of abating. Two days later, he went into a coma and, on the morning of the 24th, around 5.20 am, he died.

The funeral was celebrated on 27th April at the Cathedral of Wau, presided over by Msgr. Matthew Remijio Adam Gbitiku. After the service, the diocesan radio-web called the city population to gather at the cemetery in the Lokoloko district, where the remains were buried next to the tombs of numerous Comboni missionaries who died in the diocese of Wau.

On 26th May, the 'month's mind' Mass was celebrated in the Milanese parish of the Guardian Angels, presided over by Father Fabio Baldan, provincial superior of Italy. (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

LA MOTHER: Bruna, of Father Ottorino Poletto (EC).

THE BROTHERS: Laurence, of Father Patrick Wilkinson (LP); Gianpietro, of Father Roberto Ardini (CN); Desta, of Father Iskias Mehari Abraha (M); Hermínio, of Brother António Almeida Borges (P).

THE SISTERS: Paula, of Father Elias Afolá Kossi (EC); Alemitu, of the Sc. Abate Abebe Denkeka (ET);

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sr. Adelaide Bertocchi; Sr. Amabile Birtele.

THE SECULAR COMBONI MISSIONARY: Giovanna Dal Ben.

MISSIONARI COMBONIANI – VIA LUIGI LILIO 80 – ROMA
