

FAMILIA COMBONIANA

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

832

September 2024

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF FORMATION JULY 2024



“The revision of formation as a journey, to be rooted in Christ in the footsteps of Comboni”.



GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL NOTES OF THE 28TH CONSULTA (extraordinary), 2-3 July 2024

Appointments by the Holy See

On 3rd July 2024, the Holy Father erected the Diocese of Bentiu (South Sudan), with territory taken from the Diocese of Malakal, making it a suffragan of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Juba, and appointed its first Bishop H.E. Mons. Christian Carlassare, MCCJ, hitherto Bishop of Rumbek. We congratulate Mons. Christian Carlassare and assure him of our constant prayers, our continued remembrance and our closeness to him in his new episcopal ministry in Bentiu.

Appointments by the General Council

- On 2nd July 2024, the GC appointed Fr. Otieno Onesmas Godfrey as the second formator at the scholasticate of Casavatore.
- On 2nd July 2024, the GC appointed Fr. Zieliński Maciej Mikołaj as a technical member of the Financial Council (as the representative of the APDESAM provinces) for a second mandate, from 1.7.2024 to 30.6.2027.

Intercapitular 2025

To enable all the Superiors of the circumscriptions to plan the institutional activities of the next year, the GC announces that the next Intercapitular Assembly is scheduled for September 2025. Details of the exact dates of the start and end of the Assembly and the draft program will be made available by the end of 2024.

Next Consulta in September

Since Father General will have to participate in the second phase of the Synod of Bishops, the GC has brought forward the date of the Ordinary Autumn Consulta: from 5th to 27th September. Provincials who have questions to submit to the consultation are asked to send them to Rome in good time.

Journeys and absences of the members of the General Council

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie

- 29 September – 27 October: taking part in the Synod

Bro Alberto Lamana

- 14 July – 5 August: visiting the Province of Mozambique

- 26 – 31 August: Meeting of APDESAM Brothers in Nairobi
- The entire month of October: visiting the Province of Uganda

Fr. David Costa Domingues

- 12 July – 22 August: visiting the Province of Brazil
- 2 October – 2 November: visiting the Delegation of Asia

Fr. Luigi Codianni

- 23 July – 6 August: visiting the Province of Mozambique
- 5 October – 2 November: visiting the London province and the Assembly of the Provincials of Europe

Fr. Elias Sindjalim Essognimam

- 3 – 31 October: visiting the Province of Congo

Perpetual Professions

Agnimaka Kodjovi Abraham	Lomé (TGB)	14.07.2024
Atsou Kokuvi Elom Joseph	Lomé (TGB)	14.07.2024
Awudi Atsu Augustine	Lomé (TGB)	14.07.2024
Dodor Yawovi Amétépé Jacques	Lomé (TGB)	14.07.2024
Ocloo Komla Elisée	Cacaveli (TGB)	14.07.2024
Likonye Emmanuel	Acornhoek (RSA)	16.07.2024
Vázquez Hernández Felipe de Jesús	Metlatonóx (MEX)	26.07.2024
Kangite Wolima François d'Assise	Yanonge (CN)	28.07.2024
Mumbere Kahongya Mapenzi	Yanonge (CN)	28.07.2024
Beyokomu Anotengo Remy	Yanonge (CN)	28.07.2024
Lokengi Mputu Jean Marie Vianney	Mungbere (CN)	04.08.2024
Mwangi Samuel Ngugi	Nairobi (KE)	23.08.2024
Masanjala Hendreson Halord	Lusaka (MZ)	24.08.2024

Holy Redeemer Guild

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

Prayer Intentions

September – For the Secular Comboni Missionaries who, from 20th September to 1st October are celebrating their Extraordinary General Assembly for the approval of their renewed and updated Constitution. May the Holy

Spirit accompany them so that the event may be a sign of renewal and new vitality for their mission in the Church and in the world. *Lord, hear us.*

October – That the Synodal Church, encouraged by Pope Francis, may strengthen the vocation and participation of all the baptised, and especially our commitment as the Comboni Family. *Lord, hear us.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

SEPTEMBER

9	Saint Peter Claver, priest – <i>Patron of the Institute</i>	Solemnity
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OCTOBER

1	Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church, <i>Patron of the missions</i>	Festa
10	Saint Daniele Comboni, bishop, <i>Founder of the Comboni Family</i>	Solemnity
20	BB. David Okelo and Blessed Gildo Irwa, martyrs	Opt. Mem. (North Uganda)

Significant anniversaries

SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

12	Our Lady of Aparecida	Brasile
16	Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, virgin	
19	SS. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and companions, martyrs	United States Canada

Publications

Guido Oliana, mccj, *The Liturgy – Source and Summit of the Life of the Church. Explorations in Liturgical Theology*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 2024, 515 pages. This volume is fundamentally concerned with two theological dimensions: *revelation* and the *actualisation* of the mystery of Christ. In a word, it takes on ‘revelation in action’. The living realities on which systematic or dogmatic theology reflects – the One and

Triune God, Christ, the Spirit, the Church, grace, anthropology, creation, eschatology etc. – are present as efficacious spiritual energies in the celebration of the liturgy, in the spiritual fruits it prepares which derive from and also endure after it. The interaction between liturgy and theology is traditionally expressed by the term *mystagogy*, that is the ‘Initiation into the mysteries’ through an experiential journey that introduces into the mystery of Christ in its dual modality of *revelation* and *actualisation* in the liturgical celebration.

CURIA

Meeting of the Code of Conduct Central Committee

The Central Commission of the Code of Conduct met via Zoom on 5th July 2024, at 5:00 PM, Rome time. Present were Father Rafael Gonzalez Ponce, Father Jeremias dos Santos Martins, Father Fidèle Katsan Fodagni, Father Markus Lorenz Körber, and Father David Costa Domingues (Vicar General).

After the prayer led by Fr. David, the members followed the agenda proposed by the coordinator of the Commission, Fr. Rafael.

The Vicar General greeted those present and provided some information regarding the ongoing process of the revision of our *Code of Conduct*. The main points addressed in this meeting were:

1. The reading and correction of a text proposed by Fr. Jeremias based on the various suggestions made by the members of the Commission.
2. The discussion of the suggestions presented by Fr. Rafael for the elaboration of a Guide (protocol) regarding cases of child abuse.

The commission focused mainly on the first point. The proposed document was read and corrected up to No. 103. The correction work was facilitated by a letter prepared by Fr. Jeremias, with indications on the text.

In preparation for the next meeting, some members of the commission were entrusted with the following tasks: the preparation of a text on the phenomenon of homosexuality, which takes into account the position of the Church and shows the orientation of our Institute; the preparation of a text on spiritual and conscience abuse; the checking of citations.

The commission concluded the meeting at 8:15 PM, after three hours of work, with prayer, led by Fr. Rafael, to Our Lady of Guadalupe. The next meeting via Zoom will be held on September 4, 2024. (*Fr. Fidèle Katsan, mccj*)

GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF FORMATION

General Assembly of Formation

From 8th to 27th July, the General Assembly of Formation (AGF) took place at the General Curia in Rome. The formators of the scholasticates and novitiates participated, along with representatives of the formators of the postulancies. The assembly had this theme: “The review of formation as a journey, to be rooted in Christ in the footsteps of Comboni”.

Father Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General, welcoming the participants, expressed the hope that “this assembly will be a meeting of mutual knowledge and fraternity among the formators, to find common lines of action that respond to the current needs of the formation of our young candidates in the different formative contexts.”

The Secretary General of Formation, Father José de Jesús Villaseñor Gálvez, recalling how the last General Chapter (2022) asked for “the revision of formation in view of the mission”, said: “We will therefore have to focus on the elements of our formative journey that need to change in view of the greater effectiveness of the mission today, in fidelity to our Comboni charism.”

On the morning of the second day, the interventions of the members of the General Council outlined the commitments of the Institute in the field of formation in the light of the Chapter documents. The letter that the GC sent to the formators and provincial superiors was presented, with the hope that it be brought to the attention of all the confreres. The letter recognises how the sector of formation is marked by some challenges, including: weak spirituality, poor Comboni missionary identification, poor community life, dependencies, the immature affective dimension, difficulty in assuming qualified services, and the economic dimension... Hence, the urgency of continuing the process of reviewing and verifying basic formation.

In the afternoon, the General Secretary, Brother Daniele Giusti, focused on the information system of formation, underlining the importance of the fact that information must be taken care of in detail, documented and transmitted in the right way, at the right time and to the right person.

On Thursday, 11th July, Father Elias Sindjalim, General Assistant, presented the summary of the responses to the questionnaire on formation, prepared in light of the last General Chapter, specifying: “The context of our Assembly is listening to the reality of Comboni formation from different points of view: the General Council, the relationship with God, with ourselves and with the young people in formation; the questionnaire, in which the confreres reported their reflection on our formation; the XIX General Chapter and the

Continental Assemblies of Formation; the point of view of this Assembly, as it will develop over the next few days.”

The work of Friday, 12th July, was led by the General Secretariat of the Mission. Three themes were presented: the mission in the XIX General Chapter and formation (Father Fernando González Galarza, General Secretary of the Mission); the mission and integral ecology (Brother Alberto Parise); the means of communication and Comboni formation (Father Arlindo Pinto). The website www.combonimission.net, managed by the Secretariat of the Mission, was presented. It offers various resources and is a space for reflection among the Comboni Missionaries. There is also a guide to joining the *Laudato Si' Platform* and some useful factsheets on Integral Ecology.

On Saturday morning, 13th July, Brother Alberto Lamana, General Assistant, presented a reflection on the reality and future perspective of the Comboni Brothers today. Two testimonies followed: a) that of Brother Abel Dimanche, on the role played by the Comboni Work for Human Promotion (OCPU) in Guayaquil (Ecuador) in the sectors of missionary animation, Afro pastoral care and JPIC; b) that of Brother Christopher Yata, on the current reality of the 'Brothers in Africa' and their commitments in education, health, training, human development, youth, administration, missionary animation, and communication. The second week focused on ongoing formation. Father Fernando reiterated “the urgency of a new impetus for formation, which passes through a credible testimony that goes beyond catechesis or an academic-formative program. We are called ‘to feel with our hearts’ the needs of young people in formation, who cry out and ask for new tools of formation.”

The first two days of the week focused on two themes: *synodality* and the *digital world*. Two external experts were invited to animate the two days. Professor Serena Noceti urged participants to form and be formed “in a synodal Church and for a synodal Church,” forcefully reiterating that synodality is an essential dimension of the Church: “We must move from an idea of formation centred on the individual to ‘synodal’ formation, that is, centred on the community and on walking together.” After Professor Noceti, Father Elias Sindjalim sought to underline the importance of training the interiority of the person in formation, following the Educational Method of Integration (MEI), which is the method adopted by the Comboni Institute.

On Tuesday, July 16, Donato Lacedonio, a Salesian and professor of Social Communication Sciences at the Pontifical Salesian University, discussed the topic ‘*Education and the digital world: risks and opportunities*’. He stated that “digital is a great achievement, but ethics are needed; young people are the protagonists of this increasingly connected world, where, through social media, a digital citizenship is being built.” Father Lacedonio focused on social networks and the panorama they offer: on the one hand, they facilitate

human relationships; on the other, “they can lead to polarisations and divisions between individuals and groups”. Faced with this, we must “choose how to use them, to get closer or further away from others.”

On the morning of July 17, Father Alberto de Oliveira Silva, coordinator of ongoing formation in Rome, presented the vision of ongoing formation at the Institute level, recalling that “all formation is connected: ongoing formation and basic formation are mutually reinforcing. Ongoing formation is necessary throughout life, in the various stages of life, in clear continuity with basic formation.”

Between the afternoon of Wednesday 17th until the evening of Friday 19th, the representatives of each formation house presented a report on the life and activities carried out in their community, following the questions suggested by the General Secretary of Formation in preparation for this Assembly.

During the third week (22-27 August), the assembly participants identified the most important priorities that emerged from the work of the groups and during the plenary sessions: spirituality, missionary identity and formation; requalification of formation; constant discernment, both in the phase of vocational promotion and during the subsequent stages of formation; the Educational Model of Integration; the formation of brothers. In addition to these five main priorities, three others were chosen, which emerged from the debate in the assembly: formation in finance to live the vow of poverty in an evangelical way; formation in the means of communication and their wise, responsible and missionary use; the ongoing formation of the formators. Divided into groups according to the themes, the formators developed concrete proposals which were then taken up, debated and voted on in plenary assembly.

The assembly ended on Saturday 27th, with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by Father Tesfaye Tadesse. The Mass was celebrated, in St. Peter’s Basilica, in the Vatican precisely where, in 1864, St. Daniel Comboni had an ‘illumination from above’, while praying on the tomb of St. Peter, and developed his *Plan for the regeneration of Africa*, animated by the motto “Save Africa with Africa”. The *Assembly Acts* will be presented to the General Council for approval at the next consulta in September. This precious instrument will then be presented to the Inter-Capitular Assembly of 2025. A second step will be the preparation of a final text on what took place and what was discussed and suggested by the Assembly, which will contain the new orientations of formation in the coming years, as points of reference on the particular path the Institute intends to follow in this sector, so that all the confreres can know, follow and apply them. The aim is to offer quality formation to the young people who will come to us to offer their lives for the mission.

BRAZIL

Fr. David Costa Domingues, Vicar Generale, visits the Province

The Comboni Province of Brazil received the visit of Father David Costa Domingues, Vicar General, from July 13 to August 22. Father David visited and animated the Comboni Fathers and Brothers, and other members of the Comboni Family. He also met with those responsible for the parishes and the various social projects developed by the Comboni Missionaries and their collaborators. The Province thanks him for this visit and for the support it receives from the entire General Council.

Fr. Ezechiele Ramin: friend of the little ones and defender of the poor

The Province and Diocese of Ji-Paraná, in the state of Rondônia, in the Brazilian Amazon, organised the 9th Father Ezechiele Ramin Pilgrimage in Rondolândia, in the state of Mato Grosso, on 21st July 2024. This event is already a tradition in the calendar of the Diocese of Ji-Paraná and the Comboni Family in Brazil. It is an initiative of the local Church of Ji-Paraná with the collaboration of the Comboni missionaries, other pastoral agents and the Institute 'Fr. Ezechiele Ramin' to remember together the dream, the struggle and the testimony left by Father Ezechiele.

A native of Padua (Italy), Ezechiele arrived in Brazil in 1980. He and other missionaries carried out their mission where, in communion with the local Church, they sought to bear witness to the Gospel of life, love, justice and peace in a region marked by many social inequalities, conflicts and violence.

Because of his commitment to defending the life and dignity of the little ones and the poor, especially landless peasants and indigenous communities of Rondônia, Father Ezechiele was brutally murdered at the age of 32, on July 24, 1985, while returning from a peace mission in Rondolândia, Mato Grosso.

As a Martyr, Servant of God, friend of the little ones and defender of the poor: this is how the People of God of many Christian communities remembered this young missionary during the journey. It is estimated that more than 1,600 people participated in the pilgrimage.

The Eucharist celebrated at the conclusion of the pilgrimage was presided over by Msgr. Zenildo Luiz Pereira da Silva, Bishop of Borba and a Redemptorist missionary who knew Father Ezechiele and was in Cacoal the day the missionary was killed. Msgr. Zenildo said in his homily that "what killed Father Ezechiele was injustice, selfishness and greed." His life, his mission and his testimony cannot be forgotten.

The Bishop of Ji-Paraná, Msgr. Norberto Foerster, of the Divine Word Missionaries, also participated in the pilgrimage. In addition to the two bishops, many priests, men and women religious walked with the people of the many communities who came from far away to celebrate the memory of the missionary priest and martyr. Among the pilgrims were many young people who believed in the dream and testimony of Father Ezechiele.

His cause for beatification was started a few years ago and for this reason, his title is Servant of God. In 2019, on the occasion of the Synod for the Amazon, 200 Brazilian bishops sent a letter asking Pope Francis to recognise the Comboni missionary Ezechiele Ramin as a martyr and expressing support for the cause of his beatification which remains open.

The IX pilgrimage concluded with Holy Mass on Sunday, July 21, 2024. At the end of the celebration, the 10th Pilgrimage and the 40th anniversary of the martyrdom of Father Ezechiele were announced and will be celebrated on July 27, 2025, in Rondolândia. Father Ezechiele, friend of the little ones and defender of the poor, is alive!

Father Ettore Frisotti: remembrance and gratitude

The Heitor Frisotti Afro Pastoral Center (CENPAH) held its 26th Seminar, from August 26 to 29, at its headquarters in the Sussuarana neighbourhood of Salvador, on the theme of human suffering, which was addressed by representatives of Christianity, Buddhism, Shamanism and Candomblé. CENPAH is a space for the aggregation of various initiatives in the fields of culture, interreligious dialogue, the fight against racism, equality and the promotion of human rights. The Province thanks all the people who keep alive the memory of Father Frisotti and embrace the cause of Afro-descendants.

CONGO

Four newly professed and deacons

A source of great joy for the Comboni family of DR Congo was the perpetual profession and diaconal ordination of four scholastics at the end of their missionary service experience.

On July 28, there was the perpetual profession of three scholastics – Kangite Wolima François d’Assise, Mumbere Kahongya Mapenzi and Beyokomu Anotengo Remy –, in Yanonge, in the presence of Father Eméry-Justine Kakule Muvawa, provincial superior. On August 4, 2024, Lokengi Mputu Jean Marie Vianney pronounced his perpetual vows in Mungbere,

before Father Franco Barin, representative of the superior general, Father Tesfaye Tadesse.

Two weeks later, on 17th August, Jean Marie Vianney was ordained deacon in Mungbere. On Sunday 18th, François d'Assise, Mapenzi and Remy, in Kisangani, became deacons in the hands of the local archbishop, Mgr. Marcel Utembi Tapa. Also present at the ceremony was Mgr. Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate, mcccj, auxiliary bishop of the diocese.

ETHIOPIA

Annual retreat – ‘The Comboni Family in Prayer with Bartimaeus’

From the evening of July 21 to the morning of July 29, thirteen Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS), including their coordinator in Eritrea, two nuns of the Handmaids of the Church (of the Vicariate of Hawassa) and seven Comboni missionaries (one brother and six priests) spent eight days on retreat together characterised by an atmosphere of rest, meditation and prayer. Sister Adele Brambilla, CMS, superior of the community of Karak, in Jordan, was called to lead and animate the eight days. She is originally from Milan (Italy) and entered the Institute in 1973 with her religious profession. She was also Superior General from 1998 to 2010 after which Sister Adele immediately returned to Jordan to resume her ministry as a nurse. Introducing herself, she said that she was neither a theologian nor a biblical scholar, but that she only wanted to humbly share with those present her experience of missionary life and her encounter with the spirituality of Saint Daniel Comboni. She added: “During the next seven days that we will spend together, I invite you to take a journey with me to Jericho and meet Jesus by following in the footsteps of Bartimaeus in his experience of faith.” The retreat took place at the St. John Human Formation Centre, in Bishan Gurracha, located on the northern shore of Lake Hawassa, in the Vicariate of Meki. Inaugurated a year ago (and not yet fully completed), the Centre truly offers an environment that encourages meditation and prayer: it is silent, surrounded by greenery, full of trees and flowers, and visited by many species of colourful birds. You can also see hippos coming out of the water and grazing along the shore of the lake and fishermen in their boats fishing for tilapia.

The Guji, the local ethnic group, in their profound wisdom, say that “silence reaches God.” The retreat participants could not help but agree with this Guji adage: away from their usual routine for a whole week, in silent dialogue with God through His Word and His creation, they felt closer to their Creator.

At the end of her (dictated) meditations, Sister Adele invited the participants to return to their respective 'Galilee', where the Risen Lord is always waiting for them. (*Father José Vieira, mccj*)

ITALIA

Celebrating 60 years of missionary priestly service

Of the 64 Comboni missionaries ordained in 1964, 17 are still left. Some of them are in Castel d'Azzano, while about ten are still active in the missions or in their respective provinces. Eight of them gathered on July 2nd at the Mother House in Verona, to solemnise the sixtieth anniversary of ordination with a Eucharistic celebration in the Chapel of St. Daniel Comboni.

The following day, they went to Castel d'Azzano to celebrate Mass and meet both the companions of 1964 and the other confreres of that community, sharing the joy of the event. In the afternoon they visited the numerous nuns of the community of Cesiole, with many of whom they had shared the mission.

They then went to Limone, to the birthplace of St. Daniel Comboni, from whom they received the inspiration and strength of their vocation and mission. Finally, on Friday, they celebrated Mass for the community of the Mother House in Verona.

Those were beautiful and meaningful days of sharing the many years of missionary service, and they wanted to thank the Lord, Comboni and the Institute for their missionary vocation, confirming themselves once again as Comboni missionaries at the service of the Kingdom of God. A sincere thank you to the communities that welcomed them.

Elimu – African Summer School in Florence

From 24th to 28th July 2024, Florence hosted a university residential campus dedicated to exploring the complex realities of the African continent, with the aim of debunking stereotypes and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the topic.

The event was organised by the Comboni community of Florence (Father John Hammond and Father Fernando Zolli) in collaboration with the Nigri-zia Foundation, the Afrobrix Festival of Brescia (Father Fabrizio Colombo) and the Recovery Plan cultural and artistic centre of Florence. About twenty participants took part in the campus, which offered a wide range of educational activities.

The program included a fundamental course – 'African Renaissance and Economics' – taught by Prof. Mahougnon Venance Sinsin of the Pontifical

Salesian University of Rome, a financial economics workshop led by Prof. Chiwele Kasongo of the European University of Florence, and a discussion on Afro-descendant art in Italy with experts Mistura Allison and Justin Randolph Thompson of Recovery Plan Florence.

The students, about twenty, were accompanied daily by Prof. Assita Kone, a financial expert at the European Commission, who introduced the Mogoya Business Model Canvas. This tool, inspired by African philosophy and adapted to the challenges of digitalisation and sustainability, encouraged participants to develop innovative business ideas. At the end of the campus, the students presented competitive and sustainable projects, the result of the work done during the week.

KENYA

Perpetual profession and diaconate of Samuel Ngugi Mwangi

On 23rd August, in the chapel of the provincial house in Nairobi, Scholastic Samuel Ngugi Mwangi made his perpetual religious profession before Father Andrew Wanjohi, Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Kenya. The following day, he was ordained a deacon, along with other scholastics of the Congregation of St. Patrick, in the parish of Utawala, one of the peripheral suburbs of the capital Nairobi.

The celebration was presided over by Bishop Rodrigo Mejia Saldarriaga, Apostolic Vicar Emeritus of Soddo, Ethiopia, who is well-known and respected in Kenya. The focal point of his homily deeply affected both the nine candidates and the entire assembly, composed of people from all over the country.

Elaborating his words and addressing the new deacons directly, Bishop Rodrigo said: “Your diaconate, which is a call to service, is not a transitional phase of your ministry, but a fundamental aspect that must last your entire life: you must always be servants.” Father Wanjohi did not fail to thank all those who participated in the event, noting how their massive presence had made the ceremony a true success. Then, turning to Samuel, he revealed the location of his first service assignment: Amakuriat mission, in the West Pokot district, in the diocese of Kitale, Kenya. He explained: “This marks the beginning of your ministry, and you will be able to begin to apply the role that has been assigned to you today forever: to serve the people of Amakuriat. This, after all, is the commitment that our Institute has assumed since its birth: to reach out and make common cause with the less fortunate groups in the world.” (*Father Christopher Silwembe, mccj*)

MÉXICO

Provincial Assembly

From 20th to 22nd August, the Provincial Assembly was held in the provincial house of Xochimilco, with the participation of about 40 confreres aged between 28 and 88. During the previous week, many confreres had participated there in a course of spiritual exercises led by Father Jorge Ochoa, a Mexican Comboni missionary working in the United States.

The first day of the assembly was dedicated to ongoing formation. The theme was appreciated by all: 'The integral health of the missionary'. The theologian and educational psychologist Wanda Marissa Rodriguez helped us better understand the importance of the 'culture of self-care' at the level of body, mind and spirit. Enjoying good health at the physical, emotional (mind and spirit) and community levels is fundamental for a happy life and a ministry exercised in joy.

The first day ended with the Eucharist presided over by Msgr. Andrés Vargas Peña, bishop of Xochimilco, who, as is his custom, agreed to spend some time with us. We are very grateful for the affection he has for us. In his homily, he spoke of Saint Bernard the Abbot (it was the liturgical memorial) and Saint Daniel Comboni, emphasising in them the passion that translated into action. He invited us to always work in communion, both with cultures and with local Churches. Citing the *Aparecida Document*, the bishop insisted that "communion is missionary and there is no mission without communion." The following morning, animated by the provincial treasurer and the secretariat of the economy, was dedicated to reflecting on the economic situation of the province. In the afternoon, we discussed the *Six-Year Plan* developed in last year's Assembly, asking ourselves how it is being implemented, both on a personal and secretarial level. After dinner, there was a moment of joyful fraternal conviviality.

On the third day, the proposals that emerged from the reflection on the Six-Year Plan carried out by the different sectors were examined and discussed. The Provincial Council, ranging over all aspects of the life of the Province, shared its opinion on the progress of both the Province itself and the Six-Year Plan. The assembly concluded with a thanksgiving mass presided over by the Provincial Superior, Father Rafael Güitrón, during which the rite of blessing and sending off of some departing for the mission after a family vacation and of a small group of seminarians who are preparing to enter the seminary of Sahuayo was celebrated. (*Father Ismael Piñón, mccj*)

PERU

New seat of the Lima scholasticate

On 8th June 2024, we had the joy of celebrating the feast of the Sacred Heart as a Comboni Family together with our parishioners of Chorrillos and the community of the scholasticate of Lima. We also had the blessing and inauguration of the new headquarters of the scholasticate 'Santa Rosa de Lima', being able to share this joy in fraternity and with many friends who motivate us to grow in our formative process with their closeness, friendship and solidarity.

The solemn Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Father Mitchell Sandoval Nelson Edgar, provincial superior, accompanied by the Comboni missionaries of the communities of Lima. The celebration was preceded by some animation initiatives, including a conference by Father Pedro Andrés Miguel, who underlined the beauty of living the community together as a single heart "that welcomes and sends."

It was a very beautiful moment but also tinged with a certain nostalgia for the transfer from our old headquarters – over forty years old – of the Scholasticate, where many missionaries passed through and left a positive mark.

Now, we fifteen scholastics with the formators are beginning a new stage in the new house, where we will continue our formative and community experience always united by the dream of our founder Daniele Comboni: to give a thousand lives for the mission. (*Scholastic Yeison Morales, mccj*)

PROVINCE OF CENTRAL AMERICA – COSTA RICA

CAM is 30 years old

Exactly 30 years ago, on 15th August 1994, the Comboni missionaries, already present in Costa Rica since 1979, inaugurated the new House of Missionary Animation (CAM), dedicated to Daniel Comboni and located on Paseo Colón, one of the main and most beautiful streets of the city of San José. The idea of missionary animation of a local Church was a novelty in the Archdiocese of San José, when our Institute arrived there. However, it was an integral part – and therefore indispensable – of our mission style, and we immediately began to put it into practice with the purchase of a rented office in the capital. Since then, that a local Church should be in itself 'missionary', with horizons as vast as the world, is no longer a strange, unusual, or even extravagant idea, but rather one that is understood and welcomed. To achieve this, it is undeniable that the

opening of the CAM played a significant role. This is why the idea of 'celebrating' its anniversary was born.

The celebrations began on 12th August, with a large group of Comboni missionaries who went to the feet of the '*Negrita*', the patron saint of Costa Rica, in the Cathedral of Cartago, for a solemn Eucharist. Father Carlos Humberto, superior of the CAM community, explained this choice as follows: "We placed ourselves under the protection of our heavenly Mother and went on a pilgrimage to her feet to strengthen our testimony of missionary communion in Costa Rica and that of the entire Comboni Family."

The following Sunday, 18th August, the celebration continued with the celebration of the Eucharist of Thanksgiving, presided over by the auxiliary bishop of San José de Costa Rica, Msgr. Daniel Francisco Blanco Méndez, at the National Shrine '*Dulce Nombre de Jesús*'. The celebration was attended by Msgr. Vittorino Girardi, mcccj, numerous Comboni missionaries and nuns, some Comboni Lay Missionaries (LMC), as well as a good number of friends and benefactors.

Among other events, the inauguration of an exhibition of over thirty panels on the life of Comboni and the Comboni missionaries in the world was very significant. Father Carlos said: «This exhibition not only explains the reason for these celebrations but will also serve to make our work known in the parishes in the world. Thus, we gave thanks to God for the 30 years of CAM, for the 45 years of Comboni presence in Costa Rica, and for the fruits that our missionary service has produced».

He then added: «The CAM community has worked hard to celebrate this anniversary and we want to thank them. But our thanks also go to all the Comboni missionaries who have worked with zeal in the CAM and to all the benefactors, friends and local groups who have collaborated with us during these last 30 years».

With a hint of healthy pride, he concluded: "The celebrations have demonstrated, once again, that the Comboni charism belongs to the whole Church and that its 'novelty' continues to 'infect' everyone."

SOUTH AFRICA

Perpetual profession and diaconate of Emmanuel Likonye

On 16th August 2024, in the parish of Mary of the Assumption, in Acornhoek, in the diocese of Witbank, there was the perpetual religious profession of Emmanuel Likonye, originally from Chiradzulu (Malawi), currently engaged in his missionary service in that parish. The ceremony was presided over by Father John Baptist Opargiw, provincial superior, who

received the vows on behalf of the superior general, in the presence of some confreres, Sisters and parishioners. During his homily, Father Opargiw spoke of religious consecration as “a free and unmerited gesture of God’s love, a precious gift similar to a ‘treasure in a clay vessel’.” After recalling the importance of daily renewing one’s ‘yes’ to God, he compared Emmanuel’s call to that received by biblical figures such as Abraham, Moses, Peter and Paul, or by Saint Daniel Comboni. The perpetual profession is “an invitation to offer God the best we can, a living, pure and uncontaminated sacrifice... It is a question of love: love for God and for our neighbour helps us to live *chastity* as a total gift of self, *obedience* as recognition of the primacy of God’s will over mine and of the common good over my personal interests, and *poverty* as detachment from material goods and radical dependence on God and the community.”

At the end of the mass, all those present took part in a meal prepared by the Comboni community of Acornhoek.

On Sunday, 18th August, in the same parish, the ordination of Emmanuel to the diaconate was celebrated, by the hands of the bishop of Witbank, Mons. Thaddaeus Xolelo Kumalo, with the participation of numerous Comboni and diocesan priests, men and women religious, and a large number of parishioners, who made the celebration vibrant, participatory and embellished with liturgical dances to the rhythm of Xitsonga melodies.

The new deacon thanked all the people who accompanied and guided him in his formative journey. Father Opargiw encouraged him “to practise what he preaches” and to accept the gift of diaconal ordination with “unpretentious authority and spiritual discipline.” Father José Luis Román Medina, superior of the Acornhoek community, urged him to become more and more involved in the life and pastoral program of the community.

Bishop Kumalo said he was happy to be able to ordain Emmanuel as a deacon, jokingly calling him ‘Zacchaeus’ because of his short stature. Then, quoting an African proverb, he urged everyone not to be like frogs, who feel at ease both on land and in water, but rather like fish, aware that their life and security are intrinsically linked to water. Without metaphor, he explained: “What is at stake is to stop living in two worlds, but to focus on Christ, as the fundamental option of our life.”

The ceremony concluded with a lunch for all those present. It was a true experience of the Church as the Family of God, thanks to the participation of representatives of the white and Indian communities, mixed with the black majority, who remained present throughout the event. (*Fathers John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw and Robert Ndungu, mcccj*)

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Gabriele Perobelli (14.03.1946 – 27.04.2024)

On Saturday, May 4th, the community of Volon, a village in the municipality of Zevio (Verona) where Gabriele was born, gathered in the evening for a mass in suffrage and memory of 'their' missionary, who died eight days earlier in Africa.

His brother Luciano, his nephews and other relatives were present at the Eucharist, as well as many faithful whose singing was supported by the particularly 'enthusiastic' parish choir that gave a touch of Easter joy to the entire celebration. A simple but authentic celebration to say thanks to the Lord for a fellow countryman who was faithful until death to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus to his Central African brothers and sisters to whom he gave the best of himself for more than 40 years.

Born in Volon, a village of Zevio, on 14th March 1946, Gabriele moved with his parents to Colognola, where, over the years, his relatives awaited him every time he returned from Central Africa.

He entered the novitiate in Gozzano and took his first vows on September 9, 1967. For the scholasticate he went to Venegono and Rebbio; he took his perpetual vows on 9th September 1970. He was ordained a priest on 27th March 1971, in Volon, by Msgr. Maffeo Ducoli. Father Gabriele dedicated his first years of mission, as a formator, to the young candidates in the Comboni seminary in Rebbio (Como). He was then given his assignment to Central Africa which he happily received. The first Comboni presence in Central Africa (a territory that was originally part of the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa, entrusted to Comboni) dates back to 1966, when the first group of missionaries arrived in the southeastern part of the country, in the diocese of Bangassou (750 km from the capital Bangui) to bring aid to tens of thousands of South Sudanese refugees, mostly Azande. In 1972, those refugees returned home, but the Comboni missionaries were asked by the local Church to stay, increasing their presence.

In September 1977, Father Gabriele went to Paris to study French (official, with Sango, in the RCA) and in August of the following year he was already in the mission of Zemio, where he remained until 1985.

After serving in the Comboni seminary of Thiene (Vicenza) and the adjacent rectory (1985-90), Gabriele returned to the RCA, this time to Boda (diocese of M'Baïki). He was first spiritual director at the major seminary in Bangui and then parish priest of Our Lady of Fatima, at KM5, one of the 'pilot parishes' of the capital.

“Here,” he says, “I stayed 16 years, until 2014, and I saw a lot: mutinies of soldiers, wars, shootings, cannon shots. I have experienced great difficulties, but despite all of this, I am still here. Someone even helped me avoid bullets and I keep one as a souvenir. Here I found my true vocation as a missionary because the people I met in Central Africa count on the Church that is always present with its priests, its sisters and its volunteers. It is the Lord who makes himself present through us.”

On the occasion of the patronal feast (May 13th), he reminds the faithful of the Virgin’s message to the Portuguese shepherds: “Pray, pray the Rosary incessantly for an end to war and therefore for peace in the world.” Those were the years in which continuous armed attacks and guerrilla warfare brought the population to its knees, exhausted by unspeakable suffering.

In 2013, the parish hosted up to 4,000 displaced people, Christians and Muslims looking for a safe place, protected from the continuous unrest caused by opposing factions. An attack at the end of May 2014 caused the death of about twenty people gathered in the church to pray. All the missionaries decided to stay: that was not the time to abandon a people in despair.

Subsequently, Father Gabriele worked in Fondo, Haoussa, Kina, Boy-Rabe, Gbangou and Damala.

Gabriele was very attached to his brother Luciano’s family and relatives, as well as to the communities that saw him grow up, in particular Volon, Stra’ and Colognola ai Colli in eastern Verona. He willingly spent time there during the months that see him return from the RCA for well-deserved periods of vacation.

On the occasion of his 50 years of priesthood, Sunday, 5th September 2021, the parish community of Saints Fermo and Rustico, in Colognola ai Colli, led by Don Marco Preato, gathered around Father Gabriele to praise and thank the Lord. Among the faithful who attended the Eucharist, three Comboni Sisters who worked in the RCA and who animated the liturgy with some typical African dances took part.

In his homily, Father Gabriele spoke of ‘his’ Central Africa, where he lived the mission with the dedication and enthusiasm of his first day: “This poor country,” he says, “which the world only remembers because there are so many deaths, is ranked among the last in the world due to its collapsing economy. However, it is among the first for its people: so many people of good will held back by poverty and misery, but rich in giving and showing solidarity with the poorest.” Thank you, Lord, for having given us the gift of a missionary of the ‘type’ desired by Saint Daniel Comboni. (*From Azione Missionaria, n. 6 – June 2024*)

Father Silvestro ('Silvio') Zanardi (28.12.1940 – 5.6.2024)

Silvestro was born in Brembilla, in the province of Bergamo, on 28th December 1940, the youngest child of Angelo and Angela Giovanna Previtalli. From an early age, he kept repeating his desire to become a priest, but his father was against him entering the seminary too early.

On 12th July 1956, Silvio and his twenty-two-year-old brother Carlo – driving the family car – were involved in a dramatic car accident. Silvio escaped with some injuries; his brother, however, died on the spot. The death of his brother was an extremely traumatic event for Silvio and he would take a long time to process his grief. At the same time, he saw in the dramatic event a precise invitation to decide once and for all to realise his desire to become a priest.

On 4th October 1956, Silvio entered the Sant'Alessandro Episcopal College in Bergamo, for the two-year high school, where he confided to his classmates and teachers, mostly priests, that his true desire was to become a missionary priest, hastening to add '*comboniano*'.

On 20th September 1962, Silvio arrived at the novitiate in Florence and on 9th September 1964, he took his first religious vows.

A month later, he entered the scholasticate in Venegono. On 9th September 1966, he made his perpetual religious profession in the hands of Father Giuseppe Gusmini, superior of the Region of Milan. Taking advantage of the opportunity to take on a second 'religious' name, he chose Carlo, in memory of his dead brother. On 28th June 1967, Bishop Clemente Gaddi ordained him a priest in the cathedral of Bergamo.

Father Silvio asked to leave immediately for the mission, but his superiors had already decided on his first service at the Institute: bursar of the scholasticate of Venegono and 'propagandist' (today we would say 'missionary animator') in the then Comboni Region of Milan. He remained in Venegono for three years.

On 27th June 1970, he was assigned to the Delegation of Burundi. In July 1971, he arrived in Bujumbura, the capital, where he enrolled in a course in Kirundi, the local language. After completing the course, he was assigned to the mission of Butara. Silvio threw himself headlong into missionary work.

In 1974, Father Silvio moved to the mission of Mabayi, in the far northwest of the country: he immediately fitted in well with the community. In September 1976, Father Silvio was assigned to the mission of Chibitoke.

In November, Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza orchestrated a coup and deposed Michombero. The situation in the country was very critical. There were also tensions between the Comboni Missionaries and their respective bishops (all Tutsis), considered not very 'prophetic' towards the Tutsi

leadership and not inclined to raise their voices in defence of the Hutus. A few days after Easter 1977, a decree from the Ministry of the Interior expelled all the Comboni missionaries as “*personae non gratae*”. The reason was clear: the political authorities did not accept that all their work should benefit the Hutu population, which constituted the majority in the areas they evangelised.

Over a few hectic days, the Comboni Missionaries prepared their exodus: they left everything they had in Burundi. At dawn on 20th April 1977, they landed in Fiumicino, but their heart remained there.

A few months later, Father Silvio was assigned to the Delegation of Malawi; he arrived in Lusaka in July 1979 and was immediately assigned to the mission of Vubwi to learn the local language. A few months later, he moved to Chadiza, where he remained until June 1987. In 1983, he was appointed member of the Provincial Secretariat of the Economy and, for a couple of years, he was also vice-provincial treasurer.

In July 1987, in agreement with his superiors, he began a year-long stay in Leeds, England, engaged in the ministry of missionary animation, also in the hope of finding friends and supporters ready to help the various initiatives of human promotion in the province of Malawi-Zambia. After a short period of vacation with his family, in July 1988 he returned to the mission but was assigned to the parish of Phalombe, in the diocese of Blantyre, in Malawi.

In July 1993, he was assigned to Lirangwe (Malawi) as parish priest. He remained there until mid-1999 when he was invited to move to Chipata. In March 2001, he returned to Italy for a vacation period, which extended until November for health reasons.

When he returned, the provincial superior, Father Luigi Casagrande, wanted to have him in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, as superior of the provincial headquarters. He remained there until April 2012, working mainly in the parish of Msamba, which was entrusted to the community of the provincial headquarters.

On 15th July, the archbishop of Lilongwe, Monsignor Tarcisius Gervazio Ziyaye, celebrated his 25th anniversary as a bishop, but wanted Father Silvio to join him and 7 other Malawian bishops to celebrate the two important anniversaries together. The president of the nation, Peter Mutharika, also gave prestige to the ceremony.

In September 2022, he attended the Course for the Elderly offered by the Permanent Formation Center in Rome, but in December he returned to Lilongwe, ready to throw himself into the planned initiatives for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the presence of the Comboni missionaries in Malawi. Wherever there was a celebration, Father Silvio could not

miss it: he was the 'elder member' of the Comboni missionaries in the province and the people knew him, loved him and wanted to see him.

Father Silvio still had projects to complete. He wrote to his family and friends: "In my missionary history I have built 18 churches in as many villages. Not to mention schools and small schools, of which I have lost count. If the Lord keeps me healthy and determined, I want to build more." 2024 found him still busy in Nkukwa, a small rural village on the outskirts of Lilongwe, where he was completing his 'very last' church and starting the construction of his 'very last' small school.

He would not see the church completely finished, because, the week after Easter, for the first time, he revealed to his confreres of the community that he had stomach pains. In May he went to the CAA in Brescia, Italy, and was soon taken to the Emergency Service of the Civil Hospitals of the city, where he was diagnosed with a tumour that had already spread. At the end of May, Father Silvio was transferred to the 'Fr. Alfredo Fiorini' Centre in Castel d'Azzano (Verona) where he passed away on 5th June. On the 6th, his funeral was held in the chapel of the Centre.

The next day, as Father Silvio had explicitly requested, his remains were taken to Brembilla and placed in the crypt of the parish church, so that the fellow villagers could come and say goodbye to their beloved missionary. A funeral ceremony was held on Saturday afternoon, in a church packed to the rafters. Finally, Father Silvio was laid to rest in the chapel of the priests of the village. (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Father José Luciano Campoverde Vicuña (29.08.1971 – 05.06.2024)

José Luciano Campoverde Vicuña was born on 29th August 1971, in Biblián, in the diocese of Azogues (Ecuador), to César Ariolfo and Emma Irene Vicuña. The infant was rather premature and his parents rushed to take him to the parish for baptism. The old parish priest reassured them: "He certainly won't die... he will grow up and become what his father failed to be: a priest." In fact, Luciano's father, as a young man, had spent many years in the Redemptorist seminary but had ended up choosing the path of marriage.

Over time, little Luciano recovered, regained weight and health, and absorbed, as if by osmosis, the atmosphere of authentic and profound Christian faith created by his parents.

When he began elementary school, Luciano proved to be very active and intelligent. He attended catechism regularly and enthusiastically both for his first communion, which he received in the parish, and for confirmation, which the bishop administered to him in the cathedral of Azogues, in May

1972. He was a child who knew how to make himself loved, and both at school and in the parish, he was well-liked by everyone. When he was about to enter secondary school, a Spanish Salesian priest who was building a seminary near Biblián told him that he, Luciano, would be the first seminarian to enter. Luciano was happy and, after finishing secondary school, he returned with his father to the priest: "Here I am, ready to enter." But the Salesian stopped him in his tracks: "This is a seminary for scholastics doing the final preparatory courses." After a few years, he resumed his search: he returned to the Salesians, contacted the Redemptorists, and also met the Comboni missionaries. The latter welcomed him, so he entered the postulancy of Quito for philosophy studies. On 10th October 2005 – he was now 34 years old – he began his novitiate in Huánuco, Peru. On 5th May 2007, he took his first religious vows and in August of the same year, he went to the international scholasticate of São Paulo, ready to undertake theological studies.

On 26th April 2012, Luciano made his perpetual religious profession in the chapel of the community of Carcelén, where he was invited to represent the scholasticate during the Provincial Assembly. On 17th June, he became a deacon and on 20th October, World Mission Sunday, he was ordained a priest in Biblián, his hometown, by the bishop of Azogues, Monsignor Carlos Anibal Altamirano Argüello.

Father Luciano would have liked to leave for the mission but was assigned to his home province, in charge of missionary animation.

In November 2016, he received a letter from the superior general, Father Tesfaye Tadesse, with the wonderful news of his assignment to the Province of Brazil, starting from 1st January 2017.

Father Luciano's joy was indescribable. However, almost immediately, his joy is put to the test by an uncertain health situation that lasted for over a year. He was then re-assigned to the province of Ecuador. Appointed to the provincial headquarters in Quito, Father Luciano took on the service of the provincial procurator, thus giving a hand to the provincial treasurer, Father Giorgio Dorin. He was always available for any service requested.

From 1st January 2020 to December 2022, Father Luciano was a provincial councillor. In July 2020, he was appointed provincial coordinator of the Commission Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. In October 2020, he was sent to the parish of El Carmen, in the diocese of Portovejo, assigned to parish ministry and the animation of youth groups. He didn't stay there very long.

Shortly after mid-July 2021, Father Luciano was returning from the travel agency where he had gone to buy a couple of plane tickets. The provincial

house was a few minutes' walk away. At a certain point, he stumbled on a slightly uneven sidewalk, fell and broke his left arm. A simple fall, almost banal, certainly without serious consequences. He was taken to the hospital to have his arm put in a cast. But the X-rays revealed a very advanced bone tumour. The doctors told him he had four months to live. Father Luciano left the community of El Carmen and moved to the provincial house to begin chemotherapy sessions at the nearby hospital.

In the meantime, he continued to do what he always did: to serve where help is needed. He was so motivated in being available to everyone that on 1st January 2023 he was re-elected provincial councillor. The esteem that his brothers had for him was immense.

The four months of life diagnosed became three years lived in total serenity. On 5th June 2024, Father Luciano died at the age of 52, surrounded by the affection and care of his confreres. (*Father Alcides Costa, mccj and Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Brother Manfred Bellinger (08.06.1958 – 05.07.2024)

Brother Manfred was born on 8th June 1958 in Wasseralfingen, Baden-Württemberg, in the diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart. After secondary school, he completed a three-and-a-half-year apprenticeship as an industrial electrician in Wasseralfingen, which he completed by obtaining a professional qualification certificate. He immediately found a job, but after a year he decided to do 12 months of civil service at the hospital laundry in Aalen. It was during this period that Manfred began to deepen his life of faith and, gradually, came to understand that he wanted to spend his life serving God and the Church. He spoke about it several times with the parish priest, who directed him to the Comboni missionaries, who had a training centre for the brothers in Ellwangen, on Josefstal hill. Young Manfred immediately liked the house and the community.

On 15th May 1978, he entered as a postulant and continued his professional training in the electrical sector. On 10th October 1979, Manfred began his novitiate in Mellatz, where he took his first temporary vows on 9th June 1981, and entered the scholasticate, the last phase of his formation. He enrolled in a two-year course of professional training at the technical institute in Tettnang, where he specialised in electricity and systems engineering, obtaining a master's degree that qualified him to teach. In July 1983, he went to England, to Rickmansworth, where the Comboni Missionaries had recently taken over the management of a parish, and enrolled in a college to improve his English language skills. At the end of June 1984, he successfully completed the language course.

After a short family vacation, Manfred was assigned to the International Brothers Center (CIF) in Gilgil, Kenya, to complete his scholasticate with two years of study and practice. Here, on 11th May 1986, he took perpetual vows. He was assigned to teach and train apprentices at the Polytechnic Village where he was appointed head of the electricity department. He remained there for nine years, loved and respected by students, instructors and the people.

Manfred had a nice way of dealing with apprentices and employees. And being a football fan, he organised football matches at weekends. He often went on excursions with the group of young Christian students (YCS), with the Bible in his backpack. On Sundays, he celebrated 'Sunday liturgies of the Word without a priest' with students in various schools.

In 1995 he returned to his homeland, assigned to the community of Graz (Austria) as head of the maintenance of the house and agricultural land. However, he dedicated most of his time to the Afrikahaus, a building built to welcome and promote students and refugees. At the time, in collaboration with Caritas, the 'Afrikahaus Daniel Comboni Association for the Promotion of Students and Refugees from Africa' was founded. The house offers accommodation until the refugees have obtained a residence permit in Austria.

Brother Manfred took care of the refugees like a mother and helped them in the sometimes difficult relationships they had with the police. He also started German language courses for them, but soon found himself forced to hire a retired teacher for this task. And of course... he organised many soccer tournaments.

On 30th September 2001, Brother Manfred went to Germiston, South Africa, for the Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation. After the course, he received a new assignment: the Comboni Province of Mozambique. Without delay, he went to Portugal to learn Portuguese. In December 2002, he went to Mozambique. He would spend two periods there: from 2002 to 2014 and from 2020 until the end of his life.

In Carapira, the missionaries ran a technical school with an attached boarding school and Brother Manfred took over its general responsibility and administration. In 2014, he left this service to take over the management of the Centre for elderly and sick confreres in Ellwangen. It was the time when large groups of migrants were arriving: thousands of refugees filled the former NATO barracks, on the outskirts of the city, which became a first reception centre (LEA). Brother Manfred was immediately ready to help.

In 2020, he was able to return to the Carapira Vocational School as a teacher and formator. The school has now become an institute, it has had a significant improvement in the level of training. A class for industrial electricians has also been approved. The number of students has risen to 200. A group of girls and about thirty Muslims now also attend the institute.

2024 is the year of the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the school (created on 25th September 1964). Brother Manfred was eager to receive visits from former students, to hear their experiences and how their lives have changed thanks to the training they have received. The official celebrations were scheduled for the end of September. At the beginning of March, he took an early vacation in his homeland. He rested for a few weeks and then began a long series of conferences and meetings with missionary groups to which he presented his projects and asked for sponsorships.

He already had his return ticket for 5th July in his pocket when, on the evening of 4th July, the group *Freundeskreis Matany* ("Friends of Matany") from the city of Aalen held an outdoor barbecue evening for the missionaries of the Ellwangen community. Brother Manfred also attended so he could meet his confreres, the employees of the various offices and a good number of friends. At the end of the party, he hugged and said goodbye to everyone, saying how happy he was: "Tomorrow I will see my students. How wonderful!"

He did not delay in Ellwangen but went straight to Wasseralfingen, to the home of his brother Helmut who had offered to take him to Munich airport the next morning. In the morning, at the appointed time, seeing that he was not yet up, Helmut knocked on the door of Manfred's room. No answer. He went in and found him dead on the bed. Everyone was immensely shocked and sad. He had shown no signs of premature death at 66 years of age!

The news immediately reaches Carapira, where the confreres and students were deeply saddened. They prayed for him and talked about him, especially his ability to be close to everyone, about the beauty of having had him close to them, about the ardent warmth of his charity, the kindness of his attentions, his admirable professional skills... In everyone, there was the certainty that Brother Manfred would still continue to take care of them now as their intercessor with God.

There was a short message from Gilgil. It was from John Michael Muya, former director of the Polytechnic Village: "May Saint Daniel Comboni welcome Brother Manfred into heaven and accompany him to the presence of the Father. And you, our dear and most humble

Brother Manfred, faithful servant of the people and humanity, rest in peace. You have fulfilled your role as a missionary of Christ in spreading the Good News to the people. My tears flow uncontrollably for your death. But in my heart, I feel a deep gratitude to God for having met and known you. You were truly a great missionary of Comboni!" (*Father Alois Eder and other confreres*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHERS: Caesario Omona, of Father Idro Kenyi Denis (U); Leonardo, of Father Hector Peña Sánchez (M).

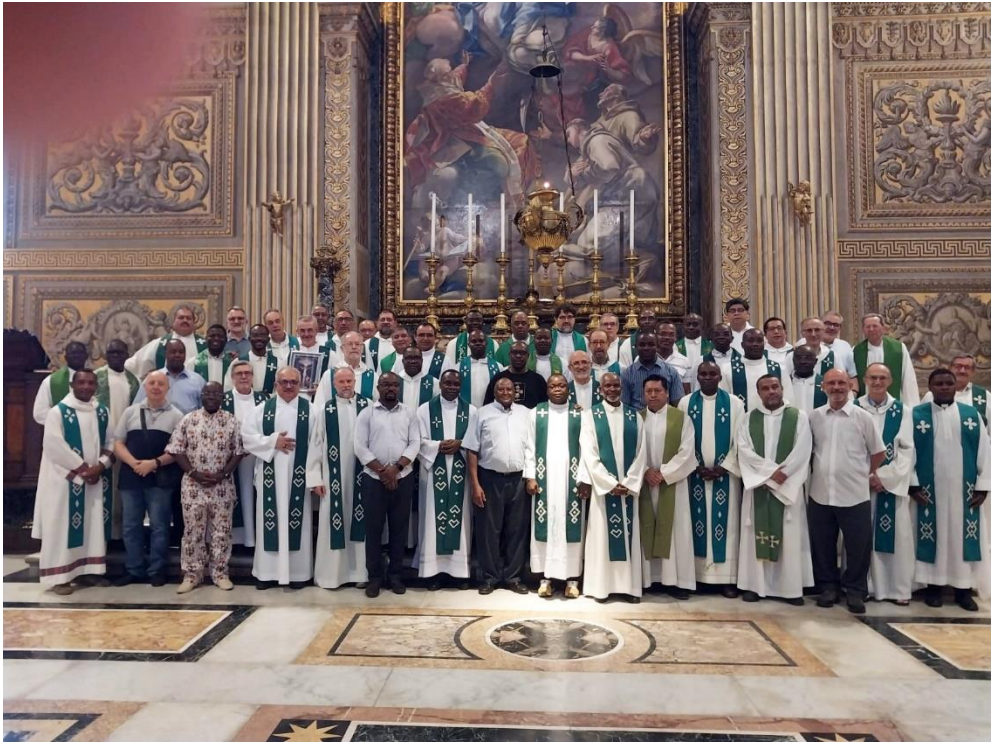
THE MOTHERS: Estefania, of Father Ruben Padilla Rocha (LP); Teresa, of Father Benedetto Giupponi (I).

THE BROTHERS: Giovanni, of Brother Emilio Prevedello (†); Domenico, of Father Bruno Bordonali (I); Manuel, of Brother João da Silva Ferreira and Brother Bernardino da Silva Ferreira (P); Emilio, of Father Marillo Spagnolo (I); Mario Alberto, of Father Rodolfo Heriberto Valdez Ponce (M).

THE SISTERS: Giuseppina, of Father Fernando Zolli (I); Mariuccia, of Father Claudio Gasbarro (†); Sr. Anna Lucia, of Mons. Camillo Ballin (†); Luz María, of Father Enrique Ibarra Hernández (M).

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sr. Mary Paul Lonergan, Sr. Elda Merlo, Sr. Rosalena Pagan Griso; Sr. Gianna Bianca Bertacco; Sr. Rosa Castelnovo; Sr. Elena M. Meregalli; Sr. Lina Soso; Sr. M. Agnese Campagnolo.

THE SECULAR COMBONI MISSIONARY: Bordignon Silvana.



In Saint Peter's for the closing Eucharistic celebration.

