

FAMILIA COMBONIANA

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

843

September 2025

50 years ago



On the afternoon of September 2, 1975, on the hill of Josefstal (Ellwangen), in a festive atmosphere, the “burial” of a coffin called ‘separation’ (*Trennung*) took place, and the sturdy oak of reunion (*Wiedervereinigung*) was planted.

The two superiors general, Father Georg Klose and Father Tarcisio Agostoni (*pictured*), were the first to cover the coffin with earth and plant the sapling oak tree.

GENERAL COUNCIL

Brief notes from the 37th Extraordinary General Consulta (16-27 August 2025)

1. The next General Consultas will be held as follows:

- October Consulta from 6th to 25th October
- December Consulta from 8th to 13th December

2. Appointment of Father Moses Otii as formator in Graz

On 27.8.2025, the General Council unanimously voted to appoint Father Moses Otii as first formator at the Graz formation community as from 1st September 2025.

Ordinations

Mintesnot Simeneh Lemessa	Jijiga/ETH	02.08.2025
Bwalya Kennedy	Lusaka/MZ	04.08.2025
Jorge Carlos Joaquim Máquina	Kisangani/CN	13.08.2025
Mutheu Moses Mwatunge	Kisangani/CN	13.08.2025
Muhindo Kapanza Lwanzo	Kisangani/CN	13.08.2025

Perpetual professions

Kennedy Bwalya	Lilanda/MZ	10/05/2025
Nyimbo Oscar Theyo	Bangui/RCD	10/05/2025
Adaklumegeah Mamertus	Accra/TGB	29/06/2025
Eklo Honyo Kossi V. Celestin	Accra/TGB	29/06/2025
Nguyen Van Tien Peter	Hô Chí Minh City/VN	04/07/2025
Romero Chajón David Eduardo	San Luis Peéen/PCA	18/07/2025
Muliza Vincent James	Lilongwe/MZ	25/07/2025
Mwilu Nichola Mbithi	Rankau Kandisi/KE	17/08/2025
Zida Koffi Magloire	Rankau Kandisi/KE	17/08/2025
Mutheu Moses Mwatunge	Kisangani/CN	03/08/2025
Jorge Carlos Joaquim Máquina	Kisangani/NC	03/08/2025
Muhindo Kapanza Lwanzo	Kisangani/CN	03/08/2025
Olupot Christopher	Matany/U	21/08/2025
Celso Samwel Pedro	Tete/MO	23/08/2025
Gil Fernando	Tete/MO	23/08/2025

Holy Redeemer Guild

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

Prayer Intentions

September – In today's ever-changing society, we ask the Lord for the ability to listen to the needs of all humanity and all of creation, performing gestures of benevolence, respect, and care for our 'common home'. *Lord, hear us.*

October – For the Comboni Missionary Sisters who are celebrating their Inter-Capitular Assembly: so that, inspired by the breath of the Spirit, they may experience this event as a *kairós* in the process of reconfiguration that they are now living. *Lord, hear us.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

SEPTEMBER

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

1	St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, virgin and doctor of the Church, <i>Patron of the missions</i>	Feast
10	St. Daniel Comboni, bishop, <i>Founder of the Comboni Family</i>	Solemnity
20	Bl. David Okelo and Bl. Gildo Irwa, Martyrs	Optional mem.

Significant anniversaries

SEPTEMBER

9	St. Peter Claver, priest	Chad, Colombia
14	Exaltation of the Holy Cross	universal

OCTOBER

16	St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, virgin	universal
19	Ss. John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests, and companions	NAP (United States and Canada)

Father Celestino graduates in Church History and Cultural Heritage

We are pleased to share the news that on 26th June 2025, Father Celestino Seabra Invaha Namaneque, originally from Mozambique, completed his studies in Church History and Cultural Heritage at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

He defended his thesis, titled *Artistic and Cultural Heritage of African Missions. The Case of the African Museum of Verona*, which focused on the valorisation and conservation of the Church's cultural heritage.

The study highlights the ethnographic collection of the African Museum of Verona, founded in 1938, highlighting its importance for the historical, cultural, and artistic memory of the Church and for its transmission to future generations.

This is an achievement for which we can be grateful and proud, one that enriches not only Father Celestino but also our entire Comboni Family.

270 young people, attracted by the Comboni charism, in Rome for the Jubilee

From 28th July to 3rd August, the General Curia of the Comboni Missionaries in Rome was transformed into a lively international meeting place, welcoming 270 young people from Africa, Europe, America, and East Timor. Many groups – including *Combojovent* from Spain, young people from Italy, Portugal, Egypt, England, and Mexico – had already gathered in the Comboni communities of Milan, Verona, and Florence in preparation for the Great Jubilee of Youth taking place in the Italian capital.

The invitation had been issued months earlier, on 11th December 2024, with a letter signed by Father Fabio Baldan, Provincial of Italy, and Father Stefano Giudici, Provincial Secretary for Formation. The program included days of prayer, reflection, liturgical celebrations, cultural visits, exchanges of experiences, and moments to share the joy of faith.

"This meeting," Father Baldan emphasised, "was an opportunity to reflect on social justice, integral ecology, and the dignity of every person, values at the heart of the Comboni mission, which looks to the peripheries and dreams of a more just and sustainable future."

► **Voices from five continents** – Participants' testimonies recount an experience of growth and brotherhood. For José Daniel Rodríguez, from Sahuayo, Michoacán (Central Mexico), it was invaluable to "learn to re-use materials to reduce pollution and become aware of everyday mistakes." Camila dos Santo Campos, 17, from Portugal, recalls her first day in Milan: "We were nervous; we did not know what to expect or who we

would meet. But our fears turned to joy: everyone welcomed us with a smile, and even though we came from different countries, we immediately became friends.” Juan Enrique Ela, a Comboni postulant from Spain, recounts the richness of “experiencing different cultures and nationalities” and confides, with a smile, that when he did not understand something, he relied on ChatGPT to communicate.

► **Songs, dances, and testimonies** – In Rome, one of the most colourful moments was the missionary outreach activity organised by the Comboni Family among the ruins of the Imperial Forums, featuring songs in Lingala, Kiswahili, English, Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian, and dances that expressed the cultural richness of the participants. Among the most touching moments was the testimony of Rhea Nadeem, a young English-woman, who shared how faith and the experience of feeling saved by God during the Covid-19 pandemic changed her life: “God is real and always with us, especially in difficult times.”

► **An experience at the heart of the Jubilee** – The Comboni Youth Jubilee was part of the larger Youth Jubilee in Rome, which saw moments of great participation: the opening Mass in St. Peter’s Square, the penitential day at the Circus Maximus, and the vigil at Tor Vergata with Pope Leo XIV. An event that brought together different languages, cultures, and histories, in the spirit of Saint Daniel Comboni and the dream of a more fraternal world. (*Father Gbama Nsusu Boniface Junior*)

► **Messages of thanks and encouragement to continue** – Despite the “Babel of languages,” we had an unforgettable ‘Pentecost experience’. The language barrier is not a barrier to fraternity when there is openness of heart and a willingness to live together in serenity. The messages of thanks we received from the leaders of the various groups of our young pilgrims speak to the ‘charm’ of the experience and encourage us to continue doing our best to involve young people in our Comboni missionary ministry.

► “We send you this message to thank you for the magnificent experience you have given us. The group from Portugal returned enthusiastic about the days spent with you. The human warmth and beauty of those days will never be forgotten” (*Carlos Campo and Father Crespim Cabral, mccj*).

► “From the bottom of our hearts, we wish to express our enormous gratitude for the wonderful welcome you gave us during the Jubilee days of our pilgrimage. You opened the doors of your communities and your hearts with such kindness, patience, and joy. Your enthusiasm in sharing the legacy of Saint Daniel Comboni not only helped us better understand the depth of his commitment to the Church’s mission to the African peoples, but also helped us rekindle that same spirit in each of you.

Thank you for walking with us on this stretch of our Jubilee journey. You have made this moment truly special.” (*Fathers Melaku Tafesse and Gordon Paul Rees, mccj*)

ASIA

Vietnam – Perpetual profession of Peter Tien, in Vietnam

Last 4th July was a significant and joyful day for our Asian delegation. For the first time, a Vietnamese candidate took perpetual vows.

Scholastic Peter Tien, surrounded by his brothers from the ‘Blessed Anrê (Andrea) of Phú Yên’ community in the Archdiocese of Thành-Phô Hồ Chí Minh, consecrated himself for life as a Comboni missionary. Father Victor Paruñgao, deputy superior of the Asian delegation, received the vows.

Andrea’s family joined the celebration, and his cousin, a Salvatorian priest (Society of the Divine Savior), gave a brilliant homily with several references to our spirituality.

The celebration was an excellent opportunity to encourage our Vietnamese candidates at various stages of their formation to pursue the missionary ideal as a concrete life option and a prophetic choice for the Church in Vietnam. We now await with serene and joyful anticipation the ordination of Peter Tien to the diaconate. (*Father Aguilar Sánchez Víctor Manuel, mccj*)

DSP

Centenary of the “Josefinum” house in Ellwangen and Provincial Assembly

On 22nd June, the Comboni missionaries working in the German province celebrated the centenary of the ‘Josefinum’ house in Ellwangen.

In 1921, a small group of brothers from the Congregation of the Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus–FSCJ (then still united; the Congregation of the Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus–MFSC would be established in 1923) purchased a dilapidated mill, located along a pond created by a dam, along with a small farm, in Schleifhäusle, a tiny hamlet of Ellwangen.

Father Isidor Stang, expelled from Sudan during the First World War, raised the necessary funds. Four years later, in 1925, two years after the formal division of the Institute (which also included the separation of material assets), the funds were made available for the purchase of a larger

house in Ellwangen. A seminary, then called the “apostolic school,” was founded there.

Until the end of the German Empire, after the First World War, religious orders in the Reich were not permitted to found religious houses. Therefore, until 1918, German-speaking candidates had to travel to either Brixen or Verona for their formation.

The opening of Ellwangen was made possible thanks to a special gesture by the then Bishop of Rottenburg, Msgr. Wilhelm Keppler, who decided to welcome a religious order into his diocese, with the possibility of opening a seminary there. Several other dioceses, however, had denied this possibility. The Ellwangen seminary and the community of Schleifhäusle (the latter was initially very poor and quickly nicknamed ‘Josefstal’ by its brothers) experienced unexpected expansion. But this is not the place to describe their rapid development.

Bishop Klaus Mathias Krämer, ordained Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart on 1st December 2024, wished to be present at the centenary celebration, also because he is well acquainted with the missionary work of our Institute, and was not only responsible for the diocesan missionary committees, but has also been president of the pontifical missionary organisation Missio-Deutschland for several years.

The great basilica in Ellwangen was packed for the jubilee celebration. The bishop described the tireless work of the Comboni missionaries as “their hallmark, despite difficulties and failures.” We were all pleasantly surprised to see how much appreciation we still enjoy in this country today.

About 500 guests attended the event, and 350 portions of excellent food were served at lunch. Most of the confrères from the various communities of the province were also present.

The following day, we began the provincial assembly with a day of reflection on the theme of the Sacred Heart, introduced by Father Josef Altenburger. (*Father Alois Eder, mccj*)

ETHIOPIA

Priestly ordination of Mintesnot Simeneh Lemessa

On 2nd August 2025, in Jijiga, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Harar, in the Somali region of Ethiopia, Deacon Mintesnot Simeneh Lemessa was ordained a priest. The ceremony was graced by the presence of the Apostolic Vicar of Harar, Most Rev. Angelo Pagano, OFM Cap., and the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archeparchy of Addis Ababa, Most Rev. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, MCCJ.

In his homily, the ordaining bishop, Most Rev. Tadesse, spoke of the beauty of the priestly ministry, emphasising the sacred responsibility that comes from serving the Church and the community.

The ceremony attracted a large number of priests and religious sisters, including several Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Sisters. The parish of St. Joseph, which has been blessed by the presence of missionaries for over a century, celebrated this special occasion with jubilation and a deep sense of spiritual fulfilment.

Mintesnot Simeneh completed his theological studies and received the diaconate in Brazil, and has already been assigned to the Comboni Province of this South American country.

The provincial superior's closing words at the celebration were very fitting: "The assignment of Father Mintesnot to the Comboni Province of Brazil for his first missionary priestly ministry is a splendid sign of the openness to the entire world of this parish of St. Joseph of Jijiga, of the Apostolic Vicariate of Harar, of the Comboni Province of Ethiopia, and also of the entire Ethiopian Catholic Church. Sending one of our "witnesses" as a gift of our faith to the Church of Brazil demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that we have taken seriously Jesus' command: 'Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.' In a certain sense, it is a test of our maturity. For this, we can only thank the Lord."

The day of celebration concluded with a meal prepared in the parish hall, symbolising both the unity of the parish community and its great joy in donating one of its own sons to the ministry of evangelisation, but also a blessing on the new stage in Father Mintesnot Simeneh's life. (*Father Asfaha Yohannes, mccj*)

ITALY

"ELIMU – African Summer School 2025" in Florence

This year, the Comboni community in Florence hosted the "ELIMU – African Summer School" from 7th to 13th July. This week of university studies focused on exploring African dynamics and innovative design in collaboration with the continent.

The initiative, now in its second year in Florence, is promoted in collaboration with Afrobrix, active in the city of Brescia. The course is scientifically directed by Professor Mahougnon Venance Sinsin and coordinated by Father Fabrizio Colombo, while local organisation was entrusted to Father John Hammond. The project was made possible thanks to private donations, student contributions, and the support of

Banca Etica, the Region of Tuscany, and the Municipality of Florence, which also provided sponsorship.

► **TEMA 2025 – African Renaissance – Innovation and Technology**

The course addressed the topic of technological innovation on the African continent, starting with the underappreciated contribution of ancient and modern Africa to science and technology. This led to a reflection on the relationship between African traditions, local epistemic knowledge, and the culture of innovation.

At the same time, the challenges related to African technological development were analysed from the perspective of an African Renaissance, also addressing the issues of technocracy and techno-colonialism, with a multidisciplinary approach: philosophical, historical, and cultural.

► **Workshops, startups, and design: a concrete path**

A major new feature of the 2025 edition was the afternoon sessions, which offered participants a unique opportunity to engage with startup professionals and Afro-descendant entrepreneurs who have already launched successful projects. These included Professor Mauro Lombardi of Blockchains and Artificial Intelligence for Business, Economics, and Law (BABEL) at the University of Florence, Chris Richmond Nzi (digital entrepreneur), Marco Tortora (Fair Italy), and Andrea Censoni (Startup Africa Roadtrip).

The goal was to inspire, train, and guide participants in the creation of innovative businesses, with a focus on technologies applied to the African context and diasporas.

At the end of the week, the students presented project ideas that will be supported in the following months through *mentoring and follow-up* with experts.

► **December 2025: Public presentation of the projects**

Thanks to the collaboration with the Florence-based association 'Fair Italy', the best ideas will be presented publicly in December, again in Florence, at an event dedicated to innovation and startups. There, entrepreneurs, investors, and incubator managers will have the opportunity to select and support the most promising projects, fostering the birth of real startups.

► **Young Afro-descendants Protagonists of Change**

Enabling young people of African descent – especially second-generation ones – to become protagonists of Africa's development and innovation is one of ELIMU's fundamental objectives. This vision is deeply inspired by the missionary and cultural plan of Saint Daniele Comboni.

See you at the next ELIMU in 2026, again in Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance. (<https://elimu.it/>)

Pilgrims from the Vicariate of Northern Arabia visit the tomb of Msgr. Camillo Ballin

On Friday, 1st August 2025, about a hundred pilgrims from the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia), accompanied by several priests, visited the Fontaniva cemetery (Padua), where Msgr. Camillo Ballin, a Comboni missionary and their bishop for 15 years, is buried. He died in Rome on Easter evening 2020.

Welcome by his brother Alfonso, family members, fellow villagers, the parish priest Father Andrea Mazzon, and Father Gaetano Montresor, the pilgrims gathered in prayer and song at their pastor's tomb. Hubert, one of the pilgrims, gave a moving recollection of Msgr. Camillo's ministry, emphasising his strength in proclaiming the Gospel despite difficulties and unjust accusations, his ability to forgive, his respect for all, and the love that bound him to people.

Father Gaetano remembered Msgr. Camillo, marked by painful events. Orphaned by his mother at the age of three, Camillo was the fourth child. His father remarried and another son, Alfonso, was born in memory of a brother who had died prematurely. "Today, Alfonso, Camillo's brother, is here with us," said Father Gaetano.

He then retraced Msgr. Camillo's vocational journey: his entry into the seminary in Vicenza as a boy, the fragile health that forced him to return home, and his unshakeable desire to become a priest. After his studies and entering the Comboni novitiate, he professed his first religious vows in 1965, and his perpetual vows in 1968. In 1969 he was ordained a priest. During his first Mass, the parish priest told him: "You have fulfilled your mother's great desire. She wanted you to be a priest!"

From the very beginning, Father Camillo chose to dedicate himself to the Arab-Muslim world: Egypt, Sudan, and the Gulf countries were his missionary territories. He spoke Arabic perfectly, so much so that he acted as an interpreter for John Paul II during his visit to Khartoum in 1993. He was a professor, school principal, and provincial superior in Egypt. He established friendly relations with many people, even the King of Bahrain. The faithful of Fontaniva and the Comboni missionaries expressed their gratitude for the pilgrims' homage. Brother Alfonso, visibly moved, said: "If you came this far, it means you loved him." The moment concluded with the song "Gli occhi miei sollevo ai monti," first in Italian and then in English (*I lift up my eyes to the mountains*). The visit to the tomb was part

of the Jubilee pilgrimage that visited Rome, Padua (with the Basilica of Saint Anthony), Fontaniva, and concluded in Assisi.

The pilgrims belonged to Neocatechumenal communities, communities with a strong presence in the Vicariate, thanks also to the commitment of numerous priests of the Way, a precious resource for pastoral life.

The previous evening, the Eucharist was celebrated in the Fontaniva cathedral according to the Neocatechumenal tradition, presided over by Father Gaetano and Father Giuseppe Caramazza. The group was unable to attend due to travel delays, but the celebration was held anyway in thanksgiving for the life and mission of Bishop Camillo.

Before leaving Fontaniva, the group gathered once again in prayer and praise in the square in front of the Cathedral, where Bishop Camillo's pastoral staff is kept. (*Father Gaetano Montresor*)

MEXICO

Provincial Assembly in Xochimilco

The provincial assembly was held in Xochimilco from 5th to 7th August, preceded by five days of spiritual exercises. The assembly offered participants the opportunity to deeply analyse the various services they perform in the country.

During the five-day spiritual exercises, led by Sister María del Socorro Becerra, a member of the Institute of the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Word, the theme of God's love and tenderness was reflected upon through His Word and His constant presence, with the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a point of reference.

The assembly itself began on the morning of the 5th, with a presentation of an ongoing formation topic by Dr. Velia Rangel. She helped those present redefine the meaning of everything that can seem like a 'failure', a loss, a moment of weakness, a crisis or moral breakdown, a bereavement or a death, inviting them to 'read' their own history and to look at such difficult moments with an attitude of hope.

The afternoon of the same day and the entire following day were dedicated to observing and analysing the activities of the various sectors (missionary outreach, evangelisation, formation, etc.), giving particular importance to the economy.

The day concluded with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Most Rev. Juan María Huerta, the new Bishop of Xochimilco.

The third and final day was dedicated to a reflection on the upcoming elections, as the term of the current Provincial Superior and his Council ends on 31st December.

The dialogue was profound and sincere, in which hope, trust, closeness, and serenity emerged as the most deeply felt desires and sentiments at this time. It is hoped that these same desires and sentiments will also be shared by the next Provincial Council.

A joyful final note: celebrations have been scheduled for four Mexican confrères who will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of their priestly ordination this year. They are fathers Víctor Alejandro Mejía, Lauro Betancourt, Armando Máximo and Aldo Sierra.

Silver Jubilees of Fathers Armando Máximo and Víctor Alejandro

Last 16th August, San Juan Atenco (Puebla) hosted the celebration of Father Armando Máximo Aquino's 25th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. He was joined by his family, friends, and members of the Comboni Missionary Family from various parts of the country, as well as part of the parish community of San José Comalapa (Veracruz), where he currently serves as a missionary.

It was a very important day for Father Armando, marked by many gestures of deep affection and many memories of experiences that remain vivid, despite the years he spent in Chad and other parts of Mexico (Mexico City, Sahuayo, and Comalapa).

A week later, on 23rd August, Father Víctor Alejandro Mejía celebrated his priestly jubilee at the Shrine of Guadalupe in La Paz (Baja California Sur), his hometown. He was also joined by family, friends, a large group of Comboni missionaries, and several diocesan priests, including Bishop Miguel Ángel Espinoza, Coadjutor Bishop of La Paz, and Bishop Jaime Rodríguez, a Comboni missionary and Bishop Emeritus of Huánuco, Peru. The titular Bishop of La Paz, Bishop Miguel Ángel Alba, was unable to attend due to health reasons.

The ceremony, during which Father Víctor renewed his priestly promises, was also followed on social media by various Christian communities in Macau and Taiwan, where he worked for over twenty years and to whom he addressed a few words in Chinese to thank them for their support and closeness. Father 'Vicho' – as everyone calls him – is the first Comboni Missionary from Baja California Sur, where the first Comboni Missionaries arrived 77 years ago.

Next November, Father Lauro Betancourt will celebrate his 25th anniversary of priesthood in Zacatecas. In December, Father Aldo Sierra will celebrate his jubilee, currently serving in South Africa.

(Brother Raúl Cervantes and Father Ismael Piñón, mccj)

MOZAMBIQUE

Perpetual vows and diaconal ordination of Celso Samuel and Gil Fernando in Tete

Scholastics Celso Samuel Pedro and Gil Fernando, Mozambicans from the province of Nampula, professed their perpetual vows last Saturday, 23rd August, in the Comboni parish of the Martyrs of Uganda, in Matundo, diocese of Tete.

Father José Joaquim Luis Pedro, provincial superior, called to preside at the Eucharist, emphasised the significance of perpetual consecration: "It is the total gift of your life, which today you place in the hands of God. Let him always guide the path of your existence."

The following day, Sunday the 24th, the two newly professed were ordained to the diaconate by the laying on of hands by Bishop Diamantino Antunes of Tete. Taking advantage of the solemn occasion, the bishop blessed the new parish office and the 'Via Fátima', the path leading to the Marian grotto recently inaugurated in the parish.

Drawing on the Gospel passage from the 21st Sunday of the year, Bishop Diamantino invited the new deacons and all the faithful present to enter the Kingdom *through the narrow door*, that is, "the door of your service and your self-giving to God and your brothers and sisters."

Both celebrations were joyfully attended by numerous Comboni missionaries, priests, nuns, and hundreds of faithful from Matundo, Nampula, Beira, and Muxúnguè.

These were two days of celebration, enriched by two deeply meaningful rites, intensely experienced by all and made truly solemn by the songs and dances typical of the *Nyungwe* people, who live in the province of Tete.

At the conclusion of the ordination to the diaconate, Father José Joaquim announced the new assignments of the two new deacons: Celso Samuel has been assigned to the Comboni community of Muxúnguè, in the Archdiocese of Beira, while Gil Fernando will return to the Comboni community of Ribáuè, in the Archdiocese of Nampula, to continue serving the Church of Mozambique with renewed missionary enthusiasm.

After the celebration, the parish offered a fraternal lunch to all present. (Father Sérgio Vilanculo, mcccj)

NAP

Comboni Missions magazine wins five awards in 2025

At this year's Catholic Media Awards, sponsored by the Catholic Media Association, Comboni Missions magazine won five awards!

Congratulations to editor Kathleen M. Carroll and the entire team who work so hard to produce this magazine (*Catholic Media Association*).

These are the five awards:

- 2nd Place – Magazine of the Year, Mission: *Comboni Missions*;
- 3rd Place – Best Essay, Mission: "I Am on the Side of Peace";
- 3rd Place – Best Personality Profile, Religious Leader: "Bishop Paride Taban – a Legacy of Peace and Sacrifice in South Sudan";
- Honourable Mention – Best Personality Profile, Religious Leader: "The Great Life of a Humble Person";
- Honourable Mention – Best Feature Article, Missions: 'Healing West Nile'.

On Wednesday, July 16th, friends and supporters from the greater Cincinnati area attended "Meet the Missionaries Night" to hear the stories of Comboni missionaries from abroad. Father Anthony Kondo Komivi, Father Mose Chrisantus Keengwe, Father Pedro Percy Carbonero, Father John Korir, and Father Richard Kyankaaga spoke about their work in the missions. Approximately 60 people attended the event, asking follow-up questions and staying afterward to speak individually with the missionaries. (*Lindsay Braud – Senior Communications Specialist – Comboni Missions – North American Province*)

PERU

Brother António Carvalho Leal – 50 years of religious and missionary

Brother António Carvalho Leal was born on 18th January 1946, in Marinhas, in the municipality of Santarém (Portugal). He was an only child. His first contact with religious life occurred during the three and a half years he spent working as a typographer for the Salesians in Lisbon.

After entering the Comboni Institute, he spent his formation period first in Santarém, then in Pordenone, Italy. He carried out his missionary ministry in Portugal for approximately 34 years, and for another 32 years in Peru, where he currently resides.

On 15th August 1975, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven, Brother António ordained took his first religious vows. This year,

on the same date, he celebrated his Golden Jubilee, 50 years of missionary religious life.

“This long journey has been entirely God’s work,” he told the brothers and faithful who regularly gather in the chapel of the provincial headquarters in Lima. He then added: “Even the Mother of God, the one who was Assumed, never boasted of her works. In her canticle, the *Magnificat*, she limited herself to magnifying the Lord (*Luke 1:46*), knowing that what had happened in her was the Lord’s work. What I have achieved as a Comboni brother is not my own merit, but rather the fruit of the work that the grace of the Lord has accomplished in my humble person.”

While still young, Brother António spent two years in Angola, doing his military service. “It was during that period that God called me,” he recalled. “Then I met the Comboni missionaries through the magazine *Audácia*. Having become one of them, I worked in accounting and administration, then in the secretariats of our communities in Portugal. I also served as a formator and bursar in a seminary of our Institute, where we had to provide for the maintenance and formation of a large group of candidates for missionary life. I was in contact with many people. I also worked for many years in the distribution of our magazines *Além-Mar* and *Audácia*.

Brother António concluded his brief remarks by highlighting the important role played by Saint Daniel Comboni in his vocation: “Saint Daniel’s compassion and dedication to the salvation of the African peoples are aspects that have always inspired, guided, and accompanied my missionary life.” Today, Brother António lives in the Comboni Provincial House in Lima. He contributes to the *Aguiluchos* magazine, serves in the sacristy, takes care of the house maintenance, and leads a prayer and Marian devotion group.

As we thank the Lord for the gift of Brother António, his humility, and his enthusiastic service to the missions, we ask him to continue to inspire new vocations for the missions.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Juan Manuel Valdovinos Valencia (05.11.1943 – 30.05.2025)

It would take many pages to describe Father Juan Manuel, a man endowed with many qualities that he put to the service of the mission. He was highly intelligent and particularly gifted with languages: he spoke English, Italian, *Acholi*, and *Chichewa* perfectly. He also had a restless and curious spirit, which allowed him to continue learning new things throughout his life. He lived and shared his splendid talents and gifts with

great simplicity, even if not always understood by everyone. He was a missionary very close to the people, which allowed him to delve deeply into the culture and traditions of the peoples with whom he worked.

We will always remember him as smiling and joyful, eager to make the most of life. This made him a missionary who preached more with his presence than with his words. He had learned to live life at a “different” pace: the word “haste” was not part of his vocabulary.

He developed a passion for natural medicine, which he learned and shared with many people in the missions. Some confrères even called him ‘Doctor Valdovinos’.

A Comboni from childhood

Juan Manuel was born on 5th November 1943, in Sahuayo, a municipality in the state of Michoacán, central Mexico, in the diocese of Zamora. He entered the Comboni seminary in Sahuayo at a very young age. He did not have to travel far to get there: his house was just a few streets away from what quickly became his new home. His parents, Señora Nena (Ana Maria) and Father Goyo (Gregorio), were well-known in the neighbourhood and were so close to the seminary community that they were considered part of the “Comboni family.” All in all, for the boy, entering the seminary was almost a simple change of residence.

After completing his secondary education, in February 1960 he entered the novitiate in Tepécam, Mexico City, where he took the habit on March 19. Two years later, on 11th February 1962, he took his first religious vows and was assigned to the scholasticate of San Diego, California (USA), for philosophy studies, enrolled in the third year of high school. After completing the fourth year, in July 1964 he was assigned to the scholasticate of Rome, where he attended the first course in Fundamental Theology (1964-65) and the second course in Dogmatic Theology (1965-66) at the Urbaniana University, obtaining a bachelor’s degree in theology.

In August 1966, he was transferred to the scholasticate of Venegono Superiore for the third and fourth year of theology. On 9th September 1967, he made his perpetual religious profession. On 5th November of the same year, he was ordained a deacon by Msgr. Edoardo Mason, Apostolic Vicar of El Obeid, in the chapel of the Mother House in Verona. On 31st May 1968, while passing through Rome, he received the official letter from the Vicar General with his future assignment: the region of Uganda, in the Diocese of Gulu, “from the day of your departure.” On 23rd June 1968, he was ordained a priest by Msgr. Mason, in the parish church of the Madonna Pellegrina in Modena.

In Uganda

Before leaving for Uganda, however, he returned to Mexico, assigned to the Apostolic High School and Sahuayo School as a teacher. The people of Sahuayo gave him a very warm welcome, especially since he was the first Comboni Missionary from the town, which for years had worked to support the training of Mexican missionaries who had recently begun to be sent out into the world.

In early January 1970, his time came to leave. He flew to Kampala and, on the 14th, was already at the Palabek mission in northern Uganda, near the border with South Sudan, as a parish priest. He remained there until June 1974, when he moved to Pabo as a curate.

In July 1975, he returned to Mexico, assigned to the parish of Ciudad Constitución, in the diocese of La Paz, in charge of missionary animation. At the end of January 1976, he went to La Paz, Baja California Sur, as a curate in the parish of the Corazón Inmaculado de Maria.

In November 1976, he went to the Curia in for a renewal course. At the end of March 1977, he returned to Uganda, assigned to Layibi, in the diocese of Gulu, as a chaplain and secondary school religion teacher. In July 1979, he was assigned to Opit as assistant pastor, where he remained until June 1982, when he returned home, first to the seminary of Sahuayo (1983), then, for a few months, to the seminary of San Francisco del Rincón, as a formator. In July 1984, he was at the seminary of Guadalajara, again as a formator, where he remained until June 1987.

Malawi-Zambia

Meanwhile (March 1987), he received his long-awaited new mission assignment: the province of Malawi-Zambia, assigned to the parish of Chipata as superior of the community. In mid-1994, he was granted a sabbatical: he initially stayed in Zambia for three months, but in September he went to Mexico for a family vacation. In January 1995, he went to Rome for another refresher course. In July 1995, he returned to Zambia, assigned to the parish of Lilanda in Lusaka where he remained until November 2001.

The following month, he returned to Mexico, bringing with him the letter of assignment to his home province, signed by Father Manuel Augusto Ferreira, superior general. He stayed briefly in Sochiapam, with the local community, awaiting a specific assignment, which arrived in August 2002, when he was assigned to the parish of Bahía Asunción, in the diocese of La Paz. In October 2003, he served in the rectory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, still in La Paz, engaged in ministry. The following month, he moved to Metlatónoc as superior of the local community and engaged in parish

ministry. In September 2005, he was assigned to the parish of Cochoapa, in the diocese of Tlapa, in the state of Guerrero, where he left a vivid testimony of his missionary enthusiasm.

In March 2007, he received a letter from Father Teresino Serra, Superior General, with the good news of his assignment to Uganda starting on 1st July. After a three-month family vacation, Father Juan Manuel flew to Kampala, where Father Giuseppe Filippi, the Provincial Superior, after a fraternal conversation, assigned him to the parish of Opit, diocese of Gulu, where he had previously served from 1979 to 1982. In 2008, he was appointed treasurer of the local community. He remained in Opit until April 2012, when he moved to the city parish of Gulu Center, where he remained until October 2012. In November, he was assigned to the parish of Kitgum, where there was also a pastoral centre.

In February 2015, he served in the parish of Aliwang, in the Diocese of Lira, until June 2015, when he moved to nearby Iceme. There, he received a letter from the Superior General, Father Tesfaye Tedesse, declaring his permanent assignment to the Province of Mexico effective on 1st July 2021.

But Father Juan Manuel wanted to continue his stay in Africa, adding to the 40 years of missionary work he has already spent on the continent. That was where he belonged; only there could he feel at ease. This was probably the most difficult test of his life, because he has sensed that the time has come for him to say goodbye to the mission he loved so much and for which he lived.

In any case, he was in no hurry to leave, especially since the beatification of Father Giuseppe Ambrosoli was looming, already scheduled for 20th November 2022. Father Tesfaye, in a letter dated October 17, 2022, called him to obedience and set a new deadline for him to be back home: 30th November 2022.

In the various *Comboni Yearbooks* published during that period several times a year, his name appears for a long time as “awaiting assignment.” It was in November 2023 that he was listed as a member of the Sacred Heart parish in La Paz. But in April 2025, he was assigned to the community for elderly and sick confrères, called Oasis, in Guadalajara, where the Lord called him to himself a few days later, on 30th May.

Father Juan Manuel will remain in the Comboni memory as a missionary of sincere, true, almost disarming simplicity, admired for his detachment from things, his authentic spirit of poverty, his passion for Africa, and his ability to always live gratefully and contentedly in his vocation. (*Father Enrique Sánchez González, mccj, and F.M.*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE BROTHERS: Roque, of Brother Salgado Ortiz Juan Carlos (M); Flaminio, of Father González Núñez Juan Antonio (ETH); Manuel, of Brother Alfredo do Rosário Almeida Durão (P); José Angel, of Father Agustín Pelayo Valera (†); Karl, of Father Joseph König (DSP); Jean Konzirodo, of Father Faustin Ngere Mboka (EGSD).

THE SISTERS: Nawal, of Father Sobhy Basily Attalla (EGSD); Rosella, of Fathers Elio and Lorenzo Farronato (RDC); Anita, of Father João Dinis João (EGSD); Palmira, of Father Giuseppe Brunelli (I) and Sister Anna Brunelli, CMS (I); Isabel, of Father Díez Maeso Lorenzo (PE).

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sister Baresi Margherita M. (I); Sister Aldegheri M. Natalia (I); Sister Haregweini Haile Demoz (EG); Sister Artusi Piercarla (I); Sister Stefli Ines Maria (I); Sister Marrone M. Rosaria (I); Sister Manzana M. Agnese (ER); Sister Varalta Erminia M. (I).

