

FAMILIA COMBONIANA

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

844

October 2025

CURIA

Intercapitular Assembly (7-26 September 2025)



Renewing our missionary drive

The Intercapitular Assembly, which began on 7th September, concluded on 26th September with the publication of a letter addressed to all confrères. The meeting, which brought together in Rome delegates from the Institute's various circumscriptions, provided an opportunity to discuss and assess the implementation of the commitments made at the 2022 General Chapter, to discern certain important issues, and to revitalise the missionary journey in light of the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni.

At the heart of the work was the desire to *rekindle the fire of the mission*, reaffirming some orientations considered fundamental:

- The choice of living the mission *ad vitam*, as a commitment for our entire existence;
- The dimension of the '*outgoing Church*', which urges us to go beyond our usual boundaries;

- special attention *ad pauperes*, or the most vulnerable;
- and the urgency of announcing the Gospel *ad gentes*, with particular attention to peoples not yet reached or insufficiently evangelised.

The message that the assembly participants sent to all their confrères emphasised the need to renew their missionary spirit, recalling the founding figure of Saint Daniel Comboni. Among other things, it read: “Our missionary vocation requires us to maintain the courage to reach out to everyone, without fear or reservation, because the Gospel is a gift for every people and every culture.”

The Assembly thus reaffirmed the Comboni Missionaries' vocation to a universal and community commitment, called to combine service to the poor with evangelisation, in harmony with the challenges of the Church and the world today.

Appointment

On 13th September 2025, the General Council appointed Father Antonio Lopez as first formator at the formation community of La Grange Park, as from 15th September 2025.

Perpetual profession

Sc. Fidelio Artur	Juba/SS	13.07.2025
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Priestly ordinations

Muke Mantenge Stéphane	Kinshasa/DRC	20.07.2025
Alex Geraldo Nunes	Mariana/BR	09.08.2025
Likonye Emmanuel	Limbe/MZ	23.08.2025
Masanjala Hendreson	Limbe/MZ	23.08.2025
Nyimbo Oscar Theyo	Limbe/MZ	23.08.2025

Holy Redeemer Guild

October	01 – 07 RCA	08 – 15 TCH	16 – 31 RSA
November	01 – 15 SS	16 – 30 T	

Prayer Intentions

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

November – For the children of our world who see selfish adults destroying our climate protection with their decisions. That they may be brave enough to stand up and defend their future. *Lord, hear us.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

	Commemoration of departed confrères, relatives and benefactors	Date to be fixed annually
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Significant anniversaries

OCTOBER

16	Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, virgin	universal
19	Saints John di Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests and companions, martyrs	NAP (USA and Canada)

NOVEMBER

21	Madonna del Quinche	Ecuador
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ERRATA CORRIGE

In issue number 843, we indicated the following diaconal ordinations as priestly ordinations. We apologise.

Ordinations to the diaconate

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

BRASIL

The power of the testimony of Father Ezechiel Ramin

On 26th and 27th July, approximately 2,500 people from the state of Rondônia and other parts of Brazil and the world gathered in the cities of Cacoal (Rondônia) and Rondolândia (Mato Grosso) to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the martyrdom of Comboni missionary Father Ezechiel Ramin.

Father Ezechiel dreamed of a more just and peaceful world. He dedicated his life to proclaiming the Gospel and fighting for justice and human rights. In the Comboni mission of Cacoal, Father Ramin stood up for the poor, courageously embracing the cause of exploited farmers and indigenous people. Today, 40 years after his death, the people hold him in high esteem and consider him a source of inspiration. A large crowd attended the 10th pilgrimage in his honour, which had the theme 'Father Ezechiel Ramin: Martyr of Hope'.

Bishop Norberto Hans Christoph Förster, Bishop of the Diocese of Ji-Paraná, speaking to those gathered, emphasised the importance of commemorating this anniversary and the significance of Father Ezechiele's testimony for the Church today.

Father Ezechiel was brutally murdered by gunmen on 24th July 1985, while returning from a peacekeeping mission. His example and testimony inspire many who fight for justice and dignity, especially for the poorest. Father Ezechiel is alive! May his testimony inspire us and accompany us in our mission. "Ezechiel?" Present!

Young people and mission – “Young people, what are you looking for?”

From 25th to 27th July 2025, dozens of young people from Comboni parishes in Brazil gathered in Salvador, Bahia, for the second Comboni Youth Assembly, focusing on the theme 'Youth and Mission – Young People, What Are You Seeking?' (cf. *Jn* 1:38). The event took place at the parish of San Daniele Comboni, which welcomed 175 participants. The days were marked by moments of spirituality, shared joy, formation, missionary activities, and cultural initiatives. The young people were able to deepen their understanding of the legacy of Saint Daniele Comboni and the charism of the Comboni mission.

Four thematic workshops addressed highly topical issues: Afro-descendants, digital communication, life planning and integral ecology, as well as care for our common home. Participants also had the opportunity to learn

more about the history of Salvador and celebrate the richness of its cultural diversity.

The final day was dedicated to 'missionary visits', which allowed for a true immersion in the reality of the outskirts of Sussuarana, the neighbourhood that hosted the event. The question that accompanied the young people until the end was: "And you, what is your dream?" Many testified that they left to evangelise, but returned evangelised.

The joy of serving God as a missionary priest

On 9th August 2025, Comboni missionary Alex Geraldo Nunes was ordained a priest by the laying on of hands by Bishop Airton José dos Santos of Mariana, Minas Gerais.

The celebration took place in the parish of Nossa Senhora das Dores, in Capela Nova. The motto chosen for this celebration was: "I have given you an example; you also should do as I have done to you" (*John* 13:15). In his homily, Bishop Airton recalled that the priesthood is not a privilege, but a call to serve with humility, especially the poorest and most forgotten. Father Alex Nunes' ordination was preceded by a week of missionary and vocational promotion organised by the Comboni Family (fathers, sisters, and laity).

Alex Nunes consecrated his priestly life to the Lord and asked for the grace to live his mission with joy and generosity, being a priest after the heart of Christ, in the spirit of St. Daniel Comboni, who urges us to '*Save Africa with Africa*'.

On 14th September, the Feast of the Holy Cross, Father Alex Geraldo Nunes was officially '*sent*' from his parish to the Comboni mission in Egypt/Sudan. (*Father Raimundo Rocha, mccj*)

ECUADOR

70 years of Comboni presence in Esmeraldas

The celebration of 70 years of Comboni presence in Esmeraldas was a deeply meaningful and well-attended event, organised by the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas (VAE) and the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador – Esmeraldas (Pucese) campus. The theme was: *Comboni Missionaries, Witnesses of Love and Prophets of Hope*.

There were two key moments. The first, on 6th June, was the awarding of an **honorary doctorate to Father Raffaello Savoia**, a Comboni missionary and pioneer of African ministry in Ecuador, Colombia, and Latin America. The day, which marked the 44th anniversary of the Catholic University founded by the Comboni Missionaries, opened with

an African-style Mass presided over by Bishop Antonio Crameri, Apostolic Vicar. The subsequent academic ceremony was attended by civil and religious authorities, with the festive presence of numerous Afro-American associations. The award to Father Savoia, presented by Pro-Rector Dr. Diego Jiménez, was greeted with prolonged applause and a large audience.

The second moment was the **festive triduum (19th-21st June)**. A committee coordinated by Bishop Antonio involved parishes, schools, and local communities in a rich program.

- **19th June** – A '*festive march*' (*pregón*) with hundreds of young people enlivened the cathedral square. After greetings from the Vicar General, Father Julio Canga, Father Ottorino Poletto, provincial superior, encouraged the young people to courageously respond to the missionary call, following the example of Saint Daniel Comboni.

- **20th June** – A symposium at the University retraced the history of the Comboni mission and the work of the three bishops who guided the growth of the Church of Esmeraldas: Bishop Angelo Barbisotti, Bishop Enrico Bertolucci, and Bishop Eugenio Arellano. Evangelisation and social advancement – education, healthcare, community organisation – were the mission's hallmarks. In the afternoon, at the Colegio Sagrado Corazón, a cultural program led by the African Pastoral Committee concluded the day.

- **21st June** – The celebration ended in the cathedral with a 'solemn session' and an Afro-style Mass, attended by the Apostolic Nuncio, bishops, civil and academic authorities, priests, and faithful.

During the celebration, Father Ottorino recalled the commitment of the Comboni Missionaries in Esmeraldas and in other jurisdictions of the country, reaffirming his desire to continue this missionary service. In his homily, the nuncio thanked the Comboni Missionaries for the journey they have made, inviting the people of Esmeraldas to take on the responsibility of evangelisation.

The celebration renewed its gratitude for the Comboni presence, today carried forward by the communities of La Merced, Borbón, and San Lorenzo. Particularly significant was the contribution of Msgr. Eugenio Arellano, Bishop Emeritus of the VAE, who now lives in the community of La Merced: his discreet yet intense presence was a sign of continuity and hope. (*Father Ottorino Poletto, mccj*)

Opening of the cause of beatification of Fr. Alberto Ferri Garavelli

The cause for beatification of Comboni missionary Father Alberto Ferri Garavelli (1935–2009) will open in Portoviejo on 22nd October. The

decision was announced by the Curia of the Archdiocese of Portoviejo, after a careful collection of data and testimonies, with a decree issued by Archbishop Edoardo Castillo on 15th September.

A native of Cologno al Serio, in the province of Bergamo, Father Ferri ministered in Ecuador, in the parishes of Limones and Viche (Vicariate of Esmeraldas) and, subsequently, in various communities in the Archdiocese of Portoviejo, Manabí province. Upon his death in Cologno al Serio on 16th October 2009, at the request of the faithful who knew and loved him, his body was brought back to Ecuador and buried in the church of Honorato Vásquez (Manabí), where he had dedicated thirteen years of his life visiting and forming numerous Christian communities.

People continue to remember him with great affection and to testify to his holiness. For this reason, on 22nd October, Bishop Castillo will open the diocesan phase of the cause, in the presence of numerous faithful and priests, and a delegation from the Comboni Province of Ecuador.

With gratitude to the Lord for his life and missionary witness, we invoke upon the entire Institute the grace to renew and keep alive, in light of his example, the missionary passion that inspired him.

EGYPT/SUDAN

The St. Bakhita Center celebrates its Silver Jubilee

With hearts filled with gratitude and to the sound of scout drums, the Saint Bakhita Center in Arbawnus, Egypt, joyfully celebrated its Silver Jubilee on 14th September 2025, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the purchase of the land on which the Centre stands. The Centre has been serving Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees since its inception through its educational and pastoral activities.

The celebration opened with a solemn Holy Mass, presided over by Msgr. Claudio Lurati, Apostolic Vicar of Alexandria, Egypt, in the presence of numerous Comboni missionaries and Comboni missionary nuns, and a vibrant community of Sudanese and South Sudanese faithful, along with many longtime friends and supporters of the Centre.

During the celebration, the organising committee recalled the most significant moments in the Centre's history, emphasising how God's hand has guided its growth in faith and true communion over the past twenty-five years. The biblical passage chosen to capture the true meaning of the Centre's two and a half decades was most appropriate: "The churches grew stronger in faith and increased in number daily" (*Acts 16:5*).

It was particularly moving to see the presence of several people who have been part of the Center since its beginnings – a living testimony to the community's faithfulness and perseverance.

The day was marked by profound joy and confident hope among all participants, who saw how God has truly walked with them along the way.

Today, the Centre faces new challenges, especially due to the displacement of many community members caused by the outbreak of the ongoing war in Sudan. Despite this, the Jubilee celebration represented a strong reminder of God's constant presence and a clear testimony to the community's unwavering faith, confident that this presence will continue in the future. (*Father Mina Anwar Habib Atia, mccj*)

ITALY

Reopening of the cause of beatification of Mons. Antonio Roveggio

On 5th September 2025, in the bishop's palace of Verona, Bishop Domenico Pompili opened the diocesan inquiry into the enduring reputation for holiness of the Servant of God Msgr. Antonio Maria Roveggio. His example, recounted in numerous biographies, has inspired the lives of many Comboni missionaries. His cause for beatification was introduced in 1952, then resumed several times, but never completed.

As a young priest, Antonio Roveggio entered the Institute founded by Saint Daniel Comboni in 1884 and left for Egypt in 1887. In 1895, at just 37 years of age, he was appointed Apostolic Vicar of Central Africa. With charity and humility, inspired by a profound devotion to the Heart of Jesus, he devoted himself with all his strength to proclaiming the Gospel in Egypt and among various ethnic groups in Sudan. Exhausted by his labours, he died on a train in Berber, while en route to Egypt. He was 43 years old.

The Superior General, Father Luigi Fernando Codianni, and his council have entrusted Father Cosimo De Iaco, the Institute's general postulator, with the task of pursuing the cause, continuing the valuable work of Father Arnaldo Baritussio, now postulator emeritus.

The session of the diocesan inquiry was presided over by Bishop Pompili. During the opening prayer, the prelate emphasised that reviving the cause for beatification of someone who died over a century ago is not intended to celebrate the past, but rather to keep alive the memory of a witness to the Gospel who can inspire the Church today and in the future. In his greeting, Father Cosimo highlighted three aspects that make the figure of Bishop Antonio Maria Roveggio modern and his cause relevant: his total dedication to the proclamation of the Gospel, his convinced

adherence to the demands of religious life, and his profound devotion to the Heart of Jesus, whose humility and meekness toward all he imitated. The event was attended by officials from the diocesan tribunal, confrères from the Mother House in Verona, several Comboni Sisters, and a good number of friends. We hope that the cause will proceed expeditiously, so that the figure of Bishop Roveggio may be known, imitated, and prayed to, along with Saint Daniel Comboni, Blessed Giuseppe Ambrosoli, and Venerable Bernardo Sartori.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Elio Benedetti (27-11-1928 – 21.06.2025)

Elio was born in Teaio, a hamlet of Segonzano (Trento), on 27th November 1928, in a land that during the twentieth century provided the Church with many missionary vocations, including Comboni missionaries. Raised in a large patriarchal family, he found crucial figures in his parents: his father David was a gentle and open man, while his mother Emma was a strong and discreet presence. The first of five children, Elio early on showed religious sensitivity and an irresistible talent for music.

From an early age, he was immersed in a missionary atmosphere thanks to the Comboni missionaries who spent their summers in a rented house belonging to the Benedetti family, next to the sanctuary of the Madonna dell’Aiuto. Elio was literally surrounded by missionaries for several months of the year. It was as if his large family, at a certain point, expanded to become a true Comboni community. As an older man, he would say: “I only have to close my eyes to see myself, still a child, carried on the shoulders of those missionaries, holding on to their generous beards as if they were reins. Perhaps this is why I can’t pinpoint a precise date for my desire to become a priest: my vocation was born in my mother’s womb and very quickly became a call to the mission.”

At eight years old, Elio was already tending the chapel in Teaio and leading the rosary. Meanwhile, his passion for the organ and liturgical chant grew. In 1939, he entered the Comboni Apostolic School in Muralta (Trento) and struggled to adapt to his studies, with a few academic failures and periods of returning to his family, but with one unshakable certainty: “One way or another, I will become a Comboni priest.”

During the war (1938-45), the seminary was moved to Fai della Paganella, where Elio and the other ‘apostolini’ lived alongside the German soldiers and suffered cold and hardship. His brother Fausto was also with him, a precious support during those difficult years. Toward the end of the conflict, while Trento was subjected to heavy bombing, Elio also experi-

enced the risks of war, finding himself caught in the crossfire between partisans and retreating German soldiers.

Course of formation – After the war, Elio returned with his classmates to Muralta, amid the rubble of the bombed-out seminary. These were difficult years, but he embraced them with curiosity and an adventurous spirit. An illness brought him back to his family for a short time, before he resumed his education at the Piccolo Seminario in Brescia, where he completed his fourth and fifth year of high school. There, he discovered new creative talents, from electricity to parish festival arrangements. His musical and technical talents increasingly became a tool for service to the community.

His novitiate in Florence – begun in August 1947 – had a profound impact on him: hard work, prayer, study, and above all, music, cultivated with passion and encouraged by his teachers. He devoted himself to Gregorian chant with such dedication that he earned honours in his studies.

On 9th September 1949, he took his first religious vows and transferred to the philosophical scholasticate in Rebbio (Como) for his second and third year of high school. In 1951, he attended his first theology courses in Brescia – always intertwining theology and music – and finally moved to Muralta-Trento, where he served as prefect of young seminarians, while continuing his theology courses at the diocesan higher seminary. At the same time, he completed his music studies at the Bolzano Conservatory, graduating with honours in piano, despite the resistance of his superiors. Convinced that personal listening was more fruitful than sermons, he earned the respect of the students, who saw him as a close and understanding guide. For his final year of theology, he transferred to Venegono Superiore, where he made his final religious profession on 9th September 1955.

On 26th May 1956, he was ordained a priest by Cardinal Giovanni Battisti Montini, the future Paul VI. Soon after, he was appointed vice-rector of the seminary in Trento, where he transformed music into a true pedagogy: he created choirs, composed motets and operettas that expressed the emotions of young people, and participated in important events with his seminarians, even singing in the Church of St. Peter during a national gathering.

In 1962, he transferred to Rebbio, where he led a community of 120 young people. There, too, music became an educational and consoling tool: with empathy and sensitivity, he was able to heal the homesickness and fragility of the youngest children. Meanwhile, he deepened his composition studies with the renowned music teacher Luigi Picchi and closely experienced the discussions of the Second Vatican Council on liturgical

music, contributing new compositions himself. He also earned a degree in educational psychology from the Catholic University, further enhancing his role as a formator.

In Mexico – In July 1965, Father Elio left for Mexico. He arrived in New York on the ship ‘Raffaello’ and then, crossing the United States, reached Mexico City. He was immediately assigned to the seminary in San Francisco del Rincón, where he found young seminarians similar to Italian ones in age and moral formation, but immersed in a culture deeply influenced by Mexico’s religious history. The memory of the *Cristero War* of the 1920s, during which perhaps 100,000 Christians and priests were persecuted and martyred, was still alive. Mexico in the 1960s was a country brimming with priestly vocations: numerous young men chose to become priests, and the atmosphere was permeated with enthusiasm and hope for the future.

Father Elio devoted himself to teaching music. He formed a seminarians’ choir that quickly became known beyond the city, so much so that newspapers nicknamed him “the magician of music”. His concerts even reached the prestigious Teatro de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. Although deeply committed to his musical activity, Father Elio managed all the tasks associated with seminary life: running the financial affairs of the facility, caring for the gardens and animals, and raising funds to support the large community. These commitments, combined with a hectic work schedule, began to take a toll on his physical and psychological well-being, leading him to smoke and visibly lose weight.

Baja California Sur – La Paz – In July 1970, Father Elio was transferred to La Paz, Baja California Sur, where he became rector of the diocesan seminary at the request of Bishop Giovanni Giordani, a Comboni Missionary, the first apostolic prefect of the then-Baja California region. Despite the fatigue accumulated over the previous years, he embraced the new assignment with enthusiasm. The desert climate, the proximity to the Pacific Ocean, and the smaller, more manageable community allowed him to approach his work with greater serenity. He devoted himself to the young seminarians, nurturing both their spiritual and human formation through conferences, daily prayers, sports, and music. At the same time, he ministered in local parishes, meeting with families and actively participating in the life of the Christian communities.

Returning to Italy – FATMO – At the end of 1975, Father Elio had to return to Italy due to physical and nervous exhaustion (now referred to as burnout). Although his health was compromised, his spirit remained intact. After a period of recovery in Pordenone, he devoted himself to mis-

sionary outreach, organising meetings and conferences on Comboni missionary activities.

In 1976, he moved to Verona, to the community of the Comboni Multimedia Centre, where he founded Open Window on the Third World (FATMO). This pioneering missionary communication project through free local radio stations allowed him to disseminate news, culture, and music from developing countries, highlighting positive aspects often overlooked by traditional media. He personally built a professional recording studio, overseeing every technical and content detail. FATMO eventually produced over two thousand radio programs, broadcast by three hundred stations throughout Italy.

Trento, Arco, Brescia, Verona and Castel d'Azzano – In July 1987, Father Elio was assigned to the rectory of Trento. He remained there for two years. In July 1989, he moved to the house in Arco di Trento, where he lived peacefully, dedicating himself to writing and poetry. Here, he collected memories, anecdotes, and reflections in a volume entitled *Sinfonia di Poemi* (Symphony of Poems), a work that bears witness to his intense life and his missionary experiences.

In January 1999, he transferred to Brescia, where he continued to recount, remember, and share his experiences with his confrères. His creative streak and intellectual curiosity never waned, despite his advanced age.

In May 2003, he returned to Verona, to the community for the sick at the 'Fratel Viviani' Centre. There he lived peacefully, cultivating affectionate relationships with his family and confrères, and dedicating himself to music and the piano, which became his form of daily prayer and spiritual consolation. His creative energy and gentleness made him a point of reference sought by all.

In June 2015, Father Elio was transferred to the 'Fr. Alfredo Fiorini' Centre in Castel d'Azzano, where he calmly faced the challenges of his age and health. He continued to be present and active in the community, maintaining the good humour and generosity that had always distinguished him. He passed away with serene calm and dignity on 21st June 2025, leaving a spiritual, cultural, and missionary legacy that will continue to inspire his family, his confrères, and all who were fortunate enough to know him.

On the afternoon of 24th June, in a radiant summer sunset, his body was returned to the earth and his soul returned to the arms of God the Father. He is now buried in the cemetery that holds the remains of other Comboni missionaries, originally from this Trentino region, so rich in missionary vocations. (*Father Donato Benedetti, mccj*)

Father Antonio Furioli (10.05.1942 – 27.07.2025)

Antonio was born in Mantua on 10th May 1942, to Matteo and Lucia Prospero. He was baptised in the parish of Saints Gervasius and Protasius on 15th June. He was confirmed in the same church on 28th May 1950. In 1957, after elementary and middle school, he enrolled at the Commercial Technical Institute in Castiglione delle Stiviere (Mantua), where he attended the first (1957-58) and second (1958-59) courses in accounting. After his father's death, the family moved to Desenzano del Garda, where Antonio enrolled in the third year at the local Commercial Technical Institute, but decided not to attend. He had something else in mind: he wanted to become a priest, possibly a missionary. It was a very difficult decision, but he was determined. He contacted the Comboni missionaries and entered their apostolic school in Crema as an 'adult vocation'. For about a year, he studied Latin and Greek, two subjects required at the time for a boy who wanted to become a priest.

In October 1960, Antonio was assigned to the Carraia seminary (Lucca) for high school studies. In September 1964, he entered the novitiate in Florence. After the first year spent there, he attended the advanced course in philosophy and the first year of theology at the Episcopal Seminary of Fiesole. At a certain point, he had strong second thoughts, having a clear sense of being called to a contemplative life, and, for a year, he asked to live in a Camaldolese monastery. In October 1966, he returned to the novitiate, took his first religious vows on 9th September 1967, and was assigned to the scholasticate in Verona, at the Mother House.

On 9th September 1969, he made his perpetual profession, and on 4th April 1970, he was ordained a priest by Msgr. Maffeo Ducoli, auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Verona, in the parish church of San Giuseppe in Desenzano. In July of the same year, he went to Rome to begin a licentiate in Sacred Theology (spirituality) at the Pontifical Gregorian University. In early 1973, he went to Sunningdale, England, for an English course.

In July 1973, he went to Asmara as a professor at the Comboni seminary where he remained for two years. In March 1974, he returned to Rome to defend his licentiate thesis, earning a *magna cum laude* grade. From June to August, he was in Paris for a French language course. In July, he went to Addis Ababa, to the provincial headquarters, for an Amharic language course. In July 1976, he was assigned to Hawassa, as director of the diocesan schools and superior of the Comboni community at the seat of the apostolic vicar.

In 1980, he returned to Rome to continue his postgraduate studies in Sacred Theology, obtaining his degree in June 1983. In July 1984, he be-

came a professor at the interdiocesan philosophical seminary of Mchinji Kachebere, at the foot of Kalulu Hill, in the Mchinji district of Malawi, near the border with Zambia. In March 1987, he went to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome to defend his doctoral thesis, entitled *The Mystery of the Cross in the Life and Writings of Daniele Comboni (1831-1881)*. This time, he received a *summa cum laude* grade. In July 1987, he moved to the Dawson Place community in London, for an advanced English course, passing the intermediate level exam. He returned there from November 1988 to June 1989 to perfect his language skills at the Stanton School of English, obtaining a 'Grade 5' certificate.

Father Antonio then felt ready to return to Ethiopia. Father Francesco Pierli, Superior General, gave him his official letter of assignment. It reads: "I am certain that by returning to Ethiopia, where you have already had a positive missionary experience, you will be able to make a great contribution, especially in the area of teaching. The formation of the local clergy has been a priority since the time of Comboni, and has been forcefully reaffirmed by the last two General Chapters. I ask you to seek communion both with your confrères and with the other professors you will be with."

In July, he took a plane to Addis Ababa, settled at the provincial headquarters, and began teaching at the capital's major seminary. He remained there until early 1995, when he went to Montclair, New Jersey (USA) for a sabbatical. On 17th March 1996, he went in Rome for the beatification of Daniel Comboni. There he met Father David Glenday, Superior General, with whom he has a long conversation. On 18th May, Father David sent him a letter of assignment to the Italian Province, effective from 1st July 1996.

Father Antonio returned to Italy, where he was assigned to the Mother House community in Verona, in charge of missionary outreach. In July of the following year, he went to Limone del Garda. In 1998, he returned to Verona. In September 2000, he transferred to the community of San Pancrazio in Rome. For the next 15 years, he taught at the Pontifical Theological Faculty and at the 'Teresianum' Institute of Spirituality, located a few hundred meters from his home. At the same time, he wrote books and articles and published specific studies.

In July 2015, he was assigned to the Mother House community in Verona as provincial librarian. In January 2022, poor health prompted him to transfer to the Center for sick Confrères in Brescia. In mid-June 2025, his deteriorating health led to his admission to the 'Fratel Alfredo Fiorini' Centre in Castel d'Azzano, where he died on 27th July.

The funeral was held in the Centre's chapel on 31st July. The homily was delivered by Father Girolamo Miante, superior of the Brescia Centre. He said: "His missionary life was characterised by the teaching of theology and spirituality in the diocesan and Comboni seminaries. His passion for the mission was manifested above all in the help he offered young seminarians to grow on a spiritual journey enriched by the Word and an encounter with Christ — two things Father Antonio considered essential to an authentic missionary life."

Today's Gospel passage speaks of a 'scribe' "who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven," who is "like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52-53). Father Girolamo commented: "The scribe knows the Word and the Law and helps the people live their relationship with God. Now, the next step is to become a disciple of the Kingdom. And I believe this is the most important step Father Antonio has been invited to take: to become a disciple, learning from the encounter with Jesus and from the encounter with so many who have lived the same experience and who have become sources of inspiration and models for life: Daniel Comboni, Charles de Foucauld, Justin de Jacobis, Thérèse of Lisieux, Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross... We could add others. They represent that richness, that treasure that inspired Father Antonio in his studies, his teaching, and his publications. What he wrote is the gift he leaves us so that we too can live our relationship with the Lord and enrich our missionary identity."

While awaiting the funeral, Father Girolamo returned to some of Father Antonio's books and adds: "What deeply impressed me were the introductions and related prefaces written by some important theologians. Their words help us grasp the beauty and goodness of Father Antonio's life." He quotes what Don Luigi Maria Epicoco, priest, philosopher, and theologian, wrote in the preface to the 2024 edition of Father Antonio's *Prayer and Mystical Contemplation*: "This text is a treasure chest containing all the precious pearls that, over time, men and women of prayer have discovered and made available to others, and it becomes a reference map for finding one's way along one's own prayer journey: a help for everyone." Father Girolamo also read some words by Cardinal Franc Rodé, from the introduction to Father Antonio's book *Gospel and Testimony – The Experience of Saint Justin de Jacobis in Abyssinia (1839-1860)*: "This study is more timely than ever, because the figure of the great Vincentian missionary is almost completely unknown, not only to the general public but even to specialists themselves. On the occasion of his canonisation in 1975, Paul VI stated: 'Justin de Jacobis has only one fault: that of being too little known.' This study finally does justice to this missionary."

As a final quote, he chooses what Father Mario Menin, a Xaverian missionary and former editor of the magazine *Missione Oggi*, wrote in the preface to Father Antonio's *Saint Daniele Comboni – The Man, the Founder, the Mystic, the Missionary*: "As I read, I felt I was dealing with a small, essential theology of missionary spirituality that cannot be traced back to any particular school, but to Comboni's own missionary work. Africa is the true fertile womb of this spirituality."

Father Girolamo concluded: "Along the path of life, Antonio also experienced hardships and fragilities that required purification, patience, silence, and conversion. We place these hardships before the Lord: He, rich in mercy, has already opened His Heart to them." (*Father Franco Moretti, mcccj*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE MOTHER: Barbara, of Father Rafał Leszczyński (PO)

THE BROTHER: Ramón, of Father Marcos Daniel Villaverde (KE)

THE SISTERS: Renza, of Father Pasquino Panato (I); Lupita, of Father Guillermo de Jesús Medina Martínez (†); Otilia, of Bro. Joel Cruz Reyes (MEX); Lizet, of Bro. Alfredo Aguilar Cedeño (PCA), Medhin Haile, of Father Tesfaghiorgis Haile (ER)

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sr. Taiocchi Angelaluisa; Sr. Sironi Anna Gerarda