



Message from the General Council for the Feast of Saint Daniel Comboni

REKINDLING THE FIRE OF MISSIONARY PASSION

Dear confrères,

We greet you with the peace and joy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we extend our warmest wishes to you on the solemnity of Saint Daniel Comboni, our Founder. This day is a special occasion for all of us, and for everyone whose life has been touched and inspired by his example and mission.

Two weeks ago, we concluded our Inter-capitular Assembly, which had begun with a day of formation on the theme *Reviving the Fire for Mission*. A clear message emerged: the urgent need to strengthen our unity and to build communities capable of responding to the challenges of our times, making careful use of the human and material resources entrusted to us. At the same time, we must recognise that our Comboni identity must be preserved and strengthened: some confrères leave the Institute, others retire, and we wonder where the courage to go where others dare not go has gone.

From the very beginning, we have been an international and multicultural family. This diversity is not a mere detail: it is a sign of the Kingdom and a testimony that communion among peoples and cultures is possible in Christ. It is a message of hope for a world often divided. Preserving this gift is more essential than ever, if we want to counteract nationalism and tribalism, which risk creeping into our communities too.

To face these challenges, we must rekindle the fire of our missionary passion. Fire is a symbol of zeal, courage, and conviction; it drives us to mission and sustains us in difficult times. Jesus Christ, the first 'Missionary of the Father', said: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" (Lk 12:49). Comboni also often spoke of a "heart burning with genuine love of God": "When the Missionary in Africa has a heart burning with the pure love of God, when he keeps his eyes fixed on the contemplation of the great goodness and sublimeness of the work for which he spends himself, then all the privations, the continuous hardships, the greatest trials become a paradise on earth for his heart" (*Writings*, 2705).

When this fire burns in us, crosses and difficulties cannot stop us. A heart on fire remains focused on the goal and is not distracted by obstacles or setbacks.



We are convinced that a mission such as ours — whose fruits we may not fully see, where years of work may seem fruitless, and which sometimes challenges logic and hope — can only be carried forward if we are truly inflamed with passion.

Today more than ever, we feel called to rekindle this fire. Many of us feel weary or fragile, and this fatigue can affect our communities as well. To nourish the flame, we must remove the ashes and add fresh wood. The best way to do this is to return to the original fire that burned within us when we first responded to the Comboni missionary call — those moments when Comboni's life and the mission of the Comboni Missionaries touched our hearts deeply.

Each of us remembers the moment when Comboni's life set our hearts ablaze: perhaps it was his selflessness in responding to God's call as an only son; or his courage to leave the Mazza Institute to pursue what he considered essential; or his perseverance in the face of opposition, even within the Church; or his steadfast faith in times of loss; or his conviction of the dignity of the African people, his tireless commitment to integral human development, his openness to diverse cultures, and his prophetic vision of mission.

Whatever the spark that first inspired us, it still burns and can rekindle our missionary fire. When we let it burn again, we overcome fatigue, indifference, and complacency; our love for mission is renewed, giving us strength to face every challenge.

And what better time than the feast of our Founder to rekindle this flame, remembering that he has given us a unique identity in the Church and in the world as Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus?

Wishing you a joyful feast day!

Rome, 10th October 2025

Solemnity of Saint Daniel Comboni



The general council