

FAMILIA COMBONIANA

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

847

January 2026

THE HOLY SEE

The Holy Father Leo XIV has established the Diocese of Caia (Mozambique), with territory taken from the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Beira and the Dioceses of Chimoio, Quelimane, and Tete, making it a suffragan of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Beira. To lead the new local Church, the Pope appointed Bishop António Manuel Bogaio Constantino, MCCJ, currently Auxiliary Bishop of Beira.

António Manuel Bogaio Constantino was born on 9th November 1969, in Beira. After completing his pre-postulancy with the Comboni Missionaries in Nampula, he attended the Santo Agostinho Philosophical Seminary in Matola. In 1995, he began his novitiate in Namugongo, Uganda, concluding it with first temporary vows on 10th May 1997.

For his theological studies, he went to Rome, where he earned a bachelor's degree in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University. On 7th October 2000, he made his perpetual religious profession. On 13th June 2001, he was ordained a priest in Beira.

He held various positions and pursued further studies: a degree in journalism and a licentiate in Integral Communication from the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria in Spain; editor of the magazine *Vida Nova* at the Anchilo Catechetical Centre; parish priest of Monapo (2008-2011); parish priest of Chitima and Mucumbura (2012-2016); archpriest of the Vicariate Forane of Songo (2012-2016); diocesan representative for catechesis and deputy director of the pastoral secretariat for the Diocese of Tete (2012-2016); Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Mozambique (2017-2022); President of the Conference of Religious in Mozambique (CIRMO) (2019-2022).

On 13th December 2022, he was elected to the titular see of Sutunurca and appointed Auxiliary Bishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Beira, receiving episcopal ordination on 9th February 2023.

We welcome this news with great joy. We feel close to our confrere and assure him of our prayers for this new and delicate task.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Perpetual professions

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Bro. García Hernández Petro Enrique | Quito/EC | 12.12.2025 |
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Ordinations

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Tap Simon Youmkuei | Mayom-Bentiu/SS | 07.12.2025 |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|

Holy Redeemer Guild

| | | |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| January | 01 – 15 A | 16 – 31 BR |
| February | 01 – 15 C | 16 – 28 EGSD |

Prayer intentions

January 2026

That the Word of light and truth may continue to bring hope to the men and women of our times and find the people of our age ready to respond to the call of God and missionary commitment.

Lord, hear us.

February

That all institutes of consecrated life may grow in communion and collaboration, recognising the strength that comes from a common vocation and diversity of charisms. *Lord, hear us.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

FEBRUARY

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---------|
| 8 | Saint Josephine Bakhita, virgin | Memoria |
|---|---------------------------------|---------|

Meaningful anniversaries

FEBRUARY

| | | |
|----|------------------------------|----------|
| 4 | Saint John de Brito, martyr | Portugal |
| 6 | The Martyrs of Japan | Asia |
| 23 | Kidane Mehret, Corredemptrix | Eritrea |

AMERICA / ASIA

Meeting of Provincials and Delegates of America and Asia

From 28th November to 1st December 2025, the meeting of provincial superiors and delegates of America and Asia (AA) took place at the provincial house of the Comboni Missionaries in Quito, Ecuador. The meeting was attended by the three provincial superiors who are finishing their mandates and the new ones who will begin service on 1st January 2026. Unfortunately, the provincial superior of Mexico was unable to attend due to travel document issues.

The meeting opened with a fraternal exchange among all participants, during which those who have concluded their mandates shared their experiences during their years of service, while the new ones spoke of the hopes and feelings with which they prepare to undertake this task in the service of the mission and the Institute.

In the afternoon, an ongoing formation session was held, led by Brother Roberto Duarte, Provincial Superior of the Missionaries of the Divine Word, who offered a reflection on *'Perspectives on Religious Life in Light of the Congress on Consecrated Life'*, held a few weeks earlier in Quito. The reflection was enlightening and fostered a moment of discernment to reflect on the service we are called to offer as witnesses and companions on the journey with our brothers in our provinces and delegations.

The morning of Saturday, 29th November, was dedicated to the unification of the circumscriptions. The topic was introduced and led by Father David Domingues, who outlined the progress made to date within the Institute on this topic and future prospects, particularly in light of the recommendations of the interprovincial assembly held last September.

During the exchange with Father David, all participants were invited to share their opinions and insights on the topic, reflecting on the work already undertaken in their respective circumscriptions. During the frank, spontaneous, and open dialogue, a clear willingness to continue the study emerged, awaiting the indications that will be communicated by the General Council in a forthcoming letter addressed to the entire Institute.

In the afternoon, information was shared regarding the mission, missionary animation, and the COP30 forum held in Brazil. This information was provided by Father Raimundo, Provincial Superior of Brazil and coordinator of the AA mission sector on the continent.

Father Jorge Benavides, delegate from Colombia, presented the situation of specific pastoral care – urban, indigenous, and Afro-American – on the continent. He also shared his experience of participating in the Afro-American Pastoral meeting held in Luján, Argentina, where some

confrères from the AA area were present. Finally, he illustrated the proposal for an interprovincial postulancy, supported by some provinces with a small number of postulants.

During the afternoon's work, the novitiates in Xochimilco and Manila, missionary service, and ongoing formation courses held in Rome were also discussed. The digital magazine and website, currently under development, were also discussed, thanks largely to the contribution of Father Paco Carrera, who is working in Colombia.

Sunday, 20th November, was dedicated to a moment of fellowship: the group visited the Comboni parish of María Estrella de la Evangelización, where the Eucharist was celebrated, and the community shared a lunch prepared by the community. They also had the opportunity to visit the 'Mitad del Mundo' monument, an iconic symbol near Quito that marks the equatorial line dividing the Earth into the northern and southern hemispheres.

On Monday, 1st December, the participants continued sharing information on other significant aspects to ensure the continuation of the service and to maintain attention to the missionary reality of the AA continent, with its challenges and hopes for the future.

Heartfelt thanks go to Father Ottorino Poletto, Provincial Superior of Ecuador, to the host province, and, in particular, to the community of the provincial house, for the warm welcome and the attentive, fraternal service that made the meeting peaceful and fruitful. *(The Provincial Superiors and Delegates of America and Asia, Quito, Ecuador, 1st December 2025)*

BRAZIL

Missionary Cenacles are affiliated with the Episcopal Conference

The National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) and the Work of the Missionary Cenacles (OCM) met on 10th December 2025, in São Paulo, to confirm the affiliation of the OCM to the CNBB, thus recognising it as an ecclesial body.

The OCM's affiliation to the CNBB was announced during a meeting held at Casa Fatiminha, headquarters of the Southern 1 Regional Missionary Council (COMIRE), chaired by Msgr. Luiz Carlos Dias, vice president of the Southern 1 Regional Council of the CNBB.

Participating in the meeting were Father José Stella Narduolo, a Comboni missionary who launched the OCM in Brazil in 1996; Father Raimundo Rocha, provincial of the Comboni Missionaries; Father Luis Fernando da

Silva, executive secretary of the Southern 1 Regional Council and coordinator of the process; and Kleber Barcellos, president of the OCM. The Work of the Missionary Cenacles was born from a request by Saint John Paul II, who called for the creation of cenacles to strengthen the missionary awareness of the baptised and to remind them that, by virtue of baptism, all Christians are co-responsible for missionary activity. The OCM truly performs a valuable service of missionary animation. The OCM's affiliation with the CNBB recognises the missionary journey and service of this work, strengthening its commitment to evangelisation ad gentes and expanding the possibilities for missionary cooperation at the regional and national levels. The CNBB and the Regional Sul 1 express their joy at this significant step in favour of the mission and reaffirm their commitment to promoting and supporting initiatives that strengthen the communion and missionary witness of the Church in Brazil.

EGYPT/SUDAN

Centenary of the Parish of the Sacred Heart in Sakakini–Cairo

On 5th December 2025, the Parish of the Sacred Heart in Sakakini (Cairo) celebrated its centenary in thanksgiving. The day was lived with humility and profound gratitude. His Excellency, Bishop Claudio Lurati, Latin Bishop of Egypt, presided over the Holy Mass, and Bishop Dominic Eiubu, of the Diocese of Kotido, joined in the celebration – both having previously served as parish priests in this community. We were also honoured by the presence of Father John Paul Kpatcha, of the Society of African Missions (SMA), whose participation was a sign of missionary fraternity.

We remember with gratitude all those who prayed, offered sacrifices, and served before us, especially the SMA Fathers, who dedicated their lives to the community from the beginning, and the Comboni Missionaries, who later consolidated and expanded the parish, generously opening its doors to Sudanese refugees arriving in Cairo. We fondly remembered Father Cosmo Vittorio Spadavecchia and all those who dedicated the best years of their youth to the Gospel in this parish.

Priestly vocations have emerged from our community as the fruit of persevering faith. Our parish has become a home and a refuge, especially for those fleeing the war in Sudan—just as the Holy Family found welcome in Egypt, we too continue to welcome those in need.

Today, we praise God who has accompanied us in every joy and every trial.

Let us pray that the next century will remain faithful to the Sacred Heart: missionary, welcoming, and full of hope. (*Father Teckie Hagos Woldeghebriel, mccj*)

Reopening the parish of Masalma – Omdurman

On 8th December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, we reopened our parish of Masalma, in Omdurman, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. It was a simple gesture, yet one steeped in history and hope. Once again, after a terrible war, the Church in Sudan is making a new start here.

Our presence in this parish was suspended on 17th May 2023, when we were forced to abandon the site due to the bloody conflict between two military groups, whose leaders were also members of the country's main executive body, the Sovereign Council: on one side, the Sudanese Armed Forces, led by General Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman Burhan, and on the other, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group controlled by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.

The same thing had already happened after the Mahdi Revolution (1881-1899), led by Muhammad Ahmad, the self-proclaimed Mahdi (*the 'Messiah'*), to free the country from Egyptian-British control. The revolt destroyed all of Daniele Comboni's works.

Then, as today, the rebirth began in this very parish, which can rightfully be considered the *mother parish* of Sudan.

It was 1899, and the parish priest was a Tyrolean named Joseph. Today, ringing the same church bell – a bell that carries with it the living memory of Comboni – is a Sudanese, Father Yousif William Idris El Tom. Next to him, starting over, is Father Lorenzo Baccin. Names change, times change, but faith continues to generate life.

History seems to repeat itself; the spirit, however, remains young. Only the war is old.

And we, once again, look forward. Always forward. (*Father Diego Dalle Carbonare, mccj*)

MÉXICO

Four Combonians celebrated their Silver Jubilees of priesthood

In 2025, four Mexican Comboni Missionaries celebrated their 25th anniversary of priesthood. All ordained in the Jubilee Year 2000, they celebrated their important silver anniversary in this new Jubilee Year, known as the 'Year of Hope'. Last 6th December, during Father Aldo Sierra's

Jubilee celebration, they all renewed their promises and commitment as Comboni priests and missionaries. Congratulations to all four!

Father Armando Máximo Aquino, originally from San Juan Atenco, in the state of Puebla, was ordained on 2nd September 2000. He has worked in Chad and Mexico. He currently serves in the parish of San José de Comalapa (Veracruz).

Father Víctor Alejandro Mejía is the first Comboni Missionary from La Paz, Baja California Sur, where the Comboni Missionaries began their presence in Mexico. He was ordained on 19th August 2000 and worked for many years in Taiwan and China. He is currently in the novitiate in Xochimilco, engaged in missionary outreach.

Father Lauro Betancourt, originally from El Saucito, in the state of Zacatecas, was ordained a priest on 2nd December 2000. After a period of missionary work in Mexico, he was sent to Kenya, where he remained for 13 years. He is currently at the seminary in Sahuayo, helping in the important work of training young seminarians.

Father José Aldo Sierra, originally from Torreón, in the state of Coahuila, was ordained a priest on 5th November 2000. After four years in Mexico and five in Austria, he was assigned to Zambia, where he worked for eight years. He is currently a formator of theology students at the Comboni scholasticate in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. (*Comboni Missionaries*)

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Carraro Renzo (12.10.1937 – 12.12.2025)

Renzo was born on 12th October 1937, in Campagna Lupia, a small town between Padua and Venice. His parents, Scipione and Angelina Boscaro, married young. Mother Angelina gave birth to her first child, Giuseppe, at 18. Renzo, their second, arrived only 14 years later.

Renzo was 10 years old when a missionary came to his parish to speak to the young people about the missionary vocation. The idea appealed to young Renzo and remained in his mind and heart for the many years he spent in the diocesan seminary of Padua. At 22, while in his third year of theology, a Comboni missionary arrived at the seminary. Renzo would write: "He was a true man of God. When he asked me if I wanted to be like him, I immediately said yes. And I have never regretted making that choice."

On 24th September 1959, Renzo entered the Comboni novitiate in Gozzano, where he spent his first year. In July 1960, he went to Florence for his second year. On 9th September 1961, he took his first religious vows

and went to Venegono Superiore to resume his interrupted theology studies. On 7th April 1962, he was ordained a priest in Milan Cathedral by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, who would become Pope Paul VI the following year.

He was immediately assigned to the Apostolic School of Padua as a professor of Italian and Latin. He attended courses in Social Communication and Classical Languages and Literature at the University of Padua, graduating in both subjects in 1967. He would have preferred the missions, but his superiors asked him to 'serve' his home province as a teacher at the Liceo Classico in Carraia. He enrolled in a journalism course and, in 1969, passed the exam to become a professional journalist.

Finally, he received a letter of assignment to the Uganda missions. He requested 10 months in London to learn English. Having obtained his Proficiency Certificate in English, he returned to Italy to say goodbye to his family. On 10th December 1969, his father, mother, and brother Giuseppe accompanied him to the airport for his flight to Kampala. A few days later, he was assigned to the mission in Makiro, in the diocese of Kabale, in the Kigezi region, inhabited by the Bakiga ethnic group. A month later, in January 1971, Idi Amin staged a coup d'état, overthrowing the government of President Milton Obote. Uganda, the 'Pearl of Africa', became a reign of terror; the police, under Amin's direction, killed 300,000 Ugandans.

In 1975, Father Renzo returned to Italy for a vacation. It was a 'Holy Year', so he decided to take four Ugandans with him, whom he accompanied to Padua, Bologna, Venice, and Lourdes, before leading them through the Holy Door in Rome. A month later, he accompanied them to the airport to return to Uganda. He, however, travelled to Rome as one of the representatives of the Ugandan Comboni Missionaries at the General Chapter, during which it was decided to reunite the two branches of the Comboni family: the Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (FSCJ), with their mother-house in Verona, and the Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart (MFSC), predominantly German-speaking. (The reunion was consecrated on the feast of the Sacred Heart in 1979.)

In July 1976, Father Renzo was in Gulu, the centre of the diocese of the same name, which covered the entire northern part of Uganda. He quickly learned the local language, *Acholi*, and started the postulancy in the parish of Lacor with three young candidates. In April 1979, the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), led by Oyite-Ojok and Yoweri Museveni, and the Tanzanian army invaded Uganda and forced Amin to flee; Yusuf Lule was installed as president of the country, but after two months, he was replaced by Godfrey Binaisa; the country was in total anarchy. Father

Renzo commented: "For the first time in my life, I saw corpses left to rot in the streets, and I encountered crowds driven mad by the frenzy of looting." From July 1981 to June 1982, Father Renzo spent a sabbatical in Denver, United States. When he returned to Uganda, he was appointed vocations promoter, initially residing in the parish of Kambuga, in Kigezi, then at the provincial headquarters in Mbuya, Kampala. He wrote: "But my true residence was my car, a Peugeot 304 station wagon, the legendary 'lioness' with which I travelled the length and breadth of Uganda. The journeys were dangerous and difficult, but I was in the prime of my missionary life, with a task that suited my temperament. I was like a little bird in the woods. I had friends everywhere and connected with ease among the thousands of students I visited and spoke with at the various schools. The fruits were not long in coming, and thus, success came to complete my general sense of satisfaction."

In July 1986, he received his new assignment: Karamoja, a semi-desert area inhabited by the nomadic and warlike Karimojong ethnic group. On 1st July 1987, he officially took up the post of rector of the minor seminary in Nadiket. "Now I was locked in that godforsaken corner, struggling with a job I had never done before, responsible for the education and lives of hundreds of adolescents. The change had been too sudden. I was so worried that I decided to flee that place after only two weeks. My escape lasted two days, and then I returned. After a couple of months, I had gained control of the situation and was enjoying my new position. I remained there for seven years." The number of seminarians grew, and many of them continued in the major seminary. Some would become excellent priests.

In August 1993, after 23 years, Father Renzo left Uganda, assigned to serve as a formator at the scholasticate in Elstree, England. He had a lot of free time, especially when the scholastics were in their lecture halls. So, he decided to return to school and enrolled for a licentiate in Pastoral Theology at Heythrop College, affiliated with the University of London. "I could only do it part-time, and it took me three years to complete it, but it rediscovered my passion for reading and writing articles."

In 1999, just when he thought he could return to Uganda, he received an assignment to the novitiate in Calamba, in the province of Laguna, in the Philippines. The one who played a nasty trick on him was his great friend (Renzo calls him 'twin brother'), Father Giovanni Taneburgo, who was looking for a second formator in the novitiate, where he was superior. The two had known each other for years: they had been together in Uganda. Father Renzo spent Christmas with his family, then took a break. On 12th March 1999, he was in Manila. He threw himself into studying *Tagalog*,

the local language, although he was quick to note: “My ability to memorise words has now dropped to zero.” But he spoke English, and groups of young and old asked him for retreats. He also sharpened his journalism skills and began an active collaboration with *World Mission*, the magazine published by the Comboni Missionaries in the Philippines.

In 2001, he was appointed head of ongoing formation in the province. He became involved in the apostolate, giving lectures to religious communities. In 2004, he returned to the novitiate as assistant master.

In 2008, almost by chance, he discovered a lump on his neck, just below his right ear. It was the beginning of what he called “my adventure with cancer”. At the hospital, he was diagnosed with lymphoma, and a biopsy confirmed the presence of cancerous cells. He was prescribed a course of chemotherapy, and the tumour seemed to be gone. In 2010, he served as spiritual director in the postulancy and novitiate. In 2013, he was appointed *probus vir* of the entire province of Asia.

In June 2022, he returned to Italy, assigned to the community of Lucca. He told his brothers, “I’m retired now.” However, his health deteriorated, and in June 202 he was taken to Castel D’Azzano, to the ‘Brother Alfredo Fiorini’ Centre for the Sick, for treatment. He died there on 12th December 2025. His funeral was held on 16th December in the parish church of Campagna Lupia. (*Fr. Franco Moretti*)

Testimony by Father Giovanni Taneburgo

For me, to speak of Father Renzo means first and foremost speaking of a close friend – we were so close and in such deep communion that, in the Philippines, people called us *kambal* (“twins”) – but also remembering many wonderful aspects of his life.

Father Renzo had ‘many faces’. He loved reading, good films, and studying; he enjoyed writing and took particular joy in preparing articles for our magazine, *World Mission*. He was also an unsurpassed preacher of spiritual retreats, for both lay and religious.

His commitment to the formation of future priests and missionaries was truly commendable: from the diocesan minor seminary of Nadiket, in Moroto, Uganda, to the scholasticate of Elstree, London, and to the postulancy and novitiate in the Philippines. He also placed great importance on ongoing formation, not only within the Comboni Family, but also in other institutes for men and women. Wherever he was, he offered a valuable service to the local Church.

Father Renzo was a ‘true man’, an excellent priest, and a ‘true’ missionary. The so-called ‘social liquidity’ – which for him meant uncertainty, precariousness, and a lack of fixed points (thoughts, values, reality) in a

constantly changing world, leaving individuals without stable certainties and generating confusion, anxiety, and pain – caused him to suffer deeply. He could not accept that everything could be lived in a ‘disposable’ way – a way he observed in marriages, in consecration to religious and missionary life, and in the priesthood.

What he wrote on the occasion of his 50th anniversary of priesthood tells us much about his enthusiasm in giving thanks for the gifts he received during the years of his active ministry:

“I thank God in a special way for my missionary vocation, which has marked my life since the age of ten and influenced my adolescence, igniting in me an unconscious but vital enthusiasm. I thank God for my rich, full, and consistent missionary life, although demanding, difficult, and dangerous, yet always interesting and worth living.

I thank my fellow countrymen, who have always appreciated and supported my perseverance. I remember with affection and gratitude the peoples among whom I ministered, whom I love and appreciate, and from whom I have received more than I have given: the *Bakiga*, the *Acholi*, the English, and the Filipinos.

I thank God, in a very special way, for the priceless gift of my daily Mass. When I celebrate the Eucharist, I feel that this is what God has called me to do. After fifty years of priesthood, every time I begin Mass, I feel new: it is never a mere habit, I never get bored; it is always interesting and exciting. It is the reason for my life.

Father Renzo cultivated friendship as a sacred reality, drawing inspiration from Saint Daniel Comboni, who, he said, inspires us, intercedes for us, and stands before us like a beacon illuminating our path, delivering this wonderful message: “Where I am, there you are also called to be.”

Father Renzo wrote extensively about friendship in the life of the Founder and, like him, kept it alive with phone calls, letters, sometimes tiring journeys, and, of course, with much prayer for his friends.

Regarding old age, in profound communion, we learned together to experience it more and more as a source of gratitude to God. An expression we often used was this: “We still have many cartridges left to fire, not to spread death, but special bullets to sow, defend, and develop life.”

In the last months of his life, he told me, “You will continue this mission longer than I. I see great resilience in you.” May this come true through his intercession, which gives me the comforting feeling of having a direct line to heaven. (Go well, my dear “*twin*.” (*Father Taneburgo Giovanni, mccj*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE MOTHERS: Gladys, of Father Córdova Alcázar José Miguel (ES); Mariangela, of Father Corrado Tosi (RDC)

THE FATHERS: Gervais Paluku Kalwana, of Father Kakule Muvawa Emery-Justin (CO); Kebede Eshete, of Father Fasil Kebede Eshete (RSA)

THE BROTHERS: Loris, of Father Ismaele Matterazzo (IT); Julio Antonio, of Father Juan Manuel Rodríguez Martín (ES); Yousri, of Father Mina Anwar Habeeb

THE SISTERS: Maria, of Father Cornelio (†) and Piergiorgio Prandina (†); Akberet, of Father Mussie Abraham Keflezghi (ER);

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sr. Salvatore Maria Sistina; Sr. Vallarta Marrón Concepción; Sr. Rothschild André Teresa; Sr. Alessandra Fumagalli

THE COMBONI LAY MISSIONARY: Mercedes Navarro (CLM)