

## FORM 1 – MISSION: RETURN TO THE SOURCE

"I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5) was the inspirational passage during the Chapter journey, helping us grow in the awareness that we are the branches of the vine, Jesus Christ, and that the vinedresser is God, the Father of all. This awareness must help us in our daily lives to develop a strong spirituality that allows us to live and savour an experience of faith and trust in the Lord as the lifeblood of our choice of consecrated and missionary life, as was also the case for our Founder, who trusted completely in God: "Whoever trusts in himself trusts in the greatest donkey in the world... all our trust must be in God" (Writings 6880-81).

Pope Francis also emphasised this aspect in his audience with the Chapter members on June 18 [2022]:

The mission—its source, its dynamism, and its fruits—depend entirely on union with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said this clearly to those he had chosen as "apostles," that is, "sent ones": "Without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). (...) Only if we are like branches firmly attached to the vine does the sap of the Spirit pass from Christ into us and whatever we do bears fruit, because it is not our work, but the love of Christ that acts through us.

The XIX Chapter responded to this invitation by formulating a dream that describes how Comboni's invitation to always keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (W 2721) then translates into an inspired and effective mission:

We dream of a missionary style more deeply rooted in the reality of the peoples we accompany toward the Kingdom, capable of responding to the cry of the Earth and the impoverished. A missionary style that is also characterised by simpler lifestyles and structures within intercultural communities where we witness fraternity, communion, social friendship, and service to local Churches through specific pastoral programs, ministerial collaboration, and shared paths. (CA 2022, 28)

Returning to the source, therefore, means reconnecting with our Comboni roots, reviving an embodied spirituality that reflects the Comboni charism and is lived, in a plurality of expressions in dialogue—reflecting cultural and generational diversity—in "cenacles of apostles" who make common cause with the people they serve in mission and evangelise as a community. The sea of the Comboni mission cannot be crossed by lone navigators.

The Intercapitular Assembly (September 2025) also reaffirmed that the path to revitalising our missionary presence and commitments begins with a healthy spiritual and community life and a communal missionary commitment. There was also a need to reflect on our journey to synthesise and overcome the fragmentation of the meanings and orientations that the mission has for the Institute.

### Community Day – Our style of mission

After allowing time for personal reading and reflection on the three short essays on this topic, the community dedicates a day to reflection, sharing, and community discernment. The following schedule is proposed: personal reflection, community sharing and discernment, celebration.

#### At the heart of personal reflection (1 hour)

The insights offered by the FP program on this topic addressed various aspects of the Comboni mission in light of the changing realities of our time. Each member of the community is invited to reflect on their most beautiful **missionary experience**: take the time to relive it through contemplation, seeking to discern the Lord's presence in the unfolding of history. Then, in a spirit of prayer, reflect on:

= How the insights offered by the written contributions—or even by other personal insights—relate to that experience?

- They could be insights into Comboni spirituality...
- Or perhaps about evangelising as a community...
- Or perhaps about Comboni principles and methodology...

= What does the Spirit suggest to you through this new awareness of yours regarding the missionary style of your community today?

## **Community discernment<sup>1</sup>**

- = Invocation of the Spirit
- = Generative Question: *From prayerful reflection on your most beautiful missionary experience, what does the Spirit suggest to you about our community's missionary style?*
- = Silence<sup>2</sup>
- = First Round of Sharing: (30 minutes)
  - > Each person offers their own response to the question under consideration (maximum 2–3 minutes)
  - > There are no comments or reactions, only attentive listening
  - > A moment of silence between each person's sharing
  - > It may be helpful to note what stands out during the sharing sessions.
- = Second Round of Sharing: (30 minutes)
  - > *What did you hear or perceive from others in your group?* What does the Spirit move you to share about what you heard?
  - > It's no longer about what you think, but what you heard from other group members.
  - > There are no comments or reactions, only attentive listening.
- = Third Round of Sharing: (30 minutes)
  - > *What missionary style, in line with the Comboni charism, is the Lord asking of us as a community today?* What is the Spirit telling us as a group?
  - > At the end of the sharing, the community tries to focus on several actions to implement in response to the Spirit's promptings.
  - > A secretary records what the group decides together as 1–2–3 key points.
  - > Consensus check: Do we, as a community, identify with these key points to implement?
  - > When the group has concluded, a volunteer closes the conversation with a prayer of thanks.

## **The Celebration**

- = The community gives thanks in the Eucharist, preparing for it with ad hoc animation.
- = Take advantage of the opportunities the liturgy offers to meaningfully celebrate the fruits of community reflection and discernment.
- = Consider the possibility of using meaningful signs.
- = Bring the community's experiences and hopes into prayer.

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<sup>1</sup>Indications for communities of 5-6 members. In larger communities, this exercise may be carried out in smaller groups. Where this is done, after the third round of sharing, time is allowed for sharing the results of the group work.

<sup>2</sup> The purpose of Silence:

- = Descent of the heart: Move from mental agitation to interior recollection.
- = Listening to God: Create interior space to hear the subtle movement of the Spirit beyond one's preconceived ideas.
- = Purification of intent: Asking oneself: "O Lord, what do you want me to hear and to speak for the good of the mission as a community?"