

# FAMILIA COMBONIANA

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

850

April 2026

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

### General notes from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Consulta – March 2026

#### Appointment of Circumscription Vice-Superiors

During the January and March Consultas, the General Council examined the choices of vice-superiors indicated by the circumscription councils and appointed the following vice-provincial confrères for their respective districts:

Circumscription		Vice-provincials/Vice-delegates
A	Delegation	Fr. Paruñgao Victor Cunanan
BR	Province	Fr. Anoumou Mossi Kuami Bernardin
CN	Province	Fr. Likingi Wasato Henry
CO	Delegation	Fr. Mbaïdjide Alfred
DSP	Province	Fr. Körber Markus Lorenz
E	Province	Fr. Martin Vargas Francisco José
EC	Province	Fr. Alcides Costa
EGSD	Province	Fr. Mbuthia Simon Mwaura
ER	Delegation	Fr. Bahta Uqbaghiorghis
ET	Province	Fr. Hernández Jaime Pedro Pablo Leobardo
I	Province	Fr. Bernasconi Fermo
KE	Province	Fr. Ahiro David Khayesi
LP	Province	Fr. Curci Carmine
M	Province	Fr. Ibarra Hernandez Luis Enrique
MO	Province	Fr. Robol Massimo
MZ	Province	Fr. García González Moisés
NAP	Province	Fr. Okot Ochermoi Louis Tony
P	Province	Fr. Manuel Augusto Lopes Ferreira
PCA	Province	Fr. Marín Artavia Ignacio Enrique
PE	Province	Fr. López Camones Edison Elías

Circumscription		Vice-provincials/Vice-delegates
RCA	Delegation	Fr. Ouandora Seigneur Malthus
RSA	Province	Fr. Mkhari Antony Abednego
SS	Province	Fr. Alenyo Peter
TCH	Delegation	Fr. Ngoré Gali Célestin
TGB	Province	Fr. Amoussou Comlan Ghislain
U	Province	Fr. Mweshi Collins Sampa

### Appointments in the formation sector

The General Council has made the following appointments:

- **Father Arroyo Román Elías** – novice master at the Mexico novitiate as of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026.
- **Father Elias Samuel Elias** – *socius* of the novice master of Nampula novitiate as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026.
- **Father Girau Pellicer José Antonio** – formator at the International Brothers' Centre (CIF) of Bogotá, as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026.

### Appointment of the Finance Council

In view of a merger, the General Council decided to retain the current members of the Finance Council, with the exception of the APDESAM treasurer. Based on recommendations from the provincial superiors of this macro-region, the General Council has appointed **Father Gbegnon Sénou Isaac** as a new member of the council.

### Unified Course (Comboni Year – Renewal Course)

Following consultation with the provincials during the Intercapitular Assembly, the General Council decided to consolidate the Comboni Year and Renewal Courses into a single program. The first edition of this program will take place from the beginning of April to the end of December 2027. The preparatory language course, intended for participants who do not know Italian, will take place from the beginning of January to March 2027. Interested confrères, after consulting with their circumscription superior, are asked to send their registration to Father Alberto Silva, course coordinator, at the following email address: [albatrosilva55@gmail.com](mailto:albatrosilva55@gmail.com).

### Specialisation courses in Rome suspended

As part of the Institute's reconfiguration process and with a view to a clearer definition of its charismatic, formative, and mission priorities, the General Council has deemed it appropriate to suspend, for one year, the reception

of confrères at the Rome headquarters for specialisation courses, with the exception of those completing their studies.

This pause will be dedicated to the preparation of a comprehensive plan for specialisations, taking into account, in particular, the criterion of ministeriality as an orientation and reference for discerning the specialisation toward which to direct the confrères. The objective is to identify several areas of study that meet the needs of the Institute's mission and can provide qualified support for the various services required at the ecclesial level and within the Institute itself.

To this end, the Formation Council, in dialogue with the Secretariat for the Mission and the Secretariat for the Economy, will be responsible for defining the priority areas of specialisation and developing a comprehensive proposal to present to the General Council. An important contribution will also be made by the formators of the scholasticates, who, as companions of the scholastics on their formative journey, will be able to assist in discernment. As part of this process, it will be the Institute's prerogative, in dialogue with the provincials and delegates, to identify the confrères to be assigned to studies, taking into account the needs of the mission, the required skills, and community discernment.

The General Council is aware that this decision may cause some inconvenience to some confrères and the circumscriptions involved. However, it represents an appropriate choice to characterise the Institute's reconfiguration process with greater clarity and coherence.

### **Itineraries of the members of the General Council**

#### **April**

Bro. Lamana	11–17 Uganda	17–25 Ethiopia
Fr. Codianni and Fr. Sindjalim	15–28 Congo	
Fr. Domingues	7–20 NAP	

#### **May**

Fr. Radol	1–15 Uganda
-----------	-------------

### **Date of the next Consulta**

The next Consulta will be held from 8<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026.



## **Meeting between the General Administration and the new Circumscription Superiors**

From 23<sup>rd</sup> February to 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026, at the Curia in Rome, the General Administration met with the first-term circumscription superiors (2026-2028). The meeting, led by Superior General Father Luigi Codianni, aimed to foster mutual understanding, reflection on the service of authority, and strengthen the bonds of communion between the circumscriptions and the General Administration.

**First week: formation and orientation** – The first week was dedicated to formation and reports on the state of the Institute and current challenges: interculturality, charismatic identity, care for confrères, ministry, internationality, and the consolidation of circumscriptions.

The meetings included reflections, led by experts, on the personal well-being of superiors, relationship management, stress and emotions, and authority as service. Ongoing formation activities were presented, with an emphasis on a transformative and ongoing journey in the lives of missionaries.

The issue of the consolidation of provinces was addressed as a necessary and irreversible process, aimed at ensuring fidelity to the charism, the valorisation of talents, and flexibility in structures.

**Second week: secretariats and organisation** – The second week featured presentations from the general secretariats and the offices of the General Administration. Among the main topics were:

- functioning and relationships with the General Secretariat;
- institutional and digital communication, with internal and external publications;
- activities of the Mission Secretariat and ongoing projects;
- formation of young missionaries, formation challenges, and support programmes;
- economics and resource management; the principles of transparency and accountability.

Each day of this second week also included individual meetings between superiors and the General Council, fostering dialogue, clarification, and personal support.

The final evaluation confirmed the satisfaction of the participants, who appreciated the clarity of the presentations and the fraternal atmosphere. The desire was expressed to maintain two-week meetings, reserved for first-term superiors.

## Father General's concluding homily

The meeting ended with a Eucharistic celebration. In his homily, Fr Luigi Codianni offered a reflection on the Gospel of the vineyard workers (Mt 21,33-46):

- **The vineyard is not our property** – We are stewards, not owners; caring for our circumscriptions means serving with responsibility and gratitude.
- **Harvest time** – The Lord requires a harvest of communion, fidelity, spiritual life and missionary courage; authentic fecundity matures with time.
- **Rejecting prophets** – We must guard against resisting the Spirit and avoid hardening our hearts.
- **God sent his Son** – Christ, sent by the Father, is at the centre of true renewal; structures and organisation alone are not enough.
- **The rejected stone** – Even what appears fragile or marginal can become fundamental; protecting, guiding, and seeking lasting fruit means leaving room for the Son, because only in him does the vine flourish.

## Conclusion

The meeting offered formation, reflection, and discussion in a fraternal atmosphere, strengthening relationships as well as tools for responsible and charismatic service. Participants were able to share experiences, concerns, and hopes, strengthening their sense of belonging to the Institute and the Comboni mission.

## Ordinations

Nguyen Van Tien (Peter)	Manila/Ph	10.03.2026
-------------------------	-----------	------------

## Holy Redeemer Guild

April	01 – 15 CN	16 – 30 EC
May	01 – 15 ET	16 – 31 I

## Prayer intentions

### April

We pray for close collaboration within the Comboni Family, so that we may bear witness to a synodal Church that is close to the poorest and most abandoned, as Saint Daniel Comboni desired. *Lord, hear us.*

## May

In the month in which we celebrate the 60th World Communications Day, let us pray that all communications workers in the Comboni Family may share the beauty that inhabits the world with good accounts that edify and give hope. *Lord, hear us.*

## Meaningful anniversaries

### APRIL

25	San Pedro de San José de Betancourt, religious	Province of Central America [Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador]
----	--	---

### MAY

#### Comboni liturgical calendar

27	Last Saturday of the month: Blessed Virgin Mary, “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart”.	memorial
----	--	----------

## Meaningful anniversaries

2	Saint Athanasius, bishop and doctor of the Church	Egypt
	Last Saturday of the month: Blessed Virgin Mary, “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart”.	memorial

## Specialisations

### Father Elias Sindjalim successfully defends his doctoral thesis

On 18<sup>th</sup> March, Father Elias Sindjalim Essognimam, a Togolese Comboni missionary, successfully completed the public examination for a doctorate in Developmental and Educational Psychology at the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS) in Rome, defending his thesis, *Stress and Psychological Well-Being Applied to the Pastoral Care of Priests, Men and Women Religious in Togo – The Mediating and/or Moderating Role of Francis Leslie’s Psychological Types and of Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Research Religious Orientations.*

The 416-page thesis (including notes, references, and bibliography), as indicated by its title, presents an exploratory and empirical study on the mental health—more specifically, the psychological well-being—of priests, men and women religious engaged in pastoral care in Togo. This is the first research conducted in Togo using the New Indices of Religious Orientation (NIRO) and the Francis Psychological Type and Emotional Temperament Scale (FPTETS).

The study aims, on the one hand, to analyse the influence of pastoral stress on psychological well-being, and on the other, to explore not only the correlations between sociodemographic factors (age, gender, years of priesthood or religious life, nationality, etc.) and the constructs used – Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Psychological Well-Being (PWB), NIRO, and FPTETS – but also the mediating and/or moderating role of certain dimensions of the NIRO and FPTETS in the relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being.

The research also aims to outline pedagogical proposals and perspectives, with particular attention to prevention as well as psychological care.

The research is a quantitative study conducted on a sample of 316 subjects from seven dioceses in Togo.

Father Elias, 55, was ordained a priest on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2000, after completing his theological studies in Chicago, USA. He carried out his ministry in Togo (2000-2008) and in the DR Congo (2012-2017). From 2008 to 2012, he was in Rome, where he graduated in Psychology from the Pontifical Gregorian University (PUG). In 2017, he was assigned to the Centre for Permanent Formation at the General Curia in Rome. In 2020, he was appointed Secretary General for Formation. At the beginning of 2022, he enrolled in a doctoral program at the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS). Since June 29, 2022, he has been one of four general assistants, with the specific responsibility of following and animating the circumscriptions of French-speaking Africa, the formation sector, and the service of accompanying student confrères.

Having brilliantly defended his thesis, he earned the title of doctor. Congratulations, Father Elias!

## **Publications**

A mosaic of voices and experiences to recount the richness of the Comboni charism. This is the proposal of the volume *A Mosaic of Perspectives on the Comboni Charism*, edited by Father Elias Sindjalim Essognimam. The book, concise yet dense (136 pages), brings together contributions from confrères from diverse life and mission contexts, as well as from different cultures and continents, thus offering a significant glimpse into the vitality and relevance of the gift received from Comboni and passed on to his heirs.

Designed primarily as a tool for initial formation, particularly during the novitiate, the volume also lends itself as a valuable support for ongoing formation in the Comboni charism.

Currently available only in English, the text will be published in French in mid-April.

## ASIA

### **Priestly and diaconal ordinations in Manila**

On 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026, at the Parish of Christ the King, Project 7, Quezon City, Metro Manila (Philippines), through the laying on of hands by Most Rev. Elias Lumayog Ayuban Jr. (Claretian), Bishop of Cubao, we witnessed the priestly ordination of Father Nguyen Van Tien (Peter), a Vietnamese, and the diaconal ordination of Mercado Sandoval Diego Martín, a Mexican.

The celebration was attended by the parish priest, Father Jose Glenn V. Orocio, Father Mejia Domingues Victor Alejandro, representing the Province of the Comboni Missionaries of Mexico, numerous confrères serving in Asia, and a large number of diocesan priests, men and women religious, as well as a group of friends of the mission and benefactors. Father Nguyen's ordination represents a historic moment, not only for the Asian Delegation, but also for the entire Institute, as he is the first Comboni missionary from Vietnam.

We are deeply grateful, not only to the Lord, but also to Saint Daniel Comboni, whose life and charism inspired these two confrères to embrace their missionary vocation with great generosity and commitment. The celebration was carefully prepared to create a profound atmosphere of prayer that enabled all present to grasp the importance of this historic moment. We express our sincere thanks to Bishop Elias for presiding over the celebration with wisdom and genuine joy, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended.

We are especially grateful to Father Peter Tien's mother and sister-in-law, who came from Vietnam to attend the ordination, and for the generous gift of a son to our Institute. Our thanks also go to the mother and aunt of Deacon Diego Mercado, who came from Mexico to share this important event, entrusting their beloved son and nephew to the Comboni mission in Asia.

We wish to express our deepest gratitude to all those who, with their support and presence, made this extraordinary celebration possible. May the Lord grant them abundant blessings.

On 15<sup>th</sup> March, the birthday of St. Daniel Comboni, Father Tien celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Parish of St. Anthony of Padua, in Sucat, Parañaque City, Metro Manila. He was assisted at the altar by Deacon Diego Martin Mercado Sandoval, in the presence of confrères, friends, and benefactors.

We hope that these two events will inspire many young people throughout Asia to consecrate themselves to God in missionary service. (*Father Victor Aguilar, MCCJ, Delegate Superior of Asia*)

## DR CONGO

### **Scholastics' solidarity commitment to integral ecology in Kinshasa**

Last Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> March, some students from the Kinshasa Scholasticate, members of the Commission for Integral Ecology, on their Lenten conversion journey, spent a few hours together with those who live off what they manage to salvage and recycle from landfills. It was a commitment to solidarity, but also a gesture of condemnation of the living conditions of too many people who must struggle to survive. It was a plea for greater Kinshasa to return to being the '*belle*' and not the '*poubelle*' (rubbish dump).

Integral ecology, in fact, is increasingly becoming a transverse theme of the mission and formation of Comboni missionaries, so that they may always be ready to listen to the cry of the earth – violated and plundered, especially in the DRC – and attentive to the cry of the poor. This is one of the so-called 'specific pastoral cares', irreplaceable today in a world torn apart by war and violence, where billions of people are denied the right to a full life.

We are all called to build a development model able to combine social justice and planetary protection. At stake is not only the future of the planet, but also the possibility of guaranteeing a dignified life for all the peoples of the earth. (*Father Fernando Zolli, mccj*)

## EGYPT/SUDAN

### **Lebanon – Escalation of the conflict and a humanitarian crisis**

The month of March was marked by a new escalation in the conflict in Lebanon, with Israeli bombings hitting the south of the country and the southern suburbs of the capital, Beirut, where the Shiite population is largest.

Compared to the military campaign at the end of 2024, the offensive appears to be more intense and widespread. According to estimates reported at the end of March, approximately 1,300,000 people have been forced to leave their homes, seeking refuge primarily in the northern areas of the country.

Our educational community, located in northern Beirut, is currently in an area not directly affected by the ongoing bombing, but is following the

evolving situation with great concern in a country once again suffering human, social, and economic hardship.

### **Sudan – An Easter of hope in Khartoum**

In Khartoum, we are preparing for Easter celebrations in a context still marked by the war that began on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

For many parishes, this will be the first Holy Week celebration with the presence of some priests and the archbishop since the beginning of the conflict. This is a small but significant sign of ecclesial continuity and hope amid suffering.

The path to peace remains long and requires the material and social reconstruction of the country, supported also by the solidarity of numerous benefactors and the generous commitment of our confrères alongside the Christian communities, step by step. (*Father Diego Dalle Carbonare, mccj*)

## MOZAMBIQUE

### **Nampula novitiate reopened**

After a year of closure, last Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> March, the doors of the ‘Saint Francis Xavier’ novitiate in Nampula reopened, welcoming 14 new young Mozambican novices. Over the next two years, they will receive intense formation and special assistance in making a profound interior discernment of their true vocational intentions for Comboni religious and missionary life. It so happened that the reopening – an event of significant importance for both the province and the Institute – occurred within the celebrations of 80 years of Comboni presence in Mozambique. We see in it a true sign of spiritual springtime and proof that Comboni’s charism is still alive and fruitful.

The ceremony was presided over by Father José Joaquim Luís Pedro, provincial superior. Also present were the new novice master, Father Francisco José de Sousa Machado, Brother Agostinho Jamal, and several confrères working in the Nampula area.

After welcoming everyone, Father Joaquim addressed the new candidates, reminding them of the expectations of this formative period and the commitments each of them must make in following Christ, ‘missionary of the Father’. After asking each of the 14 candidates to express their desire to begin this new journey, he concluded with the prayer of admission to the novitiate.

Starting from the biblical passage chosen for the occasion, Father Joaquim explained that the novitiate is a time of interior transformation

and encounter with Christ, indicating six fundamental attitudes for living this journey fruitfully:

- *active listening*, to learn to discern God's voice in silence and prayer;
- *radical willingness* to be guided by the Spirit;
- *prophetic fraternity* that makes this time a laboratory of community life and authentic witness, in a world marked by divisions;
- *courageous discernment*, to always seek God's will with sincerity and freedom;
- *resilient perseverance*, so that the mystery of the Cross and the faithfulness of Christ may be revealed;
- *missionary joy* that makes visible the signs of God's presence, whose power attracts and convinces.

He then emphasised the happy coincidence of the reopening of the novitiate with the celebrations of 80 years of Comboni presence in Mozambique, during which many confrères gave heroic testimony of fidelity, sacrifice, and generous service to the poorest and most abandoned in the country. He finally added: "You new novices are not starting from scratch, but you are becoming part of a history that has seen times of peace and joy, but also moments of war and suffering. Know that you are heirs to a Comboni missionary tradition that requires continuity and renewal."

The celebration concluded with the rite of giving each novice the *Rule of Life* and the *Writings* of Saint Daniel Comboni: two documents that, together with the Word of God, constitute the sources and foundation of formation. These two documents will be read, explained, and explored throughout the novitiate, so that the young people can understand Comboni's spirit and charism in the light of the Gospel and internalise the Institute's way of life and mission in service to the Church, particularly the poorest and most abandoned.

Many thanks were expressed, especially to the General Council and the superiors of the circumscriptions of English-speaking Africa (APDESAM), for their trust in us and the support they offered, making it possible to reopen the novitiate in Nampula.

## SPAIN

### **Presentation of the book *Isumisos***

On Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, the Comboni Missionaries' headquarters in Madrid hosted the presentation of the latest book published by Mundo Negro, *Insumisos*<sup>1</sup> – *A Mixed-Ethnic Couple in Apartheid-Legacy South Af-*

---

<sup>1</sup> In Italian, it may mean "rebels", "insubordinate people" or "conscientious objectors".

rica. The book recounts the lives of Hazel and her husband, Phillip, whose racial differences in South Africa did not prevent them from forming a mixed-race family to break down walls and build bridges of understanding. Drawing on the lives of the protagonists, the book retraces some of the most decisive moments in South Africa's recent history.

Hazel and Phillip also participated via online link from South Africa, along with Father Jaime Pi Calvera, director of Mundo Negro, and José Carlos Rodríguez Soto, the book's author. Father Calvera opened the event with a few words of welcome and a brief presentation of the new publication, part of the publishing house's '*Testimonios*' series, which also includes other successful publications, such as the testimonial book by South Sudanese doctor Emmanuel Taban and that of Congolese cultural mediator Nicole Ndongala. Subsequently, José Carlos Rodríguez shared with those present some of his experiences during the weeks he visited Hazel and Phillip in South Africa to gather the necessary material for the text. A key moment of the meeting was Hazel and Phillip's presentation, during which they also took questions from the audience. A simultaneous translation application for all presentations, used for the first time at this type of cultural event organised by *Mundo Negro*, contributed to the success of the meeting.

### **Meeting of the Comboni Family**

Under the theme 'Integral Ecology – Comboni's Prophecy Today', the annual meeting of the Comboni Family (FC) in Spain was held on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March, at the headquarters of the Comboni Missionaries in Madrid. Approximately forty Comboni religious, lay men and women gathered for a weekend of reflection and fellowship.

The meeting began with prayer, during which a minute of silence was observed in memory of three FC members who attended the previous meeting and who passed away in recent months: Mrs. Mercedes Navarro, Sister Mari Luz Sánchez, and Father Antonio Pavía.

Father Dario Bossi was the keynote speaker. In his presentation, he illustrated some of the steps taken by the four branches of the FC in promoting integral ecology and developed three points of Pope Francis' teaching that clearly demonstrate similarities with the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni: dialogue, integral evangelisation, and the active involvement of communities in their territories.

Gonzalo Violero, a Comboni lay missionary, presented some of the aspects addressed during the FC Integral Ecology Forum, held in Belém, Brazil, in conjunction with COP30 (November 10-21, 2025). Saturday morning concluded with three testimonies from the different FC branches

regarding human trafficking, the specific pastoral care of migrants, and ecological commitments. The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to drafting, in groups and as a group, the final document of the FC Integral Ecology Forum, seeking proposals and actions to continue walking together.

After an exchange of information on the current situation of the various FC branches in Spain, the meeting concluded with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Father Miguel Ángel Llamazares, Provincial Superior of Spain, during which Saint Daniel Comboni was remembered on his 195<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## UGANDA

### **Alenga parish handed over to the diocesan clergy**

On 8<sup>th</sup> March, the day the world celebrates International Women's Day, the Catholic parish of Alenga, dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, in the Diocese of Lira, experienced a historic event: the transfer of the mission from the Comboni missionaries, who founded it 56 years ago, to the diocesan clergy.

The occasion was honoured by the presence of the local bishop, Most Rev. Sanctus Lino Wanok, who presided over the Eucharistic celebration, and the provincial superior of the Comboni missionaries, Father Anthony Kimbowa Kibira. Other Comboni missionaries working in the diocese and numerous diocesan priests were also present. Local political authorities were also present, including the Honourable Peter Obong Acuda, newly elected Member of Parliament for Maruzi County.

In the presence of the bishop, Father Kibira and the outgoing parish priest, Father Michael Oguzu Aribo, handed over the tabernacle key, crucifix, Bible, and rosary to the Episcopal Vicar for the Clergy, Father Polycarp Opio, who then handed them over to the new parish priest, Father Aaron Ojok.

During his homily, the bishop urged the Christians of Alenga to carry on the flame of faith received from the missionaries. Referring to the first reading (*Exodus 17:3-79*), he observed: "On their journey through the desert toward the promised land, the Israelites reached a point where there seemed to be no way out due to the lack of water. Today, some of you may be worried about the departure of the missionaries. But it is precisely in such critical moments that God reveals himself as Lord and Father of the journey, causing water to flow from the rock."

Drawing inspiration from the Gospel passage (*John 4 – Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well*), he said: "The Comboni missionaries have

‘dug a well,’ just as Jacob had done, and this well continues to quench the thirst of the people of Alenga. This well is the Gospel of Christ that the missionaries brought, along with schools and healthcare facilities: the Christians of Alenga will continue to draw life from this message and these human development structures. For this, there are reasons to celebrate and be grateful.” He then invited everyone to accept this “handover as a clear expression of Christian discipleship”: “It is now up to us to continue the journey begun by the missionaries: we will take our steps in the direction they have indicated.” Finally, he encouraged Christians “to support spiritually, morally, and even materially the priests who today assume pastoral responsibility for the parish.”

Father Kibira thanked God for the opportunity given to the Comboni missionaries to evangelise the diocese, following the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni, “aiming at the liberation and advancement of the people of God.” He added: “The mission does not belong to the Comboni missionaries... but to God. The time is ripe, and today God entrusts his mission to the local clergy to continue. This local Church has reached maturity and possesses the capacity to continue the work of evangelisation.”

Addressing his confrères present, Father Kibira said: “Saint Daniel Comboni encouraged his missionaries to be ‘the hidden stones of the foundation,’ content to do what was asked of them and ready to leave to others the task of continuing to build the Kingdom of God.”

He also recalled the contribution of the various missionaries who worked in Alenga, some of whom shed their blood in this mission, particularly Father Egidio Ferracin and Father Giuliano Pisoni: “This reminds us that what moves the missionary is none other than love for Christ and the zeal to make him known and loved.” He finally thanked Father Michael Oguzu Aribo and Father Alberto Anichini for carrying out the mission until its handover to the diocese.

The diocesan lay leader, Jovino Akaki Ayumo, after thanking the Comboni missionaries for their 56 years of work in Alenga, urged the faithful to embrace the challenge of change, urging everyone to support the diocesan priests who now assume responsibility for the parish.

The parish of Alenga was established in 1970 by Msgr. Caesar Asili, the first bishop of Lira. The first parish priest was Father Cesare Mengalli (who left the mission to become a Benedictine monk and died in October 2024). Other Comboni missionaries working in Alenga were: Father John Fraser (†), Father Egidio Ferracin (†), Father Giuliano Pisoni (†), Father Mario Balzarini, Father Antonio Campanini, Father Juan José Valero, Father Stanislas Atipoupou, and others. (*Father Constanz Opiyo, mcccj*)

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Brother Carlos Cárdenas García (3.11.44 – 19.4.2025)**

When Brother Carlos Cárdenas García returned to the Father's house, he had just reached 80 years of age, 60 of which he had spent as a Comboni missionary, leaving a shining testimony of dedication, fidelity, missionary joy, and enthusiasm for the Comboni charism.

'Carlitos' – as he was affectionately known – was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1944, in San Diego Quitupan, in the state of Jalisco, diocese of Guadalajara: a region deeply influenced by the Christian faith, which only a few years earlier had experienced severe trials in the defence of religious freedom.

He came from a rural background, characterised by a simple life based on agriculture and livestock, and animated by a spirit of healthy fraternal coexistence. It was in this context that the values that would shape his entire life developed within him.

While still young, he felt a call to missionary life and presented himself at the Comboni Missionaries' seminary in Sahuayo, expressing his desire to consecrate himself as a brother and dedicate his life to proclaiming the Gospel. In mid-1965, he entered the novitiate in Xochimilco, a working-class neighbourhood in the southern part of Mexico City. On 9<sup>th</sup> September of that year, he took the habit, and on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1967, he made his first religious profession. That same month, he was assigned to the community of the minor seminary in Sahuayo, where, while continuing his studies at technical institutes, he devoted himself diligently to the maintenance of the house.

From the very beginning, Carlos proved to be a serene and motivated young brother, happy with his missionary and Comboni vocation. A person of great simplicity and an affable nature, he loved fraternal life and sharing. His family history, marked by the hardships of working in the fields and limited resources, was deeply rooted in a faith lived and celebrated in every moment of his life.

In July 1973, he was assigned to the Brothers' Formation Centre in Pordenone (Italy), where he attended, for two years, a course for turners and carpenters and a course in agro-animal husbandry, that is, the set of agricultural practices that involve the use of land for the production of agricultural products for human or animal purposes, and livestock breeding. To complement his studies, he also attended a lay theology course with excellent results.

At the end of the two-year scholasticate, the Centre's two formators – Father Gianclaudio Beccarelli (animator) and Brother Alessandro Pelucchi (superior) – presented an extremely positive evaluation of Brother Carlos to the Provincial Council of Mexico: «We are grateful to the Lord for being able to present to the Province of Mexico our satisfaction with the fruits Carlos has

been able to reap during his two years of scholasticate. He has not been without difficulties, but he has overcome them well. [...] We can say that we have seen Jesus' words fulfilled in him: "To him who has, more will be given," in the sense that, attentive as he is to the Word of God, he increasingly identifies with his missionary vocation, and increasingly finds the strength to step outside himself to draw close to others [...] His ideal is to live alongside poor people—the poorest!—both physically and culturally, and to make God's love known to all through his witness of faith. He has a good temperament, is docile, refined in his feelings, very sensitive and almost delicate [...] We suggest that he not be placed to work with overly active, efficiency-minded confrères: they would risk not understanding each other, and Carlos would end up suffering greatly and needlessly».

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 1975, Carlos received his first letter of appointment from the Superior General, Father Tarcisio Agostoni: "To accommodate your desire to leave for the mission, and given that your province of Mexico is placing you at the disposal of the General Council, after reviewing your option, we have decided to assign you to the region of Ecuador, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1975. I am sure you are leaving with the thanks and gratitude of your superiors, your confrères, and all who have known you for your work and dedication."

Returning to Mexico in June 1975, after a brief vacation, he left for Ecuador in 1976, assigned to the provincial residence in Quito in charge of the house. Thus began a long missionary journey for Brother Carlos, leading him to serve in various communities and provinces, generously carrying out a variety of activities: from the construction and maintenance of buildings to the animation of lay groups, from collaboration in the social work of the 'Ciudad de los Niños' in La Paz (Baja California) to accompanying indigenous communities in the Chinantla region of southeastern Mexico.

In each context, Brother Carlos distinguished himself for a style of service marked by simplicity and humility, traits that profoundly shaped his person and his mission.

In 1981, he returned to Mexico for a second term of service in his home province, which lasted six years. During this time, he collaborated in various services of the provincial house and in missionary animation activities. He also took advantage of this stay to deepen his formation by attending the theological and spiritual centre of the Discalced Carmelites.

Gifted with a special sensitivity towards the poor and those most in need, Brother Carlos knew how to approach people with naturalness and respect. His simple and generous heart led him to take a special interest in those who were forgotten or marginalised. He was a missionary who was available, capable of giving his time and attention without reserve.

His spirituality was characterised by a profound sense of God's presence: a simple yet solid faith, inherited from his family and his people, with whom he always maintained deep emotional ties. Faithful to the Comboni charism, he

passionately lived the missionary ideal of Saint Daniel Comboni, distinguishing himself for his availability and joy in total self-giving.

Over the years, he alternated periods of service in Ecuador with stays in Mexico, until 2016, when he was assigned to Peru, his last mission outside his homeland, where he remained until 2021.

Even in his final years of activity, he continued to offer his contribution in the simplest of services, particularly in the maintenance of facilities and in helping the community. It was during one of these jobs that he suffered a serious accident: while repairing a roof, he fell, suffering a fractured spine that deprived him of the mobility of his lower limbs, forcing him to remain immobile or confined to a wheelchair.

In 2021, he returned permanently to Mexico, to the Oasis of Zapopan, Jalisco, a community that welcomes elderly and sick missionaries. There he lived the last phase of his life, transforming the ordeal of suffering into a new form of mission, lived with patience and profound trust in God. In this final stage, he offered us an eloquent testimony of abandonment into the hands of the Lord.

In his final years, he never complained about his condition, maintaining the joyful and cordial spirit that had always distinguished him. He lived the gift of his missionary vocation with simplicity, leaving us a precious testimony that reminds us how God's great works are accomplished through humble instruments, docile to his action.

On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2025, we learned of his birth into heaven. At dawn on Holy Saturday, as the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection approached, his life came to completion, bathed in the light of Easter hope.

We cherish the memory of him as a joyful and enthusiastic brother and missionary, and the example of a Comboni Missionary who lived his mission in the discreet and faithful gift of a life that was a blessing to many. (*Father Enrique Sánchez G., mccj, and FM*)

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

Elio was born in Teaio, a hamlet of Segonzano (Trento), on 27<sup>th</sup> 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, Davide 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 the 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, had 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 the age of eight, Elio was already tending the chapel in Teatio 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 the cold and hardship. His brother Fausto was also with him, a precious support during those difficult years. Towards the end of the conflict, while Trento was subjected to heavy bombing, Elio also experienced the risks of war, finding himself under crossfire between partisans and retreating German soldiers.

**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 Apostolic School in Brescia, where he completed his fourth and fifth years 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 9<sup>th</sup> September 1949, he took his first religious vows and initially attended 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 the 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 9<sup>th</sup> September 1955.

On 26<sup>th</sup> May 1956, he was ordained a priest by Cardinal Giovanni Battisti Montini, the future Pope 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 San Pietro during a national gathering in Trento.

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. Meanwhile, he deepened his composition studies with the renowned music teacher Luigi Picchi and closely participated in the Second Vatican Council's discussions on liturgical music, contributing new compositions himself. He also earned a degree in educational psychology from the Catholic University, further enhancing the quality of his ministry 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 responsibilities associated with seminary life: managing 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 their toll on his physical and psychological well-being, leading him to smoke and visibly lose weight.

**Bassa California del Sud – 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 enabled 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.

**Return 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 missionary 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.

**Trent, Arco, Brescia, Verona and Castel d’Azzano** – In July 1987, Father Elio was assigned to the rectory of Trento, where he remained for two years. In July of 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. Here, 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 sought-after figure.

In June 2015, Father Elio was transferred to the ‘Fratel 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 21<sup>st</sup> June 2025, leaving a spir-

itual, cultural, and missionary legacy that will continue to inspire his family, his brothers, and all who were fortunate enough to know him.

On the afternoon of 24<sup>th</sup> 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, and FM*)

### **Father Alois Deflorian (30 May 1937 – 20 February 2026)**

Father Alois was born in Ausserpfitsch, South Tyrol, on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1937. As a child, he lost his mother and, shortly thereafter, his stepmother. He was then entrusted to the care of the Ralsbauer family in Val di Vizze, where he spent his childhood.

In the Autumn of 1951, he entered the Missionary House of Milland as a student and, like all his classmates, attended the city's episcopal seminary. With great dedication, he graduated from high school in 1959. In October of that year, he began his novitiate in Mellatz. There, he took his first temporary vows on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1960. Since there was no possibility of offering philosophy courses in the second year at Mellatz, the novitiate was shortened by a year, after obtaining permission from the Holy See.

He began his theological studies in Bressanone, where he took his perpetual vows on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1965. On 29<sup>th</sup> June of the same year, he was ordained a priest in the Cathedral of Bressanone by Bishop Josef Gargitter. The following year, in 1966, he was sent to Peru, where he would remain until June 2023, when he returned to his native province.

He began his pastoral ministry—which would last uninterrupted for 57 years—in the then Tyrolean settlement of Pozuzo, in the central forest of the Pasco region, known for being a land of German, Austrian, and especially Tyrolean descendants, who had come to this part of Peru at the end of the 19th century. Father Alois worked in Pozuzo for two years.

He subsequently served in various localities: Cerro de Pasco/Huariaca (16 years), Cerro de Pasco/Huayllay (2 years), Carhuamayo (3 years), Ambo (3 years), El Carmen/Sunampe (12 years), and Huánuco (15 years). He also spent the last years of his life in Huánuco, collaborating in pastoral ministry and then as a retired priest. In Peru, he was affectionately known as '*Padre Lucho*' (a diminutive of Luigi, Luis, or Alois).

For 16 years, he worked in the parish of San Juan Bautista in Huariaca, whose origins date back to 1572. In addition to his pastoral work in the parish and in the numerous surrounding villages, Father Alois devoted particular attention to the sick, offering them spiritual care at the district hospital.

Toward the end of his service in Huánuco, the violence of terrorist groups, particularly Sendero Luminoso – a Maoist-inspired revolutionary movement

aiming to establish socialism in Peru – became increasingly present, sowing fear and chaos in the villages. “In those years, poverty and misery marked people’s daily lives,” Father Alois often recalled.

Whether in the harsh climate of the Andes (Cerro de Pasco, 4,330 meters above sea level) or in the coastal parishes, he was always available to travel wherever needed, despite frequent health problems.

Human weaknesses, especially within the Church, also caused him suffering. A confrère friar recalled one of his expressions: “How is it possible that we, who daily drink the cup of salvation, are so little transformed by it?” These words reveal his profound desire for a priestly life rooted in the Eucharist.

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2024, in an article published in the diocesan weekly of Bressanone, Father Alois retraced his missionary experience as follows: «From January 1966 to June 2023, I served as parish priest in various parishes of the Tarma prelate, located between 2,000 and 4,000 meters in the Peruvian Andes. Wherever I went, I met welcoming people who made me feel at home. My main task was to celebrate the patronal feasts. This involved long journeys – sometimes by car, other times on horseback – to reach the most remote villages, where solemn celebrations, processions, and numerous baptisms regularly awaited me. Parents gladly seized the opportunity to have their children baptised».

«We foreign missionaries had to adapt greatly. Outside the church, there was always a great and annoying din; inside, there were mostly women with their children crying or screaming, and elderly people; the young people, however, were always playing on the sports field. The most beautiful and useful moment was in the evening, during Vespers. Finally, there was a moment of silence, which allowed for attentive listening, and so we could conduct some catechesis, especially in preparation for children’s baptisms. People stayed until late at night».

«One of the events that deeply affected me was the Christmas celebration in a mining village. The shacks were located on the shores of a lake, with steep cliffs behind them. A few weeks after that Christmas, a huge landslide crashed into the lake, generating a tidal wave that destroyed the entire village. Hundreds of people died. I was deeply shaken, and my faith was also severely tested. [...] The mission taught me that everywhere there are good people who try to live according to God’s will. I would like to invite you, readers of this weekly, to accompany the missionaries not only with your prayers, but also with your generosity, even if it means sacrifice. It’s difficult to convince someone that God is a good father with just words».

In June 2023, after 57 years of mission, Father Alois returned to the Comboni house in Millard, on the outskirts of Bressanone, where he felt at home. On 25<sup>th</sup> July 2025, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he celebrated his platinum jubilee of priesthood at the shrine of ‘Maria am Sand’ (Mary of

the Sand), located on a small hill, a 13-minute walk from the new parish church. Beside him at the altar were the diocesan bishop, Most Rev. Ivo Muser, Father Hubert Unterberger, his classmate who was ordained a priest on the same day, and Father Fidelis Pezzei, who was celebrating the 65th anniversary of his ordination. Both Father Hubert and Father Fidelis had served as missionaries in Peru for many years.

Father Alois passed away suddenly on the night of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026. The funeral was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> in the church of 'Maria am Sand'. The main celebrant introduced the ceremony with these words: "Gratitude is the feeling that fills me as I remember our confrère Father Alois Deflorian. And I believe I am not far from the truth if I think this same feeling fills each of you present here. In the Eucharistic Prayer of this Mass – or Roman Canon – we will hear the following words: 'Remember, O Lord, your faithful, who have gone before us with the sign of faith and sleep the sleep of peace... Grant them, O Lord, and all who sleep in Christ, refreshment, light, and peace.' When Father Alois passed away on Friday night, these words seemed to come true in him. Those who were with him said that he truly fell asleep in peace." Others said: "As he lived, so he died." In the afternoon, the body was taken to the local cemetery for burial.

Those who knew Father Alois remember him as a quiet and reserved man, humble and deeply contemplative.

A fellow friar said, "I have known Father Alois since he was a student in Milland and during his studies at the seminary in Bressanone. His long stay in Peru testifies to his faithfulness and perseverance. He was always close to the people, with whom he always maintained good relationships. His appreciated missionary service was characterised not by great works, but by the simplicity of a daily pastoral presence."

Another confrère: "He was always grateful to the simple and kind-hearted people who welcomed him. At the same time, he was aware that—as many missionaries know from personal experience—he had to adapt his way of thinking and continually learn new things. Alois was deeply committed to conveying the image of a loving God to people, not only through his words, but also through his closeness." (*Various confrères*)

## LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

**THE FATHERS:** Mathurin, of the scholastic Beninga Yassika Belfort Cedrique (RCA); Abram, of Father Mayik Nyok Jervas Mawut (EGSD)

**THE MOTHERS:** Madgalen, of Father Opargiw John Baptist Kerayo (RSA); Florencia, of Father Fraile Gómez Juan Antonio (E); Lourdes, of Father Rodríguez Pérez Pablo Simón (KE); Stefania, of Deacon Mwaba Mathews (MZ); Lina, of Father Serra Teresino (I) and Sister Gina Serra.

**THE BROTHERS:** Angelo, of Brother Pedercini Aldo (I); Carlo, of Father Zanini Luigi (†) and brother-in-law of Father Tacchella Eliseo (CN); Jaime Almeida, of Brother António Almeida Borges (P); Agostinho, of Father Jerónimo Alberto Vieira da Costa (MO); Albino Martins, of Brother Matias Martins dos Santos (P)

**THE SISTER:** Martia Tesesa, of Brother João Paulo da Rocha Martins (P)

**THE SISTER-IN-LAW:** of Father Avelino Gonçalves da Silva Maravilha (P)

**THE SISTER-IN-LAW:** Alígia Maria, of Father Manuel Ferreira Horta (P)

**THE COMBONI SISTERS:** Sr. Rossignoli M. Daniela (I); Sr Rosa Fosca (I); Sr. Dell'Orto M. Daniela (I)