

FAMILIA COMBONIANA

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

853

July-August 2026

THE HOLY SEE

Appointment of Mons Manghesteab Tesfamariam

On 1st June, the Holy Father renewed the appointment of Msgr. Manghesteab Tesfamariam—a Comboni missionary and the Archbishop of Asmara (Eritrea)—as a member of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches. We, the Comboni family, welcome this news with joy and gratitude; we are delighted and honoured by the esteem the Holy Father has reaffirmed for Msgr. Manghesteab and, through him, for the entire Institute in its service to the universal Church. We accompany Msgr. Manghesteab with our affection, fraternal closeness, and prayers, asking the Lord to sustain him in this role.

Father Tesfaye appointed the Archbishop of Addis Ababa

On 12th June 2026—the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus—the Holy Father, Leo XIV, arranged for a change in leadership for the Archbishopric of Addis Ababa, entrusting its pastoral governance to the current auxiliary bishop, the Comboni missionary Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie. The prelate succeeds Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, who turns 78 this coming July and has led the Church in Addis Ababa since June 1999.

The new metropolitan, originally from Harar, entered the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus in 1986 and was ordained a priest in 1995. He studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University and obtained a Licentiate in Islamic Studies from the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome. He also completed a training course at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome.

He served as parish priest and director of the Comboni School in Haro Wato (in his home country). He held various roles within his religious institute, serving as its Superior General from 2015 until 6th November 2024, when he was appointed auxiliary bishop of the Archbishopric of Addis Ababa. He received episcopal ordination on 2nd February 2025.

The General Council and all members of the Comboni Institute congratulate him and express their joy regarding this new and delicate ministry, assuring him of their enduring affection. They also declare themselves honoured by the Holy Father's decision and wish to assure Msgr. Tesfaye

of their constant prayers, that the Holy Spirit and the Heart of Jesus may sustain and guide him in fulfilling the mission entrusted to him.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

General Notes of the 44th consulta of June 2026

Appointments

During the June consulta, the General Council made the following appointments:

► Formation

- Father Mughendi Mwangulo Anatole (CN), as novice master of Sarh novitiate as from 1st July 2026, replacing Father Kamanga Mutombo Stéphane.
- Father Percassi Vincenzo (I), as formator and superior of the Casavatore scholasticate as from 1st July 2026, replacing Father Stefano Giudici.

► General Administration

- Father John Ikundu, as General Secretary of the Mission as from 1st July 2026, replacing Father González Galarza Fernando.
- Father José da Silva Vieira, as the person in charge of the communications office as from 1st July 2026, replacing Father Arlindo Ferreira Pinto.
- Brother Dzinékou Yawovi Jonas, as head of the Office for Development and Sustainability, and a member of the general economate and the council for finance as from 1st July 2026.

The General Council expresses its sincere gratitude to the confrères who have hitherto carried out these services with such dedication and generosity, and extends to those newly appointed its best wishes for the ministry entrusted to them.

Meeting of the Comboni Family

The customary meeting of the Comboni Family took place in Rome, at the Generalate of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, on 30th and 31st May 2026. The first day was dedicated to the theme of interculturality and the challenges it poses for community life, strategic planning, and formation. A need emerged to promote greater internationalisation within provinces and communities and to strengthen the intercultural dimension at all stages of formation, including ongoing formation. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of a spirituality of incarnation and a deeper in-

ternalisation of the Comboni charism. The community was recognised as a privileged setting for learning and practising interculturality.

The second day featured updates from the various Institutes and a discussion regarding the Comboni Family's participation in the gathering in Belém (Brazil) for COP30 (November 2025). Additionally, an *Investment Values Charter*—inspired by the Church's social doctrine and recent Magisterial documents—was presented, with the aim of promoting resource management that is ethical, transparent, and consistent with the Institutes' charism and mission.

Finally, several potential areas for joint action were identified; these will be further explored by the organising committee.

The next meeting will be held in Verona on 29th and 30th May 2027.

Guidelines for the numerically small formative presences of scholastics (“formative communities”)

Following the opening of several formation communities—in implementation of Chapter decision CA '22, no. 26.6 (“To reopen one Scholasticate and leave to the General Council the decision to open, where necessary, small formation units for scholastics—accompanied by a confrère—within Comboni communities, in order to integrate prayer, study, community life, and pastoral service”)—the General Council deemed it appropriate to provide guidelines to support these new formation settings, which differ from traditional scholasticates.

To this end, a document containing these guidelines has been approved *ad experimentum* for a period of one year. It will be made available to the relevant formation communities, Circumscription superiors, scholasticate formators, the CIF, and the novitiates.

Journeys by the General Council

Father Luigi Fernando Codianni

From 18th to 24th July – Portugal (Lisbon) – Meeting of European provincial superiors (with Father Radol)

From 13th to 25th August – Mozambique – Spiritual exercises and celebrations for the 80th anniversary of our presence in Mozambique

From 26th August to 3rd September – Togo (Lomé) – Meeting with the ASCAF Commission for unification (with Father Sindjalim)

From 6th to 17th September – Brazil (São Paulo) – Meeting of the BS/CO/EC/PE Commission for unification (with Father Domingues)

From 18th to 27th September – Mexico (Mexico City) – Meeting with the M/PCA Commission for unification (with Father Domingues)

From 5th to 9th October – DSP – Provincial assembly (with Father Radol)

Fr. David Costa Domingues

From 19th to 27th July – Certosa di Pesio (Cuneo) – Spiritual exercises

From 2nd to 8th August – Sambuca Pistoiese (PT) – Preaching spiritual exercises for the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate (SFI)

From 12th to 31st August – Portugal

From 6th to 17th September – Brazil (São Paulo) – Meeting with the BS/CO/EC/PE Commission for unification (with Fr General)

From 18th to 26th September – Mexico (Mexico City) – Meeting of the Mexico/PCA Commission for unification (with Fr General)

Fr. Austine Radol Odjambo

From 6th to 19th July – Spain – Visit

From 20th to 27th July – Portugal (Lisbon) – Meeting of the provincial superiors of Europe on unification (with Fr General)

From 1st to 10th September – Eritrea – Visit

From 12th to 21st September – Ethiopia – Meetings of the EAST and NORTH APDESAM Commissions for unification (with Brother Lamana)

From 22nd to 30th September – Malawi-Zambia – Meeting of the SOUTH APDESAM Commission for unification (with Brother Lamana)

From 5th to 9th October – DSP – Provincial assembly (with Fr General)

Fr. Sindjtoim Essognimam Elias

From 9th to 25th August – Togo

From 26th August to 2nd September – TGB – Meeting with the ASCAF Commission for unification

Bro Lamana Consola Toberto

From 19th to 27th July – Certosa di Pesio (Cuneo – IT - spiritual exercises

From 12th to 17th September – Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) – Meetings with the EAST AND NORTH APDESAM Commissions for unification (with Father Radol)

From 27th to 30th September – Malawi/Zambia (Lusaka) – Meeting with the SOUTH APDESAM Commission (with Father Radol)

Next Consultas

Dates of the next general Consultas:

- October Consulta (from 12th to 30th)
- December Consulta (from 7th to 12th)

First Professions

Name / Circ. of Origin	Place	Date
Sc. Agaba Leonard / U	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Amanuel Ermias Erango / ET	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Atoma Samuel / U	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Damianal Steven / MZ	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Gondwe Fiskani Juweka / MZ	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Hassen Mohammed Ojulu / ET	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Josepari Odek Wilson Gitano / SS	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Katerega Oscar Lubega / U	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Le Mihn Nhat (Joseph) / A	Quezon City	02/05/2026
Sc. Mumbere Daniel / U	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Bro. Munguacel Edison / U	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Mwambila Sakala Michael / MZ	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Nguyen Thien Nhan Matthew / A	Quezon City	02/05/2026
Sc. Onyala David Vincent Bitu / EGSD	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Onyango Paul Modo Guido / SS	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Parvini Emmanuel Giuseppe Francesco / EGSD	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Phiri David / MZ	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Samuel Isayas Addise / ET	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Sewagegn Daniel Degfa / ET	Namugongo	02/05/2026
Sc. Tran Ngoc Am (Joseph) / A	Quezon City	02/05/2026
Sc. Badagbon Koffi Pierre Emmanuel / TGB	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Bessane-Rabbi Ghislain / RCA	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Dadabor Waklatsi Kodzo Augustin / TGB	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Datsomon Kokou Hervé Jean / TGB	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Djagombaide Bodin / TCH	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Djigbe Hilaire / TCH	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Katembo Siwako Magloire / CN	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Makaba Nkuanga Jean-Marie / CN	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Mbusa Ise-Ngoma Donatien / CN	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Muhindo Makelele Wasingya Charles / CN	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Mumbere Kyusi Shukuru / CN	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Mungufeni Aloma Martin / CN	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Munuma Wamuthanrika Reagan / CN	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Oussa Maxime / TGB	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Savi Komlan Rémi / TGB	Sarh	10/05/2026
Sc. Avitud Guerrero Cesar Adrian / M	Xochimilco	16/05/2026

Name / Circ. of Origin	Place	Date
Sc. Fuentes Mejia Luis Enrique / PCA	Xochimilco	16/05/2026
Sc. Ortega Trinidad Aristoteles Hegel / M	Xochimilco	16/05/2026

Confrères admitted to perpetual profession and priestly ordination

Name	Circ. of Orig.
Sc. Aguiar Vignon Michel	(TGB)
Sc. Amado Komlan Gademon Prosper	(TGB)
Sc. Apetokou Kossivi Paul	(TGB)
Sc. Asmare Gawo Ghebre	(ET)
Sc. Biruk Girma Ababa Haileyesus	(ET)
Sc. Davon Kossigan Sylvestre	(TGB)
Sc. Dzikunu Winfred Etse	(TGB)
Sc. Felizardo Azevedo	(MO)
Sc. Kambale Kasoro Meschack	(CN)
Sc. Kasereka Mwami Charles	(CN)
Sc. Konosi Atambanakabange André	(CN)
Sc. Kpogo Komi Jules Ametefe Aime	(TGB)
Sc. Mamadou Cristal	(RCA)
Sc. Mumbere Kavuthe Delphin	(CN)
Sc. Nteyamba Ilundu Etienne	(CN)
Sc. Nyiker Changjwok AbDalla	(SS)
Sc. Ocen Moris Paul	(U)
Sc. Ouma Joseph	(U)
Sc. Saúl Arnaldo Bazo	(MO)
Sc. Twesigye Andrew	(U)
Bro. Pedrito Mario	(MO)

Perpetual professions

Bro. Alfredo Monteiro De Sousa	São Paulo/BR	02/05/2026
Bro. Pedrito Mario	Chama/Z	21/06/2026

Holy Redeemer Guild

July	01 – 15 KE	16 – 31 M
August	01 – 15 MO	16 – 31 MZ
September	01 – 15 NAP	16 – 30 PCA

Prayer Intentions

July

We pray for the victims of trafficking that the Lord break the chains of their slavery, and that, through the intercession of Saint Daniel Comboni and Saint Josephine Bakhita, we may all fight with courage and tenacity against this scourge. *Lord, hear us.*

August

For all those forced to leave their homelands to save their lives: that they may find acceptance and respect, and that society may address the root causes of migration. *Lord, hear us.*

September

We pray that the Lord of life may give us eyes to contemplate the beauty of creation, hearts to care for it with love, and hands to serve it with justice, renewing in us the Spirit who makes all things new. *Lord, hear us.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

JULY

28	Blessed Joseph Abrosoli	Memorial
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SEPTEMBER

9	St. Peter Claver, priest, Patron of the Institute	Solemnity
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Significant anniversaries

AUGUST

2	St. Frumentius, Bishop (*)	Ethiopia
15	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	RSA (S. Africa)
23	St. Rose of Lima	Peru, Chile
28	St. Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church	Kenya

(*) The Roman martyrology mentions him on 20 July

SEPTEMBER

9	Saint Peter Claver	Chad, Colombia
14	Exaltation of the Holy Cross	Feast

Publications

ADOM ESSOSOLAN JEAN-MICHEL, *Vivre et Servir*, pp. 100 + I-XII, Togo, January 2026. To mark the twelfth anniversary of his priestly ordination and the sixteenth of his religious profession, Father Adom Essosolan Jean-Michel has compiled his human and missionary experiences—lived between 2015 and 2021 in the Central African Republic (CAR)—into the volume *Vivre et Servir* (“Living and Serving”). That period was marked by the horrors of war and suffering, but also by extraordinary acts of solidarity and faith.

Born in June 1985 in Pya (Togo), Father Adom was ordained a priest on August 8, 2015, in Lomé. He holds a Licentiate in Theology and Philosophy and a diploma in Sociology. He served as a parochial vicar at Notre-Dame de la Liesse parish in Grimari, CAR, and was responsible for the diocesan Catechetical Commission and the Biblical Apostolate. Having returned to Togo in 2021, he is currently in charge of vocations promotion. “I realised that mission is not merely a set of actions, but a presence—with and for others—in the name of Christ,” he writes in the introduction. Presence, accompaniment, and compassion are the three words that sum up his experience, as well as the heart of the Comboni Missionaries’ mission wherever they serve.

CONGO

Some good news from areas of conflict.

Father Eliseo Tacchella describes the situation at his parish (in the Isiro area), which is currently sheltering numerous displaced people, primarily from Ndubala and surrounding villages. These individuals fled following attacks by armed men that sowed fear and insecurity throughout the region. His account reveals a situation that remains highly uncertain. Some residents are considering returning to their villages, while others make only brief trips back to retrieve food and essential supplies. Many families, however, do not yet feel safe enough to return home permanently.

The displaced people’s stay at the parish is lasting longer than initially anticipated. Consequently, the community is doing more than simply

providing temporary shelter; it is also striving to involve these guests in parish life and various community activities.

Father Eliseo's account is deeply pastoral in tone: alongside the tangible challenges regarding safety, sustenance, and an uncertain future, Father Tacchella invokes the Gospel message of trust and hope. His parish thus stands as a place of welcome and support for people marked by fear and suffering, yet striving to look toward the future with renewed confidence.

DEUTSCHSPRACHIGE PROVINZ

The ministry of lector conferred on three students from Graz

The visit of Father Roberto Turyamureeba, Provincial Superior, to the Graz-Messendorf formation community included a small yet significant moment on Trinity Sunday, 31st May 2026: the conferral of the ministry of lector upon three scholastics—Jesús Daniel Osuna Félix (Mexico), Wilson Wairimu Njoroge (Kenya), and Blondel Ilolube Tandir (Democratic Republic of the Congo).

During the Mass at the Graz-Messendorf church, this brief rite was a special experience for many of the faithful. In his homily, Father Roberto spoke of the mystery of the Trinity, emphasising that only God can reveal who He is—a revelation made manifest through creation and the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, Church history is rich in individuals who have left us clear testimonies of lived faith—some we have met in person, others we have come to know through reading or hearing about them.

“From this day forward, through your ministry as lectors, you are officially entrusted with proclaiming this Triune God. In every biblical passage you proclaim, a concrete aspect of God's work and essence will be made present,” Father Roberto noted, encouraging the three scholastics as they prepare for their future priestly and missionary ministry.

He continued: “The Word of God must play a central role in the lives of both the proclaimer and the listener during a celebration. Saint Daniel Comboni was convinced that wherever the Gospel is planted, it transforms hearts. Therefore, dear Daniel, Wilson, and Blondel, embrace this precious service—especially during the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacraments, and other liturgical rites. And remember: effective proclamation requires clarity, inner conviction, and a compelling tone.” Addressing the concelebrants, Father Roberto asked them to accompany and support the three scholastics—through counsel and concrete examples—in their new service within the Graz-Messendorf community and the wider

Graz-Southeast pastoral area: “Support them with your attention, your prayers, and your openness, so that they may proclaim the Word of God effectively, understandably, and clearly. Help ensure that the Good News is conveyed in language that is contemporary and relevant to real life—and, above all, that it is truly lived out by them.”

This was followed by the rite of conferring the ministry of lector upon the three scholastics, featuring the Church’s solemn prayer and the presentation of the lectionary. At the conclusion of the Mass, each of the three scholastics was presented with a certificate affirming the ministry they had received.

The parish community participated in the celebration with great enthusiasm. The “Schola St. Peter” choir from the mother parish of Graz-St. Peter provided solemn and dignified musical accompaniment for the Eucharistic celebration.

Words of thanks from the parish council president, Ms Monika Greiner, and announcements by Ms Rosemarie Krisper complemented the Provincial Superior’s address. Ms Greiner particularly highlighted a thought from the homily: “God accompanies us. He watches over us, is with us and within us, and leads us deeper into the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.”

During the subsequent reception—featuring drinks and celebration cakes prepared by the Graz-Messendorf chaplaincy youth group—many community members congratulated the three scholastics on their new ministry. They offered many good wishes for the journey ahead as they prepare for priestly ministry as Comboni Missionaries. (*Father Roberto Turyamureeba, MCCJ, and Father Michael Zeitz, MCCJ*)

EGYPT-SUDAN

Sudan – Signs of hope in times of trial

Despite many difficulties, the journey of renewal for our missions in Khartoum continues. The Comboni community in Masalma—an historic district of Omdurman—is overseeing the restoration of the parish and, for the past few weeks, the renovation of Comboni College in the capital’s city centre, alongside work on the Bahri community, which houses the provincial headquarters.

Alongside these structural projects, our confrères are dedicated to the pastoral care of eleven parishes in the Khartoum metropolitan area. In many of these, Christian communities have been able to resume sacramental life after long months of isolation and suffering. This is an encour-

aging sign: hope is re-emerging, sustained by the daily commitment of many men and women who refuse to give in to the wounds of war.

Yet, alongside these signs of renewal, there are also grounds for deep concern. The conflict continues to affect vast areas of the country, and reports from North Kordofan (around El Obeid) and South Kordofan (in the Nuba Mountains) remain alarming.

On 19th June, Father Yohanna Al Amin, a diocesan priest, was killed alongside two associates from the Holy Cross parish in Kauda. This incident occurred against a backdrop of intense local tensions, rivalries between armed groups, and struggles for territorial control. While the exact circumstances of the attack remain unclear, the event serves as yet another reminder of the fragility of the situation in many regions of Sudan. Faced with these challenges, the road to a just and lasting peace still appears long. And yet, even in the places most scarred by violence, small but significant signs of hope continue to emerge. It is from these signs that our missionary commitment begins anew, in the certainty that the Gospel of peace and reconciliation continues to bear fruit, even in the most difficult situations. (*Father Diego Dalle Carbonare, MCCJ*)

ITALIA

Letter from the Provincial Council to the confrères at the start of a discernment process regarding the future of our presence in Italy.

The Provincial Council of the Comboni Missionaries in Italy has sent a letter to confrères initiating a process of communal discernment regarding the province's future, with a particular focus on redefining ministries and reorganising communities. This process takes place against the backdrop of the transformations affecting religious life in Europe and also looks toward the prospect of a future *Unified European Province*.

The letter begins by examining the contemporary reality, marked by conflicts, inequalities, migration, environmental threats, and the growing marginalisation of many people. In this context, the Comboni Missionaries reaffirm their commitment to maintaining their missionary work in Italy, in alignment with the guidelines of the *2023–2028 Six-Year Plan*.

However, the Provincial Council acknowledges certain challenges directly affecting the province: the declining number of confrères, an ageing demographic, and the difficulties some communities face in sustaining meaningful fraternal life and an impactful apostolic presence. Faced with this situation, the Council emphasises that change does not represent a retreat, but rather a form of creative fidelity to the Comboni charism and mission.

Consequently, a reflection has been launched regarding the province's future configuration: the number of communities, their geographical distribution, and the ministries to be consolidated, developed, or potentially concluded. The priority areas identified are: welcoming migrants; Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC); youth outreach; communication and media; missionary animation; and shared ministerial responsibility within the Comboni Family.

The Council invites all confrères to participate actively in this process. Over the coming months, the province's three zones—*North-West*, *North-East*, and *Central-South*—will engage in communal discernment, involving individual local communities. Specific contributions will also be provided by the secretariats for Mission, Formation, and Finance.

The work will be guided by key Institute documents, including the *Document on Ministry*, the *2022 Chapter Acts*, the *Six-Year Plan*, and the General Council's letter *Andiamo Oltre* ("Let's Go Beyond"). The goal is to identify which current presences and activities are most generative from a missionary perspective and to determine where personnel and energy should be concentrated.

This process of discernment also includes the possibility of closing certain communities, should this prove necessary to strengthen other presences deemed more significant and sustainable. The Council acknowledges the sensitivity of these decisions—which affect locations rich in history and human bonds—yet believes that postponing choices that have become necessary would risk further weakening the missionary witness.

Input from the zones and secretariats will feed into the Provincial Assembly scheduled for Verona from November 16 to 20, 2026. This gathering will serve as an opportunity to gather and compare the reflections that have emerged, thereby guiding the Provincial Council's future decisions and enabling a continued, courageous, and hopeful commitment to a creative fidelity to the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni.

MOZAMBIQUE

First Comboni priest from Carapira

On 23rd May, the parish of Carapira, in the Diocese of Nacala, marked a historic day with the priestly ordination of Father Fidélío Artur, the first Comboni priest from this area. The event holds special significance, coming nearly 78 years after the arrival of Comboni missionaries in Carapira, where the mission was founded in 1948.

Born in 1995 in Micolene, Fidélío completed his formation by studying theology in Kinshasa. Following his perpetual profession in July 2025 and his or-

dination as a deacon a few months later, he was ordained a priest by Bishop Alberto Vera Arejula of Nacala, before a crowd of the faithful who had gathered to share in this moment of joy and grace.

In his homily, the bishop noted that the priesthood is a call to service and love, urging the newly ordained priest to live out his ministry with faithfulness, a spirit of prayer, and missionary zeal. His family members also emphasised that this vocation is a gift from God to the entire Church, rather than merely a personal achievement.

Father Fidélío will soon begin his missionary ministry in South Sudan, his first assignment as a Comboni priest. Father Zębik Krzysztof Adam, the Provincial Administrator for South Sudan, was also present at the ordination and assured everyone that “Father Fidélío will be in good hands.” Addressing the newly ordained priest, he added, “We are waiting for you. Come with courage, patience, and humility, ready to love the people you will work with from the very start.”

Muanza Celebrates – Father Carlos Máquina ordained as the first Comboni priest from the area

Saturday, 30th May, was an unforgettable day for the village of Muanza, marking the priestly ordination of Carlos Joaquim Jorge Máquina—the first priest and first Comboni missionary from St. Peter the Apostle parish in Muanza, within the Archdiocese of Beira.

The Eucharistic celebration took place in the hall of the Muanza Industrial and Commercial Institute and was presided over by Msgr. António Manuel Bogaio Constantino, MCCJ, Bishop of Caia—his first ordination since taking office. Concelebrating with him were Father José Joaquim Luís Pedro, MCCJ, Provincial Superior, and Father Izaías Machanguira, the parish administrator. Civil and religious authorities were also in attendance, along with a great number of the faithful.

Msgr. António began his homily with a powerful statement: “When God calls, He means business.” He explained: “The priesthood is not a matter of power or prestige, but a mystery of generous dedication to God. For this reason, the people expect the priest to be authentic—leading a life that is morally beyond reproach, clear, and transparent—and ready to serve.” Addressing the ordinand, he added, “The people expect closeness and holiness from you. You must love the poor and fall in love with the mission. Our founder, Comboni, used to say: ‘The missionary would like to have a thousand lives for the mission.’ You do not become a priest for yourself, but for others. Be a source of hope for the sick, for wounded families, and for the marginalised... Follow the example of Mary of Nazareth: like her, bring life, joy, and hope. Do not waste time on the Internet.

Use your time to meet people and visit catechists and communities. Always remember that if you are becoming a priest today, it is because, years ago, ‘Someone’ passed by here and called you.” He then added: “You will not be spared suffering. You will experience moments of pain and loneliness... You will shed tears that the people will not see. You will endure dark nights. But the Lord will always be with you.”

After describing the day as «a moment of great joy that crowns eighty years of Comboni presence in Mozambique», Father José Joaquim said to Carlos: «You are the fruit of this history. Be a living embodiment of the Comboni charism. Always preserve the joy of service, for a sad priest convinces no one. Learn to be a brother before a leader... Your life must be your most important sermon. And do not keep the Gospel locked away in a drawer; take it out into the streets».

The diocesan clergy of Beira, represented by Father Adelino Fernandes, also joyfully welcomed this first priestly ordination in the parish, describing it as “a milestone in the history of Muanza, a living sign of God’s presence.” Indeed, from the establishment of the diocese in 1940 and the official erection of Saint Peter the Apostle parish in 2004 by the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts—followed by the arrival of diocesan priests in 2014—the Archdiocese of Beira had not yet seen a priestly ordination take place in this parish. The priest also reminded the newly ordained man: “Remember your motto: may this dwelling be loved and be a ‘place of peace’ for those who suffer.”

The Beira delegation of the Conferência dos Institutos Religiosos de Moçambique (CIRMO)—the body that brings together and coordinates consecrated religious life in the country—represented by Father António Dança Roda, expressed deep joy at seeing new labourers rise up in the Lord’s vineyard. They expressed the hope that Father Carlos Joaquim’s priesthood would be marked by fidelity to the Gospel, fraternal communion, and missionary passion. They also expressed gratitude to Father Carlos’s parents, describing them as his “first seminary” due to their tireless nights of prayer.

The newly ordained priest also spoke, quoting Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus: “Love is repaid by love alone” and added that his joy was hard to contain. After thanking God, he reiterated his gratitude to Msgr. Constantino for agreeing to ordain the first priest from Muanza and acknowledged that this moment was the fruit of the work of many people to whom he felt deeply indebted. He told his parents, “The Lord is very proud of you.” He concluded by acknowledging the grace of God’s merciful gaze and affirming that the priesthood is not a finishing line, but the beginning of a new stage.

Maria Almija Rodrigues Pulseira, the administrator of Muanza, highlighted the great significance of the ceremony for all the local residents, noting that “a son of this land has received the grace and honour of becoming a priest.” Addressing the newly ordained priest, she said: “Live your mission with humility, wisdom, a spirit of service, and fidelity to the teachings of Christ. May your priestly ministry be a source of reconciliation, peace, and the strengthening of faith for all the faithful.”

The people expressed their gratitude to God for being able to witness such a “great blessing” and sang *Inhaxa dza mwana komana* (“thanks for this son”), acknowledging that all is God’s grace and hoping for further vocations. (*Father Sérgio Mário Vilanculo, MCCJ*)

SOUTH AFRICA

Father John Bosco appointed as the new parish priest of Saint Anne’s in Johannesburg

On Sunday, 31st May 2026, the parish community of St. Anne’s in the Belgravia neighbourhood of Johannesburg joyfully welcomed its new parish priest, Father John Bosco Mubangizi—the first Comboni missionary appointed to lead the parish. His official installation took place during a solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by Father John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, the Provincial Superior, and concelebrated by seven priests.

During the rite of taking possession, Father Joe Pich—Dean of the Central Deanery of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg and representative of Archbishop Steven Brislin—exhorted Father John Bosco to “serve and love the people of God so that they may become authentic disciples of Christ.” The Archbishop’s letter of appointment, outlining his rights and duties in service to the Christian community, was also read aloud.

In his homily, inspired by the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Father John Baptist highlighted the value of unity and communion: “God’s unity is a model for us all. It invites us to live in harmony, respecting the dignity of every person. In this way, we make God’s love and unity visible in the world.” Applying the Word of God to the reality of the parish, he added: “This is our parish, our Church, and our common home. Whether we are South Africans, African immigrants, or members of the Portuguese-speaking community, we all belong to the same family.”

Referring to recent incidents of xenophobia in South Africa, Father John Baptist emphasised that “rejecting others because of their differences is contrary to God’s plan. Exclusion wounds deeply, because every human being needs relationships and a sense of belonging.” At the conclusion

of the celebration, Father John Bosco expressed his gratitude to God for the mission entrusted to him and thanked all those who had supported him along his journey. He offered special words of appreciation to Father Letsie Moshoeshoe, the outgoing parish priest, “for eleven years of faithful service and for the solid pastoral foundations left to the community.” Addressing the faithful, the new parish priest asked for three gifts: “Your prayers, your patience, and your cooperation.” In return, he pledged “availability, respect, and service carried out with the humility and love of Christ, the Good Shepherd.”

Finally, Father Letsie thanked Father John Bosco and the Comboni Institute for accepting responsibility for the parish, offering his successor best wishes and invoking the Lord’s blessing upon him.

The celebration was enlivened by hymns in various African languages and in Portuguese, reflecting the cultural richness and diversity of the communities within the parish. Afterwards, the participants gathered in the parish hall for a time of fellowship and conviviality, during which they had the opportunity to meet the new parish priest in person.

St. Anne’s Parish is located in Belgravia, not far from our provincial headquarters, in an area marked by poverty, unemployment, and crime. The population consists primarily of immigrants from various African countries, whereas in the past, the neighbourhood was home mainly to communities of Portuguese and Italian origin.

This new pastoral commitment aligns perfectly with the Comboni charism, which calls missionaries to share in the lives and hopes of the poorest and most marginalised people. Furthermore, the presence of the Comboni missionaries at St. Anne’s strengthens their contribution to the life of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, where they are already ministering at St. Charles Lwanga Parish in the Orange Farm township. (*Father Efrem Tresoldi, MCCJ*).

Protests against undocumented immigration continue

30th June —the day of demonstrations organised by the *March and March* and *Operation Dudula* movements—concluded without serious incidents of violence. The maintenance of order was largely due to the massive police and military presence in the cities affected by the protests. However, a tense atmosphere persists, particularly in urban neighbourhoods home to immigrant communities from various African and Asian countries. Isolated incidents of intimidation and vandalism targeting homes and businesses owned by foreign nationals have been reported even in the days following the demonstrations.

Meanwhile, many immigrants continue to leave for their countries of origin. According to various estimates, the number of people who have returned has already exceeded 15,000.

The *March and March* and *Operation Dudula* movements—previously accused by human rights organisations and other observers of involvement in attacks on immigrants and the looting of shops and businesses owned by foreign nationals—have announced their intention to continue protesting until the government adopts measures deemed more effective at combating irregular immigration and either regularising the status of or deporting individuals lacking the necessary residency documents. Supporters of these movements argue that the presence of irregular immigrants exacerbates unemployment, crime, and drug trafficking.

It is not just fear that hangs in the air; there is also a great deal of anger. Alongside concerns regarding immigration, there is widespread discontent among many South African citizens—particularly the youth—who struggle to find employment and face limited economic prospects. Added to this is criticism directed at institutions regarding issues such as corruption and the quality of public services, including electricity and water supply, housing, healthcare, and education. According to numerous analysts, these economic and social conditions have helped fuel support for anti-immigration movements. Some observers also believe that the issue of immigration is set to play a significant role in the campaign for the municipal elections scheduled for 4th November. Among the parties that have adopted a particularly critical stance on immigration is *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (the MK Party), founded by former President Jacob Zuma.

The issue of undocumented immigrants remains complex. Civil society organisations and human rights groups maintain that some have unsuccessfully attempted to obtain or renew the necessary residence permits, facing bureaucratic hurdles and lengthy administrative delays. According to these organisations, many irregular immigrants contribute to the country's economy through their work and cannot automatically be held responsible for the crime or unemployment problems attributed to them by certain segments of public opinion. (*Father Efrem Tresoldi, MCCJ*)

UGANDA

Fr Giuseppe Clerici honoured with the *Onorificenza di Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella d'Italia* (Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy)

On 8th June 2026, Father Giuseppe Clerici (known to all as *Larem*—meaning “friend”) received the honor of *Knight of the Order of the Star of*

Italy, a prestigious distinction conferred by the Italian Ambassador to Uganda, His Excellency Mauro Massoni.

During the ceremony, the ambassador expressed deep gratitude to Father Clerici for his long and generous missionary life in Uganda, while also paying tribute to all the missionaries who have dedicated their lives to proclaiming the Gospel and promoting human dignity. Upon receiving the certificate and medal, Father Clerici thanked the Italian Embassy for the support it has provided over the years for the work of the Comboni missionaries in Uganda.

Also present at the ceremony were Father Anthony Kimbowa Kibira, provincial superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Uganda, some friends of Father Clerici and representatives of the Italian embassy.

Father Giuseppe Clerici has reached the ripe old age of ninety this year, and continues to be a witness to faith, dedication and missionary service. We offer him our heartfelt congratulations, along with sincere gratitude for all the good he has accomplished during his many years of missionary



work, and we promise him our prayers that the years ahead may be filled with blessings.

Born in Cadorago (Como) on 8th May 1936, he made his perpetual religious profession on 9th September

1962, and was ordained a priest on 30th March 1963. Assigned to the missions in Uganda in 1965, he dedicated his life to the most needy, serving for decades in various communities and dioceses—most notably Anaka Parish and Holy Rosary Parish in the Diocese of Gulu.

He celebrated the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination in 2013 and his 60th in 2023. Today, he resides at the provincial headquarters in Kampala and remains a key figure in missionary work.

We wish this tireless giant of the mission many more years on the front lines, sustained by the same enthusiasm, faith, and love for the people to whom he has devoted his entire life.

IN PACE CHRISTI

FATHER GAETANO BELTRAMI (04.09.1941 – 29.04.2026)

Gaetano was born on 4th September 1941, in Piano di Rivà—a hamlet of Ariano Polesine, in the then-diocese of Adria (province of Rovigo)—to Cherubino and Vittoria Aguiari. He attended local primary schools. In September 1952, he entered the Salesian missionary seminary (also known as the “Mons. Versiglia Institute”) in Bagnolo Piemonte (Cuneo), where he completed his first year of middle school. Due to health issues, he was forced to return home and enrolled in the middle school in Contarina, located 28 km away. After finishing middle school, he enrolled in a technical institute (specialising in administration and commerce) and obtained his diploma. He worked as an accountant for a company for one year.

However, Gaetano had not lost his desire to become a priest. On 28th March 1960, he wrote to Father Leonzio Bano—a member of the Comboni Missionaries’ General Curia in Verona who was in charge of apostolic schools in Italy—asking for “information regarding the aims of your Institute, as I am interested in joining it myself.” Their correspondence continued until April 1961, when Gaetano was able to send Father Leonzio some good news: “After so much drifting, I am finally entering port. I can no longer contain the joy in my heart at finally being able to take flight. Thank you for accepting me as a candidate. I feel the day drawing near when I will leave for your seminary in Crema. In truth, I should have gone last September, but I was constantly hindered by my brothers, who would not have given me a single penny to buy a piece of clothing or pay any potential tuition fees. Furthermore, in November, we suffered the misfortune of a flood that submerged everything. We lost everything and were forced to wait for the allocation of a new home.” “I asked my siblings several times if I could leave, but they considered me reckless for wanting to abandon them in those circumstances. I borrowed books to get a head start on my studies. I also sought financial assistance through a letter addressed to the readers of the Catholic weekly *Orizzonti*, and I received it.” In September 1961, Gaetano went to Crema as a “late vocation,” dedicating himself to the study of Latin and Greek—subjects required in the seminary at the time. Within a few months, he was able to attend classes alongside students in the *ginnasio* (lower secondary/high school preparatory) course. In 1963, he attended the *liceo classico* (classical high school) in Carraia (Lucca), and in July 1965, he passed his final exams. By early November, he went to Sunningdale, Berkshire, England, to begin his two-year novitiate. On 9th September 1967, he made his first religious profession and was assigned

to the apostolic school in Crema as a prefect for a small group of *ginnasio* students. He attended theology courses at the city's episcopal seminary. On 30th May 1970, he made his perpetual religious profession, and on October 10 of the same year, he was ordained a priest in the Crema Cathedral by the local bishop, Msgr. Carlo Manziana.

Father Gaetano was immediately assigned to the seminary in Crema, where he was placed in charge of a group of young students. In July 1971, he had the opportunity to visit several missions in the Diocese of Lira, Uganda. Upon returning to Crema, he found a letter assigning him to the postulancy in Florence as a formator. In October 1973, he was assigned to the community in Naples as superior and vocations promoter. In July 1976, he went to Rome serving as provincial secretary for missionary animation. He then moved to Verona to serve as vocations promoter, a role he held until June 1978. (*Father Franco Moretti*).

«He knew how to handle young people. »

«Father Gaetano Beltrami was a Comboni missionary who played a valuable role in many activities, particularly in missionary animation and formation.” This is the view of Father Giovanni Munari, superior of the “Brother Alfredo Fiorini” Centre for the sick and elderly in Castel d’Azzano (Verona), where Father Beltrami spent the last ten years of his life—a life that came to an end on April 20, 2026, at the Borgo Roma Hospital in Verona. Father Munari presided at the funeral on June 2nd, bidding him a final farewell, and “recounting” the second chapter of his missionary life. “I crossed paths with him on many occasions, and I found it easy to relate to his jovial nature. I owe him a great deal.”

Father Gaetano Beltrami was a significant presence at our facility in Castel d’Azzano. He spent the last ten years of his life here. Many of us accompanied him through the slow progression of his illness. At first, we watched him struggle to contain it, and then try to carve out a space within it where he could keep alive his ability to connect with others.

In the end, he was imprisoned in a shell that stripped away something from him each day: movement, sensation, emotion, and even the faintest perception of reality. We sensed his inner struggle whenever we held his hand; he would clasp it tightly, reluctant to let go.

Many of us remember him alongside a white-haired lady named Elizabetha, who visited him every day to help him eat. She passed away right here, three months ago, while sitting by his side. We are certain they are already together in the place where even a glass of water given out of love is never forgotten. Who knows how much they must share and cel-

eborate in the great, finally liberated feast of undying life? That is the nature of life: we meet, we walk a stretch of the path together, and then we part ways—only to meet again, finally free to be our true selves for one another.

Italy

Many of us—especially those who underwent our formation in the 1970s—crossed paths with Gaetano on numerous occasions and owe him a great deal, as he played a very active role in the life of the Italian provinces, within formation houses, and in coordinating bodies.

I personally met him in Florence, where he was taking his first steps as a newly ordained priest, just as I was joining the Comboni Missionaries. He radiated youthfulness. It was easy to relate to his jovial nature, his love for music and singing, and his appreciation for the beauty and positivity of life. He was an invaluable asset in many activities and initiatives, particularly those involving missionary animation or formation. He had a real knack for working with young people; indeed, anyone looking back at his missionary life will consistently find him involved with youth.

After spending two years at the postulancy in Florence, Father Gaetano served as a missionary animator and vocation promoter—first in Naples, then in Rome, and later in Verona. He remained deeply engaged with young people from his ordination in 1970 until 1978, when he left for Mexico.

Mexico

He changed countries, but his horizons remained the same. In Mexico, too, he was asked to do what he had done—and done well—in Italy. He first went to the parish in the Colonia Montezuma district of Mexico City before moving to the Missionary Animation Centre—also in the capital—to serve as vocations promoter.

Father Gaetano would stay in a given location for only short periods—a couple of years—during which time he was valued for his human and spiritual qualities. Gradually, he began to gain recognition as a point of reference in the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, and spirituality—areas crucial to the guidance of young people and, in particular, those aspiring to religious life.

In July 1982, he went to Rome to stay at the Generalate—specifically within the community of student confrères—for four years of specialised study. He enrolled at the Pontifical Salesian University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in educational sciences (along with a provisional li-

centiate) with top marks on March 5, 1985, and a degree in Psychology on 15th October 1986, graduating *summa cum laude*.

Promotor and formator

Upon returning to Mexico, he was assigned to the Centre for Missionary Animation and Vocations Promotion, tasked with fostering the ongoing formation of the province's confrères. He held this role for three years. In July 1989, he was assigned to the minor seminary in San Francisco del Rincón as a formator for the students, and soon after, he also became the superior. In 1992, he moved to the Postulancy in Mexico City to serve as a formator for the postulants.

After nine years in Mexico, he returned to Italy in July 1995, assigned to the Provincial Centre for Ongoing Formation and Missionary Animation in Pesaro. He remained there only until December of that year; he was elected provincial councillor and appointed vice-provincial effective 1st January 1996, requiring a move to the provincial headquarters in Bologna. He was also entrusted with the care of elderly and sick confrères, who at that time were concentrated in two houses: the Motherhouse in Verona and the house in Milan.

In February 2002, he was assigned to the "Padre Giuseppe Ambrosoli" Centre for the Sick in Milan, where he remained until December 2004. Father Gaetano possessed a special gift for listening and truly knew how to help people navigate life's major transitions—especially the shift from active ministry to a less active life, a time when one must come to terms with personal frailty and the ailments of age. He spent ten years in Italy. After a brief vacation with his family, he left for Peru in June 2005. He was assigned to the province's coordination offices in Lima—the capital—and tasked with overseeing ongoing formation for the province. On 1st January 2006, he was chosen as a *probus vir*. In May 2009, he was assigned to the Lima postulancy as a formator for young postulants. He remained there until December 2012, when he was assigned to the provincial residence in Lima, while continuing to serve as the provincial coordinator for ongoing formation. In July 2016, he returned to Italy and was assigned to the "Fratel Alfredo Fiorini" Centre in Castel d'Azzano. By then, the first signs of the illness that would accompany him on a new and arduous ten-year journey were already beginning to appear.

Most of us came to know him during this very period. For Father Gaetano, it was a special time—a season for reaping what had been sown and taking stock of the life journey that had gone before.

Messages

Since the day he returned to the Father's house, I have received dozens of messages—especially from Peru. They express surprise at the news of his death, as many still thought of him as active and engaged in so many things, and they convey deep gratitude for what they had received from him. Let me read a few to you:

► “Dear Father Tano, how could we not remember your meetings with us catechists, your infectious joy, and your patience? Thank you for your generosity and your friendship.”

► “Tano, how much knowledge and information you shared with us as both a priest and a psychologist! You shaped us so that we, too, could become mentors to other young people. You guided engaged couples and helped with pre-marriage sessions and courses on the education of love. You will always remain in our memories.”

► “Father Tano, my spiritual director, was a man of God who helped me greatly through my vocational crises.”

And here are two messages from members of our own community:

► This is not silence:

It is a voice that has crossed to the other shore.

Like the wind through the cypresses of Carraia,

It still passes by, and those with ears to hear
recognise that voice of yours.

Brother of simple days,

of high school desks and the hopes of youth,

you set out into the deep

while others sought safe harbours.

And you held nothing back:

neither time, nor voice, nor life.

Faithful son of a greater dream,

you walked in the footsteps of Daniel.

And there, where the earth cries out for genuine hands,

you sowed without counting the cost,

believing—against all evidence—

that every seed knows its own dawn.

Now you dwell within that Word

which you so often lent to the darkness of humanity.

And if today it seems we are losing you,

it is only because we do not yet know

how to listen fully.

And so, you remain in living memory—

not as a shadow, but as a light that endures.

► “Dear Father Gaetano, it was a joy to come and visit you every evening and bask in your lovely smile during those moments of clarity. You have returned to the Father’s house alongside Elizabetta, who has been waiting for you for so long. Thank you for all you meant to me.”

«He sought what was truly good for him»

Reflecting on Father Gaetano and his life, I found the Gospel passage chosen for this farewell ceremony to be beautiful and meaningful. John the Evangelist is the one who delved deepest into the mystery of Christ and captured the sentiments Jesus held for those He had called to follow Him. “Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you. You gave him authority over all human beings, so that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ” (*Jn 17:1b-3*).

These verses encapsulate Gaetano’s spiritual journey and his life as a missionary. What else did he do but seek the one true good—Christ Jesus—and share it with others, so that they too might welcome into their lives that glimmer of eternity dwelling within each of us—a light that ignites only when we encounter Him, the Lord?

And furthermore: “Father, I want those whom you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may behold my glory, the glory you gave me; for you loved me before the creation of the world” (*Jn 17:24*). Gaetano has gone to where his true good lies—the One he always sought, who transformed his life and heart, the One he made known to others and loved deeply to the very end.

It also comes naturally to me to think that these words might be his own: “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence...” (v. 5). Yes, Gaetano—behold the glory of your Lord! Finally free from your mortal body—which had become a prison where you no longer felt at home—and finally transformed, experience now what life truly is!

Thank you, Gaetano. Pray for us, for our community, and for the entire Institute. Rest in peace. (*Father Giovanni Munari, MCCJ*)

BROTHER MARTIN PIETRO (12.07.1947 – 27.05.2026)

Pietro was born on 12th July 1947, into a farming family in Faedo di Cinto Euganeo (Padua), a tiny village of just 250 inhabitants located in the heart of the Euganean Hills. After completing his primary and middle school education locally, in 1962, he entered the “Atestino” Episcopal College in Este (Padua), which housed a state-recognised technical institute for

commerce and surveying. In July 1967, he passed his technical qualification exams for surveyors with excellent results.

Shortly thereafter, he entered the postulancy in Pordenone, before moving on to the novitiate in Florence on 10th October 1968, where he took his first temporary vows on 9th September 1970. He returned to Pordenone for three years of professional training. In June 1973, he obtained a certificate in theology studies for laypeople.

In August 1973, he was assigned to Viseu (Portugal) to serve as a formator for postulants. In 1975, he was posted to the Namapa mission in the Diocese of Nampula, working as a teacher at the parish school. The following year, he was assigned to the nearby Mirrote mission, tasked with missionary outreach. However, Pietro was always willing to serve in various capacities, acting as both a teacher and a nurse. He became a sort of jack-of-all-trades, always ready to lend a hand. On 9th September 1978, while on holiday in Italy, he made his perpetual religious profession. In December 1980, he went to Coimbra (Portugal) serving as a vocation promoter. In 1984, he was assigned to the Maia community, again serving as a vocations promoter. In September 1986, he went to the Rome Generalate for two years of specialised study at the Pontifical Salesian University, earning a Diploma in Educational Sciences—specialising in youth ministry and catechetics—*magna cum laude*—on 29th November 1988.

He then returned to Mozambique, where he was assigned to the Mecuburi parish (1988–90), the Anchilo Catechetical Centre (1990–93), and the provincial headquarters in Nampula as provincial bursar until December 1994.

In January 1995, he went to Viseu, serving as the community bursar. In July 1999, he moved to the provincial headquarters in Lisbon, where he handled household management until December 2000; he then travelled to Rome for a six-month refresher course at the Generalate's permanent formation centre. After spending six months on leave with his family starting in July 2001, he returned to Mozambique in January 2002. He was assigned to the Missionary Animation Centre in Beira, serving as the provincial secretary for missionary animation. From March to December 2004, he served at the Songo parish in the Diocese of Nampula before moving to Maputo—where the provincial headquarters had been relocated—initially as assistant community bursar and, from September 2005, as local bursar.

In July 2009, Brother Pietro returned to Italy, assigned to the Venegono Superiore community with responsibility for missionary animation; in November, he was appointed local bursar. In December 2010, he moved to

the provincial headquarters in Bologna, remaining there until June 2022, when he was assigned to the Centre for Sick and Elderly Confrères in Milan to assist with household management and the care of the sick. In July 2015, he returned to Mozambique, assigned to the Nampula mission station to work at the reception house and the missionary animation centre, while also assisting at the Santa Cruz parish in the Mwahivire neighbourhood, which was run by the Comboni Missionaries. In August 2016, he received news of the death of his mother, Ines Mafalda.

Brother Pietro returned to Italy for good in May 2019. He spent a year and a half with the community of student confrères at the Generalate in Rome. He opted for a period of spiritual accompaniment and took the opportunity to undergo medical check-ups (he was hospitalised three times at Sant'Eugenio Hospital during the first half of 2020); in October, he was assigned to the care centre for elderly confrères in Rebbio (Como).

In August 2024, he agreed to be transferred to the “Brother Alfredo Fiorini” Centre in Castel d’Azzano for medical care. His health had deteriorated... In May 2026, he was admitted to the Borgo Roma Hospital in Verona, where he passed away on the 25th. His funeral was held in the Centre’s chapel on 1st June 2026. (FM)

FATHER MELZANI STEFANO (21-02-2026 – 09-06-2026)

Upon arriving in Castel d’Azzano in October 2023 and introducing himself to the community, Father Stefano told us: “I was born on 21st February 1941, in Bagolino, in the province of Brescia—a village that has produced many vocations among Comboni sisters, brothers, and fathers.” He was referring to the seven other Comboni missionaries from his village who had preceded him in choosing the missionary life (Brother Amedeo Salvadori, Father Paolo Calvi, Brother Luigi Scalvini, Father Bortolo Calvi, Brother Stefano Salvadori, Father Giuseppe Calvi, Father Egidio Melzani, and Father Stefano Melzani), as well as the seven Comboni sisters who rounded out the group (Sister Pia Giulia Pelizzari, Sister Alma Melzani, Sister Rosalia Alberti, Sister Amalia Melzani, Sister Annamaria Melzani, Sister Maria Melzani, and Sister Santina Pelizzari). Six of them bore the surname Melzani.

He added: “It all began in the fifth grade, when I took part in a trial month; this opened the gates of the apostolic school in Crema for me. There, I attended the three years of middle school (1953–55) and the two-year *ginnasio* programme (1956–57), before moving to Carraia (Lucca) for the three years of classical high school (*liceo classico*) from 1958 to 1961. Even then, my decision to become a Comboni missionary was clear and unequivocal.”

Formation

On 1st October 1961, Stefano entered the novitiate in Gozzano (Novara), receiving the religious habit on the 22nd of that same month. On 9th September 1963, he professed his first temporary religious vows and was assigned to the scholasticate in Venegono Superiore (Varese). The following year, he was reassigned to the apostolic school in Crema to serve as a prefect for the young seminarians. He attended the second and third years of theology at the city's diocesan seminary. In July 1966, he returned to the scholasticate in Venegono Superiore for his final year of theology. He made his perpetual religious profession on 9th September 1966, and was ordained a priest on 8th July 1967, at the parish church of Bagolino by the Bishop of Brescia, Msgr. Luigi Morstabilini. The strong bond connecting him to his hometown and the missionary zeal shared with other missionaries from his village were—and would always be—two fundamental aspects of his personality.

Burundi... and expulsion

Immediately after his ordination, Father Stefano was assigned to the minor seminary in Brescia as vice-rector. Two years later, he received his assignment letter for the missions in Burundi. He spent a few months in Paris taking a French course at the Alliance Française. He arrived in Burundi in July 1970, assigned to the Mabayi mission. He immediately enrolled in a language centre in Bujumbura, the capital, determined to learn the difficult Kirundi language. He returned to Mabayi and lived in community with Father Giovanni Nobili and Father Eugenio Palla.

These were not easy years for the country. From the time of its independence from Belgium on 1st July 1962—even though the Hutu ethnic group made up the majority of the population (about 85%)—the Tutsi minority consolidated political and military power, triggering instability, tensions, and ethnic conflict. Burundi soon plunged into a long period of institutional instability and political volatility, marked by frequent power struggles between the two main ethnic groups (the third being the Twa, or Pygmies). With firm determination, the missionaries immediately chose a missionary approach that involved standing alongside people who had been deprived of their rights. This choice often exposed them to criticism, especially when they began to publicly voice their protests in defence of the oppressed.

Later, Father Stefano moved to Butara—still within the Diocese of Bujumbura—but he would always remember the years spent in Mabayi. He often spoke of that time as a wonderful period: “Mabayi was in the mountains and reminded me of my hometown. I regularly visited the Christian

communities. I would set out early in the morning with my backpack, reach a chapel, and stay there for three or four days before returning to the centre. Often, I would cross the border to visit a neighbouring mission in Rwanda as well, where the same language was spoken.” “Many refugees from Burundi lived there; they were fellow Christians who had fled there for their lives.”

Unfortunately, precisely because of the criticisms some missionaries voiced against the government, all the Comboni missionaries were expelled from the country in April 1977.

A brief return home and departure for Chad

Saddened and disappointed, Father Stefano returned to Italy. His superiors assigned him to the community in Brescia, where for two years he served as the diocese’s vocation promoter and missionary animator. In 1979, he moved to the seminary in Trento, taking on the same responsibilities.

After this period of recovery and healing from the trauma of his expulsion, he left for Chad in 1983—a place where the Comboni missionaries had only recently arrived. It was the 1975 General Chapter that had proposed expanding the Institute’s work into Chad; it was viewed as an attractive missionary alternative in response to the headwinds blowing elsewhere—such as in Burundi, but also in Uganda and other countries that had recently emerged from European colonial rule and often looked askance at the presence of white Europeans, from whom they were trying to break free once and for all.

It was in the very year of their expulsion from Burundi (1977) that the Comboni missionaries arrived in the Central African Republic. In 1978, they opened three missions in neighbouring Chad as well (Bediondo, Doba, and Moïssala), though these fell under the administration of the Comboni Region of Central Africa. Shortly thereafter, the Comboni Sisters also arrived. Chad is a country four times the size of Italy. Today, it has a population of around 22 million, but in 1978 it had fewer than 5 million inhabitants, divided into 200 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups—half Christian (comprising both Catholics and Protestants) and half Muslim.

Doba

Father Stefano arrived there in July 1983, assigned to the Doba mission as parish priest. These were difficult years: Chad was devastated by famine and ongoing ethnic conflicts. Some missionaries spoke out to denounce the massacres taking place amidst the near-total indifference of the international community, thereby incurring threats of expulsion. Some

female missionaries, overwhelmed by the pressure and hardships, chose to leave the mission. Yet, Providence seemed to guide the Comboni missionaries' path: the mission grew, strengthened, and became firmly established.

On 6th March 1989, the Holy See established the Diocese of Doba, carving its territory out of the Diocese of Moundou. That same day, Father Michele Russo, MCCJ, was appointed Bishop of Doba, and he received episcopal ordination on 21st May of that year. The Comboni house in Doba also became the episcopal seat. [On 30th September 2012, during a homily, Bishop Russo criticized the government's management of oil resources and was expelled on charges of having "engaged in activities incompatible with his role." Three months later, the expulsion order was revoked, but on 14th October 2014, Bishop Russo was permanently expelled from Chad. He died in Milan in 2019.]

Delegate for Chad

On 1st January 1990, the missions in Chad (a fourth had been opened in Sarh, which is the seat of a diocese) officially formed the Chad Delegation, and Father Stefano was chosen as its first leader, tasked with coordinating the missions' activities.

Upon completing his service as delegate, in January 1997 he went to Rome for a six-month sabbatical, during which he attended specialised courses at the Pontifical Salesian University. He is particularly interested in the themes of catechesis, pastoral care, and liturgical renewal.

Novice Master and Return to Chad

In July, he was assigned to the novitiate in Venegono Superiore as assistant novice master. The following February, he was appointed novice master. Yet, he could not stay still; he needed wide horizons. He soon became deeply involved in the ministry of missionary animation.

He spent five years in Venegono Superiore—a period he would always regard as "very significant." When he left, he carried in his heart a great many friends who would stay in touch with him for the rest of his life.

He returned to Chad in 2003 and remained there for a full sixteen years, working in parishes and training centres: Laï, Dono-Manga, Doba, Moïssala, and Sarh—all in the south of the country. For the most part, he served as a parish priest, bringing his own unique style and sensitivity to the role. This is evident from a brief account he gave of those years: "Every Sunday afternoon, after celebrating a couple of Masses in as many chapels, I would go to a prison to celebrate Mass for a group of inmates. [...] I will never forget Sunday, May 7th [*the year is not specified*,

Ed.] The Gospel reading was about Jesus as the ‘Good Shepherd,’ the guardian of His sheepfold. During the homily, I explained that the prison was like the sheepfold in the Gospel. In Jesus’s flock, there are young sheep; some are surrounded by their little ones, while others are sick; still others are elderly. And then there are the young goats and lambs—representing strong adolescents who are more or less obedient. [...] Well, Jesus knows each sheep personally; He tends the sick ones and gives rest to those that are weary.” When he leaves the fold, sometimes he is at the head of the flock to lead, at other times at the rear to urge them on and offer encouragement... His staff is a sign of protection. [...] *The prisoners in the fold* look at me, smile, and nod, but there are also those with serious, sad faces. And so, I tell them that precisely because they are there, God is closer to them and loves them immensely. The sheep not confined there perhaps do not need quite as much tenderness and love. [...] And everyone sings as if they were in church: clapping their hands, beating drums... And for me, it is pure joy to watch and listen to them.” This is how Father Stefano viewed his missionary life. He was with the people, felt the pain of those who were suffering, and embraced the small victories that so often occur, especially among the poor. Seeing a bit of life blossom in a place like a prison was a source of true joy for him.

The end... festive bells ringing

In July 2019, Father Stefano returned to Italy for medical treatment. He lived in the Brescia community until March 2020. As soon as he recovered, he returned to Sarh, Chad. He stayed there for only three months before being forced to return to the centre for the sick in Brescia. From January 2021 to September 2023, he was in Milan at the “Padre Giuseppe Ambrosoli” Centre. In October 2023, he was transferred to the “Brother Alfredo Fiorini” Centre in Castel d’Azzano (Verona).

He had various passions—reading, study, prayer—and photography, certainly inspired by the extraordinary landscapes of Central Africa and the vibrant colours worn by its people. We knew him during his most difficult moments and did our utmost to help him bear the heavy cross the Lord had placed upon his shoulders in his final years. He carried it with courage and serenity to the very end.

Father Stefano passed away on 9th June. His funeral was held on the 13th in the chapel of the Centre. I presided over the ceremony, noting that our final farewell to Father Stefano Melzani took place the day after the Feast of the Sacred Heart—our Comboni feast day. I also explained the reason for the choice of the two readings. The first, from the *Second Letter to the Corinthians*, reminds us that mission is not about proclaiming

ourselves, but rather Christ the Lord. It is, therefore, a grace and a privilege—yet one we carry in vessels of clay, which wear out and break easily. This is an experience we all share. Wealth on the one hand and fragility on the other were also two significant aspects of Father Stefano's life and mission.

For the second reading, I chose the passage of the Good Shepherd. Many—indeed, almost everyone—express their agreement with a smile, for most of us remember the beautiful story—heard time and again from his own lips—of his visits to the inmates of a Chadian prison, where he would go to celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday evening.

In the afternoon, Father Stefano's body is being brought to Bagolino for the funeral service and subsequent burial in the village cemetery, within the priests' chapel.

In 2017, marking the 50th anniversary of his ordination—while he was still in Sarh—he wrote a few lines on a scrap of paper, expressing a wish, or perhaps a request: "When news of my death comes, I would love to hear the bells of Bagolino ringing out in celebration." He has surely heard them from up there, where he is now. (*Father Giovanni Munari, MCCJ, and FM*).

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHERS: Haile Shakur, of the scholastic Yohanes Haile Argaw (ET/Casavatore); Daniel, of Father Bwalya Jeston Michael (Z/CN)

THE MOTHER: Louise Adjoto, of Father Salomon Badatana (TGB)

THE SISTER: Nadège, of Father Biro Jexis Berlin (RCA);

THE SISTER-IN-LAW: Maria Irene, of Bro. Alfredo do Rosário Almeida Durão (PT)

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sr. Freri Rosa Grazia (I); Sr. Cattaneo Fiorentina M. (I)

THE SECULAR COMBONI MISSIONARY: Maria Rifino (I)