

# Familia Comboniana

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

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776

July-August 2019

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

### GENERAL NOTES - Consulta of June 2019

#### 1. Appointments

1.1. The GC appoints, as from 1 September 2019:

##### Novitiates

**Fr. Alberto de Oliveira Silva** Father Master of the novitiate of Santarém (P)

**Fr. Antonio Guarino** *Socius* of the Lusaka Novitiate (MZ)

**Fr. José Francisco de Matos Dias** *Socius* of the Cotonou Novitiate (T)

**Fr. Manuel Fidelino Gomes Jardim** *Socius* of the Namugongo Novitiate (U)

**Fr. Tesfaghiorghis Hailé Berhane** Father Master of the Decameré Novitiate (ER)

**Fr. Víctor Manuel Tavares Dias** Father Master of the Manila Novitiate (A)

##### Scholasticates and Brothers' Centres (IBC)

**Fr. Eguíluz Eguíluz Ramón** Second Formator of the Bogotá CIF (CO)

**Fr. Ferdinand Sito** Formator of the Kinshasa Scholasticate (CN)

##### Curia

**Fr. Fermo Bernasconi** Member of the Ongoing Formation Team (C)

**Fr. Benedetto Giupponi** Superior of the Community of Student Confreres (C)

**Fr. Sindjalim Essognimam Elias** Coordinator and Superior of the CCFP in Roma (C)

**GSF**

**Fr. Villaseñor Gálvez José de Jesús** Member of the Formation Council (representing the America/Asia Continent).

1.2. The MCCJ GC, the SMC GC and the CLM Central Committee have nominated the **Members of the Commission** of the Comboni family for the **Forum on Social Ministry**: MCCJ: Fr. Daniele Moschetti and Fr. Fernando Zolli. CMS: Sr. Maria Teresa Ratti and Sr. Hélèn Israel Soloumta Kamkol. CLM: Marco Piccione (Venegono). They will choose their own coordinator.

1.3. The GC compliments the two Comboni Bishops on their new appointments:

**Mons. Ayuso Guixot Miguel Ángel**, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

**Mons. Odelir José Magri**, President of the Missionary Committee of the Conference of Bishops (BR).

## **2. Admission to Perpetual Vows and Holy Orders**

The GC has **admitted to the profession of Perpetual Vows and Sacred Orders** the following scholastics:

*Sc. Fazili Makanzu Germain* (CN – CN)

*Sc. Welemu Anatole* (MZ –MZ)

*Sc. Mbala Topa André* (CN – CN)

*Sc. Nkwe Lugiri Claude* (CN – RCA)

*Sc. Atti Razak (Theophile)* (TGB – TGB)

*Sc. Hounlessodji Messan Sikpa Vincent* (TGB – TGB)

*Sc. Kambale Kasika Emmanuel* (CN – studies Rome)

*Sc. Revolledo Villanueva Eduardo Antonio* (PE – A)

## **3. Fixed Assets**

The official allocation of circumscription property to their Fixed Assets has been postponed until the October 2019 Consulta.

## **4. Communication of official decisions**

The GC asks that the communication of official decisions by circumscriptions be made, always and only, by means of trustworthy

(legally valid) means of communication. In making decisions, the GC cannot take into account messages sent only through WhatsApp or similar means. It is taken for granted that the communication must reflect the view of the whole Council and not only that of the Circumscription Superior.

## **5. Rule of Life**

Following the meetings of June-July 2017 and June 2018, the Central Commission for Revisiting and Revising the Rule of Life met in Rome from 10 to 15 June. Fr. Markus Körber was unable to attend due to illness. The first four days were devoted to the completion and re-elaboration of the proposals for revision coming from the circumscriptions, the General Secretaries and the scholasticates. The Commission prepared a first draft of the revised text of the Rule of Life to be presented to the next General Chapter in 2021. The last two days were dedicated to meeting the Comboni Consultants. At this stage in the process, it became clear that there is a great desire in the Institute to re-appropriate the spirit of the Rule of Life and to understand more deeply the Comboni charism so as to recreate it and live it in a new way. The Commission wishes to thank all those who participated in the process through their reflections. We are now faced with the great challenge of constantly re-visiting our Rule of Life and making it our daily Life.

## **6. Formation**

### *6.1. First Religious Professions of 2019*

This year, 31 novices, two of whom are Brothers, took the vows in the various seats of the Comboni Novitiates: Cotonou (13), Lusaka (8), Nampula (4) and Xochimilco (6). The newly-professed are from three continents: Asia (1), Francophone Africa (13), Anglophone and Portuguese-speaking Africa (12), America (5). The Institute joyfully welcomes these 31 new confreres who have already been assigned to the various Scholasticates and International Brothers' Centres to continue their initial formation.

### *6.2. New novices in 2019/2020*

The Institute estimates that, in the coming year of formation, there will be 63 new novices of whom 59 will be candidates for the

priesthood and 4 for the Brotherhood; they will be distributed among our novitiates as follows: Decameré (3), Cotonou (24), Lusaka (16), Manila (4), Nampula (4), Santarém (4), Xochimilco (8). Given that the Cotonou novitiate can only accommodate 19 candidates, the GC is in dialogue with the Circumscription Superiors and Father Masters so as to find room for the remaining 5.

### 6.3. Specialisations

On 14 June *Fr. Aguilar Sánchez Víctor Manuel* (C) defended his doctorate thesis at the department of Patristic Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University, obtaining maximum marks “Summa Cum Laude”. His thesis is entitled “Corpus Nestorianum Sinicum”.

*Fr. Asfaha Yohannes Weldeghiorghis* (ET) has completed his Licentiate at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Spiritual Theology specialising in formation.

The following will complete the course for formators at the Teresianum at the end of the month: *Fr. Manuel Fidelino Gomes Jardim* (C) and *Fr. Onesmas Godfrey Otieno* (EGSD).

## 7. October: Extraordinary Mission Month

The Extraordinary Mission Month was proclaimed by Pope Francis on the occasion of the centenary of the promulgation of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* of Benedict XV (30 November 1919).

For us Combonis, being ad gentes missionaries, this missionary month has a special value. Even though no particular activities have been organised at Institute level, we are confident that each circumscription will celebrate this month in the most appropriate way.

The GC invites the Circumscription Superiors and the Mission Secretaries to implement the proposals indicated by the General Secretary for the Mission in the letter of 20 March 2019. This Missionary Month will, moreover, be celebrated together with the Synod for Amazonia (October 2019). May the celebrations help us to rediscover our charism, the purpose and passion of our lives.

## **8. Famiglia Comboniana**

For the first two days of June there was a meeting in Carraia of the members of the General Councils of the entire Comboni Family (CMS, MCCJ, CSM and a representative of the CLM). On the first morning, the lay Biblical scholar Luca Moscatelli led the group in reflecting on mission from scratch, followed by a debate on Christians in Europe, presented like a canary in a cage: the question arose as to how to develop in this minority group concern for the Kingdom and help them to see outside their cage. Ample space was given to sharing on mission promotion from the time of Comboni to today and on the Rule of Life of our Institutes.

## **9. Consultations for the election of circumscription superiors**

At the end of this Consulta almost all the results of the straw ballots for the choice of new provincial superiors had been received. The GC wishes to thank all the confreres for their participation. Circumscription superiors are reminded that the real consultations will commence on 15 July next year so as to allow those receiving votes sufficient time for reflection and prayer. The remaining results of the consultations, for provinces and delegations, must be received in Rome by 10 September next.

## **10. Deontological Code**

Prior to the final approval of the Deontological Code, the GC has decided to await the possible publication of the “Vademecum” of the Holy See regarding the management of situations of abuse of minors, so as to include the new guidelines in our Code. Meanwhile, the new directives of the Motu Proprio of Pope Francis “*You are the Light of the World*”, have been included. It is hoped that we can soon publish the final edition of the Code. The translations will be made after its approval.

## **11. Journeys and Commitments of the GC**

### **Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie**

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|---------------------|---|
| 1 July – 11 August: | in Ethiopia for holidays and in Eritrea for a visit and spiritual exercises |
| 12 – 18 September:  | in Madrid for a meeting of Comboni Bishops                                  |
| 1 – 14 October:     | visit to Asia with Fr. Alcides  |

### **Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins**

2 July – 8 August: visit to Mozambique  
20 – 27 September: in Portugal for a meeting on interculturali-  
ty

### **Fr. Alcides Costa**

29 June – 11 August: Lima and Brazil  
30 September – 15 October: Visit to Asia with Fr. Tesfaye

### **Fr. Pietro Ciuciulla**

1 – 8 July: in Chad for CAE Council  
12 – 30 July: in the NAP  
3 – 10 August: in Sicily for holidays  
13 – 24 August: in Malawi-Zambia for spiritual exercises  
17 – 24 September: in Congo to meet the bursars

### **Bro. Alberto Lamana Cónsola**

1 – 9 August: spiritual retreat  
24 – 31 August: in Spain  
20 – 27 September: in Portugal for a meeting on interculturali-  
ty

## **Mons. Ayuso, the new President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue**

Pope Francis has appointed Mons. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot as the new President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID). Mons. Ayuso succeeds the late Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, who died in July 2018.

Born in Saville on 17 June 1952 and ordained priest on 20 September 1980, Mons. Ayuso worked as a missionary in Egypt and Sudan up to 2002. In 1982 he was awarded a degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) in Rome and, in 2000, a doctorate in dogmatic theology at the University of Granada.

In 1989 he became professor of Islamology, first in Khartoum and then in Cairo. He later taught at the PISAI where he was

Principal until 2012. He also chaired a number of meetings for interreligious dialogue.

On 30 June 2012, Benedict XVI appointed him Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He was consecrated Titular Bishop of Luperciana in March 2016.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is a Decastery of the Roman Curia, created by Paul VI on 19 May 1964, as a Secretariat for non-Christians but was re-named by Pope John Paul II on 28 June 1988. Mons. Ayuso took office as President on 25 May 2019.

### **Perpetual Professions**

Sc. Atti Razak Theophile (T)	Lomé (TG)	28/06/2019
Sc. Hounlessodji M. Sikpa V. (T)	Lomé (TG)	28/06/2019
Sc. Mbala Topa André (CN)	Kinshasa (RDC)	28/06/2019

### **Ordination**

Fr. Antonello Giovanni (I)	Verona (I)	29/06/2019
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### **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** – That in moments of loneliness and difficulty we may feel the presence of the Lord and succeed in making these situations into occasions of closeness and listening to his Word so as to become light and hope for the whole world. *Lord hear us.*

**August** – That the up-coming Synod for Amazonia may promote a mentality able to break the structures that end life and build networks of solidarity and inter-culture while giving up the “culture of obsolescence”. *Lord hear us.*

**September** – That the Comboni Missionary Sisters, gathered for the Inter-Chapter Assembly, may reflect upon and understand more deeply the processes in hand with the eyes and heart of God. *Lord hear us.*

## **Publications**

**Fr. Enzo Santangelo**, *La donna che ha cambiato la storia*, ed. Fraternità Nazareth, Salerno, May 2019. As the author himself says in the prologue, this book is a “work of fiction” in which Our Lady tells the story of her vocation and her mission alongside her Son so that it may “speak to the minds and hearts of parents in such a way that they may be inspired by Our Lady to bring up their children well”.

## **General Secretariat for Finance**

### **Meeting of the Council for Finance**

From 28 to 31 May, a meeting was held of the Council for Finance with the purpose of verifying accounts and planning the economic and administrative activities of the Institute. The more important themes discussed in the course of the meeting were:

- a. Preparing for the special Financial Assembly planned for 4-5 June;
- b. The conclusion of the process of assigning the fixed assets;
- c. The letter on the obligation to audit the patrimonial situation also of the communities.

The Financial Council meets twice a year and is composed of the members of the General Economate, four continental representatives and two technical advisers, to audit the accounts. Its duties involve different areas such as checking and examining accounts, verifying administrative and managerial procedures, indicating choices to be made in financial planning and the study of the financial problems of the Institute and the global financial context. The next meeting of the Council will be held from 25 to 27 November.

### **Financial Assembly in Rome**

The General Council (CG) met on 4 and 5 June 2019, in Roma, with the members of the Council of Finance and some provincial superiors and bursars, mostly from Europe. There were 26 participants who met to study at Institute level the possibility of setting up a Pensions Fund and how to finance initiatives to promote regular local income.



“There are indications – said General Bursar Fr. Claudio Lurati, in his introduction at the beginning of the meeting – that show that perhaps the time has come to take some important steps beyond the usual forms of solidarity, to provide better prospects for the sustainability of all the circumscriptions. We must first establish a Pensions Fund to fulfil the Chapter mandate and make up what is lacking as we consider the long-term future of so many confreres. Secondly, we are faced with requests for financing by some provinces so that they may create some regular sources of income”.

How did this Assembly originate?

The proposal was made by the Council for Finance and was supported by the General Council in the December 2018 Consulta. During the meetings of provincial superiors (of Europe and Africa) in February, the proposal was discussed and commented on.

In the recent March Consulta, the GC made the initiative official sending out a letter of convocation and inviting the participation of provincial superiors and bursars of the DSP, Italy, LP, NAP, Portugal and Spain, the continental defence persons and the members of the Council for Financial.

The Assembly concluded with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General, in the chapel of the General Curia.

## **General Secretariat for Formation**

### **Father Masters and their Soci meet in Rome**

The formators of nine novitiate communities, coming from the four continents where Combonis are working, had a meeting lasting from 17 to 30 June, at the Generalate in Rome. They were fourteen in all. Out of nine novitiates, six are located in Africa (Zambia, Chad, Uganda, Mozambique, Benin and Eritrea), one in Europe, one in Latin America and one in Asia.

Speaking about the meeting, Fr. Víctor Manuel Tavares Dias, who is leaving for the novitiate in the Philippines, said that the main dimensions of the life of the novices and formators were reflected upon: human, psychological, intellectual, spiritual and missionary. In fact, the integral and harmonious development of the candidates demands reflection and gradual progress in all its dimensions.

Precisely for this reason, Fr. John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, Fr. Siro Stocchetti, Fr. Elias Sindjalim Essognimam and Fr. Fermo Bernasconi, members of the Centre for Ongoing Formation, included in the agenda some moments of revision and evaluation of the programmes, the contents and the methodologies used in the novitiates, of the formative environment, of relations between formators and novices and the continuity of formation both before and after the novitiate.

## ASIA

### **Anniversary**

On 1 May, the Christian community of the parish of St. Joseph the Worker at Iao Hon (in the north of Macao), celebrated the XX anniversary of the blessing of the church. The celebration, presided over by Bishop Stephen Lee, was accompanied by the participation of some diocesan priests and religious and about 400 people. During the Mass, six boys received the sacrament of Confirmation and ten received their first Holy Communion.

Since 1999, the Combonis have been charged with the care of this new place of worship and to ... *"find some fans"*! To this end they began to visit the quarter, forming small groups of catechumens, finding a place for the children to play, and organising some celebrations... and so the community grew and developed. Today there are 80 children enrolled in the Sunday school and there are 20 catechumens (at Easter, 8 adults received the sacraments of initiation and 11 children were baptised).

The motto for the celebration of the XX anniversary, *"Two decades in the love of God: evangelise together for the future"*, is meant to express the feelings of all who form part of this little flock and to recognise that it was the love of God that united them and took them on a long journey and to renew the commitment to work and pray together... sharing the Gospel with the neighbouring people: this is how to build a bright future.

## BRASIL

### **VIVAT Meeting**

The Comboni Missionaries and the Comboni Sisters organised and took part in the meeting of VIVAT International which was held in São Paulo at the end of May. VIVAT is, of course, an organisation that represents thirteen religious Institutes at the UN.

This organisation allows us to voice effectively our fundamental commitment to evangelisation in the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation at the UN. It gives our work visibility and protection; it contributes to the development and promotion of policies that defend human rights and integral ecology; it facilitates sending reports and appeals to the UN Special Speakers.

About thirty men and women religious from various parts of Brazil took part in the meeting, together with the international coordinators Helen Saldanha and Robert Mirsal who work in New York. The Comboni Family was represented by Sr. Candida Amaro, Bro. Simone Bauce and Fr. Dario Bossi.

VIVAT Brazil has revised its networking priorities for the coming years: to confront the negative impact of mining and agribusiness; to remote a culture of peace by defending the Statute of Disarmament; to reinforce its commitment in the area of migrations.

The Institutes which were present, during a meeting of their provincials, undertook to promote in the coming years the transition of VIVAT Brazil from an informal group to a legally constituted organisation.

## CONGO

### **New Website of the 'Laudato Si' Missionary Centre**

The 'Laudato Si' Missionary Centre, inaugurated in August 2018 in Kinshasa, is a Comboni undertaking involved in animation, formation and research on the management of the environment and the protection of creation. In June 2019 the Centre opened a new website in French, English, Spanish and Italian. There is an open invitation to visit the site for information on the activities of the Centre. The website may be accessed through this link: [www.cmlaudatosirdc.org](http://www.cmlaudatosirdc.org).

## CURIA

### **Meeting of Lay Men and Women of Missionary Institutes in Italy**

The representatives of lay groups of the various missionary Institutes and *fidei donum* of the diocese of Rome met from 14 to 16 June 2019 at the Comboni Missionary Generalate in Rome. There were about 30 participants at the meeting which was chaired by Fr. Giorgio Padovan. They represented Villaregia, Xaverians, Consolata, PIME, Franciscans, Comboni and others. Two lay couples shared their experiences: one from Palermo (Comboni Lay Missionaries) and the other from Padua (Malbes Community, with the Comboni Sisters).

The aim of the encounter was to compare mission experiences both at home and abroad so as to improve missionary presence in the local Church, in groups and in civil society. Those were days of meeting, listening, reflection and planning.

The participants were assisted by the lay theologian Marco Vergottini (Vice President of the Italian Theological Association) who, with his relation “The Christian witness. Identity and mission”, led the meeting in a critical re-reading of some Council documents, proposing that the “lay” category be abandoned and replaced by the expression “Christian witness”.

### **Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

On Friday 28 June the community of the General Curia celebrated the solemnity of the Sacred Heart. Participants: the Combonis present in Rome, some Comboni Sisters and a group of friends and benefactors. The Eucharist was led by Mons. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Mons. Giuseppe Franzelli, Bishop Emeritus of Lira (Uganda), and Fr. Alfio Tirrò, parish priest of the parish of San Vigilio, were also present.

In his homily, Mons. Ayuso said that “for Pope Francis, the solemnity of the Sacred heart is like a feast of love, the love of a heart that had loved much” and indicated its three characteristics: “The first characteristic of the love of the Father for us is that it is a personal love. He does not simply love the human race but each

single person ... A second characteristic is tenderness. The third characteristic, to which we should all conform ourselves, is meekness”.

## DSP

### **Reducing structures**

We are now in a position to say that, in 2019, after many years of difficult work and negotiations, the DSP concludes its process of restructuring its buildings and properties. Little by little, the missionary houses have been updated and, where necessary, plots have been reduced and land has been sold. In 2016 the missionary house of Mellatz was sold. At the same time, part of the land of Brixen was rented out and it is now being used for bio-social agriculture. In 2018 the old house in Graz was renovated while the building of the residence and the agricultural land have been rented out to Caritas. Finally, the house of the community of Josefstal has been sold, given that the DSP, in the area of Ellwangen, could not continue maintaining two houses.

The process of reduction requested by the General Chapter of 2015 (CA '15, 44.7) has been completed and the DSP no longer possesses buildings that stand empty or require extensive and costly work.

### **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of reunification**

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reunification of the two Institutes – FSCJ and MFSC – into a single Comboni Institute, the MCCJ, was celebrated firstly on Sunday 16 June at Ellwangen, in Germany. The Mass was presided over by Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General.

The following were present at the celebration: Fr. Karl Peinhopf, Provincial Superior of the DSP, the members of the provincial Council, the confreres of the Province, Bro. Alberto Lamana, General Assistant for Europe, Fr. Venanzio Milani, Fr. Josef Pfanner and many other confreres “who did so much for the reunification”, said Fr. Tesfaye in his homily. In the General Administration, the lives of Fr. Alois Eder, Fr. Otto Fuchs, Fr. Joseph Uhl, Fr. Alois Weiss and Fr. Anton Fink were a blessing. Many others who

spent some time in Rome, like Fr. Markus Körber and others who served on committees like Fr. Franz Weber and Bro. Hans Eigner, helped with the services and initiatives of the General Administration of our reunified Institute". Lastly, Fr. Tesfaye thanked Fr. Georg Klose for his symbolic embrace of Fr. Tarcisio Agostoni on the day of reunification, the feast of the sacred Heart, 22 June 1979, when the two Superior Generals sealed the reunification after 56 years of separation.

A second celebration was held a few days later in Limone sul Garda, where the missionaries of Brixen/Bressanone and other representatives of the German communities joined the missionaries of the communities of northern Italy. Among the roughly fifty participants there were various confreres who had not seen each other for more than thirty years: some had studied together at Innsbruck while others had been in the same circumscription in Africa or Latin America. They were overjoyed to meet again.

The day was joyfully marked by a Eucharistic celebration and a fraternal meal in the house that witnessed the birth of Saint Daniel Comboni.

## ITALIA

### **Priestly Ordination**

Around sixty concelebrants, mostly Combonis, accompanied Giovanni Antonello, 30 years of age, for the ceremony of ordination that took place on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 29 June, at the parish of the Votive Temple, Verona. Presiding at the celebration was diocesan Bishop Mons. Giuseppe Zenti. Also present were the Provincial of Egypt-Sudan and Giovanni's immediate Superior, since he juridically belongs to that Province.

Mons. Zenti, while conducting the celebration, stressed the most important aspects of ordination and emphasised mainly the missionary character and the importance of "ad gentes" today. He expressed affection and admiration for the Combonis who, in his opinion, are those who give themselves completely for evangelisation without borders.

The attentive assembly accompanied the ceremony with passion and emotion. At the end, the Bishop asked Giovanni to im-

part his blessing to his family in recognition of a journey that found its principal inspiration in them.

After the ceremony, the festivities continued at our house and, on the following day, a Sunday, Fr. Giovanni celebrated his first Mass at his parish church, the Guardian Angels.

## MALAWI-ZAMBIA

### **First professions**

The fourth of May was a day of great joy at our Fr. William Nyadru Interprovincial Novitiate (of APDESAM), at Bauleni, Lusaka, with 8 novices of the provinces of Malawi-Zambia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya taking their first vows.

Many came to witness this celebration that marked an important passage in the formative life of the novices. Present were the Comboni Sisters and the friends of the novitiate, confreres of the communities of Chama, Chipata, Kalikiliki and Lilanda. The Mass was enlivened by the English choir of the parish of Saint Kizito.

In his homily, the main celebrant, Fr. Andrew Bwalya, Vice-Provincial of Kenya, thanked the novices for their courageous decision to take a step forward in the journey of formation and asked them not to waste their time and energy dwelling on the difficulties encountered during the novitiate but to embrace every moment of the journey with gratitude and consider it all a time of grace that helps to mould their vocation.

Fr. Andrew also reminded the newly-professed of the importance and necessity of being faithful to their vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, which are the pillars of their consecration, especially at a time when these Evangelical counsels seem to contradict the style of life of the world in which we live.

For his part, the Novice Master of the novices, Fr. Dawit Wubishet Teklewold, thanked all the confreres who were an integral part of the formative journey of the novices and announced the various destinations where they will continue their theological studies. (*Fr. Daniel Chisha*)

## PORTUGAL

### **Meeting of those in charge of Comboni media in Europe**

Those in charge, with the directors and administrators of the European Comboni publications, met from 27 to 31 May at the Comboni community of Maia. The formation theme chosen for this year was “Religious Marketing. New means of editorial diffusion”, and was presented by the Lay Combonis João Maria Neves and Cristina Alçada. Fr. José da Silva Vieira, Provincial Superior of Portugal and responsible for the media sector in Europe, acted as moderator.

The participants presented their reports on the printed Comboni publications and shared their experiences and ideas regarding the challenges that the means of communication today present to evangelisation and missionary animation by Comboni Missionaries in Europe. Bro. Alfredo do Rosário Almeida Durão and Bro. António Carvalho Leal spoke of their experience in distributing the magazines “Além-Mar” and “Audácia” in Portugal.

Fr. Arlindo Pinto presented the final proposal of the “Guide for the development of a Plan of Communication for Comboni media in Europe”, which he prepared together with Bro. Alberto Lamana, General Assistant. Fr. Enrique Bayo, a member of the editorship of “Mundo Negro” (Spain), presented the draft of the Plan which the magazine has already established. Fr. Carmine Curci informed the meeting that the new multi-lingual European Web portal, an initiative already approved by the provincials of Europe and which will be run by the London Province, may be ready for October 2019.

The next meeting will be held in Sunningdale from 25 to 29 May 2020, in Sunningdale (England) and will, as well as the exchange of the Plans of communication of the various circumscriptions, on online publications and the challenge of the transition from printed matter to a digital system.

The meeting was attended by Comboni representatives from Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom (LP), Poland, Germany (DSP), the Rome Curia and a representative of the Comboni Sisters, Sr. Paola Moggi.



## **The Comboni Family On The Move**

The heads of the four branches of the Comboni Family met on 8 June in Cacia to review and plan their joint activities of missionary animation and formation. With reference to the activities of the year 2019-2020, the theme “Christ is alive and wants you to be alive too”, was chosen. The project of the Comboni family, to the value of €10,000, will benefit the families of Colombian veterans and help coca producers cultivate alternative crops.

Two days later, about thirty people took part in Comboni Family Day which is celebrated on 10 June, Portugal day. The sanctuary of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Leiria hosted the meeting which began with a Eucharist led by the Provincial, Fr. José da Silva Vieira and continued with a fraternal meal and the presentation and sharing of experiences by each branch of the Family. The day concluded with a guided tour of the cathedral of Leiria.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **Funeral of Bishop Giuseppe Sandri**

His death took us all by surprise: even though we knew he was not very well, we were hopefully waiting his recovery and return to normal life. But this was not the plan of God and Bishop Sandri died on 30 May.

Following the South African custom, the funeral did not take place on one of the days following his death but a full week later, on 6 June, in Witbank, his episcopal see. The funeral was preceded by a “commemorative function” in the afternoon of 5 June. It concluded with a Mass at which many priests of the diocese participated as well as a large congregation of the faithful.

Before Mass, prayers of petition and praise were raised to God for the eternal repose of the soul of Bishop Sandri. Many from among the faithful came to the lectern to give their testimonies which noted especially his closeness to the people, his informal manner and his ability to see the funny side even in difficult times. He was described as a man of the people and a man of God, as one whose loss is felt by all as they realise they will no longer enjoy his friendship or benefit from his untiring work.

On 6 June, there were so many people attending that it was not possible to celebrate the funeral in the Cathedral. The civil authorities, therefore, made available the large town hall where the celebration was held, with the Archbishop of Johannesburg, Mons. Buti Tlhagale, presiding and concelebrated by almost a hundred priests, including almost all the Combonis working in South Africa. Members of the faithful were there from all the parishes of the diocese. Also present were six members of Bishop Sandri's family who, on hearing of his passing, came from Trent, in Italy. All present were deeply moved by the celebration and expressed their emotions especially through various speakers who emphasised how much concern Bishop Sandri showed about the social problems of South Africa, the economic situation and education as well as the struggle against corruption. It was clearly evident that he really practised his motto, "venio ministrare" (I have come to minister). After the funeral, the remains were taken into the cathedral for burial alongside two other Comboni bishops.

One of the repeatedly emphasised aspects of the life of Bishop Sandri was his Comboni identity. Bishop Sandri truly incarnated the Comboni charism in the exercise of his ministry. Of him we may indeed say what we read of Saint Daniel Comboni in the Rule of Life, no. 2: "He distinguished himself for his total dedication to the missionary cause for which he spoke, worked, lived and died".

## UGANDA

### **Provincial Assembly**

From 29 April to 3 May 2019 the annual Provincial Assembly was held. It was an occasion to get together as a family, to review the progress made and plan for the future. The main theme was "interculturality". Fr. Edward Kanyike, Provincial of Malawi-Zambia, helped us to reflect upon the theme. During the Assembly, four confreres renewed their religious vows: Bro. Michael Avaga and the Scholastics Constanz Opiyo, Elias Orishaba and Felix White.

On 5 May, during a lively ceremony, the province handed over to the diocese the mission of Aliwang (Lira diocese). The Eucha-

rist was presided over by Mons. Sanctus Lino Wanok who, in his homily, thanked the Combonis for their marvellous work during the years of their presence at Aliwang and in the diocese of Lira in general.

From 20 to 25 May, the province hosted the Brothers' Assembly at Layibi. The participants were from the Anglophone provinces of Africa, from Mozambique and the province of Congo. It was an important opportunity to meet together and discuss questions of common interest. We are grateful to the General Council and especially to Bro. Alberto Lamana for his participation at this Assembly.

This year, the celebration of the solemnity of the Ugandan Martyrs was prepared and animated by the Archdiocese of Gulu. In his homily, the Archbishop of Gulu, Mons. John Baptist Odama, preached a message of unity among peoples. The number of pilgrims is increasing every year and we cannot fail to thank God for the gift of those martyrs to the Church.

On 8 June, many people gathered from all over at Ombaci (Arua). The confreres Fr. Justin Ogen of the parish of Angal, Fr. Roberto Pegorari of the parish of Ombaci and Fr. Isaac Martin, from the Palorinya refugee camp, celebrated their Golden Jubilee of priesthood while Fr. Ruffino Ezama celebrated his Silver Jubilee.

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Mons. Giuseppe Sandri (26.08.1946 – 30.05.2019)**

Mons. Giuseppe Sandri was born at Faedo, in the Italian diocese of Trent, on 26 August 1946. He was sent to the United States where he did the novitiate in Monroe and made his first profession on 15 August 1968. He continued his studies at the scholasticate of Cincinnati where he made his perpetual profession on 15 August 1971 and was ordained priest on 27 May 1972. While in Cincinnati, he obtained a Masters in theology at Xavier University. He was later assigned to South Africa.

After spending some months at the parish of Acornhoek (Witbank diocese) learning the Tsonga language, he was made parish priest of Waterval Bushbuckridge (1973-1978). He later helped in

the parishes of Luchau and Acornhoek (1978-1980) and was placed in charge of the Maria Trost Pastoral Centre, at Lydenburg (1981-1986), and later became parish priest of Acornhoek (1986-1991).

“I met Fr. Sandri in 1987” – Writes Bro. Artur Pinto, who lived with him during his final years – “when he first welcomed me to the mission of Acornhoek, the most rural and remote mission in the diocese of Witbank. The effect he had on my life as a young man, scarcely twenty years old, was a determining factor for my missionary consecration”.

He was Provincial Superior of South Africa for two mandates (1993-1995 and 1996-1998) and was later appointed General Secretary of the Institute in Rome (1999-2007). He was re-elected provincial of South Africa in 2008 and, on 6 November 2009, he was appointed Bishop of Witbank. His episcopal ordination took place on 31 January 2010 at the Maria Trost Pastoral Centre, Lydenburg.

Mons. Sandri considered it important to know the country where he had been sent, its customs and traditions. Besides English, he spoke the Northern Sotho, Tsonga and Zulu languages. Right from 1973 he collaborated in the work of translating and publishing liturgical texts, hymn books and the Bible in Tsonga-Shangaan which were published, under his direction, by the Episcopal conference of South Africa, in 1996.

Furthermore, from the time he arrived in South Africa, he regularly collaborated, at local and national level, on matters of justice and peace, with the Department of Justice and Peace of the Episcopal Conference and the South African Council of Churches. He was a member of the Johannesburg Institute of Contextual Theology and of the South African Academy of Religion.

The Provincial of South Africa, Fr Jude Eugene Burgers writes: “His sound pastoral identity was appreciated in particular in the areas of catechesis, the formation of adults and the promotion of local vocations. He worked tirelessly for a self-supporting Church. His ability to work in a team made him available to all while his ability to listen, his kindness and his frank manner and the Christian faith he lived, made him the good missionary priest he was.

He was a humble person. He had a deep love for the Church and was meticulous in the service of the Gospel in conformity with the desires and directives of the Church.

He built up sound and lasting relations with everyone. He had a great capacity for friendship with people of all ages. He had a special place in his heart for the priests of the diocese of Witbank and his Comboni confreres. He was a collaborator by nature. He would meet people in their own environment, in their own needs, in their joys and in their sorrows”.

Bro. Artur Pinto continues: “Since the diocese was so vast, Mons. Sandri had to travel more than 40,000 kilometres each year as he went about his pastoral work. He was the sort of bishop who was present everywhere, so totally dedicated to his duties that he neglected his own health ... and, during his visits, he would accept whatever food or drink the people had to offer. It may have been due to this that he developed an ulcer which, on 27 March, perforated his stomach. Before I took him to hospital that morning, he simply said to me ‘Pinto, call the doctor immediately, I am in unbearable pain’. He was writhing in pain at the door of the chapel where every morning we would prepare to celebrate the Eucharist. He underwent emergency surgery that same day. I went to visit him twice a day at the intensive care unit of the Cosmos private hospital in Witbank. On 7 April, we transferred him to the best private hospital in South Africa, close to Pretoria where he was well attended by kidney specialists and a doctor friend of his who kept us informed about his condition.

On 11 April, he had a second stomach operation but the infection had spread and was out of control. On 30 May, at 4.30 am, the telephone rang and the doctor friend gave us the sad news: ‘Our Bishop has just passed away’”.

“If we could sum up his life in a few words – we read in the message of the General Council – we would say that he possessed three distinguishing characteristics: his joy, his unconditional service to the People of God and his deep sense of belonging to the Comboni Family.

Mons. Sandri was a joyful person and he expressed his joy through his good humour, his readiness for a laugh and his sense of wittiness. His joy was rooted in God, in the certainty of his vocation and in his deep awareness of the presence of God.

His episcopal motto *Venio Ministrare*, 'I Have Come to Serve', sums up his dedication and his journey of identification with Christ the Good Shepherd. We may say that it was his generosity and his unconditional dedication to the Kingdom of God that consumed the strength of one who grew up in the mountains of Trent that led to his untimely death.

His sense of belonging to the Institute was expressed in his love for the Comboni Family which he served in various ministries, incarnating the charism of Saint Daniel Comboni and especially his dedication to the peoples of Africa. The words of Comboni, addressed to the African people of Khartoum: "The happiest day of my life will be the day on which I will give my life for you", apply very well to the life of Bishop Sandri. To the people of the diocese of Trent he used to say: 'My native Trent is dear to me but now South Africa has won my heart'".

#### **Fr. Efrem Angelini (17.02.1920 – 23.06.2019)**

Fr. Efrem Angelini was born at Vezzano, in the province of Trent (Italy), on 17 February 1920. He entered the Institute in 1931. He began the novitiate in Venegono in 1937 and took first vows on 7 October 1939. He went to Verona for the scholasticate, then to Brescia and lastly to Rebbio. He took perpetual vows on 7 October 1944 and was ordained priest on 29 June 1945. He worked in mission promotion for a few years and was then appointed spiritual director at Sulmona. In 1956 he was sent to Mexico as Master of Novices until 1962 when he went to Spain where he worked until 1966.

That same year he was sent to Venegono as formator of scholastics until 1969. Finally, in 1970 he received his appointment to Ecuador where he spent 45 years of his missionary life.

In 2015, at the ripe old age of 95 years, he returned for good to Italy and was sent to Castel d'Azzano where he died on 23 June 2019. He was then 99 and the oldest confrere in the Institute. Despite his age, he enjoyed good health to the end of his days. A few hours before he died, on being asked how he was, he replied: "I am alright".

Clear of mind, intelligent and witty, with a happy disposition and with a permanent smile on his lips, Fr. Efrem was the perfect ex-

ample of a person fully realised as a man and a missionary. We were all sure he would have lived to celebrate his hundredth birthday but the fullness of years is not one of our choices!

The funeral was presided over by Fr. Renzo Piazza who delivered a long list of the virtues of Fr. Efrem: "He spent four years and nineteen days in this house. He immediately settled in well and collaborated in every way as long as he was able. We appreciated his smile and his respect, his trust in God and his perseverance, his constructive suggestions and words of encouragement, his compassion and his friendship, his good humour and optimism, his avoiding burdening others with his difficulties, how he remembered to put God first, how he struggled to pray with tenacity, integrity and the peaceful acceptance of the will of God. A few days ago he said to me: 'I am no longer able to see to my own needs: I would like to go to the Africa section of the house. Let's see what God is asking of me now'. I never saw him kneel down but he taught us how to pray; he never spoke of what he did in the mission but he was a mission right up to the last day of his life; he never raised his voice but everyone noticed when he was not there; he had no responsibility in the community but was always a man with authority; he never complained except for one occasion, when he was 95, saying that the Provincial could have allowed him to work a further two years in Ecuador. In Castel d'Azzano we thank the Provincial for having let him go ... and giving us the joy of having him with us from the beginnings of this community".

At the funeral, besides the confreres of the nearby communities, many of his family members and friends were present. The choir of his home town of Vezzano (made up of his family and first and second cousins) brought added joy to the Eucharist. As many remarked, it was the usual sort of sad funeral but a celebration of praise and joy, the happy conclusion of a beautiful and holy life.

At the end of the celebration, Bro. Virginio Manzana recited a poem in his honour. Fr. Claudio Zendron, his former provincial superior in Ecuador, spoke of him above all as a man of prayer and a priest of the confessional: especially at El Carmen (Esmeraldas) he was the "Spiritual Father" of his parishioners and of hundreds of priests and religious who would come even from oth-

er dioceses. Thank you, Fr. Efrem, our great friend! (*Fr. Manuel João Pereira*)

**LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD**

**THE FATHER:** Perfect, of Sc. Apedovi Awoumessi Hippolyte (T).

**THE BROTHER:** Cristoforo, of Mons. Giuseppe Franzelli.

**THE SISTER:** Luigina, of Bro. Luigi Salbego (I).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. Lucia Carrera, Sr. M. Margherita Bedin, Sr. M. Anastasia Zanotto.

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**MISSIONARI COMBONIANI VIA LUIGI LILIO 80 - ROMA**

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