

# Familia Comboniana

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

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786

June 2020

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

### First professions

#### **SARH (Chad) (11) – 3 May 2020**

Sc. AGNIMAKA Kodjovi Abraham (TGB)

Sc. AGUIAR Vignon Michel (TGB)

*Bro. ATAKPA Baïssa Marius (TGB)*

Sc. AWUDI Atsu Augustine (TGB)

Sc. KAMBALE Sivihwa Olivier (CN)

Sc. KANGITE Wolima François d'Assise (CN)

Sc. KONOSI Atambanakabange André (CN)

Sc. MWEZE Zahinda Mathieu (CN)

Sc. N'GBOLO-MECKO Christ-Jordy Larry (RCA)

Sc. OUSSOU Gbèmahossou Saturnin (TGB)

Sc. SAKEDAKA Ouassoum Vendvyver-Jospin (RCA)

#### **ISIRO-MAGAMBE (Congo) (1) – 9 May 2020**

Sc. BEYOKOMU Anotengo Remy (CN)

#### **XOCHIMILCO (Messico) (5) – 9 May 2020**

Sc. ROMERO CHAJON David Eduardo (PCA)

Sc. BAUTISTA RAMOS Ivan de Jesús (M)

Sc. HERNÁNDEZ CRUZ José Manuel (M)

Sc. BEDOYA PATIÑO Luis Felipe (COL)

Sc. MORALES BOLÍVAR Yeison Olivo (COL)

#### **NAMUGONGO (Uganda) (14) – 23 May 2020**

Sc. ATARA Ababayehu Joseph (ET)

Sc. TWESIGYE Andrew (U)

Sc. ABABA Biruk Haileyesus (ET)

Sc. OLUPOT Christopher (U)

Sc. GAMA Felix Blessings (MZ)

Sc. OUMA Joseph (U)

Sc. BWALYA Kennedy (MZ)  
Sc. WANYAMA Mark Musungu (KE)  
Sc. MWABA Mathews (MZ)  
Sc. MUTHEU Moses Mwatunge (KE)  
Sc. MWILU Nicholas Mbithi (KE)  
Sc. OCEN Moris Paul (U)  
Sc. TAP Simon Yomkuey (SS)  
Sc. MULIZA Vincent James (MZ)

### **NAMPULA (Mozambico) (4) – 23 May 2020**

Sc. ADRIANO Agostinho Lapuia (MO)  
Sc. FELIZARDO Azevedo (MO)  
Sc. FIDÉLIO Artur (MO)  
Sc. RONALDO Mateus Mulima (MO)

### **Ordinations**

Fr. Opiyo Constanz (U)                      Lacor-Gulu (UG)                      30/05/2020

### **Message from the General Council**

The GC informs us that the Course for the Elderly planned to take place from 3 September to 29 October has been postponed and will be held in 2021 on a date yet to be decided.

The meeting of the Comboni Social forum on Ministeriality, scheduled to take place from 12-16 December 2020 will go ahead as planned.

### **Book by Fr. Siro Stocchetti**

Fr. Siro Stocchetti has published in four languages (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish) a book entitled “Interiority”, which will be sent to our formation houses. A publishing house has shown interest in the Italian version. The previous publication by Fr. Stocchetti, “Self-esteem”, is available in five languages. Those interested may contact Fr. Stocchetti by email ([siro.stocchetti@gmail.com](mailto:siro.stocchetti@gmail.com)).

### **Bellarmino Prize**

Fr. Victor Manuel Aguilar Sánchez has received the Bellarmino Prize for his degree thesis: “Corpus Nestorianum Sinicum” (an extract from the thesis was published in the MCCJ Bulletin number 280, July 2019, pp. 57-68). The Bellarmino Prize was instituted by the Pontifical Gregorian University to stimulate scientific research and to promote the best two degree theses defended during each school year. The

decision to award the Prize for Fr. Victor's thesis was taken on 30 April 2020 by the Office of the Academic Vice-Rector and by the Commission in charge of evaluating the candidates, after a thorough evaluation of the research carried out by each candidate.

The prize-giving ceremony was held at the Gregorian University in Rome on 25 May 2020, using a You-tube link so as to allow Fr. Victor Aguilar, who works in Macao, China, to take part in the ceremony and receive the Prize, together with his confreres, relatives and friends. Prof. Henryk Pietras, SJ, relator of the thesis, accepted the prize on behalf of Fr. Victor.

The thesis emphasises that "By examining the history of Christianity in China, we realise how, for centuries, the missionaries worked so hard to take on the many challenges regarding the inculturation of the Gospel. More specifically, during the dynasty of Yuan and Ming, we remember especially the Franciscan, Dominican and Jesuit missionaries who distinguished themselves in this great work. Nevertheless, the Gospel of Christ has much more ancient roots, in the mission of the oriental Syrian monks who, at the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) first proclaimed the story of Jesus to the Chinese people, by using the Chinese language".

The marvellous work carried out by the Jingjiao community (The Religion of Light" or "Luminous Teaching") was chronologically the first encounter between the Christian message and the Chinese people. The entire group of documents produced by this contact is "conventionally" known as the Corpus Nestorianum Sinicum, and two documents, whose titles in English are: "Thus have I heard on the listening of Mishihe (the Messiah)" and "Discourse on the One-God", are the subject of the doctoral research. Using the original text, the author has identified the various stages in the development of their composition and context. The theological value of the study is concentrated on the identification, exposition and explanation of the Trinitarian, Christological and soteriological concepts in the two documents.

Furthermore, this doctorate thesis presents the Chinese face of the pastoral and missionary undertaking carried out by the members of the Jingjiao community, demonstrating their efforts to "understand", "translate", "explain" and "transmit" the story of Jesus in Chinese categories.

Congratulations to Fr. Victor Aguilar and best wishes for his teaching and his pastoral service in the Chinese world.

## **Holy Redeemer Guild**

June	01 – 07 ER	08 – 15 LP	16 – 30 P
July	01 – 15 KE	16 – 31 M	

## **Prayer Intentions**

**June** – That, with our gaze fixed on the Heart of Jesus, we may see His face in all we meet, especially in the poorest and most abandoned. *Lord hear us.*

**July** – That the CLM, in their forthcoming continental meetings, may allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit and so respond generously to the needs of the people they meet in various countries. *Lord hear us.*

## CONGO

### **Rebel incursion**

During the past ten years, to the east of the diocese of Bondo, the LRA has never ceased to spread terror, death and danger. In February of this year, the rebels took over the forests in the parishes of Dakwa, Ango and Bili.

Early in May they reached a point 250 km from Bondo, close to Bili and on 28 May, at seven in the morning, they made an incursion into the parish of Bambilo, 170 km from Bondo, a mission we handed over to the diocese in February of this year.

It is not known how many people were kidnapped or killed as many fled to the fields. The rebels took away foodstuffs and ransacked houses, the “Fr. Senén’s Health Centre” and the mission where the Combonis were first present in 1999; some of these were: Fr. Senén Gandara, Fr. Elio Farronato, Fr. Claudino Ferreira, Bro. Santo Bonzi and Bro. Ivan Cremonesi. The health Centre and the mission were sacked and destroyed. We are wondering why this area of the Congo has for so many years been the target of so much insecurity and neglect.

In recent days, soldiers of the DRC armed forces have come to Bondo, but without any military equipment. How long more will the terror spread by the LRA continue in our diocese of Bondo? (*Fr. Pedro Indacochea*)

## UGANDA

### **The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic**

The Ugandan ministry of health has so far carried out twelve thousand Covid-19 tests with 85 proving positive and, after treatment, 52 people were completely cured. Hitherto, there have been no deaths recorded. The two groups with most positive results were those returning from abroad and international truck drivers.

The country entered a state of alert at the beginning of March; on 17 March the President of Uganda announced the first measures to slow the spread of the virus: schools and institutes of learning were closed as were businesses, with the exception of shops selling groceries and medical goods. Limits were placed on travelling. Later, more measures were put in place such as restrictions on people's movements, except in emergencies, the closure of the international airport and all borders. The transport of goods, both by land and by sea, has been allowed to carry on as usual.

The most affected people are those with low incomes who are unable to continue with their usual activities that enable them to live; the government has introduced measures to provide some food to the most vulnerable families. All health facilities are on maximum alert. We are proud of the confreres in the province who are directly involved in the hospitals and medical services, especially in the hospitals of Lacor (diocese of Gulu) and Matany (Moroto diocese).

In our parishes, the liturgical celebrations and other public pastoral initiatives have been suspended due to the prohibition of public gatherings. One mission deeply affected by this is that of Kasaala (diocese of Kasana-Luwero). The parish was due to celebrate its 75 years of presence on 21 March 2020. The President was expected to have taken part in the function and enthusiastic preparations were under way for a great celebration. Unfortunately, while it seemed at first that the celebration could take place, right on the eve of the great day the parish was informed that it was not possible to hold the celebration and that the presidential directives had to be strictly followed.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, the experience of isolation has led to a rebirth of initiatives which, in a certain sense may be described as providential. First of all, the daily adoration of the Blessed sacrament was proposed to all the communities and widely accepted. One confrere shared his experience explaining how, before the pandemic,

he rarely found time for the prayer During the Day from the breviary but has now resumed the practice. In one of the communities, the confreres have seriously recommenced the activity of gardening: a greenhouse was set up and a large vegetable garden is developing. Having to stay together has somehow reinforced and consolidated the communities. Three of our confreres renewed their vows and the celebrations were beautiful in their simplicity.

The situation has also its challenges. One confrere lost his father and another his mother but neither of them could go home for the funeral. The Provincial Council could not meet physically, even though there were some urgent questions to be discussed. Those confreres who were due to travel abroad for reasons of health had to postpone their journey. Thanks be to God, there have been no emergencies in the Province.

At the present moment, among other things, we are preparing new ways of reaching people and this is an advantage also for the future. The social media have an important role in communication between ourselves and with the Christian communities. They help us to evaluate how well we have trained people spiritually, remembering that the family must be the fundamental cell of the Church.

### **First professions**

On Saturday 23 May 2020, at the center of the Novitiate of Namugongo, fourteen confreres made their first religious professions. Fr. Achilles Kiwanuka Kasozi, Provincial of Uganda, received their vows.

Four of them are Ugandans: Andrew Twesigye, Joseph Ouma, Moris Paul Ocen and Christopher Olupot and on 26 May they left the novitiate and went home for a period of holidays.

The other ten scholastics, Ababayehu Tefera Atara Joseph, Biruk Girma Ababa Haileyesus, Felix Blessings Gama, Kennedy Bwalya, Mark Musungu, Mathews Mwaba, Moses Mwatunge, Nicholas Mbithi Mwilu, Simon Yomkuey Kueth Tap and Vincent James Muliza will remain in the community of Namugongo until the borders are reopened. It may not be easy to keep ten newly-professed in a community with no specific programme of life but we shall see how to adapt to this new scenario. (Fr. Sylvester Hategek'Imana)

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Fr. Marcello Vulcan (23.11.1937 – 05.04.2020)**

Marcello, the sixth of eleven children, was born at Palù di Giovo, in the province of Trent, on 23 November 1937, to Carlo and Carmela Brugnara. From childhood he showed a good character, always smiling and happy; he was noted for his calm nature and his helpfulness towards others.

in October 1946, little Marcello answered the call of the Lord and decided to enter the seminary of the Comboni Missionaries in the house of Muralta in Trent. He did the novitiate in Gozzano and in Sunningdale, England (1954-6), where he took first vows on 9 September 1956. He went to Venegono Superiore for the scholasticate (1959-61) and to Verona (1961-63), where he took perpetual vows on 9 September 1962. He was ordained priest on 30 March 1963 in Verona. On Sunday, 14 April of that year he celebrated his first Mass at Palù di Giovo: "The townspeople had worked swiftly: the main street and the square in front of the church were festooned with festive bunting. Fr. Marcello was received at the entrance to the town by the entire population".

After spending a year in Carraia doing mission promotion, he was appointed to Uganda where he worked for ten years. He ministered in Aduku and Lira-Ngeta. In 1970-71, he did a specialisation course in catechetics in London. He then returned to Uganda where he spent six months in Iceme, a year and a half at Lira-Ngeta and two years at Aliwang.

In February 1974 he was assigned to Kenya where he worked mainly in parishes: two years in Gilgil, two in Naivasha, a year in Katilu, a year in Nairobi (Kariobangi), seven years at Tartar as local bursar and then almost three years again in Katilu.

"Both in Uganda and Kenya he was well loved by the people because he spent himself so much for them; he never paused, he visited all the chapels and was always on the go to meet his faithful, especially those in difficulty". These are the words of Father Teresino Serra, superior of the Verona Mother House. "He was an intelligent man, humble and sensitive. He was kind, polite and welcoming which attracted people to him; he was always smiling, very helpful and willing to assist others, treating everyone equally".

In July 1991 Fr. Marcello was transferred to Italy. He spent four years in Trent, working in mission promotion and then spent a period

of seven years outside the community. When he returned, he was sent to Cordenons where he spent about five years with an interval of two years in Uganda. In 2007 he was assigned to the community of Lucca, where he spent almost 13 years.

Fr. Antonio Solcia, who lived with him in his final years, recounts in his testimony: "Fr. Marcello had known, admired and followed the example of Mons. Milingo, who performed a sort of exorcism on various people. This activity of his, in which he firmly believed, caused some painful episodes with the ecclesiastical authorities. Here in Lucca he would meet many people for those 'exorcisms', but Fr. Marcello was very reserved and never spoke of those matters. The people were grateful and would come from far away to see him. During our first meeting as a Comboni community with the new bishop, Mons. Paolo Giulietti, the bishop said he had heard gladly of this activity and invited Fr. Marcello to come and speak to him, promising to give him the official post of diocesan exorcist".

Fr. Marcello passed away in Lucca on 5 April 2020 due to the Covid-19 illness. On 8 April, with a brief funeral ceremony, he was buried in Verona in the Comboni cemetery that is part of the monumental city cemetery.

### **Fr. Paolo Filippini (21.03.1926 – 09.04.2020)**

Paolo was born at Teglio (Sondrio), on 21 March 1926, to Antonio and Eufemia. He entered the Comboni novitiate in Venegono (1943-5), where he made his first profession. He then did the first two years of the scholasticate at Rebbio (Como), one year at the Verona Mother House and three years in Venegono where, on 22 September 1950, he made his perpetual profession. He was ordained priest on 19 May 1951 in Milan by Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster.

After spending a year in Zahle, Lebanon, studying Arabic, he was sent to Khartoum (Sudan) to continue studying Arabic (1952-3). He was then sent to Mupoi, South Sudan where he ministered from 1953 to 1959. He then spent a couple of years in Bologna, at the provincial house, editing the magazine.

From 1961 until 2013 he worked in Uganda, in various missions: Arua-Ediofe (1961-1976), Gulu Cathedral (1976-1982), Awach Parish (1982-84), ministering in the parishes of Opit, Kigumba, Parombo and Kalongo, during the period from 1984 to 2013. He also learned several languages. Apart from Italian, he knew, as he himself said, English, Arabic, Swahili, Zande, Alur, Acholi, etc.



Fr. Filippini truly worked like a “hidden stone”. In fact, we have few details about him. Concerning his long period in Uganda, we have just one letter written in 1965 by his confrere, Fr. Giuseppe Calvi (who died in 2011), from which we can see the trust and friendship that bound the two missionaries. Here is an extract: “The last time you wrote to us, it was from your home in Teglio; we hope that the good Valtellina wine has done you some good. What about your headaches? When are you coming back? If you believe you can return, rest assured I will not be at all against it; I will be happy if you come to help us. Here in Angal, we ought to give regular assistance to the sick of the hospital. There is work to be done with the liturgy, the singing and the ordinary ministry here in the mission. We will not give you any heavy work like going on safari so as not to provoke a relapse. In a month or so, Fr. Fiorante and Fr. De Tommasi ought to go to Parombo to open the new parish. Then you would be expected to come to keep us company and help us with our daily work. I am of the view that if any Father wants to come and work in the mission, even if only for two or three years, it is always worthwhile; if it is just a question of his travelling expenses, it is an insult to Providence to prevent the good one may do for souls even in just one year: a single soul saved is worth more than the price of a plane ticket ...”.

In the last years, having returned from Africa for health reasons, Fr. Paolo lived first with the Rebbio (Como) community and then in Milan, at the Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli Centre, for treatment. It was there that he received congratulations from Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General, for his 75 years of temporary consecration. Those closest to him have said that he spent much of his days praying in the small chapel of the house, or absorbed in his thoughts and remembering his life of 93 years; he was always smiling and impatient to recount his adventures, spread over a mixture of time and space and enriched by a vivid imagination.

Fr. Paolo died in Milan on 9 April 2020: “Tiptoeing, in silence, at the start of the Paschal Triduum, he returned to the embrace of the Father. His life was permanently marked by silence: he loved concrete gestures better than a lot of words. His silence was broken only by his accounts of his experience in Uganda. His stories about his mission were many-faceted and told of his great labours: his service at the hospital, especially in the obstetrics department and his care for the children and the families” (*From the obituary published on the website of the parish of Sant’Eufemia, Teglio, Sondrio, diocese of Como*)

## **Fr. Anthony Wolstenholme (18.03.1924 – 02.05.2020)**

Anthony Joseph Wolstenholme ('Tony' to those close to him) was born in Hawley Street Flats, in the centre of Sheffield, England, on 18 March 1924 to William Reginald and Elizabeth Theresa Mary, the second of seven children.

On finishing secondary school, he began to work at the "English Steel Corporation" as a trainee metallurgist. In 1942, when Great Britain was fighting in the Second World War, having reached the age of eighteen, he was called to military service and joined the Royal Marines. He was sent to a listening post in the Faroe Islands to monitor the Arctic convoys that were crossing the Atlantic and spent the rest of the war in that place.

At the end of hostilities, he returned to England where he fell gravely ill with an infection that began in his nose and caused a swelling of the brain. He was transferred to the Royal Naval Hospital in Plymouth where he was not expected to live. It seems it was there he told his family members, called to his bedside, that, if he recovered completely, he would have followed the priestly vocation. And that is what happened. He went to Campion House in Osterley (West London), a Jesuit pre-seminary set up to assist adult vocations.

It was at Osterley that Anthony first met the Verona Fathers (as the Combonis were then called). One of the mission promoters, Fr. Filiberto Polato, from the nearby community of Sunningdale, was a frequent visitor to Campion House. Anthony expressed his desire to become a missionary priest in Africa and asked to join the Combonis. He was accepted into the novitiate in Sunningdale in August 1949 and took first vows at the age of twenty seven. He continued with his philosophical studies in Sunningdale before going to the Scholasticate in Venegono Superiore to pursue his theological formation, in July 1953. He was ordained priest in Milan Cathedral on 15 June 1957 by Archbishop (later to be Pope and a canonised saint) Giovanni Battista Montini.

After ordination, Fr. Anthony helped for a year in Sunningdale before being appointed to the missions of North Uganda. He was first sent to the parish of Gulu Cathedral where he ministered for a year and then went to the mission of Warr (West Nile), before taking up a post as a teacher at the Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul at Pokea, in the outskirts of Arua, where he taught until June 1965, when his poor health obliged him to return to England. From then on, for the rest of his life, Fr. Anthony was troubled by a number of phobias, probably as a result of his experience in the missions of Uganda. He had a great

fear of dirt and would repeatedly check at night if the external doors were locked and the windows properly closed. Nevertheless, he endured all those difficulties stoically, without rancour or complaint as was typical of his gentle and caring nature. “A clear sign of his undoubted sanctity – writes Fr. Patrick Wilkinson – Fr. Anthony never allowed his condition to be a burden to others. It was his Cross and he bore it always with a smile”.

After spending a year convalescing with his family in Sheffield, Fr. Anthony returned to Sunningdale where, with the exception of a year spent in Dumfries, Scotland (1972-1973), he spent the following twenty years, up to July 1988. For the first ten years, much of his time and energy were spent teaching English to those who were being sent to the novitiate in Sunningdale or to ordained confreres assigned to Anglophone missions in Africa. Fr. Anthony was always a very competent and popular teacher.

Following the transfer of the Novitiate and the English language studies from Sunningdale, Fr. Anthony offered to assist Fr. Teodoro Fontanari with the pastoral care of the faithful who attended our Church of the Sacred Heart at the Sunningdale house. His peaceful and unassuming manner and his diligent care of the seriously ill and the elderly made him a well beloved pastor and priest.

In 1988 he was asked to join the community of Baillieston Road in Shettleston (Glasgow, Scotland) and to help with mission promotion, before transferring, together with the community, in 1992, to the present Carmyle, Glasgow house.

Due to his failing health, Fr. Anthony was transferred in early 2014 to “Nazareth House” in Cardonald (Glasgow), run by the Nazareth Sisters, and later, for another six years, to “St. Joseph’s Retirement Home” run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, in Robroyston (Glasgow). There Fr. Anthony passed away peacefully as he sat in his armchair in his room, shortly before one o’clock on the afternoon of Saturday 2 May 2020.

### **Fr. Giancarlo Guiducci (06.03.1941 – 06.05.2020)**

Giancarlo, the son of Francesco and Maria Aguzzi, was born in Corinaldo, in the province of Ancona and the diocese of Senigallia, on 6 March 1941, into a family of eleven children. His father was a farmer. As a boy he entered the Comboni Missionaries and completed his studies in the Institute. He did the novitiate in Sunningdale, England in 1958-1959 and was sent to Carraia (Lucca) for the

scholasticate (1959-61), and then to Trent where he was also a prefect of the boys. He took temporary vows on 9 September 1959 and perpetual vows on 9 September 1965. He was ordained priest in Verona on 26 June 1966. He exercised his ministry in Pesaro for three years as vocations promoter.

He was then appointed to Uganda for a period of eight years (1969-1977) and there exercised his ministry as parish priest and local superior at Amudat.

He returned to Italy to take part in the renewal Course in Rome. After that he was appointed to Kenya for two years where he worked in ministry at Sololo and at Kacheliba as parish priest.

In 1980 he returned to the parish of Amudat in Uganda, where he was based until July 1982 when he was again assigned to Kenya where he remained until the end of 2017. In Kenya he carried out his ministry as parish priest of Kapenguria, Kacheliba, Amakuriat, Katilu, Kabichich and again at Amakuriat, in Mogotio, Kacheliba, and in Nairobi (2013-2017) as formator of the Brothers while ministering in Kariobangi.

In his own words, he said: "I began my missionary life among the Pokot tribe in 1971, first in Uganda and then in Kenya, working almost all the time among the pastoral Pokot. In 1984 we opened the mission of Amakuriat in the extreme north of Pokot territory.

I now give you a simple reflection on my eighteen years of missionary life. The people here have a rather peaceful character. The welcome and assistance in integration among these people was excellent, even if there was a certain amount of resistance to the new religion. They are extremely proud of who they are, and this is not lost by those who pursue further studies. Economically, they are self-supporting, except when natural disaster strikes. Our work was and is still carried out in two main fields: education and medicine. I have seen personally how these two activities touch the hearts of the Pokot. At first, our work was regarded with indifference but later the people experienced at close quarters the generosity of the missionaries during the famine of 1980 and the cholera outbreak in 1981, when the fathers and Sisters did so much for them. Another sign that we have touched the hearts of the Pokot is the reaction of many elders to education. They now see the school as something that questions their tribal system. What is really happening is that the Pokot of the Plains are changing fast. Our schools have helped to create a group of people with a broader outlook, who believe in a better education and the number of those who have been to school is continually growing.

The first Pokot priest was ordained last year. In 1972 he entered the pre-seminary of Amudat where I was then parish priest and 'rector'. It has been a great cause of joy for all the people and it is also a sign of hope. I feel a degree of sympathy for those former students of mine who, now adults, suffer within themselves because of the ever more distinct and energetic struggle between the pagan mind and that of the Christian".

Fr. Guiducci was not known by his name, Giancarlo, – writes Fr. Tomas Herreros Baroja – but by his surname. This "became so popular that some children received the name 'Guiducci' at their Baptism, probably due to his constant availability and his generosity. During the cholera years, after the fall of Idi Amin and in times of chaos, the people received such foodstuffs as maize, beans, potato flour and vegetable oil. The oil became known as 'Guiducci' as did the tins that were used as a measure so that the people would say, when going to buy some maize, for example: 'three Guiducci of maize, please'.

Fr. Guiducci was always affable, the ideal companion who always welcomed everyone, who gave good advice saying just the right words, one who never held a grudge but was a faithful friend, so faithful, in fact that he almost made a pact with the Pokot people without ceasing to be a friend of the Karimojong".

"He was a man who was gifted and practical – writes Bro. Friedbert Tremmel – always ready to help the people and the confreres in many different ways. For me he was a fatherly friend who would express his opinions and advice with understanding and humility. The people of Amudat, Amakuriat and Kacheliba remember him as a missionary who was very dedicated and industrious, with a great heart that was open to their concerns and needs".

Having returned to Italy in 2018 for health reasons, he worked in Pesaro at the ongoing formation centre and mission promotion for more than a year and then in Padua at the postulancy, in mission promotion and at the rectory, right up to his death on 6 May 2020.

### **Fr. Romualdo Anselmi (07.02.1930 – 14.05.2020)**

He was born at Selva di Progno, in Verona province, on 7 February 1930. He did the novitiate at Gozzano where he took first vows on 9 September 1953. He did the scholasticate in Viseu where he took perpetual vows on 9 September 1955 and was ordained priest on 25 March 1956.

Fr. Romualdo breathed his last at the age of ninety. He had worked in Mozambique for more than half a century, from 1959 to 2014, with a short interval of five years spent in Padua doing mission promotion. Towards the end of his life, every time I went to visit him in Castel d'Azzano, I noticed he was always happy and content with his nostalgic ('saudade') memories of his beloved Mozambique. Fr. Romualdo was one of those missionaries, almost all of whom have gone to God, who lived in Mozambique in times of enormous change: during the time of Portuguese colonial government, the struggle for independence and the Marxist-Leninist FRELIMO regime, the sixteen-year-long civil war and the coming of peace. Those were difficult times that demanded a strong missionary spirit and a vocation deeply rooted in the Lord of History. An indispensable aid to becoming part of that mission was knowing the languages well – Portuguese and Macua, the local language which Fr. Romualdo spoke fluently.

After a couple of years in Portugal, spent learning Portuguese and helping with the new Comboni presence in Lisbon, he left for Mozambique where he was assigned to the first Comboni mission in the country, Mossuril, on the shore of the Indian Ocean, close to the Isle of Mozambique. The mission area was prevalently Moslem, as it is to this day and the missionary work of evangelisation, by no means easy, was centred mainly on schools for education to which all who wished were admitted, regardless of whether they were Christian or Moslem.

After the country gained independence in July 1975, Fr. Romualdo joined the government school at Nieta mission where everything had been nationalised: the school, the church, the house of the missionaries and all the buildings. I remember meeting him at that mission, the only Comboni present apart from the community of Comboni Sisters. It was the time of the "*equipas missionárias*", that is communities of Comboni Missionaries who, together with the Comboni Sisters or of other Institutes, following the example of the primitive Christian communities, put all their goods in common while praying and planning their pastoral work together.

Fr. Romualdo worked in that mission for twelve years without interruption, while civil war was raging. The school had become his passion and was his main mission. He got on well with the students to whom he sought to impart the values of the Gospel by means of instructional films he would show at weekends in the open, using the large wall of the church, then being used as a dormitory, as a screen. After his transfer to another mission, Alua, he also worked there in the

government school, continuing with the system of integral education, presenting Gospel values to the students despite the Marxist-Leninist system of government. At Alua, apart from the school, Fr. Romualdo continued with the pastoral centre of the Erati zone (the missions of Alua, Namapa and Nacaroa), where lay people engaged in various pastoral ministries were trained and prepared for their specific work: liturgy of the Word, catechesis, funerals, the promotion of women, aid to the poor, visiting the sick and so forth.

During the period when he was working in the school, he would dedicate weekends to direct pastoral ministry, visiting the Christian communities together with the Sisters, spending time with the people and celebrating their joy in the faith.

Fr. Romualdo was a man of few words but he was a peaceful man, obedient and ready to provide whatever service was asked of him, working with dedication and competence. He was also very practical. At a time when resources were in short supply, especially during times of war, the mission required that the missionaries learned to make do with what they had and to see to various tasks: maintaining the vehicles, keeping the water supply working, doing repairs and doing construction work, etc. Fr. Romualdo was good at these things and in helping with the building of schools and chapels run by the mission. He also worked with passion and precision.

Reflecting on Fr. Romualdo's life, there came to my mind a poem by Rev. Tonino Bello "Maria, donna feriale" (Mary, the Everyday Woman) inspired by the Vatican reference to Our Lady: *Mary lived on this earth the same ordinary life as everyone else, full of concern for the family and her work* (AA 1). For fifty years Fr. Romualdo made common cause with the people, with the population of Mozambique, with the Local Church and with his confreres, both in time of peace and in time of war, never giving up. Devotion to Our Lady, especially Our Lady of Medjugorje was hugely present in his life. The attitudes of Mary, the 'everyday woman', sum up his life which he lived so naturally and with so much concern for the good of the people and those living around him, inspiring confidence, faithfulness and hope, even in times of great adversity. (*Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins, mccj*)

## **LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD**

**THE FATHER:** Gabriel, of Fr. John Peter Alenyo (U).

**THE MOTHERS:** Anne Marie, of Fr. Justin Dossou-Yovo (U); Azucena of Fr. Janito Joseph Aldrin Palacios (RSA), Letesilassie, of Fr.

Sebhatleab Ayele Tesemma (ET); María Pilar, of Fr. Enrique Bayo Mata (E), Virginia, of Fr. Mario Cerda Contreras (M).

**THE BROTHERS:** Graziano (who died a few days ago) and Arnaldo (who died some months ago), of Fr. Erminio Pegorari (†); Freddy, of Fr. Pedro Percy Carbonero Mogollón (PE); Muke Bwakyanda, of Fr. Kasereka Amini Wasingya (TCH); Fr. Giacomo (Xaverian), of Fr. Alberto Doneda (I).

**THE SISTERS:** Annamarta, of Fr. Antonio Campanini (P); Bice, of Fr. Renato Rosanelli (I).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. Emilia Maria Grassi, Sr. M. Matilde Montanari.