

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

788

September 2020

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

General Notes – Consulta of August 2020

1. Episcopal nomination

On 6 August last, our Treasurer General Mons. Claudio Lurati was nominated Vicar Apostolic of Alexandria in Egypt. On behalf of the entire Institute, the GC offers him congratulations and best wishes in his new service to the Mission. The GC also wishes to thank Mons. Claudio wholeheartedly for his eleven years of service as Treasurer General.

2. Vice-Provincial appointment

During this Consulta, the GC, taking into account the choice made by the provincial council of Mozambique, has appointed Fr. José Joaquim Luis Pedro as Vice Provincial Superior of that province.

3. Treasurer General

With his episcopal appointment, Mons. Claudio Lurati has ceased his service as treasurer general. Fr. Angelo Giorgetti will continue this work for the time being as Assistant Treasurer General.

Due to the pandemic, new ways of holding the assembly for circumscription bursars and the Financial Council are being studied. A first phase using a video link is being considered, to be held next November and a second, attended in person, to be held in Rome in April 2021.

4. Secretariat of Formation

As from 1 August, Fr. Elias Sindjalim is the new General Secretary for Formation; Fr. John Baptist Opargiw has already handed over to him all the work of the secretariat. The GC thanks Fr. John Baptist for his dedication during his years of service to the Institute.

Due to the pandemic, the movement of novices, newly-professed scholastics and other confreres for studies will be discussed case by case by the General Administration and the Circumscription Superiors. The policy of the GC is that the Provincials where the neo-professed are confined should, together with their respective Provincials and the General Secretariat of Formation, coordinate a programme of missionary service lasting one year so that they do not lose a year.

This policy also applies to the neo-professed who, having returned to their original provinces, cannot go to their assigned scholasticates. The Provincial Councils should study each case on its own and, if necessary, organise, in collaboration with the General Secretary of Formation, a year of missionary service for them as well.

5. Towards the XIX General Chapter

5.1. The election of the delegates

Given the continuing difficulties in travelling, the GC will ask the Congregation for Religious (CICLSAL) to waive our RL 150.5-150.8, and allow for the possibility of voting for one's delegate telematically. In the meantime, we may use this method for the straw ballot.

5.2. Questionnaire

The General Secretariats and the Commission for the revision of the Rule of Life have prepared a series of questions for all the confreres to help them prepare, through reflection, for the next Chapter. The questionnaire will be sent to all. There will also be a more specific questionnaire for each sector addressed to these "involved in the work". The replies will be sent to the Pre-Capitular Commission.

5.3. Workgroup

The GC has created a work group that involves all the members of the General Secretariats in the preparation and translation of these questionnaires. In October, the same group will prepare a form to assist the Circumscription and Continental Councils in the preparation of their reports to the next Chapter.

5.4. Contact by e-mail and a digital forum

The GC has decided to create an e-mail address and a digital forum to receive reflectors and contributions for the next General Chapter. Two confreres will manage these digital means up to the moment when they will pass everything received to the Pre-Chapter Commission.

6. Vatican Vademecum

On 16 July last, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a new Vademecum, a kind of "Instruction Manual" to be used together with our Code of Conduct to regulate the system to be followed when we must deal with situations of abuse of minors and vulnerable persons.

7. Details concerning the beatification of Fr. Ambrosoli

The Vatican Secretariat of State has confirmed (Prot. n. 498.844) that the ceremony of the beatification of Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli will take place in the diocese of Gulu (Uganda) on 21 November 2021 and will be presided over by Card. Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

8. The next Consultas

The GC will also meet during the month of September (9-11) and again from 12 October.

Comboni Renewal Course

The next edition of this Course is planned for the first months of 2021, starting on 4 January and ending on 31 May 2021. The Course is being held for confreres aged between fifty and sixty, especially those who have celebrated or are preparing to celebrate their Silver Jubilees of ordination or, for Brothers, of perpetual vows. The Course will conclude with a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (final three weeks). Those interested, after speaking with their Circumscription Superiors and obtaining the required permission, should contact the coordinator of the Course, Fr. Fermo Bernasconi – e-mail:

fermoberna@gmail.com or ccfpmcci@comboni.org

Since the language of the Course is Italian, those confreres who do not know this language will need at least three months of study here in Rome. They will need to plan to be here towards the end of September to commence language studies in October 2020.

N.B.: To enter Israel, African confreres will need a visa which can only be obtained after receiving permission to stay in Italy. To obtain a permit to stay in Italy at present requires around five months so it is necessary for them to come to Rome around mid- November 2020.

With the present pandemic situation, we entrust this initiative of ongoing formation to God through the intercession of Saint Daniel Comboni.

Perpetual Professions

Sc. Jaleta Gurmessa Geda (ET)	Gilgel Beles (ETH)	21/06/2020
Sc. Biangbali Abaingu Blaise (CN)	Yanonge (RDC)	12/07/2020
Sc. Turinawe Vicent (U)	Layibi (UG)	15/07/2020
Sc. Izakare Amoko Isaac (U)	Layibi (UG)	15/07/2020
Sc. Onyait Nicholas (U)	Layibi (UG)	15/07/2020
Sc. Horbé Richard (TCH)	Moïssala (TCH)	18/07/2020
Sc. Gokam Dj. (Bienvenu) (TCH)	Moïssala (TCH)	18/07/2020
Sc. Paluku Faustin Kamw. (CN)	Chitima (MO)	19/07/2020
Sc. Moindi Polycarp Ntabo (KE)	Nairobi (KE)	24/07/2020
Sc. Ng'ang'a Joseph Githua (KE)	Nairobi (KE)	24/07/2020
Sc. Boosuuro Maaso- En. Pius (T)	Juba (RSS)	09/08/2020
Sc. Ngbo Fufunga Justin (CN)	Juba (RSS)	09/08/2020
Sc. Kalibuku Teddy (MZ)	Lunzu (MW)	14/08/2020

Ordinations

Fr. Atti Razak Theophile (T)	Kpangalam-Sokode (TG)	15/08/2020
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Publications

Noi siamo missione: testimoni di ministerialità sociale nella famiglia comboniana, by the Commission Ministeriality Comboni Family, edited by Fernando Zolli and Daniele Moschetti, May 2020. The book is a collection of various missionary experiences in the field of social pastoral. It is material that will help in the reflection that will take place during the *Comboni Social Forum of Social Ministry* (CSFSM) due to be held from 12 to 16 December 2020. For now, the book is available in paper form in Italian, English, French and Spanish. The electronic version will soon be distributed.

Dal Congo, le lettere di un uomo felice, edited by Lina Farronato, July 2020. This is a collection of epistles written by Fr. Elio Farronato, published on the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary of priesthood. We quote here a few lines from the Introduction that summarise somewhat the meaning of these letters. "Being a Comboni Missionary is a reason for joy for Father Elio who is aware that he is a bearer of joy to the brethren of the Congo... with the intention of helping them to approach God as the dearest and sweetest of fathers and to overcome the feeling of oppression generated by ancestral fears, by the fear of hostile forces and by excessive submission to leaders without scruples".

Holy Redeemer Guild

September 01 – 15 NAP 16 – 30 PCA
October 01 – 07 RCA 08 – 15 TCH 16 – 31 RSA

Prayer Intentions

September – That the Secular Comboni Missionaries, while conducting their X General Assembly centred on the icon of the mustard seed, may live in the certainty that Christ will cause the seeds of the Gospel sown by them to bear abundant fruit. *Lord hear us.*

October – That all Christians may feel they are “sent” ad gentes and take to heart the mission of building up an atmosphere of welcome and encounter for the poor and for migrants and commence initiatives of mutual knowledge and respect. *Lord hear us.*

ITALIA

Milano: the community says goodbye to the deceased confreres

On 11 July, the Milan community gathered around Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General, and Fr. Fabio Baldan, Provincial Superior of Italy, to keep the memory of the confreres who died since the start of the Covid-19 emergency. For some of them who died during the acute phase of the lockdown, it had not been possible to celebrate any public funeral rites. This was the time to mark, as a community, the departure of our confreres with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Tesfaye and celebrated publicly, together with those family members who could attend.

There was a good degree of participation also by people close to us who frequent our Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima and who knew our confreres. Fr. Fabio helped the confreres to make a sapiential reading of the events and took the occasion to meet the personnel who work in our Assistential Health Residence (RSA).

In this way, the community said its goodbyes to Fr. Firmino Cusini, Bro. Libero Ribelli, Fr. Giuseppe Simoni, Fr. Costante Ferranti, Fr. Paolo Filippini, Fr. Raffaele Cefalo, Fr. Bruno Carollo, Fr. Luigi Gusmeroli and Fr. Claudio Crimi. It was confirmed that Covid-19 was the cause of the deaths of Fr. Simoni, Fr. Ferranti, Fr. Filippini and Fr. Cefalo.

The following day, Sunday 12 July, Fr. Tesfaye and Fr. Fabio celebrated Mass in the chapel of the Milan community.

From Castel d’Azzano

This morning, Fr. General told us he would willingly take our messages to the General Council. This is the first time I heard Fr. General saying this. We were very pleasantly surprised.

Some of us spoke up immediately but I thought I should reflect before speaking. Now, after thinking about it, I am writing a few lines.

The restrictions imposed by the virus have, I think, made many confreres understand that being is greater than doing and we, here in Castel d’Azzano, are happy to contribute to the Kingdom of God by being praying people who offer their bodily discomforts, even though we have no external activities. I believe the same is happening to our confreres who are busier than ever.

Then, we thank God who guides us along the right path: more vocations and less money, which means more testimony of what the Lord does in us and around us (the work of God) than our buildings (our works). We thank the Lord who hears our prayers for vocations; actually, about one third of the confreres are now from Africa. And the Africans are more inclined to work together, in community, while we Europeans are individualists by nature and more inclined to create great structures (I get money from my benefactors and so I work alone and on a large scale; I work for the people and not with the people).

I believe that the word ‘*We*’ will become increasingly more commonly used than the word ‘*I*’ and that the word ‘*Our*’ will be more popular than ‘*My*’. I wish you all the best. Memento. (*Fr. Carlo Plotegheri*, on the occasion of the visit of the Superior General to the Bro. Alfredo Fiorini Centre, July 2020 - editor’s note.)

Bro. Alfredo Fiorini: the memory continues

The memory of Bro. Alfredo Fiorini, 28 years after his violent death in Mozambique, continues in the diocese of Latina and especially in Terracina, in his parish of Saint Dominic Savio.

This year, some initiatives have been organised. On Friday 21: Eucharistic Adoration; Saturday 22: missionary animation for boys and girls, “*Travelling with Alfredo*”; Monday 24 (anniversary of his death): Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Venanzio Milani. In the evening, with a good number of people present, there was a direct connection with Mozambique with Chiara Turrini, resident in Mozambique, to get the latest news on the situation, and a conference by the journalist and author Luca Attanasio, presented by Fr. Milani, who gave a counter-narration on that Africa which is not just a theatre of war, hunger etc., but the Africa of independence, of values, of

sustainable development and democracy. He also spoke of Africa here at home. There was also a display of a number of mages, dedicated to Bro. Alfredo.

KENYA

Despite the pandemic

The Covid-19 has been among us in Kenya ever since the first case was imported around five months ago. Its impact has been enormous and it has turned our lives upside down. Many have lost their jobs and their future is in danger. The school year has been postponed causing great upsets. Nevertheless, we are learning new ways of doing things, including celebrations which are carried out with simplicity. Thus, on 24 and 25 July, we celebrated the perpetual profession and diaconate of our confreres Polycarp Ntabo Moindi and Joseph Githua Ng'ang'a.

The ceremonies were carried out observing strictly the measures established by the government to limit the spread of the virus. According to one of these, religious celebrations must not last longer than one hour and must not involve more than a hundred people. To respect these norms, we reserved the celebration of perpetual vows to the Combonis in the zone of Nairobi and the ordination to the diaconate was reserved mainly to friends and relatives of the ordinands. Everything went very well. The two young men were ordained deacons by our bishop confrere Mons. Macram Max Gassis, in the church of St. Daniel Comboni in Embakasi.

MALAWI-ZAMBIA

Perpetual vows and diaconate

Having completed his theological studies in Kinshasa (Congo), the Zambian Comboni scholastic Teddy Kalibuku did a year of pastoral work in the parish of Lirangwe, in the southern region of Malawi known as the "Shire Region".

Once it was clear to all that the COVID-19 would not have allowed gatherings since both Church and state had imposed restrictions that had to be observed, on 14 August, the confreres of the Shire Region gathered with the community of Lunzu with provincial Fr. Michael Mumba and a confrere who had come from Zambia, to celebrate Teddy Kalibuku's profession of perpetual vows.

The liturgical celebration was nevertheless solemn, with a beautiful homily by Father Provincial on our vocation and perseverance, deeply

rooted in Jesus Christ. It was followed by a nice meal in Lunzu community with the cutting of the cake and ice cream. All of this served to strengthen the bonds of fraternity between us.

The following day, 15 August, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady, Teddy was ordained deacon at Lirangwe parish, where he carried out his missionary service, by Archbishop Thomas Mzuza of Blantyre diocese. Together with Father provincial, there were also some confreres and a limited number of the faithful. *Ad Multos Annos, Abambo Teddy! (Fr. Michael Martin Zeitz, mccj)*

MOZAMBICO

Perpetual Profession

On 19 July 2020, at Chitima (Mozambique), despite the security measures required by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Eucharistic celebration was held during which the Congolese scholastic Paluku Kamwami Faustin consecrated himself definitively to God by making his final profession with the intention of imitating Jesus Christ and becoming a missionary disciple according to the charism of St Daniel Comboni.

Fr. António Manuel Bogaio Constantino, Superior of the Circumscription, presided at the celebration. The event, in its simplicity and in the presence of just a few people, was lived with great spiritual interiority. After the celebration, there was a very brief convivial moment during which Faustino received the best wishes of all present that he may be faithful to the call of God and may serve the people with simplicity and courage.

TCHAD

A celebration of perpetual vows and diaconate

The Delegation celebrated with joy the perpetual vows and diaconate of the two Chadian scholastics: Richard Horbé and Bienvenu Gokam. The celebration took place at Moïssala, in the diocese of Sarh. We thank God for these vocations and their total self-giving in the service of the mission and we pray that the Lord of the harvest may raise up more Chadian Comboni vocations for the mission of the universal Church.

The Eucharistic celebration took place in the parish church of the Holy Trinity in Moïssala on 18 July 2020 and was presided over by the delegation superior Fr. Fidèle Katsan. The Mass began at 16.00 in a

fraternal and joyful atmosphere, bearing in mind the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and the observance of the security measures imposed by the government and the directives of the Chadian Episcopal Conference. Fr. Fidèle Katsan, commenting on the readings of the day, placed the emphasis on three tools necessary for fidelity to the definitive missionary commitment: prayer, an ascetic life or personal effort and the support of a healthy community life. The Delegation Superior received the perpetual vows of both young men in the name of Father General Tesfaye Tadesse. In attendance were some confreres from other communities, some priests, relatives of the newly-professed and some parishioners.

Again respecting the security measures, on 19 July we celebrated the Mass of the diaconate, with Mons. Miguel Sebastian, Bishop of Sarh, presiding. In his homily, he emphasised the importance of humble and disinterested service, the opposite to what the world wants which is to command and be the leader.

The two new deacons will continue their period of diaconate in the communities where they are doing their missionary service. They are prepared to serve and to transmit the joy of the Gospel to their brothers and sisters. As we read in the thoughts of Comboni chosen for the occasion, "Always cheerful and already consecrated to God, ready to do all the things God asks of me" (W 1034).

TOGO

The diocese of Sokodé, a generous beggar

On 15 August 2020, the solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady, Sokodé, one of the oldest dioceses of the central region of the country, had the joy of receiving five new priests ordained at the hands of Mons. Célestin-Marie Gaoua, the bishop of the diocese. Three of them belong to the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption, also known as Assumptionists, one to the Little Work of Divine Providence, better known as the community of Don Oriane, and the fifth is our confrere Théophile Razak Atti.

The parish of Christ The Light Of The World in Kpangalam joyfully welcomed and organised the celebration in this time of the Covid-19 pandemic. All the measures necessary were taken to observe the norms established by the government and the Bishops' Conference of Togo regarding the re-opening of places of worship.

In his homily, the Bishop invited the people of God to love the Virgin Mary who was assumed into heaven at the end of her earthly life and

exhorted those about to be ordained to have a special devotion to Our Lady, Mother of the High Priest *par excellence*, Jesus Christ, to love her and to pray with her and through her intercession, “ad Jesum, per et cum Mariam”!

The newly-ordained priests gave thanks to God for the gift of the priesthood and also thanked their families, friends and benefactors for having supported them. The celebration continued with songs, a shared meal and exchanges between people coming from different places, while observing social distancing.

It must be said that the diocese of Sokodé has only 65 priests, a very low number for such an old and vast diocese. For this reason, the bishop has always strongly supported the Institutes that have come to work in this Islam-dominated context.

We give thanks to God, Lord of the calling, who, despite the growing need for priests in the diocese of Sokodé, calls the sons of this land to carry out their mission elsewhere.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Fr. Giacomo Piccinelli (09.06.1928 – 11.07.2020)

It is beautiful to contemplate the tall trees of the forest outlined against the immense heavens. Their presence encourages us and urges us to commit ourselves. The fall of any one of these giants makes a great noise and leaves a gap in the horizon. This is what I felt when, last January, I saw Fr. Giacomo Piccinelli in a wheelchair, sorely tried physically but always cheerful, smiling and a ready wit.

Fr. Giacomo was born at Brinzio, in Lombardy (Italy), on 9 June 1928. He grew up amongst dynamic and productive people, in a blessed land, irrigated by the waters of Lake Como and the snow-covered peaks of the Alps. His parents, seeing his abilities, wanted him to become a teacher but God’s plans were different. For the restless Giacomo, the environment of the lake and the classroom was too confined: following the call of God, he knocked on the door of the Combonis and they accepted him. Giacomo was ordained priest on 31 May 1958. He didn’t have to wait long to leave for the mission as, in 1961, he was appointed to South Lower California, in Mexico.

I met him some years later to ask him if he would agree to change community. The province was asking him to leave the mission for the capital where he would have had to devote himself to a group of young people who, under the patronage of the Legion of Mary, needed a priest for their human and Christian formation. For Fr.

Giacomo, this meant leaving the mission to which he had dedicated all his energy and hopes. It cost him dearly but he agreed and, for a number of years, worked with those marginalised young people. With his strength of character and confidence in God, he succeeded in being accepted by them. Like a good father, he taught them to be honest and productive, to earn their daily bread by working honestly and respecting others. The young people believed in him since he was the first to roll up his sleeves and they cried when the superiors asked Fr. Giacomo to move to the mission the Combonis had opened among the indigenous people of Tuxtepec and the surrounding area, in the diocese of Oaxaca.

In the seventies, due partly to the insistence of certain people, the General Administration authorised a missionary commitment among the indigenous people of Chinantla. Fr. Giacomo asked to be included in the list of the lucky ones who were going to support the Christian communities there. Appointed to Ojitlán, he soon became aware of the religiously desolate situation. During a patronal feast, he had an opportunity to see that Jesus Christ and the Word of God were entirely absent from those feasts! Besides, the parish of Ojitlán had become a fiefdom of the Lefebvre traditionalists. Fr. Giacomo immediately understood that condemnation would not have helped and ruled that all religious celebrations should be preceded and accompanied by the proclamation of the Word of God. It was not easy but it succeeded in some villages. The superiors, however, in the aftermath of certain events, thought it best not to accentuate the differences that existed between the various groups and asked Fr. Giacomo to leave that turbulent one and go to Costa Rica, to minister to the lay faithful of the Vicariate of Puerto Limón. There he began to form small Christian communities assembled by the Word of God, sustained by the Eucharist and energised by the missionary mandate of Jesus. Catechetical centres were set up where periodic retreats were held and Fr. Giacomo found a way to express his “charism” as a builder and planner, also demonstrating his capacity for fraternity and friendship with the lay collaborators; many people came to God and remained faithful to the Church. Fr. Giacomo’s personality was complex: he was not only a builder and a missionary but also a great admirer and disciple of St Benedict and his motto “ora et labora”. “If you are not willing to do manual work, you will not eat”: he never spoke these words but they were written on his face. He was a blacksmith, a carpenter, a cook and took care of the hens and the rabbits. He had succeeded completely in carrying out this life

programme in El Salvador when the superiors transferred him from Bribri, Costa Rica, and sent him to Cuscatacingo, a peripheral parish which still bore the wounds of the recent civil war the bloody clashes between gangs. In a few years, the parish had changed and the Combonis offered it to the bishop in exchange for permission to start a new parish in a needy area in the outskirts.

Giacomo spent the last years of his life in a village on the airport road near San Salvador. Finally, his guardian angel took him from his wheelchair and carried him to his encounter with the Lord of life. The calendar showed it was 11 July 2020. (*Fr. Gianmaria Piu, mccj*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHERS: Segundo Aurelio, of Fr. Jaramillo Arias Pablo Eduardo (EC); Adossi Ahadeta, of Bro. Adossi Koffissan A. Matthias-Elie (KE).

THE MOTHERS: Maria dos Prazeres, of Fr. Joaquim de Sousa Pereira (P); Anna Maria, of Fr. Claudio Zendron (I) and sister of Fr. Alberto Villotti (†).

THE BROTHERS: Giuseppe, of Fr. Mario Porto (I); Beniamino, of Fr. Renato Rosanelli (I); John, of Fr. Patrick Wilkinson (LP); José Maria, of Fr. Miguel Ángel Llamazares (E); Enrique, of Fr. Vicente Serrano Aparici (EC); Domingo, of Sc. Mponda João Mponda (PCA); Adossi Kossi Benoit, of Bro. Adossi Koffissan A. Matthias-Elie (KE).

THE SISTERS: Giuseppina, of Bro. Alessandro Ongaro (I); Anna, of Fr. Anastasio Tricarico (I); Sr. Irene (Scalabrinian), of Fr. Pietro Moro (I); Maria del Pilar of Fr. Torres Gómez Manuel Ramón

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Sr. M. Natalina Bellotti, Sr. Eugenia Maria Gerosa, Sr. Pier Valeria Muraro, Sr. M. Andreina Merigo, Sr. M. Agnese Pettinato, Sr. Daniella M. Haibu Zerezghi.