

# Familia Comboniana

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

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799

September 2021

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

### Journeys by the members of the General Council

#### ***Father General***

From 20 August to 12 September – visiting the communities of Sudan and leading Spiritual Exercises.

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

From 4 to 11 September, Spiritual Exercises in Limone.

#### ***Bro. Alberto Lamana***

From 1 to 8 August, Spiritual Exercises at Montecuccio, Rome.

From 20 to 25 September in Verona for the European Continental Assembly in preparation for the Chapter.

#### ***Fr. Alcides Costa***

From 9 August to 11 September - in Brazil.

### Perpetual Professions

Sc. Ngalite Régis Eric (RCA)	Dono-Manga (TC)	03.07.2021
Sc. Silwembe Christopher (MZ)	Nairobi (KE)	11/07/2021
Sc. Jobo Stanislas (MZ)	Nairobi (KE)	11/07/2021
Sc. Katembo Jean Paul Muhandiro (CN)	Nairobi (KE)	11/07/2021
Sc. Tesema Habtamu Masresha (ETH)	Nairobi (KE)	11/07/2021
Sc. Oduor Kevin Otieno (KE)	Nairobi (KE)	11/07/2021
Sc. Angella Gabriel (U)	Layibi (UG)	28/08/2021
Sc. Inácio Manuel	Layibi (UG)	28/08/2021

## Ordinations to the priesthood

Fr. Nyinga Dunga David (CN) Kinshasa (RDC) 24.07.2021  
Fr. Muhindo Mwanawatuma Gratien (CN) Butembo (RDC) 02.08.2021

## 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 celebration of the XIX General Chapter of the Comboni Missionaries may light up their way in humble service to the mission of the Church. *Lord hear us.*

**October** – Together with all the missionaries of the world, we thank the Lord for the opportunities he gives us of serving the neediest and we pray that we may be always able to do so with love. *Lord hear us.*

## Publications

**Tonino Falaguasta Nyabenda mccj**, *Un Missionnaire Combonien, Joseph Ambrosoli, médecin des âmes et des corps*, Afriquespoir 2021. This recently published booklet in French is dedicated to the great missionary doctor who will soon be beatified. Fr. Tonino Falaguasta, in a few pages and with a simple style, brings close to us the untiring and loving service of Fr. Ambrosoli, and to his “miracles” at Kalongo Hospital.

## ASIA

### Webinar: the Tao of Heaven

The Mission Secretary of the Asian delegation has organised, on 23 and 24 August, a webinar on missionary methodology entitled: “The Tao of Heaven: the first inculturation of the Gospel in China (VII century)”.

Already at the start of the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), the Oriental Syrian missionaries (the so-called Nestorian missionaries" or missionaries of the "Illuminated Community of Jingjiao Teachings") proclaimed for the first time the story of Jesus to the Chinese in their native language. The webinar sought to bring to light their efforts to understand, translate, explain and hand on the story of Jesus in Chinese categories.

The relator was Comboni Fr. Víctor M. Aguilar Sánchez who is at present working in Macao (China). In 2019, Fr. Aguilar was awarded a

doctorate at the Gregorian University, Rome, on this theme and his doctorate thesis won the Bellarmio Prize 2020.

During the webinar, Fr. Victor presented the methodology and the conclusions of this thesis, especially from the point of view of inculturation and emphasised the relevance of the experience of those first missionaries in China for the Church of today.

## CONGO

### **Priestly ordination**

Saturday 24 July 2021, at the cathedral of Notre Dame du Congo in Kinshasa, Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo presided at the Mass during which nine deacons were ordained to the priesthood. Among them was the Comboni Missionary David Nyinga Dunga.

The celebration began at 9am with the participation of at least a hundred priests, men and women religious and a large congregation of the faithful including the parents and friends of the deacons.

In his homily, Cardinal Fridolin thanked the nine deacons for giving themselves to God, the Church and humanity. He also thanked the parents and relatives for their sacrifice and the education they gave to their children and the religious institutes for accompanying them in their formation with their prayers and support in times of difficulty.

The cardinal then exhorted the deacons to be good intermediaries between God and his people, to be zealous and creative priests, fervent in prayer and attentive to the needs of the poor. He invited them to be aware of their religious and missionary identity, “to be true missionaries, willing to go to the geographic and existential peripheries, the isolated areas and to those who have lost the will to live”.

After the Mass, the Comboni Missionaries, the Comboni Missionary Sisters, the Lay Comboni Missionaries and the friends and relatives of Fr. David joyfully shared in a fraternal meal organised by the Province and the family of the new priest. On the following day, Fr. David celebrated his first Mass amidst joyful singing at his home parish, Christ-Roi, in the Commune of Kasa-vubu.

Fr. David had chosen as his motto the verse Luke 10, 27-28: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and all your mind and your neighbour as yourself”.

Fr. David, 34, is the fourth child of Kongoli Nyi Bongo and Mbaya Lucie. He attended the preparatory school and postulancy in Kinshasa; he was then sent to the novitiate in Cotonou where he

made his first religious profession in May 2015. He continued his theological studies in Lima, Peru, up to 2019 when he began his missionary service in Pangoa, in Peruvian Amazonia among the indigenous Nomatsiguenga. He was given his first missionary appointment to Peru.

Fr. David expressed his joy after his ordination in these words: “I thank God for the grace of the priesthood. I have lived these days with serenity, joy and peace; now I want to be at His service. I ask Him to give me the grace of service and willingness”. The Church in Pangoa to which Fr. David has been sent presents the great challenge of evangelisation in depth of the indigenous population by the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and human promotion. (*Bro. Lwanga Kakule*)

## CURIA

### **Map of the experiences of social ministeriality**

In July, a dossier was published containing a mapping of the activities of the Comboni Family in the ambit of social pastoral, edited by a commission and based upon two questionnaires that were made available to all the members of the Comboni Family.

The documented experience – 205 in all, to date – are divided by continent and various data are provided for each experience corresponding to precise evaluation criteria, chosen on the basis of pre-set objectives, a brief summary of the experience and several photos.

All this material, whose collection and cataloguing required considerable effort, has been placed in a database available online on our websites ([comboni.org](http://comboni.org) and [combonimission.net](http://combonimission.net)) in PDF, to make it possible for those interested to download and print it.

This is a considerable task since, by analysing the data of the mapping, it is possible to establish whether our ministerial presence corresponds to the demands of our time and our Comboni charism.

A reading of the data will also make it possible to promote and create a current of relations between the different projects with the aim of reciprocally enriching ourselves by the experience of each one in the various pastoral areas.

### **A display in stages: contextual models of evangelisation**

A small display has been set up in the entrance hall of the Generalate in Rome; it will be updated periodically for the purpose of offering

periodical reflections on the missionary ministry of our time from the perspective of the Comboni experience lived out in the territory of the different continental contexts. Three experiences are presented at a time, alternating with themes and situations, to encourage sharing and dialogue and to appreciate different contextual models of evangelisation.

In fact, in the context of the profound changes taking place in the world, the missionary service also finds itself face to face with new scenarios and, as a missionary Institute, in communion with the Church we are making a transition towards a new paradigm of mission. The synthesis of this elaboration is given by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, his programming document to form the direction to be taken by the Church in the coming years.

As we are aware, missionary methodology was one of the strong points of Daniel Comboni who, starting from his experience in the field and by meeting with the most advanced forces of the missionary movement of his time, was able to discern how to approach the people, to present the Good News and to communicate it in a meaningful and inspired manner.

In today's world, characterised by pluralism, culture, situations and extremely diverse contexts in the various continents, it is not possible to have a single "method" of evangelisation. There is a growing need for contextual approaches that require research and discernment. In this matter, the path followed by Daniel Comboni is still valid and highly relevant today.

The first three experiences of the display present the Comboni Missionary work at Castel Volturno (Italy/Europe), at Korogocho (Kenya/Africa) and at Tumaco (Colombia/S. America).

## EGSD

### **The eightieth birthday of Fr. Davide Ferraboschi**

On Monday 19 July, the parish of Masalma in Omdurman gathered around Fr. Davide Ferraboschi to celebrate his eightieth birthday. The celebration drew the attendance of many parishioners and also of many confreres and friends from the various communities of Omdurman, Bahri and Khartoum. After the Mass at which Fr. Davide himself presided, the parishioners presented their gifts and expressed their appreciation in the courtyard of the parish church. A message of blessings from the Holy Father was also received, brought by the Chancellor of the Nunciature in Sudan. The celebration ended with a

fraternal meal shared by the confreres and the Comboni Sisters in attendance.

Fr. David's eightieth birthday celebrations coincided with his Golden Jubilee after fifty years in the mission of Sudan (except for one year in Cairo). Fr. Davide spent most of those fifty years in Kordofan (Kadugli, El Obeid, El Nahoud) and in Darfur (Nyala). He first went to Masalma in 2005 where he was Parish Priest up to 2015 and now works as a curate.

## ETHIOPIA

### **Inauguration of the “Bible of Emmaus”**

On Saturday 24 July 2021, at the Capuchin Franciscan Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Gullele, the launching was held of the Catholic Bible in Amharic also called “The Bible of Emmaus”, in the presence of H. E. Cardinal Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel, Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Ababa, a number of Catholic bishops, representatives of the Biblical Society, the religious heads of evangelical churches and a large number of priests and the Catholic faithful.

The bringing together of the 73 books of the Catholic canon of Scripture and the accurate revision, where necessary, of the texts, is a historic achievement by the Catholic Church in Ethiopia. The work, lasting ten years, was completed thanks to the determination and competence of Dr. Abba Daniel Asefa and his team (which includes some former Comboni students and employees such as *Endrias Kacharo, Zekarias, and Abju*). Abba Seyum Cahsay Hagos, mccj, was also commemorated. With the help of others, he contributed to the previous translation of the Deuterocanonical Books and other important Catholic texts.

## ITALIA

### **Annual Assembly of Comboni Missionaries serving in Italy**

The Combonis of the Italian Province held their Annual General Assembly in Pesaro from the evening of 28 June to the evening of 2 July. This year the Assembly had as its main purpose the preparation of the report of the Italian Province to the XIX General Chapter of the Institute which is to be held in June 2022 in Rome. The reduced number of participants due to the pandemic included the Vicar

General Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins, representing the General Council.

The Assembly was opened by the theologian Maria Soave Buscemi with a reflection on the ecclesial reality, the mission and diakonia. The reports of the various Provincial Secretariats and Commissions and that of the Provincial Council were shared during the Assembly.

The gathering studied and debated the themes associated with the change of missionary paradigm which demands a more adequate response and a qualified service that increasingly networks with the Comboni Family and many other actors in civil society, movements, churches and communities of other religions that work to transform society. This is the perspective of ministeriality which is the specific missionary services based upon Comboni spirituality which require competence and passion, among and with migrants and young people, in communication and commitment for justice, peace and care for creation.

Approval was given to a document on ministeriality understood as diakonia as the basic criterion for rearranging the Comboni presence in Italy which certainly now represents a milestone in setting out the next missionary steps in response to the challenges of today. Some structures are to be re-qualified others to be closed and presences must be ever more uncomplicated, close to the poor, respectful towards the ecosystem and in solidarity with those who suffer. Frank and open dialogue also led to important votes to reconfigure the face of a province which, for far too long, was considered in the Comboni world one that dispensed economic resources and services. Instead, it is today called to be in the forefront of geographic and existential peripheries where the message of Jesus of Nazareth is either forgotten or discarded but is fundamental for us to console and liberate.

In this journey of innovation which guides us towards the Chapter, we challenged ourselves and adopted a report that presents the work of the Italian Province, placing on the table enormous challenges such as economic sustainability, innovation and the digitalisation of missionary communication, the internationalisation of the Province, integral and intercultural formation of young candidates, a new approach to work among the youth, a liberating presence among migrants, missionary animation that makes its own the themes of Pope Francis such as integral ecology, solidarity economy and universal fraternity founded upon the radical dignity of every person.  
*(Fr. Filippo Ivardi, mccj)*

## **Padova keeps the memory of Fr. Ezekiel Ramin**

«What the seed suffers is suffered by the sower ». These words of Father Ezekiel Ramin, A Comboni from Padua, who was killed in 1985 at the age of 32, ring so prophetically true as to cause one to tremble. It was this image that, on the anniversary of his death, guided the memorial of “Father Lele” at his home parish of San Giuseppe, in Padova.

Faithful to tradition, Padova, understood as the local Church and the community of the Comboni Missionaries, kept the memorial of Fr. Ezekiel Ramin on the anniversary of his murder in Cacoal, Brazil, 24 July 1985.

The church was filled with the faithful and, with them, the many friends for whom Fr. Ezekiel is more than just a memory but a living memory of commitment, an intercessor, an inspirer of life offered up. This took place at the parish church of St. Joseph in Padova, the church where Fr. Ezekiel was baptised, was raised in the faith, accompanied by the sacraments, was ordained priest and, finally, where his funeral was celebrated one warm, hazy day early in August 1985. A marble plaque inside the baptistery of the church as well as a bronze bust on the left side of the facade of the parish church show that this is the church of Fr. Ezekiel Ramin.

The Mass was led by Mons. Pietro Brazzale, coordinator general of the diocesan rogatory of the cause of beatification of Fr. Ezekiel. Concelebrating were the director of the missionary centre Rev. Raffaele Gobbi, the parish priest Rev. Lino Minuzzo and the confreres of Fr. Ezekiel, Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse, Father General, Fr. Gino Pastore, Fr. Franco Vialetto, Fr. Davide De Guidi and Fr. Gaetano Montresor. Also present were the four surviving brothers of Fr. Ezekiel, Paolo, Antonio, Filippo and Fabiano. The Mass was enlivened by a musician of the parish and a small choir. A number of diocesan priests were unable to attend since it was a Saturday and they were busy in their respective parishes.

Mons. Pietro Brazzale, a great and passionate student of the human, Christian and missionary life of the Servant of God Fr. Ezekiel Ramin, as he usually calls him, commented on the Gospel passage of the multiplication of the loaves, reading it in the light of the experience of faith and self-giving of Fr. Ezekiel who placed at the Lord’s disposal everything he had, all that nature had given him, and that was indeed very much and gave it all to God. Mons. Brazzale insisted upon the charity of Fr. Ezekiel, also referring to the 36 sworn testimonies that were heard during the diocesan rogatory, testimonies he described as moving. It is now time to invoke the Servant of God as an intercessor.



Fr. Tesfaye – his coming to this celebration was a pleasant surprise – took the floor and thanked the family and the parish community who ‘reared’ Fr. Ezekiel in the faith, in the values of life and of the Gospel and who gave him to the Church and to the world as a witness. Before Mass, Fr. Tesfaye had gone to the tomb of Fr. Ezekiel at the Major Cemetery of Padova where, together with some Comboni confreres, he remained in silence and in prayer, to honour Fr. Ezekiel and his entire family. The same chapel contains the remains of Fr. Ezechiel’s parents, Mario and Amabile, his brother Gaudenzio who died aged 27 in a tragic road accident and at whose funeral Fr. Ezechiel presided a few months before leaving for Brazil, and his sister-in-law Gabriella. Fr. Tesfaye then asked God to grant new vocations for the proclamation of the Gospel. In conclusion, he informed the congregation of the great consideration with which the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints accompanies the normal iter of study and evaluation of the documentation presented for the recognition of the holy virtues of the Servant of God Fr. Ezekiel and of the prayer of intercession approved by Mons. Bruno Pedron, Bishop Emeritus of Ji-Paraná, a Salesian and also originally from Padova. A number of the faithful purchased the book of the letters of Father Ezekiel, *Testimone della speranza*, and everyone took home a copy of the holy picture with the prayer, thus declaring *sotto voce* that, in their homes, the picture of father Ezekiel is conspicuously present, inspiring both prayer and commitment. (*Fr. Gaetano Montresor, mccj*)

### **“O What a Summer 2021!” In the name of Afro-Italianism**

After the gap of last year, the week from 24 to 31 July saw the return of, *O What a Summer!* held in the grounds of the house in Vicolo Pozzo, Verona. It was a week filled with music, fashion, African cinema, display and culinary stands organised by *Fondazione Nigrizia*, *Museo Africano (MA)*, *Festival del Cinema Africano* and by the *Afroveronesi Association*.

At last, we were able to come in person to spend some evenings together with an exhibition which, since 2006, has become part of the Veronese summer season with meetings and events offered freely to the citizens, something that nourishes passion and curiosity for the world of Afro and Afro descent.

The exhibition this year was meant to highlight and bring to the fore the Afro-Italian world and reality. This new Italy is a world waiting to be discovered which also renews our missionary narrative which sees Africa solely as a reality 5000 km away. The world of *Afropeism* is the

reality in which we live and which we cannot avoid as missionaries. The confrontation with their desire to be the voice of the struggle for citizenship and against all forms of discrimination does us good and renews us. Above all else, it purifies us of the sometimes paternalistic attitude which sees this reality solely through the lens of the situation of migrants.

“O What a Summer 2021!”, attended by almost 1200 people on the first two evenings and an average of 100 for the cinema evenings, has demonstrated that culture and art can be brought together to promote the human values of all.

Saturday 24 July, was the turn of *rap* and *hip hop* music. The artists included such people as Numb, Koi and Natas; followed by Big Boa, F00rtissimo and the rising star Tommy Kuti who matured artistically to a degree with Afriradio and Nigrizia Multimedia.

Sunday 25 was the turn of the *Fashion Shows* with male and female models who paraded wearing the creations of *BB Style*, artisan brands of handmade Afroltalian fashion by Bruno Bruxtar Kpakpovi (Togo) and *KeChic*, a West-African tailoring business that derives from a fantastic social project providing work for the tailors at the *Centre Handicapé di Dakar*, together with friends and colleagues of Sheikh Diattara who first proposed the idea in Milanese territory. During the interval between the two fashion parades, a concert was performed by the singer Anna Bassi followed by the beautiful voice of *Adriana*, the musical group *E.D.A* with *Sidy Casse*, a young Senegalese singer, a former contestant in the *X Factor* musical talent show.

From Monday 26 to Saturday 31 July, there were six evenings of *Cinema Africano sotto le stelle*. These were films on the theme of migration: *Travellers and Migrants* of the Verona African Film Festival. There were five short and five full-length films by African and European directors accompanied each evening by a different guest speaker who, after the films were shown, chaired a moment of reflection and study of the themes covered by the cinematographic work”. (*Fr. Fabrizio Colombo, mccj*)

### **29<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of the death of Bro. Fiorini**

The 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Bro. Alfredo Fiorini was celebrated in Terracina (LT) with various initiatives led by Reverend Fabrizio, the parish priest and well attended by the faithful. On Saturday 21 August, there was an afternoon devoted to children. On Sunday 22, the Mass was enlivened by the missionary group. On Monday 23, the very young visited the places connected with Alfredo:

the homes and buildings dedicated to him, the hospital, the school, the library and his tomb ... In the evening there was a missionary vigil led by Fr. Venanzio Milani. On Tuesday, the anniversary of his death, there was a Eucharistic celebration with a large congregation of the faithful, some priests of the town and some Combonis from the General Curia, among whom was the Vicar General Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins, and the Assistant General Brother Alberto Lamana. At 21.30, under the direction of the Alfredo Fiorini Association, there was a conference on "*The new forms of slavery*": the scarlet thread that joins Africa to Agro Pontino. There were interventions by the journalist Luca Attanasio, the sociologist Marco Onizzolo and Fr. Venanzio Milani.

## KENYA

### **Ordinations to the diaconate**

Saturday 17 July 2021 was a great day for the parish of Mary Mother of the Church in Amakuriat, West Pokot, where we had the ordination to the diaconate of five confreres: Katembo Jean Paul Muhandiro (RDC), Jobo Stanislas (Malawi), Habtamu Masresha Tesema (Ethiopia), Silwembe Christopher (Zambia) and Kevin Oduor (Kenya). The Bishop of Kitale, Mons. Maurice Crowley, who ordained them, praised the Combonis for the good work they do among the Pokot people and challenged the men and women to be ready to offer their sons and daughters to serve the People of God.

In his homily, he encouraged the deacons to be men of prayer, ready to lead the people of God to the house of the Lord and, speaking to the people, he greatly emphasised the importance of peace. "We need a peaceful place where our women can go freely. Please, stop fighting over cows!" In conclusion, he encouraged the faithful to follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Health to combat the Coronavirus.

The celebration, accompanied by singing and dancing, was also attended by political leaders. One of them, the senator of the area, assured the Bishop that there was already peace between the Pokot and the Turkana: people may move freely from one county to another without fear.

The confreres of the nearby communities (Turkana and Pokot) attended in large numbers. In his speech, the Provincial Superior Fr. Austine Radol Odhiambo thanked the Bishop for agreeing to ordain the five Combonis and the parish priest of Amakuriat, Fr. Gervais Katya, for preparing the ceremony. Let us pray for our deacons as

they prepare for their ordination to the priesthood in their respective provinces. (*Fr. David K. Ahiro, mccj*)

## PORTUGAL

### **Fr. Rebelo confirmed as national director of the PMW**

The Bishop in charge of the Missionary Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Portugal, Mons. Armando Esteves has confirmed the appointment of our confrere Fr. José António Mendes Rebelo as national director of the Pontifical Missionary Works. Fr. Rebelo will begin his service on 20 September 2021.

Our heartfelt congratulations go to Fr. Rebelo on his appointment together with our best wishes and prayers for his ministry at the service of the missions.

## SUDAN

### **Khartoum Bahri Parish celebrates its Diamond Jubilee**

Dedicated to the “Blessed Virgin Mediatrix of All Graces”, the parish of Khartoum Bahri has celebrated its Diamond Jubilee (75 years) on 15 August 2021. No other parish in the diocese bears this name and there are certainly very few with such a long history. Seventy-five years is a long time and it was marked by extraordinary services and the sacrifices of many priests, sisters, catechists, leaders, choir members and altar servers who made this parish what it is today.

The celebration took place on 15 August when the annual feast of the parish is celebrated. The Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Gabriel Zubeir Wako, Archbishop Emeritus of Khartoum, accompanied by the Apostolic Nuncio to Sudan, the Provincial Superior, various confreres, priests, religious and a large congregation of more than a thousand of the faithful, mostly adolescents and young adults.

The Cardinal commenced the celebration by incensing the new bronze cross of the parish, brought specially from Italy and is now in the compound of the church, there for the veneration of all who enter. It is a bronze cross for a diamond jubilee that fills our hearts with hope for a golden future for the mission in Sudan!

During the celebration, H. E. Cardinal Zubeir invited the faithful not to lose sight of the role of our Mother Mary in individual Christian life. Our Lady has been decisive for the growth and survival of our Church during recent stormy years.

At the conclusion of the celebration, everyone present was given as a keepsake a small picture of the Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus. The Church in Sudan has a long history that goes back directly to our Founder, but the presence of so many young people points to the youth of the Church which is forever seeking new ways of affirming its presence in a hostile environment. Most of our young people come from South Sudan and from the Nuba Mountains. We prayed to the Blessed Virgin, who intercedes for all graces, the grace we need to proclaim the Gospel to all these young people whose families have been broken up and whose lives are full of challenges.

## TOGO-GHANA-BENIN

### **The province is celebrating**

Saturday 26 June and Saturday 24 July 2021 have become part of the annals of Togo-Ghana-Benin Province and will be forever remembered when speaking of ordinations. In fact, on these days, four sons of the Province received Holy orders: two priests and two deacons.

They are the Fathers Benoît Azameti and René Agbonou and the deacons Saurel Augustin Houinsou and Simon Agede.

The priestly ordinations were held in our parishes of Ste Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus and the Sainte Face de Kégué (Lomé) on 26 June, in the presence of an immense congregation from the home parishes of our confreres and those of the other ordinands belonging to the Discalced Carmelites (5 priests) and the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (2 priests and 1 deacon).

Despite the torrential rain that fell in Lome that day, the celebration was very beautiful and we wish to remember an expression from the homily of Mons. Nicodème Bariggah-Benissan, Metropolitan Archbishop of Lome: "If it for God to call you, it is up to you to act in such a way as to be good priests", to be in the midst of a world hungry for meaning.

As for the deacons, Mons. Isaac-Jogues Gaglo, Bishop of Aneho (Togo) did not mince his words inviting the ordinands (3 priests and 7 deacons for the diocese of Aneho and 2 Comboni deacons) to endeavour to live close to Christ the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by them. To nourish this intimacy, Mons. Gaglo exhorted the newly-ordained deacons and priests to treasure silence, the sacrament of reconciliation and the daily celebration of the Eucharist.

All these celebrations were followed by fraternal meals.

It is interesting to note that the Comboni candidates ordained in the course of the same celebration have been appointed to the same mission, Poland. Thus, Togo becomes an evangeliser of the land of its Patron Pope John Paul II.

We wish fathers Benoît and René a fruitful mission and we pray that the ministry of deacons Saurel and Simon may be a happy one.

## UGANDA

### **Episcopal ordination of Mons. Wokorach**

The episcopal ordination of Mons. Raphael P'Mony Wokorach, mcccj, a Ugandan, as Bishop of the diocese of Nebbi, in Uganda, was held on 14 August last. The restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 meant that only a few invited people were admitted to the cathedral of Nebbi for the long-awaited consecration that took place five months after his appointment by Pope Francis, on 31 March of this year. He takes the place of Mons. Sanctus Lino Wanok who was transferred to the diocese of Lira.

The celebration was presided over by the Archbishop of Gulu, Mons. John Baptist Odama, who exhorted the new bishop – the fourth in the history of the diocese – to serve the people like Jesus the Good Shepherd: “Do not hesitate to give your life for the flock, the poor, the weak, the immigrants and the foreigners”.

Among the political authorities present was the Minister of State for North Uganda, the Honourable Grace Kwiwucwiny, representing President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

The episcopal motto of Mons. Wokorach is: “To Serve with Humility”, because, as he emphasised, “Humility renders all service meaningful”. In his address after the ordination, Mons. Wokorach said: “I see Saint Daniel Comboni as a model bishop. As I take on this responsibility, I remember how much his faith sustained him in the different situations of his life. He dreamt of Africa... Africa or death... He was an exceptional pastor, a pastor whose faith was strong, whose faith made his life sensitive to the various needs of his people ... Saint Comboni stands before me as a great and exemplary Bishop, holy and capable”.

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Fr. Ramón Esteban García Reyes (06.08.1947 – 12.01.2021)**

Fr. Ramón Esteban was born on 6 August 1947 at Huixquilucan, Mexico, into a very religious family. He entered the minor seminary of the Comboni Missionaries at Sahuayo and received all his priestly and missionary formation in the Institute.

He made his first religious profession on 18 June 1971 in Mexico City where he began to study philosophy. In 1973, he was sent to the scholasticate in Rome where he studied theology, earning a diploma at the Urbanian University. On 25 March 1976, he made his final profession and, in the same year, on 28 August, was ordained priest in his home village.

He exercised his first missionary service as a formator in the minor seminaries of San Francisco del Rincón and at Guadalajara where he worked from 1976 to 1982. Leaving Mexico, he was appointed to the province of Ethiopia-Eritrea where he stayed for a period of nine years in the parish of Killenso.

In 1995, he returned to Mexico to serve in missionary animation and remained for five years in the CAM community in Mexico City and in Sahuayo. In 1998, he took part in the Renewal Course in Rome. Having finished the Course, he was again sent to Ethiopia for a short period of three years. From 2001 to 2013, he alternated his service between Ethiopia and Mexico until he was assigned to the Oasis of Guadalajara for reasons of health.

Fr. Ramón kept a youthful appearance despite the health difficulties he had to cope with. His missionary life was divided into two parts: the years dedicated to pastoral work in the missions of Ethiopia and those spent serving in Mexico.

In this province, many students and former students of the seminaries where he was present remember him as a formator who was both close and understanding at the same time, like someone who knew how to help the young people prepare themselves to respond to life.

In missionary animation, up to the last days of his life, he accompanied the groups of “Comboni Damas”, visited the parishes to spread missionary publications and did mission appeals giving testimony of his missionary experience.

At one point in his life, he came into contact with some Charismatic Renewal groups that somehow affected him in his personal spirituality and his experience of prayer. He dedicated much time to prayer and, little by little, became ever more available for a service of listening and accompanying the many people who wanted him to direct them in

their lives and to receive some help in their personal and spiritual troubles.

As a religious, he was a community man and participated respectfully and cordially in the lives of all the confreres. As a priest, he always gave good example in his fidelity to ministry and his vocation while being merciful and attentive to the needs of others.

In the last years of his life, he had the burden of suffering in his illness, poorly understood by others since he appeared to be healthy and strong; he bore his cross in silence, not wanting to be a burden to others.

The infection took him by surprise and he had no time to react: the Covid virus penetrated his lungs and bore him off in a short time. On the day before he died, he had said he felt well and only needed to have an x-ray as he would feel tired when he exerted himself. He did not manage to keep his appointment as he fainted as he was getting into the car and so concluded his journey in this life. He died on 12 January 2021. (*Fr. Enrique Sánchez González, mcccj*)

### **Fr. Vicente Leal Ruiz (24.04.1943 – 18.01.2021)**

Fr. Vicente was born on 24 April 1943, at San Juan del Río, Querétaro (Mexico). He entered the minor seminary of Sahuayo as one of the first Mexican candidates who did all their formation with the Comboni Missionaries. Having completed his humanistic studies, the equivalent of a diploma, he joined the Tepepan novitiate, in Mexico City, in 1960 and made his first profession on 11 February 1962.

From 1962 to 1964, he remained in San Diego, California, for the first years of philosophical studies and then went to Verona where he remained until 1968 to study theology and complete his preparation for the priesthood. He took perpetual vows on 9 September 1967 and was ordained priest on 23 June 1968.

His first appointments were to Arabic-speaking countries. He left for Lebanon where he studied the language and began to prepare to go and work in the province of Khartoum. There he was sent to the mission of Atbara as a teacher and also to serve in the parish.

He had an accident riding his motorbike in which he received a serious head injury and returned to Mexico for treatment in 1973. That time was the start of a period in which he distanced himself from the community and lived a very personal sort of life. From 1982 to 2016, he tried several times to become incardinated in a diocese but, unfortunately, he did not succeed in regaining sufficient stability.

Over the years, Fr. Vicente gradually developed a vision of faith and religious practice that placed him in conflict with his confreres. For this



reason, without becoming aggressive, he preferred to be alone and continue with his experience.

He always felt he was a Comboni and lived out his priestly ministry with much zeal. He devoted a great deal of time to prayer and made several attempts to enter a contemplative monastery.

In 2016, given his personal needs and his amiability to continue living alone, it was suggested that he enter the community for the sick and elderly confreres. This year he went to Oasis and lived a life devoted to prayer and his personal activities.

He passed away on 18 January 2021, a victim of Covid-19. (*Fr. Enrique Sánchez González, mccj*)

### **Fr. Jorge Martínez Vargas (23.11.1943 – 19.01.2021)**

Fr. Jorge Martínez V. Was born at Celaya, Guanajuato, Mexico, on 23 November 1943 into a large family with sound religious values. He joined the junior seminary of Sahuayo as one of the first student “founders” of the first formation house of the Combonis in Mexico. In 1961, he entered the novitiate in Tepepan, Mexico City where he made his first profession on 9 September 1963. The following year, he was sent to San Diego, California, to commence philosophical studies; later, from 1966 to 1970, he continued his formation in Venegono. On 7 December 1969, he made his perpetual profession and on 19 March 1970, he was ordained priest.

He was immediately appointed for just over a year to the community of Sahuayo minor seminary where he dedicated himself to vocations promotion and missionary animation among the young postulants.

In 1971, Fr. Jorge began a long period of missionary service in African territory. He worked first in Uganda in the parishes of Moyo and Obongui. He then returned for a short period to Mexico as a member of the community of Sahuayo and in the parish of Bahía Tortugas, in Lower California. There then followed ten years of mission in Africa, this time in the province of Kenya where he worked in the communities of Nairobi, Gilgil and Kapenguria.

For the years 1993 and 1994, he was in Rome to take part in the Renewal Course and to take a Sabbatical Year. Having completed this experience, he returned to Mexico with some health problems but was still available for the services entrusted to him. From then on, he remained in the province dedicating some years to missionary animation in the communities of Sahuayo and San Francisco del Rincón.

He filled the office of provincial bursar for nine years, living at the provincial house in Xochimilco. As the years passed, his health

deteriorated reducing his ability to take on new responsibilities. On leaving the post of provincial bursar, he joined the community of San Francisco del Rincón to help in ministry according to the needs of the seminary. At the same time, for some years he assisted some young men who were joining the preparatory school and postulancy, teaching them about the history of the Institute, the Comboni spirituality and the figure of our Founder.

In March 2019, he asked to be sent to the Oasis community in Guadalajara since he increasingly felt the need to be cared for and looked after medically. He lived his last two years there enjoying relative tranquillity but bearing the burden of his illness.

On 19 January 2021, Fr. Jorge fell victim to the coronavirus which, in a few days, caused so much suffering in the entire community for the loss of a number of confreres.

The impression he leaves us is that of a tranquil, serene man. Fr. Jorge never became agitated when faced with the difficulties and problems that came his way. His relations with others were cordial and accompanied by such goodness that it was visible both in his attitudes and in his words.

He was a simple character who liked to joke and was always in a good mood. He would not easily lose his cool and we never saw him irritated. In community, he gave good example by his fidelity and dedication to his priestly and missionary consecration. His missionary vocation was deeply marked by the experience of his encounter with the Founder through his writings with which he was very familiar.

Those who lived with him in the various missions remember him as a person with whom it was pleasant to live and with whom they could work without difficulty.

In his service in the province of Mexico, he always showed himself to be a dedicated person and one who took seriously the responsibilities laid on him. He was neat and exact and always responded with generosity without ever complaining.

His sober lifestyle was always an example for those who lived with him and his missionary witness attracted many people, leading them to commit themselves to the mission.

In his final years, he was tried by his illness and lived out his health problems with concern. But even in moments of great suffering and fear, he was able to sustain his trust in God, abandoning himself to him every day.

In 2020, he had prepared the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination. He eagerly looked forward to that day but unfortunately, just a few days before it, he had to leave the preparations he had

made to thank the Lord for the blessings he received during his many years of priestly and missionary service. Today we are certain Fr. Jorge is celebrating an everlasting feast in heaven. (*Fr. Enrique Sánchez González, mccj*)

### **Fr. James Donald Francez (03.12.1928 – 21.01.2021)**

Fr. James Donald Francez was born on 3 December 1928 at Gueydan, Louisiana, in the diocese of Lafayette, USA. He took temporary vows on 13 September 1952 and perpetual vows on 9 September 1956. From 1955 to 1957 he stayed in Italy as a scholastic first at the Mother House in Verona and then in Venegono for theology. On 15 June 1957, he was ordained a priest and appointed to his home province where he stayed from 1958 to 1965, exercising his ministry in various missions in Ohio and California.

In 1965, he was appointed to the province of Mexico, initially at the Sahuayo minor seminary where he was a professor and assistant to the young aspiring Comboni Missionaries. He also helped with ministry in all the parishes of the city while he tried to learn Spanish.

In 1968, he went to the missions of Lower California where he spent practically all of the rest of his life and where he lived his missionary experience up to the year 2014 when he had to withdraw for reasons of health and age. He was sent to the community of Covina, in California, but did not stay long as his heart was in Mexico where he returned that same year, though still a member of the NAP, and was appointed to the Oasis community in Guadalajara. It was there that he spent the remaining years of his life and his mission, never losing his lively, serene spirit.

Fr. James was a very simple missionary and, in some ways, was very close to the people. He was cordial, affable and friendly. He had a broad smile and made people feel welcome. In his missionary years in Lower California he worked and lived among a group of Combonis who were mostly Italian and he sometimes felt misunderstood. In fact, the confreres did not always understand him. However, this was no reason for him to be discouraged so, with great simplicity and humility, he lived his life trying his best to do whatever they asked of him.

In Mexico, he worked only in the missions of Lower California which, in those times, was one of the more demanding missions as the missionaries were compelled to live in isolation. The region was poor in infrastructure and there was extreme poverty in some parts. Fr. James succeeded in adapting to the situation and spent time in all the missions, from north to south, that made up the Apostolic Vicariate of La Paz.

In all the places where he stayed, he always sought to implement projects that might promote development among the people such as poultry and horticulture. When computers came out, he would often go to Los Angeles, California, to purchase the equipment necessary for teachers and students. Unfortunately, many of these projects did not survive but they did reflect the uneasy spirit of Fr. James.

Having been in the old missions of California, he busied himself collecting information and documents that might be useful in writing the history of the missions in those lands. He also obtained photographic and printing equipment. He wrote a short book which he produced with many photos. He continued adding photos in the various missions of Lower California.

He spent the last years of his life at the Oasis, Guadalajara, the house for sick and elderly confreres. In those seven years, we saw his physical strength diminish but not his spirit. He was always very cheerful and lively: he never lost his sense of humour, even if, in the latter times, he found it hard to take part in community life. He never lost his humility and when he had to ask for anything, he did so trying to cause as little disturbance as possible.

The Lord called him at a moment when the Oasis community was going through a deep crisis due to the coronavirus, even though he was not infected. Seeing how weak he had become, the doctors advised that he be allowed to come to the end of his life in the company of his community members. He died on 21 January 2021. (*Fr. Enrique Sánchez González, mccj*)

### **Bro. Rodolfo Sánchez Barajas (05.06.1941 – 23.01.2021)**

Bro. Rodolfo was born in Sahuayo, Michoacán, on 5 June 1941. He was one of the first group of Brother candidates who began their formation in Mexico. On 19 March 1960, he took first vows and, six years later, on 19 March 1966, he made his perpetual profession in La Paz.

From 1960 to 1970 he worked in Santiago, Lower California, where he devoted himself to construction works, learning a skill that would later become one of the main areas of his missionary service, especially in Africa. From 1970 to 1973, he was at the Xochimilco postulancy in charge of the maintenance of the house and helping with missionary animation.

In 1974, he began his first mission experience in Africa. When he arrived in Zaire (now DR Congo), he was assigned to the community of Mungbere where he worked on the construction of some schools,

dispensaries and chapels; then, from 1985 to 1987, he was assigned to Dakwa, working in human promotion.

In 1988, he returned to Mexico and went to Monterrey to work as a formator of the Brother Postulant candidates. He carried out this service until 1990 when he was assigned to the Delegation of Central America. He stayed at the postulancy in San José de Costa Rica, responsible for the maintenance of the house.

In 1993, he was again appointed to the missions in DR Congo, first at Dakwa and then at Isiro, looking after the houses. Six years later, he returned to Mexico and was sent to San Felipe Usila, Oaxaca, among the indigenous Chinantecos.

In 2010, his wish to return to Africa was granted and he was sent to the Central African Republic. Two years later, he had to return to Mexico for health reasons and was welcomed into the Oasis in Guadalajara where the Lord called him during the coronavirus pandemic: he died on 23 January 2021 of a heart attack.

Bro. Rodolfo was a simple and joyful sort of person who worked with enthusiasm in all the missions where he was sent. He enjoyed company and willingly took part in gatherings of the community or the people. His style was simple and cordial and he easily related to people. He especially loved missionary animation and mission appeals.

In all the communities where he lived out his missionary consecration, he was always an example of fidelity to his personal prayer and never missed community acts. His Comboni identity was clear and, from the way he shared his experience, it was obvious he was personally familiar with Saint Daniel Comboni.

The illness of his final years was quite a burden. He had to contend not only with his physical problems but also with bouts of depression from which he emerged still with a positive spirit and wishing to stay together with others.

Bro. Rodolfo will go down in Comboni history for having done his work with dedication like a hidden stone; but the goodness he left in so many people who knew him, especially in Africa, means he will be remembered as a good missionary who crossed their paths to remind them how much the Lord loved them.

### **Bro. Hermenegildo Cordero Bautista (11.04.1938 – 29.01.2021)**

Bro. Hermenegildo was born on 11 April 1938 in the small agricultural fraction of Salitre Santa Rosa, in the state of Michoacán, and the Archdiocese of Morelia.

While still very young, as an aspirant Brother, he entered the seminary of the Comboni Missionaries. He was one of the first group of young people who felt called to the mission as Brothers and he always kept this vocation clearly in mind and in it realised all his dreams as a man consecrated to the mission.

In 1956, he was admitted to the Tepepan novitiate in Mexico City and after two years, took first vows on 1 November 1958. IX years later, on the same date, he took perpetual vows and was given his first appointment to Mexico City for missionary animation. In 1960, he was set to Santiago, in Lower California, to serve as a catechist in the parish. During these same years, he was appointed to collaborate in construction works in La Paz Boys Town and in Mexico City. It was there that he did his building apprenticeship, a trade he would later practise in all the missions he would go to.

From 1973 to 1974, he stayed at the Paris community of Issy les Moulineaux, in France to learn French in preparation for his future mission in Africa. He was then sent to the province of Central Africa which became his second patria, since he spent so many years in those missions. From 1974 to 1983, he worked at the mission of Boda, in charge of the land of the mission and other works in the parish.

After this first experience in Central Africa, he returned to Mexico to serve the province. In 1984, he was assigned to the community of the provincial house to help as bursar and, the following years, he moved to the community of Guadalajara where he stayed until 1987.

He spent the years from 1991-1997 in Central Africa, working in the communities of Zemio, Bangui and Grimari. In 1997, he returned to Mexico, staying there for holidays and a period of service until 2001. In 2002, he again went to Central Africa where he stayed until 2009 for his final period of service to that province.

He spent the years from 2010 to 2021 in the Monterrey community, at the provincial house and finally at the Oasis community in Guadalajara where he died on 29 January 2021.

Bro. Hermenegildo has left us the memory of a Comboni Missionary who was identified with and passionate about his missionary vocation. He was simple and cheerful, sociable and one who enjoyed company. He was respectful and helpful, available for whatever task he was given. He was always a great missionary animator and was happy to do mission appeals, even when they demanded sacrifice and left him tired. He never missed an opportunity to sharing his gift for singing and enlivening all the celebrations.

The mission of Central Africa was his great passion: he felt identified with the people of the parishes where he served and where he shared his life in closeness and fraternity with the poorest. He always felt he was part of the group of missionaries who continue to spend their lives in those lands and one of his greatest sorrows was not being able to return there to live out his final years with them. Even though he was old and sick, he continued to ask to be appointed to “his mission”. The Lord had other plans for him and he became one of the many victims of the coronavirus that continues to cause so much suffering among us.

Bro. Hermenegildo was a religious who easily assimilated the values of religious life. He loved and enjoyed being in community. He was faithful to his duties and the demands of his personal and community life. His spirit of service made him always attentive to the needs of the community and, as far as he could, he never lost an opportunity to be of assistance.

Humanly speaking, he was an attentive person, lovable and polite, a sure reflection of the upbringing he received in a family that was poor but marked by the values of faith and trust in the Lord. In his relations with others, he showed a great capacity for socialising and, like some of his confreres, he was always inclined to establish very simple contacts with people. We may say he was a missionary who loved to be with people and felt that this was a way to be a missionary.

He lived his Comboni missionary vocation identified with the charism and always kept present the figure of our Founder: Comboni was a presence and a reference point that accompanied and sustained him wherever he went and in all the experiences he had in his life. (*Fr. Enrique Sánchez González, mccj*)

### **Fr. Ambrogio Grassi (27.02.1943 – 09.05.2021)**

After precisely 50 years of priesthood, the Lord called him to himself to celebrate his priestly Golden Jubilee. Fr. Ambrogio was born at Legnano (Milan) on 27 February 1943. After the novitiate in Gozzano, where he took first vows on 9 September 1967, he studied theology in Venegono where he made his perpetual profession on 9 September 1970. On 18 March 1971, he was ordained priest. He remained in Venegono for missionary animation among the youth of the GIM. Those were glorious years with many young people coming to “the castle” for the monthly meetings. Intense work in the parishes with youth groups and with good fruits for the mission. The presence of the novitiate in Venegono was a concrete and visible testimony to arouse in other youths the desire to respond to the call of the Lord.

In 1973, the way to Africa opened for Ambrogio and he was appointed to Togo. After a period in Paris to study French, he landed in Lomé in June 1974. The Combonis had then been present in that small African country for ten years and it was in 1974 that the presence was also begun in the bordering countries of Benin and Ghana, in the south of the two countries which belonged to the same cultural area and spoke the same local languages. Fr. Ambrogio threw himself into the study of the language that would enable him to live his missionary ministry with a sound and deep closeness to the people. Vogan, Afanya, Aklakou were the parishes where he exercised his missionary ministry: years of great work in the various Christian communities, in the parish centres and in the many villages of the area, accompanying the catechumens, the children and youth and the many associations that brought young and old together for catechesis and prayer. It was an environment in which the traditional religion, voodoo, was familiar and deeply rooted in the heart of the people. With his fiery character that sometimes burst into flames, once the storm had passed, Ambrogio showed who he really was: a big-hearted man, generous, tireless in his work, full of projects that were not always easy to accomplish with the people who were not always able to respond to his expectations.

That was a long period of mission: almost twenty years, rich in hope and in self-giving; he lived the last two years (1990-1992) in Lomé as the provincial bursar. He did not expect such a post but he took to it with dedication and generosity. Being a man of the periphery, he did not love the city and preferred the country communities: on Sundays and on other occasions, he would go to Sanguera, a community that gradually grew and matured.

After twenty years, it was only right to take time out for renewal and updating: Fr. Ambrogio went to Italy for the renewal course in Rome and for a period of rotation which he spent in Troia (Foggia) in missionary animation.

His heart was always in his beloved Togo and in June 1996, he returned there. There had been some changes: the deanery of the south-east (Aneho), in the care of the Combonis since 1994, has become a new diocese with a local bishop. We are still present but the parishes will gradually be handed over to the local clergy. Fr. Ambrogio returned to Vogan and, for four years, continued to offer his work and dedication to the people he knew and loved. When the parish was handed over to the diocesan clergy in 2000, he went to Akoumape, a former outstation of Vogan and now a new parish. He then spent eight more years in ministry and as parish priest. Fr.



Ambrogio was always in the front line with his ardent, generous manner! The important thing is to know how to live while giving yourself just as you are. Akoumape was also handed over in 2008, allowing the Combonis to open a new mission (Toko-Toko) in the north of Benin in the diocese of Djougou.

Eventually, Fr. Ambrogio returned to Italy where we find him in Milan, Gozzano and Rebbio, busy with ministry and missionary animation. Having regained his strength, he asked to embark again on a new missionary experience which he lived out for one year (2016-17) Chad at Moïssala. However, he had health problems and had to return home. He would forever be the same big-hearted Fr. Ambrogio, always willing to live out his priesthood with generosity right there in Rebbio, his last community. On 19 March last, he celebrated his fifty years of priesthood in the chapel where he was ordained in 1971. He expressed his infinite gratitude to the Lord who allowed him to spend 35 of those fifty years of priesthood in Africa! His condition worsened during the last months of his life and he returned to the home of the Father on 9 May 2021. Africa remembers him as a great worker who gave his life for Togo; many remember him with affection. What really matters, at the end of life, is to have loved! (*Fr. Girolamo Miante, mccc*)

### **Fr. Nolasco Robiso Jovilla jr (03.05.1976 – 06.08.2021)**

Fr. Nolasco Robiso Jovilla Jr was born on 3 May 1976 at Majayjay, Laguna, in the diocese of San Pablo, in the Philippines. He was studying to become a sailor but then met the Comboni Missionaries and joined the postulancy in 1995. In 1999, he went to the novitiate. It was then that I knew him as a novice in Calamba, having arrived in the Philippines that same year. His period of novitiate was extended to include a trial year which he passed teaching at a Catholic school in Santa Rosa, Laguna. He took his first religious vows on 20 May 2001. He was sent to study theology at the International Scholasticate in Elstree, England. I met him there, in the summer of 2002, during my visit to the scholasticate where we celebrated the Open day together. Fr. Nolie made his perpetual profession on 13 February 2005 and was ordained to the priesthood at Majayjay on 8 August 2005. He died two days before celebrating the eighteenth anniversary of his ordination. What a mystery! God had a special plan for him. He will celebrate it in heaven together with St. Daniel Comboni.

After his ordination, Fr. Nolie was assigned to Uganda where he was a missionary among the Karimojong. It was a special moment in his missionary experience when he led a delegation of young Karimojong to the World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain, in 2011.

In 2012, he returned to the Philippines and was assigned to work in missionary animation. Fr. Nolie was a somewhat shy person and did not find it easy to communicate. At that time, he showed he was not at ease and it was necessary for him to spend two years outside the community in the dioceses of San Pablo and Pasig.

The Lord knows the goodness of the heart and we are grateful to Fr. Nolie for the example of his devotion to duty and also for his musical talents and his culinary abilities: we all enjoyed the dishes he lovingly prepared on the occasion of our community celebrations.

Our Lord has now called him to himself at the early age of 45 years. He called him so suddenly that we can hardly believe he has left us. May God in his goodness give him true and eternal repose in His company and seeing His face. May God console his family, especially his mother Generosa. (*Fr. Renzo Carraro, mccc*)

### **Fr. Claudio Gasbarro (20.03.1942 – 21.08.2021)**

Fr. Claudio first came to our community on 1 August 2021. He was unknown to nearly all of us. He was born on 20 March 1942 at Pescocostanzo, in Abruzzo, in Aquila province. On 9 September 1966, he took first vows and, three years later, perpetual vows; he was ordained to the priesthood on 18 March 1970.

He was placed in charge of missionary animation in the Sulmona community and, in 1976, he was appointed to the province of Central Africa-Chad. He belonged to the first group of confreres who initiated our Comboni presence in Chad, taking over from the Jesuits who were short of personnel. He went to Moïssala in August 1977; presenting him to the community, read his name the French was: "Voici le Père Clodiò" and the name of Fr. Clodiò stuck.

He was placed in charge of a sector 40 km from the centre at Bekourou, which had about thirty Christian communities to be guided and tended. He hardly had time to take a look round and learn a few words in the Mbay language when he was caught up in the painful events of the civil war in 1979 which marked a turning-point in the social and political life of the country. Moïssala was the scene of violent massacres by local people of Moslems from the north. Returning to the mission together with the Bishop who had come to administer the sacrament of confirmation in his sector, Fr. Claudio found the road to Moïssala covered with dead bodies and blood.

In this context of instability and great tension, he continued his ministry: he learned the language, visited the villages and accompanied the youth. He was not well organised in his pastoral work but had a simple and immediate sort of contact with the people;

he became part of the people with the spontaneity and enthusiasm of a man from the south: he sang, laughed, danced and spent time with the people who immediately understood that they were dealing with a man who was simple and good, willing to help, especially when visiting the communities in the more distant villages. People asking for a lift on his vehicle multiplied. They loaded it down with any amount of baggage, sacks of millet, goats and hens. Fr. Claudio was unable to say no and was so overwhelmed by the requests that it became a torment for him and his journeys “into the bush” became a problem. He therefore preferred to stay at the centre and, to avoid the stress, he undertook the translation of the lectionaries into the Mbay language.

In December 1982, I joined him in Moïssala to take his place. It was Fr. Claudio who taught me my first words in the local language, told me about the catechists I could count on, the roads to take and the more important villages. I could see that he had an immediate and spontaneous rapport with the people and that he was well liked. During my first journey to get to know the territory, a village headman gave us a goat to welcome the new arrival, due certainly to the climate of brotherhood and friendship created by Fr. Claudio.

He was appointed to a new Comboni mission – the fourth – in the city of Sarh. There, too, the Jesuits were leaving the parish to the Combonis but as for structures, there was only the church: there was no house or classrooms or organised pastoral service. On the feast of the Epiphany 1983, Fr. Claudio, the only member of the incipient community, was presented to the people as the new parish priest and set to work with his usual enthusiasm and style and also the same problems. A year later, the rebellion in the south against the government in the north brought the war to all the area including the city of Sarh. Fr. Claudio began to suffer health problems, tiredness and weakness which obliged him to leave the country soon afterwards. It was 1986. He was assigned to Italy and took the place of Fr. Massimo Cremaschi at the ACSE in Rome. He then went to Casavatore and Castel Volturno with Bro. Vincenzo Pannice, working with the migrants. Lastly, he went to Lecce up to a few weeks before his death which took place on 21 August 2021. (*P. Renzo Piazza, mccj*)

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

**THE FATHERS:** Santos, of the Sc. Romeo Guarcax Yac (PCA); Faustin, of Fr. Metin Sèdoté Alex Canisius (C), René, of Fr. Billo Junior Bertrand Chrisostome (RCA); Ricardo, of Fr. Angel Camorlinga (EC).

**THE MOTHERS:** Sandra, of Bro. Marco Binaghi (C); Margaret Mary, of Fr. Martin James Devenish (LP); Bertha, of Fr. Jorge Elías Ochoa Gracián (NAP) and Fr. Francisco Javier Ochoa Gracián (M); Carmen, of the Sc. Fulvio Rigamonti (†).

**THE BROTHERS:** William Kossivi, of Fr. Afola Kossi Mensah Elias (EC); Mateo, of the Sc. Romeo Guarcax Yac (PCA); Antonio, of Bro. Bruno Barbiero (†); Abraham, of Fr. Endrias Shamena (RSA).

**THE SISTERS:** Agnese, of Fr. Enzo Tomasoni (I); Sr. Ester, of Fr. Giovanni Battista Bressani (†); Cesarina, of Fr. Giorgio Aldegheri (I); Victoria, of Fr. Joseph Anane (ET); Celeste, of Fr. José da Silva Vieira (ET); Virginia, of Fr. Marino Perghem (†).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. M. Celina Pendin, Sr. Carmela Agnese Papini, Sr. M. Felicina Manzoni.