

# Familia Comboniana

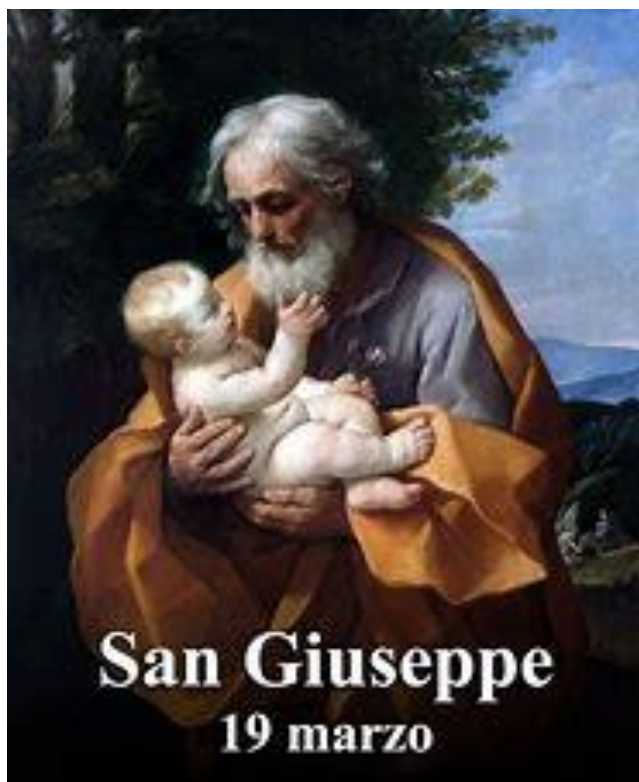
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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

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805

March 2022



## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

### **Precapitular Commission**

#### **Conclusion of the first stage of the work**

*The Precapitular Commission in charge of preparing the conduct of the XIX General Chapter of the Comboni Missionaries met from 25 January to 25 February at the Generalate in Rome. All members were present. A letter with guidelines will be sent in a matter of days to the capitulars and on April 25th a videoconference will be held with all the capitulars for further sharing on the Commission's proposals in view of the Chapter to be held from 1 to 30 June 2022 in Rome. Fr Pedro Andrés, coordinator of the Commission, gave us a brief summary of the work carried out which we publish below.*

The Precapitular Commission has finished the work we had planned for this month that we spent here in Rome, from 25 January to 25 February. There was no shortage of difficulties caused by the pandemic, first to travel from our places of missionary service and then to meet "in person". In fact, we started the work with a part of the group in one room and each of the others in his own room, to observe the required quarantine. The community of the Curia did everything to ensure that our work could go ahead, including constant prayer for the work of the commission and for the good progress of the General Chapter in its preparation. A big thank you to all of them!

The General Chapter is a point of arrival and also of departure in our synodal process which we wish to be not a parallel process but part of the synodal process underway in the Church. A journey made in communion, participation and mission.

The Precapitular Commission has a subsidiary service in this process. We were tasked with arranging the preparatory work in which we all participated somehow, in different ways. We had already received from the General Council, in the letter of convocation, an **icon** , "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15), **four paths** , Revisitation and Revision of the Rule of Life (a long process), Ministeriality in view of requalification, Communion of goods - sharing and sustainability, Verification and Review of Formation, and also a **prayer** . Then questionnaires were sent out seeking everyone's participation.

How was **the participation**? 37.8% of the confreres sent their answers to some of the questionnaires. Then there was the participation in the elaboration of the reports of the circumscriptions

and continents and of the reports of the various offices, as well as the material produced on each of the four paths undertaken by the Institute in recent years. Is this participation sufficient or insufficient? The commission wanted to welcome everything, enhance it, respect it, arrange it and make it available to the capitulars and the Chapter.

First of all, our work consisted in making a thematic synthesis of the answers to the questionnaires; we had already done some work before going to Rome, each in his own home, on reading the answers. Here we have made the synthesis that has helped us to elaborate the content of the tools that we will offer: proposals and material that can help the capitulars to make informed discernment.

We have revised the **Statutes** of the previous Chapter. With the help of the facilitator we propose changes, with different reasons. We wish to promote synodality, the participation of all in the discernment process. Among the different types of method we give priority to a method of appreciation, that is, one that seeks the seeds of life that exist, whatever works, whatever makes us dream, without forgetting the sicknesses, what we suffer from in the Institute, to then move on to designing a future of hope and commit ourselves all together. We are not aiming at the elaboration of a document emerging from a debate between ideologies to tell those who are not convinced or who are not doing well how they must change. We intend to avoid trapping ourselves, as a Chapter, in the drafting of a document, so that we can commit ourselves to making an exercise of community discernment on the life and mission of the Institute in the Church today at the service of the Kingdom of God and to produce guidelines for the next six years.

We will propose an **instrument for discernment**. In the introduction we will present the reasons that we have understood from what we have received and then there will be a report for each of the four paths, in which the following will be presented: the journey made, lights and shadows, the current reality and the challenges and proposals to be considered. We will also add a summary of our responses to the questionnaires and a list with other ideas proposed for consideration by the Chapter. Useful material so that each capitular can make his own contribution to common discernment.

A very important moment of the Chapter will also be the election of the Superior General and Council. However, we have not discussed this theme and we have nothing to propose. **We are asking the capitulars to join one videoconference on April 25th** at 2.00 pm,

for a greater sharing of the fruits of our labours. This moment will mark another stage on our way to the postponed and desired Chapter. The journey we are taking is synodal and spiritual in its preparation, celebration and transmission. A process that we carry out rooted in Christ and together with Comboni, in order to live the mission as a synodal journey of fraternity. The capitulars represent everyone; the Chapter is the Comboni Institute responding to the vocation and mission that has been entrusted to it. Therefore it is up to the capitulars to prepare themselves in the best possible way and the duty of the entire Institute to pray to the Blessed Trinity to give us a spirit of discernment of His will through the intercession of Our Lady and of St. Daniel Comboni. (*Fr. Pedro Andrés, Coordinator*)

### **Perpetual professions**

|                                  |                |            |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Sc. Clement Mutie Mbithi (KE)    | Kacheliba (KE) | 23.01.2022 |
| Sc. Adobo Mabolotu Seraphin (CN) | Bondo (CN)     | 02.02.2022 |

### **Ordinations**

|                                      |                       |            |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Fr. Tasema Habtamu Masresha (ET)     | Waragu (ET)           | 05.02.2022 |
| Fr. Jobo Stanislas (MW)              | Guilleme-Mchinji (MZ) | 05.02.2022 |
| Fr. Silwembe Christopher (Z)         | Guilleme-Mchinji (MZ) | 05.02.2022 |
| Fr. Katembo Muhandiro Jean Paul (CN) | Butembo-Beni (CN)     | 16.02.2022 |
| Fr. Paluku Vindu Muyisa Moïse (CN)   | Butembo-Beni (CN)     | 16.02.2022 |
| Bro. Oduor Kevin Otieno (KE)         | Kisumu (KE)           | 26.02.2022 |

### **Holy Redeemer Guild**

|       |                                |
|-------|--------------------------------|
| March | 01 - 07 CO08 - 15 E16 - 31 SDR |
| April | 01 - 15 CN16 - 30 EC           |

### **Prayer intentions**

**March** – We pray, during the month in which we remember especially Saint Joseph in whose face Jesus saw the tenderness of God the Father, that all Christians may encounter in the sacrament of reconciliation the tender face of the Father who welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us. *Let us pray* .

**April** – We pray that we remember, even today, that the risen and glorious Christ is the deep source of our hope, certain we will never lack his help to bring to completion the mission entrusted to us. *Let us pray* .

## Significant anniversaries

### March

- 17 St. Patrick, Bishop LP (London Province)
- 19 Saint Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary Central Africa

## Significant anniversaries

### April

- 25 San Pedro de San José de Betancur, religious DCA (Centramerica, Costa Rica, Guatemala El Salvador, Nicaragua)

## Publications

**Edited by G. Scattolin mccj and Riccardo Paredi**, *Spiritual Manifestazioni in Islam*, an Anthology of some fundamental texts of classical Sufism (I / VII - VII / XIII centuries) translated and commented. Complete Edition, Workshop of Medieval Studies 2021. Through the words of the Sufis themselves and their tireless search for the Divine, the book permits us to know the experiences and wisdom of these ascetics and mystics who lived between I / VII and III / IX century. Some brief historical introductions clarify the political-religious context of the time, while a wide array of comments, notes and semantic-philological comments offer various interpretations of these spiritually and linguistically dense concentrated.

**Francesco Chemello mccj**, *A great love story. The Comboni mission in South Sudan from 1857 to 2017*, with a short update 2017-2021, Bibliotheca Comboniana FS 19, GA MCCJ Rome 2021. The book describes *a work of God* - writes Fr. Louis Okot Ochermoi Tony, provincial superior of South Sudan, in the introduction - "performed by people full of passion for the Gospel and for the mission, who went to unknown and hostile places where they got to know the people and made it possible that they could have life in abundance ... This rereading of our history (published at a time when the situation in the province is bleak) invites us to live with hope because the hand of God who started this work will bring it to completion".

## BRASIL

### **Latin America - Continental Mission Council Comboni meeting on Integral Ecology**

In dialogue with the General Administration, the Continental Council of the Mission is organizing a Comboni Meeting of Integral Ecology, which will take place in parallel with the Pan-Amazon Social Forum (X FOSPA), called to take place in Belém do Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon, from 28 to 31 July.

The participation of about 35 members of the Comboni Family (MCCJ, SMC, LMC and Seculars) is expected. The first part of the meeting will be devoted to listening and exchanges with the peoples of Pan-Amazonia gathered in FOSPA. In the second part, from 1 to 3 August, we will deepen the Comboni spirituality and our charism in the light of the Magisterium of the Church and the paradigm of Integral Ecology developed in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

We will evaluate and re-launch this missionary priority with the indigenous peoples on the continent and in the living memory of the martyrs, with special attention to the very current message of Fr. Ezechiel Ramin. We will exchange experiences listening to the testimony of other continents and of the fruitful encounter of our pastoral realities and projects with social and environmental movements, as recommended by Pope Francis.

### **70 years of Comboni presence**

The Province continues and re-launches the celebration of 70 years of presence in Brazil. Among the initiatives underway, we indicate a monthly series of short videos on the most significant Comboni figures in Brazil; an annual thematic program suggested to Comboni parishes, to celebrate together with the people, focusing each month on a theme of the Comboni mission in Brazil; a monthly video program of vocations promotion aimed at young people, entitled "ProVocation for young people".

Significant moments of celebration are being organized, especially at the end of July, in memory of Fr. Ezechiel Ramin; with the Comboni Missionaries, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of their Institute; in September, the closing celebration of the year, symbolically realized in one of the urban suburbs in which

we are involved, re-launching the periphery as a "theological place" of today's evangelization.

### **The confreres of Brazil remember Bro. Soares**

The desire of Br. Manuel Soares (25.02.1943 - 21.02.2022) was to celebrate his 79th birthday with the community of Angelim, which he loved so much, but it was not possible!

Bro. Manuel arrived in Brazil from Portugal about 50 years ago, with the vocation of a consecrated brother. Then, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he asked his superiors to continue working alone in Balsas, but outside the Institute. Later, he settled in the village of Angelim, where he dedicated himself to social pastoral care.

"I came to Angelim - he explained in an interview - because there were many people in need of help. I donated my land to some poor families and other charities. I am happy that, although I no longer belong to the Comboni Institute, I have never lost the memory of the charisma of the founder St. Daniel Comboni. I keep, as nourishment and foundation of my social activity, these words of his: 'The apostle does not work for his own good, but for God himself' and 'he knows that his tomb becomes the cradle where new apostles are born'".

Since the seventies, Bro. Manuel has been a promoter of human development activities, trying to guarantee the right to land, education, work, health, with professional courses. He was a teacher in the workshops where courses in woodworking, carpentry and electricity were held. For about 20 years he was director of the San Camillo charity, at the São José hospital.

"It is when the tree lies on the ground that its size is measured" - begins a testimony -. "Bro. Manuel dedicated his life to our city. Angelim's difficult and delicate problems were almost always entrusted to him for resolution, as he had a very humane way of dealing with people. For example, he provided for the transfer of the sick in need of special care to other cities and tried to help the most desperate cases, transferring the seriously ill to Teresina".

At the funeral mass, Fr. João Filho, who presided over the celebration, said: "For us, Bro. Manuel was a vivid reminder of the presence of the Comboni Missionaries in our diocese of Balsas. Its history, in fact, is intertwined with the evangelizing activity of the Comboni Missionaries. His work was aimed at helping the growth of CEBs (Basic Ecclesial Communities) and their commitment in the social sphere, especially health care. At Angelim he experienced total donation in the service of

our people. He lived alone in his little house, led a simple, humble life, always giving away what he had. He was an example of a Christian: he left his homeland, his culture and his family to live among us, bearing witness to his faith as a missionary. The people of Angelim and I can only say: thank you very much, Bro. Manuel, God has already welcomed you into his home". ( *Enzo Santangelo, mccj* )

## EGSD

### **The ministry of Lector**

On January 23, Sunday of the Word of God, the formative community inserted in Cordi Jesu, in Cairo, witnessed a beautiful life witness with four scholastics who received the ministry of Lector (reader).

The liturgical celebration, which was attended by young people from the foreign university of the sanctuary of Cordi Jesu and some friends, was presided over by the vice provincial of Egypt-Sudan, Fr. Dominic Eibu, representing the provincial superior and the ordinary of the Latin vicariate in Egypt. Fr. Eibu underlined how the Word of God, when well proclaimed, must have an impact on the listener and that the reader must prepare himself daily, meditating on it, in order to proclaim what has had an impact on him first of all.

This ministry comes at a time when the Holy Father has established the third Sunday of ordinary time as the Sunday of the Word of God.

Each step taken in our inserted community is a moment of grace and at the same time a story in the making. We are forever grateful to God for his incessant presence on the journey with each one of us and we pray that he will bring to completion all that he has begun in our life, in our community, in our province and in our Institute.

### **Comboni College Khartoum: new computer laboratory**

On February 8, 2022, a new computer laboratory was inaugurated in Comboni College in Khartoum (CCK) in Sudan. It was dedicated to the memory of the late Fr Luigi Cocchi (1932-2021), who had already set up a computer laboratory for the CCK school in the 1990s as well as for the church staff. This new laboratory was set up with the contribution of Mondo Aperto Onlus, the charity of the Italian Province. The times we live in require new skills and computer knowledge has become a basic requirement for everyone. Hopefully it will be the first of many other workshops, in the CCK as well as other Sudanese



schools, where information and communication technologies (ICT) is a compulsory subject being introduced in the new curriculum, while very few schools have such facilities. .

The provincial superior, Fr. John Richard Kyankaaga, some confreres and some teachers were present at the inauguration. It took place in the middle of the last national school pause imposed by the government for the latest wave of Covid, which once again interrupted the already troubled school year, repeatedly slowed down by the ongoing demonstrations.

During the blessing of the workshop, the following "reinterpretation" of Psalm 23 was read: *"The Lord is my Programmer, I will not crash. He installed your software on the hard drive of my heart. All your controls are easy to use. His directory guides me to the right choices for the sake of your name. Even if I go through the problems of life, I will fear no bugs, because, for He is my backup. His password protects me. He prepares a menu in front of me in the presence of my enemies. His help is only the touch of a button away. Surely His goodness and mercy will follow me, all the days of my life. And my file will be merged with His and saved forever!"*.

### **The diocese of El Obeid celebrates the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Comboni Missionaries**

In 1871, Daniel Comboni sent a group of three missionaries from Khartoum to the west of the country to look for a suitable place to establish a mission in more favourable weather conditions.

The three missionaries, Fr. Stanislao Carcereri, in charge of the group, Fr. Giuseppe Franceschini and Fr. Domenico Polinari, arrived in El Obeid on January 15, 1872, which was considered a suitable place; shortly after, in a place called Suk al-dalala, a small church was erected, blessed by Comboni in May of the same year.

Ten years later, in 1882, one year after Comboni's death, the church was abandoned due to the Mahdiyya revolution and was eventually destroyed. The missionaries returned only in 1900. After their return, they settled at the place where stands the present cathedral, consecrated by Mons. Edoardo Mason on May 3, 1963, under the protection of Our Lady Queen of Africa.

The celebration of January 16, 2022 was held to commemorate the arrival of these valiant men of faith.

Christians, as the Bishop recalled during the celebration and during the days of preparation for the ceremony, owe their faith to these

courageous missionaries and their successors. The Christian community has grown despite various challenges and the Church is slowly becoming self-supporting, self-propagating and self-ministering. Msgr. Yunan Tombe Trille, who is himself a Nuba, born and raised in El Obeid, invited the Christian community to learn from the missionaries who left everything to bring the faith so that the Cross of Christ, his Word and presence in the 'The Eucharist may always be living signs of its growth.

The celebration was attended by many men and women religious, the diocesan clergy and the lay faithful. We recall that in Sudan there are about 1.1 million Catholics, about 3.2% of the total population; in the diocese of El Obeid there are only 100,000 Catholics.

## ERITREA

### **Priestly ordination**

On January 30, 2022, the deacon Sirak Medhanie Ghebrenigus was ordained a priest in the parish of Kidanemihret at Sembel, on the outskirts of the city, where Fr Sirak carried out his pastoral work during his scholasticate.

The ordination was preceded by several days of missionary animation: the first, on January 16, in the parish of Kidanemihret, aimed in particular at young people.

Then, from January 17 to 26, Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Sisters organized animation in Keren Eparchy, at the parish house of Fr Sirak, following a program established with the parish priest and the parish council. It was a beautiful experience that the faithful greatly appreciated.

The priestly ordination was presided over by Archbishop Menghsteab Tesfamariam mcccj. All the Comboni confreres, the Comboni sisters, the parents, family members and friends of Fr Sirak were present during the ceremony.

In his homily, Bishop Menghsteab highlighted the responsibilities of the priesthood.

After lunch, Fr. Habtu Teklay, Superior Delegate, thanked God for this priestly gift to our Institute and to the Church. He thanked the Archbishop for his service, Sirak's parents for their generosity and all those who collaborated in the celebration, and wished the new priest

abundant blessings from God in his missionary service. (Fr. *Bahta Uqbaghiorghis mccj*)

## SPAIN

### **“Carisma de Misión y Cooperación” awarded to Mons. Arellano**

The Comboni Missionaries working in Spain are proud to announce that Mons. Eugenio Arellano, bishop emeritus of the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas, in the north of Ecuador, has been awarded the "Carisma de Misión y Cooperación" Prize of the Spanish Confederation of Religious (CONFER).

According to the press release published on 1 February, CONFER recognizes Mgr. Arellano for his work of over 26 years in the Vicariate of Esmeraldas "at the service of Afro-descendant communities" and his commitment to peace "in an area not free from conflicts".

Archbishop Arellano was born in Corelli (Navarre) in 1944 and was ordained a priest in December 1972. Although for six years he was a formator of young Comboni Missionaries in Paris and carried out various pastoral services in Spain and Portugal, his missionary life is closely linked to Ecuador, where he first arrived in 1978. After several years of pastoral service, he was elected provincial superior of Ecuador and then, in 1995, appointed bishop of Esmeraldas, a duty he carried out with great commitment until his replacement on 2 September last. Between 2017 and 2020 he was president of the Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference.

A good man, joyful and very close to the people, he has always dedicated endless hours of his episcopal service to listening to everyone because, as he says, "it is necessary to learn to spend time talking to people, to sit and laugh with them and eat together. They have to know the voice of the shepherd not only in the cathedral but in everyday life. They must feel that you belong to them and for this you have to leave aside some important things".

The Charisma awards are granted to persons or institutions whose work is in tune with the fundamental purpose of CONFER which is to animate, serve and promote religious life. The awarding of the prizes is scheduled for next November.

## ETHIOPIA

### **Priestly ordination**

On February 5, 2022, the deacon Suraphiel Habtamu Masresha Tesema was ordained a priest in Waragu, Oromia, during a very well prepared and curated celebration, which took place in the beautiful parish church of the Most Holy Saviour, packed with people. For two days Waragu was transformed into a spiritual centre of the Catholic faith, a corner of the heavenly Jerusalem, named by all the people of the area and visited by important pilgrims; in particular, by the Holy Spirit invoked on Abba Habtamu with the laying on of hands by Bishop Seyoum Fransua.

The parish priest of Waragu, Abba Michael Miriti, IMC, generously welcomed and hosted Bishop Seyoum, the priests, the numerous people present and Fr. Habtamu who has been assigned to Uganda and is preparing to go there.

## ITALY

### **Cardinal Ayuso in Venegono Superiore**

Card. Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, from 11 to 13 February visited the community of Venegono Superiore, which over recent months has been celebrating the centenary of its presence in the country. The Cardinal also had meetings with the local Catholic community.

There are two reasons why the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue went to Venegono Superiore, a territory in the province of Varese, in Lombardy: the third anniversary of the signing in Abu Dhabi of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together (signed on 4 February 2019 by Pope Francis and the great Imam of Al-Azhar) and the celebration of the centenary of the Comboni presence in Venegono Superiore (July 1921-July 2022).

On Friday evening Cardinal Ayuso was at the archiepiscopal seminary of Venegono Inferiore for a meeting with the seminarians of the diocese of Milan, on the themes of the Abu Dhabi document.

The same theme was addressed on Saturday evening, in the parish church of Venegono Superiore. Interviewed by the editor-in-chief of the pages of "Chatolica" in the newspaper "Avvenire", Cardinal Ayuso offered the participants important reflections on the theme of fraternity

and on the importance of the journey towards human fraternity as a path to peace. He underlined the importance of dialogue for the construction of peace, a dialogue that does not mean losing one's identity but which, on the contrary, starting from a very clear and secure identity, allows people to "look each other in the eye" and together walk and build paths of peace.

The church was packed with people - including Msgr. Damiano Guzzetti and the superiors of the African Comboni circumscriptions Fr Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate, from Congo, and Fr Fidèle Katsan Fodagni Kokouvi, from Chad - who, in silence for more than an hour, listened attentively to the words of the Cardinal.

On Sunday morning, Cardinal Ayuso presided over the Eucharistic celebration, also in the parish. Our thanks to Cardinal Ayuso for his words, his availability and simplicity.

## KENYA

### **Diaconate**

Saturday 29 January 2022 was a great day in the parish of Holy Cross, in Kacheliba, West Pokot, for the ordination to the diaconate of the scholastic Clement Mutie Mbithi. The bishop of Kitale, Mgr. Maurice Crowley, was a bit sad because the previous night he had lost his former vicar general, Fr. Francis Opondo: "Last night - these were his opening words - a priest of mine died and, thank God, today I am ordaining a deacon."

He then praised the Comboni Missionaries for the good work they have done and are still doing among the Pokot people. While congratulating Clement's parents on giving their son to the service of the Church, the bishop challenged those present to be ready to offer their sons and daughters to serve God's people, saying West Pokot has only three priests, two diocesan and one a Comboni.

The deacon's family and various authorities participated in the beautiful celebration, full of music and dancing, including the senator of the area who thanked the bishop for his constant visits to West Pokot and assured him that this year, the year of elections, everything will take place peacefully.

Also present were numerous confreres from neighbouring communities (Turkana and Pokot) and the Nairobi group, led by our provincial superior, Fr. Austin Radol Odhiambo, who thanked the

community of the parish of Kacheliba, headed by Fr Chrisantus Kegwee Mose, for the preparation of the beautiful ceremony. (Fr. *David K. Ahiro, mccj*)

## MALAWI-ZAMBIA

### **Priestly ordination**

February 5 was a day of joy and gladness, full of God's love and grace. Two of our confreres, Christopher Silwembe and Stanislas Jobo, were ordained priests by the new archbishop of Lilongwe, Mgr. George Desmond Tambala, OCD.

The ordination took place in the parish of Saint Anne, Guilleme, Malawi. Numerous people attended. This is the first ordination that Archbishop George Desmond Tambala has presided over since becoming the local ordinary in Lilongwe. In his homily, the prelate reminded the newly ordained that the priesthood is not paid work and invited them to show love for God and for the people they are called to serve, emulating the example of Christ the Good Shepherd.

Fr Stanislas was assigned to the province of Malawi-Zambia while Fr Silwembe was assigned to the province of Kenya. We thank the Lord for the gift of the priesthood and accompany them with our prayers.

## NAP

### **Visit to the province**

"In North America, if someone visits you during the winter, it means they really care and love you." These words could be applied to Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General, and Fr. Pietro Ciuciulla, Assistant General, who made their visit to the Province from 25 January to 17 February 2022.

This disposition of the heart reminds us of St. Daniel Comboni: "Day and night, sun and rain, will find me equally and always ready for your spiritual needs: the rich and the poor, the healthy and the infirm, the young and the old, master and servant will always have equal access to my heart. Your good will be mine, and your pains will also be mine. I undertake to make common cause with each of you, and the happiest of my days will be the one in which I can give my life for you (Writings 3158-59).

Animated by the same sentiments, Fr Tesfaye and Fr Pietro were able to see at close hand the work that the Comboni Missionaries carry out in the parish of Saint Lucia, in a poor neighbourhood of Newark. The children and grandchildren of Italian immigrants consider this neighbourhood their home.

The visit enabled Fr. Tesfaye to listen to the coordinator of Vivat International. Fr Tesfaye, who is a member of the Vivat International board of directors, was able to get an idea of the great work done by the group of men and women religious: the organization works with grassroots groups and influences government delegates to the UN. Fr Tesfaye then made a quick visit to the UN headquarters and Vivat International office which are nearby.

The confreres who work in the California area were happy to meet the two members of the General Council who participated in the Sunday liturgies and also met the parishioners. Fr Tesfaye encouraged the confreres to “share the face of Comboni”, that is, to take care of the mental health of the people God puts on our path, of migrants, of the poor, of people who suffer, of the young and the excluded.

Fr Tesfaye and Fr Pietro were able to meet the Archbishop of Los Angeles, José Horacio Gómez Velasco, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), who shared the joys and challenges of the Catholic Church in the United States. Catholic bishop Alberto Rojas also expressed gratitude for the evangelization work that the Comboni Missionaries are carrying out in his diocese.

The Comboni Missionaries of Cincinnati were also happy to receive the visitors. The first missionaries arrived in the United States in 1938 and were welcomed by Archbishop McNicholas. Since then we have been present in this archdiocese. Archbishop Dennis Schnurr informed the visitors of the reorganization of the archdiocese under "Fari di Luce", where the evangelizing energy of the Comboni Missionaries is also expected.

The new community of La Grange Park welcomed Fr Tesfaye and Fr Pietro and celebrated Mass with friends of the community. We also visited some old friends and benefactors. The visit gave the Superior General and the Assistant General the opportunity to express gratitude to the Comboni Lay Missionaries and Auxiliary Ladies of Monroe, Michigan, who keep the memory of our presence. Despite the cold, visitors stopped at St. Joseph's Cemetery to pray for the deceased brethren who rest there.

In cold weather, with ice and snow, in Kitchener, Ontario (Canada), Fr. Tesfaye and Fr. Pietro were warmly welcomed by the faithful of the parishes of St. Joseph and St. Anne. Fr. Tesfaye was able to concelebrate in the Geez rite with the Eritrean community, in the celebration presided over by Fr Mussie Abraham. The leaders of the Eritrean community and the South Sudanese expressed gratitude for the pastoral closeness they receive from the Comboni Missionaries.

We had hoped that Fr. Tesfaye and Fr. Pietro could stop at Niagara Falls and enjoy the view of this natural wonder, but the cold did not allow us to stay out of the car for long, so they could only make a quick "Japanese visit", that is, a stop for a few photos.

We thank Fr. Tesfaye and Fr. Pietro for their visit. May God, St. Daniel Comboni and our Lady of Guadalupe accompany them to the upcoming XIX General Chapter and reward them for their service to the whole Institute!

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **Meeting of the Comboni youth in Mooi Nooi**

The young Comboni confreres who work in the Province of South Africa gathered for their annual meeting from Monday 21 February to Wednesday 23 February 2022, at the SMA structures of Mooi Nooi in the diocese of Rustenburg. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and for other reasons, we have not been able to organize this annual lifelong learning event for three years. We are grateful to all the confreres and to all those who made this meeting possible this year. Of the nine Comboni Missionaries belonging to the age group of the young confreres, six took part in the meeting. The two invited facilitators were Bro. Francesco Padovan and Fr. John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw.

Bro. Francesco, whose missionary life and service go from 1968 to today, shared his interesting missionary experience with the participants. A farmer by profession, he devoted himself to the practice of ecology by planting thousands of fruit and other trees in the various Comboni missions. As a member of the ongoing formation team, he recounted how he was involved in the ongoing formation of the Brothers. Bro. Francis, who also accompanied many young people in vocational promotion and postulancy, insisted that the young confreres are truly the future of the Comboni Missionaries in South Africa.



In turn, Fr. John Baptist gave a conference on the theme: *Intergenerational and intercultural dynamics in our Comboni communities*. He began by reiterating the importance of ongoing formation for the different age groups, in particular for young confreres, in order to start them well on the transition from a protected formation structure to apostolic life, where they personally take on their first responsibilities which, usually, are very demanding. He also spoke of the joys and challenges of community life in which the implications of the generation gap and interculturality are at stake.

According to Fr. John Baptist, "Our Institute was born from a rich charismatic history. From its very humble beginnings, the Institute has grown and developed, welcoming members from new geographical and cultural contexts, creating new ways of living the charism, new initiatives and missionary expressions. It is important, at this stage, to believe in the new geography and composition of the Institute. The 'new geography of vocations' is significantly changing the human composition of our Institute, making it more 'Catholic', as Comboni wanted. The result is a greater sensitivity towards a more intercultural type of life at all levels, which invites all of us to a conversion and a change of mentality".

The young confreres were very happy with this experience of ongoing formation and found it useful as an indispensable component of their missionary activity. They look forward to the next appointment of the year 2023. (Fr. John Baptist Keraryo Opargiw, MCCJ)

## CHAD

### **The school, a place of meeting and dialogue**

On 12 and 13 February 2022, a training session was held on the theme "The school, a place for meeting and dialogue" with the teachers of the Saint Oscar Romero High School in Mongo (Chad), capital of the Sahelian region of Guera and headquarters of the Apostolic Vicar and of the civil and military administration of the eastern region of Chad. The region was evangelized by the Jesuits, who are still present in two parishes; we Comboni Missionaries are present in the parish of Abéché.

Economically Guera is based on cattle breeding and extensive agriculture; it is almost all Islamized, both from a cultural and religious point of view.

Education, in a historically distrustful context towards Western education (a sad legacy of French colonialism), has seen, over the years, the rise and development of schools (kindergartens, primary schools, high schools) both on the part of the Church and that of the state. It is in this context that these two days of training took place, in response to a request from the teachers of Mongo high school, which welcomes students of all religious and ethnic backgrounds and aims to offer an integral human formation.

Teachers are aware of the social role they play among their pupils and families and that they do not have sufficient cultural tools so that a more attentive pedagogy to the person can be practiced even in a complex context such as that of Mongo.

We left full of good intentions and with the idea that it is necessary to have other training opportunities aimed at both teachers and families, exploring the possibility of involving colleagues from state schools. *(Bro. Enrico Gonzales, mccj)*

## TOGO

### **Provincial Assembly**

From 7 to 11 February the members of the Province of Togo gathered in Lomé (Togo) for the annual provincial assembly, opened with words of welcome from Fr. Timothée Hounake, provincial superior. Immediately afterwards Fr. Timothée presented the situation of the province with regard to personnel and reiterated the need to deepen the sense of belonging to the Institute and to the Province.

The items on the agenda were: synodality, on which the three towns of the province are already working; the Institute's Code of Ethics, the updating of the provincial directorate of economics, the revision of the planning of the province and the reports of the various secretariats and commissions.

In the Province, made up of thirteen communities in the three countries Togo, Ghana and Benin, 53 Comboni Missionaries are working (45 priests and 8 brothers). There are also 25 young schoolchildren in training who, for the most part, study outside the province. In recent decades the Institute is "changing colour" and the Province is a clear example of this with the high number of young members and the fact that most of the members are African, coming from various countries: this is a reason for joy and for optimism. The

prophetic cry of St. Daniel Comboni: "to save Africa with Africa" has become a reality.

## IN PACE CHRISTI

### **Bro. Ivan Cremonesi (09.27.1947 - 02.08.2022)**

Ivan was born in Crema, in the province of Cremona, on September 27, 1947. After his novitiate in Venegono, he took his first vows on May 28, 1983 and was sent to Paris to study French. He then spent two years in the CIF in Kinshasa and in 1986 began his long stay in the Democratic Republic of Congo (at that time Zaire). He took his perpetual vows on May 22, 1988.

After his arrival in Congo I had met Bro. Ivan several times and in different places. But only recently, in Butembo, I had the opportunity and the joy of living with him for about two truly beautiful years, and discovering a nice and holy missionary brother and a master of things of the Spirit. He arrived in the community with the office of treasurer of the community, the propaedeutic and of the Brothers Postulancy. He loved his job and was always ready to meet the needs of the community with great generosity. He had made a beautiful spiritual journey and was transmitting it with enthusiasm and vivacity. In recent years he felt that his spirituality was well expressed by Rembrandt's famous painting of the "Prodigal Son" or the "Merciful Father" and he expressed it in all the emails he wrote to his confreres. What fascinated him were the two hands of the Father: one male and the other female, the two aspects of the fatherhood and motherhood of God that Ivan himself experienced in his being a missionary.

I would put "the motherhood of God" in the first place: Bro. Ivan was a "mother" for the community and for the people. He had a special spirit of service and in any community he also liked to devote himself to cooking to give the brothers the pleasure of sitting at the table and sharing good things and ... good conversation. He stimulated us with current theological reflections, provoking lively discussions. He liked to welcome people with a hug. I remember that one day the Bishop of Butembo, Mons. Sikuli, came to visit us. We all greeted him with a handshake while Ivan, much to the Bishop's surprise, embraced him warmly saying: "What a joy to be able to embrace my Bishop".

With regard to the "fatherhood of God" in Ivan, I would emphasize his attention and esteem towards all the confreres and his desire to make

the life of those who preceded us known to the younger ones. In Kimwenza (Kinshasa) he had greatly desired that there be a "memorial" with photos of all the deceased confreres who had worked in the Congo. The photos were ready but Ivan did not have the joy of seeing the start of work on the memorial. When he arrived in Butembo, he wanted the same photos to be posted in the great hall of the meetings of missionary animation. He had his spiritual journey at heart but also that of the confreres and above all their "ongoing formation".

Ivan's spirituality had deep roots in the time he dedicated to prayer and meditation on the Gospel and he expressed it in his interventions during the celebrations.

He was not in good health. In the past he had had problems with the arteries in his legs and suffered from gout. However, despite his worsening condition, he was available and generous as long as he could.

He died in Goma on February 8, 2022. Another great friend has gone, a big brother who has joined the others on the other side, but whose tenderness will not remain just a memory. (*Bro. Duilio Plazzotta, mccj*)

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

**THE FATHERS:** Francisco, of Bro. Guillermo Casas (E); Leonildo, of Fr. Alessandro Bedin (EGSD).

**THE MOTHER:** Petrina, of Fr. Roberto Pérez Córdova (M).

**THE SISTER:** Sr. Valentina, of Fr. Lorenzo Tomasoni (I).

**THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS:** Sr. Margherita Bragadini, Sr. Mariangela Mirandola, Sr. M. Giannina Falco. Sr. M. Federica Russo, Sr. M. Loreta Di Paolo, Sr. Rosa Albina Seri.