



Missionari Comboniani

Superiore Generale

Rome 18/06/2022

Your Holiness, Holy Father

The Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus greet you and thank you for the welcome you have afforded us. We are here, first of all, to thank you and to thank God for the gift that you are for the Church and the world. We have chosen as the inspirational theme of our XIX General Chapter the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Saint John: **“I am the vine; you are the branches”**, because we believe that our being **“rooted in Christ together with Comboni”** is our deepest and most urgent need. In preparing the Chapter, we identified four paths of discernment: *the Revision of the Rule of Life, the Evaluation of the Formative Journey in our Institute, Ministeriality at the service of the Re-qualification of Commitments, and the Communion of Goods*. We have chosen these four paths because we believe that it is necessary to take steps of conversion to respond generously to today's missionary challenges, trying to be attentive to the paths of the peoples we work amongst and their situations of suffering. Today we are called to continue the work of presence in difficult missionary contexts marked by war, violence and migration, and we are called to be artisans of peace and reconciliation.

Saint Daniel Comboni, our Founder and that of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, the Charismatic Father of the entire Comboni Family - that also includes the Secular Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Lay Missionaries - wanted the Mission to be a truly catholic work involving all ecclesial resources: *“The Work must be Catholic, not just Spanish or French or Italian”* (Writings, No. 944). As Your Holiness can see, the internationality desired by Comboni is visible here before you.

Holy Father, we ask you to bless our Missionary Institute and all Comboni Missionaries: the strong and generous ones who are in the Mission and those who are going through difficult moments, our young people in Formation and our elderly and sick Confrères. We thank you for the gestures of trust and appreciation that you have addressed to us and for all the collaboration that the various Dicasteries and Offices of the Vatican, in particular the Secretariat of State, offer us, supporting and guiding us especially when we face - among ourselves - situations of difficulty, fragility and counter-testimony.

Holy Father, we thank you for your testimony of evangelical life and for your teaching through your Apostolic Exhortations, Encyclicals and Apostolic Constitutions, especially for *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* and for the Synodal journey. We also thank you very much for the recent Rescript concerning the Derogation from Canon 588, in favour of Religious Brothers called to the Service of Authority. We are very grateful for your service in favour of those enduring all kinds of suffering in many places, for your being a clear voice that denounces individual and social sin, war between peoples and nations, economic injustice and the destruction of Creation. We are close to you in this moment of suffering caused by the condition of your knee which forced you to postpone your visits to Lebanon, the Republic of Congo and South Sudan.

Holy Father, we were all touched by your welcoming gesture to the group of victims of abuse who are known in England as ‘Comboni Survivors’ on the 13th day of this month: some of them spoke of an “experience of healing and transformation”; we hope in the depths of our hearts that this gesture of Your Holiness will alleviate some of their pain and suffering. We too express our pain and participate in the suffering they have experienced and also that caused to you: we ask for forgiveness and inform you that we welcome the indications you have given us.

Finally, Your Holiness, we offer you our heartfelt thanks for having received us today and we humbly ask your prayers and your blessing.

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie mccj

on behalf of all the Capitular Members of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.