

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

820

July-August 2023

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Appointments

During the June Consulta, the General Council made the following appointments:

Appointments for scholasticates /CIF and formation communities

- **Fr. Mwariri Joseph Maina:** Superior of Lima scholasticate as from 1.7.23.
- **Fr. Andrés Miguel Pedro:** Bursar of Lima scholasticate as from 1.7.23.
- **Fr. Carbonero Mogollón Pedro Percy:** Formator of Nairobi scholasticate as from 1.8.23.
- **Fr. Stefano Giudici:** Formator and bursar of Casavatore scholasticate as from 1.10.23.
- **Fr. Maku Joseph:** Formator and bursar of Pietermaritzburg scholasticate as from 1.9.23.
- **Fr. Mboka Ngere Faustin:** Formator and bursar of Beirut formation community as from 1.8.23.
- **Fr. Kornu Godwin Kwame:** Formator of Chicago formation community as from 1.8.23.
- **Fr. Peinhopf Karl:** Formator of Graz formation community as from 1.9.23.
- **Bro. Mwamba Kabaya Jean Marie:** Formator and superior of Nairobi CIF as from 1.10.23.

Novitiate appointments

- **Fr. Leandro Araya Leonardo:** Father Master of Mexico novitiate as from 1.9.23.
- **Fr. Kiwanuka Achilles Kasozi:** Father Master of Lusaka novitiate as from 1.8.23.

- **Fr. Torres Cuyubamba Noé Abel:** socius of Mexico novitiate as from 1.9.23.
- **Fr. Kaliya Benedict:** socius of Sarh novitiate as from 1.9.23 (*ad interim* socius at Cotonou until 1.7.24)
- **Fr. Tesfaghiorghis Hailè Berhane:** socius of Namugongo novitiate as from 1.9.23.

The General Council wishes to thank all formators who have ended their service in the scholasticates and novitiates: Fr. Tomas Herreros Baroja, Fr. Karl Peinhopf, Fr. John Baptist Opargiw, Bro. Adossi Koffissan Ad-ekplovi Matthias-Elie, Fr. Gabriel Martinez Torres José, Fr. Gabriel Uribe Gonzalez, Fr. Dawit Wubishet Teklewold, Fr. Alejandro Canales Maza.

Admission to Perpetual Vows and Holy Orders

During the same Consulta, the General Council examined the dossiers prepared by the General Secretary of Formation with the auto-evaluations of the candidates, those of the formators, those of their respective Provincial Councils and the Missionary Service (where relevant). Of the 24 confreres presented (3 brothers and 21 candidates for the priesthood), 22 were admitted; the General Council has requested a further verification period for the remaining two.

The General Council wishes to remind all circumscription Superiors that the letter by which they present their candidates must, besides everything else, indicate the results of the votes leading to their decision.

General Assembly of Ongoing Formation

According to the decision indicated in the Guide for the implementation of the XIX General Chapter, the General Secretariat of Formation organized the assembly of those in the circumscriptions in charge of ongoing formation, which took place in Rome from 16th to 30th June and was attended by representatives of almost all circumscriptions. The representatives of the circumscriptions were joined by the superior of the Curia community and three other confreres, for a total of 33 people.

The general aim was to be formed together, deepening and appropriating the vision of formation, which is that of the Church, and which our institute has assumed and progressively put into practice, so that we can become motivated people capable of living this service for all the confreres and for everyone to live “in a state of formation”. Indeed, formation is either permanent or it does not exist at all! The nature and characteristics of the service entrusted to those in charge of ongoing formation in the circumscriptions were studied in depth and the tools for carrying it out were

identified. Among these tools, there is increasingly close collaboration between all concerned, at the continent and Institute levels. A specific objective, precisely for this purpose, was to deepen the themes that the Chapter has chosen and that the Guide for the implementation of the Chapter has indicated for the coming years: spirituality, identity and community life.

Comboni Family Meeting

The General Councils of the three Institutes and the coordinator of the Central Committee of the Comboni Lay Missionaries met at the Generalate of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Rome from 2nd to 4th June for the traditional annual meeting of the Comboni Family. The meeting began with a moment of prayer during which the participants remembered some of those who have left a mark on our Institutes with their exemplary way of living the mission. The particular situation of Sudan and other peoples in situations of suffering was then recalled with a letter expressing the solidarity of the whole Family. The meeting provided an opportunity to share the journey that each reality is making and to discern the progress of some common initiatives, in particular the relaunch of the commission for social ministry.

Brothers' Continental Reference Person

The General Council makes it known that the continental representative of the Brothers elected by the APDESAM circumscriptions is Bro. Gédéon Ngunza Mboma and that of the circumscriptions for Europe is Br. Tomasz Basinski. Both are members of the Continental Assembly of Circumscription Superiors. The General Council wishes them a good term of service in this post. The GC awaits, for the next Consulta, the conclusion of the electoral process in the constituencies of ASCAF and America/Asia.

Council for the Mission

The General Council wishes to thank those councillors who have terminated their period of service: Fathers Giorgio Padovan, Edmond Dimonekene Sungu and John Richard Kyankaaga Ssendawula. The General Council has appointed the new members of the Council as from 1. 7. 2023:

- Fr. Dario Bossi (America/Asia);
- Fr. José Joaquim Luis Pedro (APDESAM);
- Fr. Víctor-Hugo Castillo Matarrita (ASCAF);
- Fr. Javier Alvarado Ayala (Europa).

The Council thanks all of them for their availability for this service of co-responsibility together with the General Secretary of the Mission and looks forward to seeing a renewed drive in the coordination of the mission sector.

The 100th anniversary of the division of the Institute

July 27, 2023, marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the division of the Comboni Institute into two separate and autonomous Congregations. Remembering the pain of division must strengthen in us the indescribable beauty of rediscovered reunification, of the discovery made - together again - of our most authentic charism and of today's awareness that being "one" makes us more ready to face the mission, to grasp its true meaning and to accept its implications and sacrifices. In the coming months, publications and commemorative initiatives are planned.

Note on drafting the minutes

The Secretary General will publish in the next *MCCJ Bulletin* an extract of his presentation, made to the new Circumscription Superiors, concerning the drafting of the Minutes of the Circumscription Council. The General Council asks all the Superiors of the circumscription to carefully read what is published and to inform the respective Provincial Secretaries or the Minute Secretaries who draw up the minutes. There are currently few circumscriptions that fully comply with the requirements of the minutes, which have the dual purpose of ensuring formal communication between the circumscription and the General Council and constituting historical documentation of the decision-making process that takes place in the circumscriptions.

The next Consulta

The General Council informs that, due to Father General's ecclesial commitments which occurred during the month of October, the third ordinary Consulta scheduled for that month will be divided into two sessions:

- from 13 to 23 September;
- from 6 to 17 November.

They therefore ask the circumscription superiors to present, before September, the points they wish to be taken into consideration.

Journeys and Absences of Members of the General Council

During the period June – October 2023, the following visits will take place:

- **Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie**
 - 28 June – 3 July: London together with the Vicar General – Meeting with the Comboni Survivors' Group.

- **Fr. David Costa Domingues**
 - 28 June – 3 July: London with Fr General
 - 6 – 26 July: Ecuador
 - 28 July – 23 August: GMG and Portugal
 - 26-30 August: Poland
 - 28 September – 30 October: NAP and Mexico
- **Fr. Luigi Codianni**
 - 22-25 June: Granada (Spain) with Fr. Elias Sindjalim
 - 1 July-7 August – Brazil, with the General Treasurer
- **Fr. Elias Sindjalim Essognimam**
 - 22-25 June – Granada (Spain) with Fr. Codianni
 - 5-18 July: Uganda with the General Secretary of Formation
 - 18 July – 3 August: Benin with the General Secretary of Formation
 - 5 - 18 August: Congo for the Episcopal Ordination of Mons. Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate
- **Bro. Alberto Lamana**
 - 26 June – 16 July: Ethiopia

It is also made known that, within the limits of their respective journeys, during the summer months the members of the General Council will take their holidays.

General Secretary Absent from Rome

From 17th to 26th August, the General Secretary will be absent from Rome. We are asked to limit our correspondence to items that cannot be postponed.

Spiritual exercises

The General Council and some members of the General Administration will have their spiritual exercises together with the members of the general administrations of the missionary Institutes of Italy, from 3rd to 13th September, at the Carthusian monastery of Chiusa di Pesio (CUNEO), run by the Consolata Missionaries. The programme will, in the final days, include some moments of ongoing formation on various themes. We are asked to limit our correspondence to essential and urgent matters during this period.

Holy Redeemer Guild

July	01 – 15 KE	16 – 31 M
August	01 – 15 MO	16 – 31 MZ
September	01 – 15 NAP	16 – 30 PCA

Prayer Intentions

July – That the first anniversary of the memorial of Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli (on 28th July) may help all Comboni missionaries in the service of the most fragile to renew their commitment to a journey of holiness in faithfulness to the circumstances of daily humble service to the sick, the suffering and the fragile. *Let us pray.*

August – That the rights, cultures and ways of life of indigenous peoples may be ever more respected in their journey of emancipation and reaffirmation of their full dignity, and that the deep religious sense they express may find a new welcome in a secularised world. *Let us pray.*

September – That, in our pastoral practice, we may be ever more aware of the situations of sexual exploitation and the spread of the phenomenon of the trafficking of women and children, giving attention and support to those who work to eliminate these situations of suffering and injustice. *Let us pray.*

Comboni Liturgical Calendar

JULY

28	Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli	Memorial
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SEPTEMBER

9	St. Peter Claver, priest – <i>Patron of the Institute</i>	Solemnity
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Meaningful anniversaries

AUGUST

2	St Frumentius, bishop	Ethiopia
15	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	RSA (South Africa)
23	St. Rose of Lima, virgin	Peru, Chile
28	St. Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church	Kenya

SEPTEMBER

9	ST. Peter Claver, priest, <i>Patron of the Institute</i> , Solemnity	Chad, Colombia
14	Exaltation of the Holy Cross	Universal

GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE MISSION

Meeting of the General Councils of the Comboni Family

The General Councils of the Comboni Family met from the afternoon of Friday 2 June to midday on Sunday 4 June, in Rome, hosted by the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

After an initial moment of personal presentation, in the afternoon there was an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the programmatic homily delivered by Comboni in Khartoum on 11th May 1873. We began by asking ourselves what echoes it arouses in our hearts today, a century later, and what challenges it can still present to the missionary family that bears its name. It was a beautiful and intensely lived moment, which brought us to state that the charism that shines clearly in that text continues to keep us united and encourages us to move forward the Founder's dream.

The following day was devoted to getting to know the individual institutes. The first to "speak about themselves" were the Secular Comboni Missionaries who shared their enthusiasm for the first vows of the first four African sisters, made last April 23 in Nairobi (Kenya), and the long journey travelled to reach the new opening.

It was then the turn of the Comboni Lay Missionaries who are currently revisiting the themes that emerged in their Continental Meetings in America (Lima, Peru) and Africa (Cotonou, Benin). They also presented the goals of their next European Assembly (in October in Poland) and shared the priorities the Central Committee has for next year.

In the afternoon, the Comboni Missionaries, speaking of their General Chapter last June, presented the new methodology adopted on that occasion, which prompted them to create "dreams" and to outline the guidelines by which to achieve them by 2028.

The Comboni Missionary Sisters also shared what they "lived" with their recent General Chapter and the steps taken in recent months to put the decisions taken into practice. We all appreciated the courage they showed in the radical restructuring of their Institute, which will see the current 19 circumscriptions reduced to 7.

We have joyfully recognized the importance of the work done in recent years, the goodness of the collaboration shown by the CF in the field of ministeriality and the good teamwork carried out by the General Councils, so much so that we have undertaken to draw up a small "directory" that helps us to work better in our meetings. (Alberto de la Portilla, coordinator of the Central Committee of the CLM)

European Mission Assembly

The European Assembly of the Mission brought together in Rome (6-10 June 2023) about thirty confreres and representatives of the Comboni Family who work in the Mission sector. After recalling the previous meeting in Maia in March 2017, the reports of the various circumscriptions and that of the European Council of the mission were presented, enabling us to retrace the work carried out from that date to today.

The meeting with missionary realities present in the diocese of Rome helped us to grasp suggestions and provocations coming from the work of others, especially lay people, who are committed to the proclamation of the Gospel and human promotion.

The social and ecclesial challenges that Europe poses to us today have been explored thanks to the interventions of Serena Nocetti, a theologian, and of Mons. Roberto Repole, Archbishop of Turin, and the reflections of some confreres.

From the group work and from the sharing of the participants some requirements emerged, first of all, the need to clarify personally and as a community the meaning of mission in Europe today - a mission that must undertake a synodal journey that must be continuously subject to evaluation.

From the various proposals formulated in six sectors – mass media, missionary animation, parishes and rectories, collaboration such as the Comboni Family, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and migrants, mission in Europe – there emerged the priority to be given to the training of competent and qualified personnel for missionary service in Europe. Furthermore, the need to encourage experiences of collaboration and to favour the annual meeting, in each country, of the provincial councils and the coordinating team of the Comboni Family was underlined.

Retreats in the spirit of Integral Ecology

The Comboni Family of the Americas, wishing to share an itinerary on Integral Ecology, proposes spiritual exercises in five stages.

The proposal is addressed to all members of the Comboni Family and to lay people very close to our charism: “Those who are committed to defending the dignity of the person can find in the Christian faith the deepest reasons for this commitment” (*Laudato si'*, 65).

Below are the topics that will be addressed and the relative dates:

► “The cry of the earth and cry of the poor” (Fr. Dario Bossi, mcccj, Saturday 12 August 2023);

► “Integral ecology” (Sr. Dalva Maria Areia, smc, Saturday 9 September 2023);

- ▶ "Regeneration of the body-earth territories" (Sr. Betty Pompei, smc, Saturday 14 October 2023);
- ▶ "The spirituality of the native peoples of Latin America" (Bro. Enzo Balasso, mccj, Saturday 11 November 2023);
- ▶ "The ecological conversion of the Church" (Elena Larangeiro, msc, Saturday 9 December 2023).

For information, you can connect to the following site:

<https://comboni.github.io/espls/> (*Comboni Missionaries of America*)

CURIA

Accommodation at the EUR House

In addition to the welcome afforded to the meetings organized by the General Administration, the community of the Curia at the EUR house is always happy to welcome confreres passing through or arriving for periods of stay in Rome. However, it is important that arrivals are communicated in time and according to pre-established methods, in order to avoid any confusion that may prevent whatever preparations are necessary to welcome the confrere in an adequate way. Therefore, those traveling to Rome are reminded to inform the Superior of the Community well in advance (Fr. Tomás Herreros Baroja – +39 327 056 4904 – supeur@comboni.org) or the treasurer of the house (Br. Marco Binaghi – +39 327 999 1287 – casaeur@comboni.org) of their planned arrival and the details of their stay.

If the mode of transport is by air, it is necessary to communicate, in addition to the date and time of expected arrival, the airport of arrival and the flight number, adding whether you would like to be met at the airport or if you intend to use public transport. Even if the trip has been communicated to other members of the Curia, it is still necessary to take care to inform the superior of the community or the treasurer, because these two confreres are responsible for receiving guests.

BRAZIL

Remembering Lino Pretto

"From the time I was born until I was 92, I have always been guided by God. God is my Father, and as such he has always cared for me, his son. Therefore, I accept all that God gives me, and I feel that I am right where God put me. I am grateful to him for always guiding me and never making me want for anything, especially in terms of love and affection. I also have to thank him for when he wants to call me, to continue life up there, eternal

happiness and love ». These are the words of Lino Pretto in his farewell to this world.

Lino was born on 13th July 1930, in Malo, in the province of Vicenza. He was a child when World War II broke out. He witnessed the horrors perpetrated throughout Europe by the Axis Forces (a military alliance composed of Germany, Italy and Japan, also called the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis, ideologically characterized by Nazism and Fascism) and the Allied Forces (United States, Soviet Union, England, among others). He was 13 when he saw with his own eyes the disaster caused by the bombs dropped by American planes on Vicenza, Padua and Verona. He also reads and heard of the tragic bombings of Milan and Turin and was shocked. The death and destruction left a deep and enduring mark.

As a young man, he sympathised with the Comboni missionaries and entered their Institute. In September 1948 he began his novitiate in Florence. On 9th September 1956, he made his perpetual religious profession and, on 15th June 1957, he was ordained a priest.

After a stay in England to learn English, he was sent to the Sudan. In 1958 he was assigned to Isoke mission and, in 1961, he was sent to Kator mission near Juba. In 1963, he moved to the residence of the bishop, Msgr. Sisto Mazzoldi, in Juba. Everywhere he went, he taught in the mission schools.

Father Lino was expelled from the Sudan with other missionaries. Once back in Italy, he was assigned to the Rome scholasticate (Via Luigi Lilio) for a specialization course. He majored in philosophy, psychology and history. He then went to Brazil where he was a professor of psychology and history. However, after a short time, he left the Comboni Institute, got married, and started a family.

Sister Death came to him at the age of 92, on 21st June 2023, in São Paulo. He now rests in peace. (Father Enzo Santangelo, mccj)

ECUADOR

Assembly of Comboni Missionaries in Ecuador

The Comboni Missionaries of the province of Ecuador celebrated their annual provincial assembly in Quito, from 5 to 9 June. The theme that guided the work of the last General Chapter was chosen for the meeting: «“I am the vine; you are the branches” – Rooted in Christ together with Comboni».

During the five days of the Assembly, the participants sought to establish the priorities of the Province for the next six years, reviewing the five priorities chosen by the Chapter itself: Spirituality, Identity and Community

Life, Review of Formation, Ministeriality at the Service of Redevelopment, Communion of Goods, Sharing and Sustainability.

The concrete commitments chosen for each priority, specified in clear lines of action, must now be accepted with strong determination by all, in order to be able to respond to the challenges that the mission is facing today in Ecuador, in the full awareness that the country is going through political instability, made even more critical by the elections scheduled for August.

Another major challenge today is the escalation of violence “controlled” by drug mafias, especially in the provinces of Guayas and Esmeraldas, where a state of emergency was declared a few days ago.

The Assembly also said it was very concerned about natural disasters, such as the heavy rains caused by *El Niño*, a meteorological phenomenon that invariably produces extreme conditions, with tragic consequences shown in climate change and the destruction of our Common Home. Not to mention the numerous illegal mines, the reckless extraction of oil, the increase in palm cultivation, now indicated as one of the causes of the deforestation of vast areas of tropical forests and the loss of forest cover in the country. As always, those present at the assembly underlined that it is the poor and defenceless who suffer the consequences of all these situations.

May St. Daniel Comboni intercede for all the Comboni Missionaries engaged in Ecuador, so that they know, with their missionary service of evangelization, to really help his people find the right tools to face and thwart all threats to life and to Mother Earth. And may God help the Ecuadorian people to find ways of “continuing” - through non-violent attitudes and actions - to affirm lifestyles that respect each person’s culture, traditions, values and dignity.

ITALIA

Feast of the Martyrs of Uganda Parish, Rome

On Sunday 4 June, the parish of the Martyrs of Uganda solemnly celebrated the feast of its patron saints, postponing the liturgical feast from 3rd to 4th June 2023, to allow a greater number of the faithful to be present and commemorate the 22 Martyrs to whom the church is dedicated, commissioned by Pope St. Paul VI after his visit to Namugongo in 1969.

A crowd of around 400 gathered for the 12:00 Mass. The Mass was presided over by Father Torquato Paolucci, a Comboni Missionary, and celebrated by the parish priest Don Luigi D’Errico and about a dozen celebrants, including five Comboni Missionaries. Also present was the

Ugandan ambassador to Italy who, at the end of the Mass, thanked the assembly and invited everyone to pray to the Ugandan Martyrs and to imitate their faith.

After the celebration, over 300 people gathered under the large canopy adjacent to the church for lunch, prepared by the Filipino community that gathers here every Sunday for the Eucharist.

Between the parish of Lira (Uganda) and that of the Martyrs of Uganda in Rome, a twinning was set up some time ago which is producing spiritual and material fruits in the two communities. In the last two weeks of July, four catechists from the Rome parish will make a pilgrimage to Lira to meet the Catholics of that diocese and bring aid for various projects supported by the Roman parish. Thanks to various initiatives, 12,000 euros were raised for the various projects. Also, on the occasion of the feast of the Martyrs, the missionary group collaborated in the organization, and the "Together For" group exhibited and put on sale objects produced by the women of the group. An atmosphere of joy and fraternity energised the day.

Acse – “Dying of Hope”

On 22nd June, in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, the annual Vigil in memory of those who have lost their lives on their journeys to Europe was celebrated. The “Dying of Hope” Vigil was promoted by ten organizations, including Saint Egidio, Centro Astalli, Migrantes, Caritas and... Acse.

The function was presided over by Card. Matteo Zuppi, president of the Italian Episcopal Conference, who gave a broad speech on the dangers of forgetfulness. All those who, from June 2022 to today, have lost their lives in the Mediterranean and on the mainland at the gates of Europe were remembered: as many as 3,170 refugees!

NAP

Yet another prize

Congratulations to Editor-in-Chief Kathleen M. Carroll and all the members of the Comboni Missions magazine editorial board! The publication earned second place as “Magazine of the Year - Mission Category” during the 2023 Catholic Media Conference. The judges motivated the award as follows: «For the excellent coverage, always wide and complete, of the challenges and results of the mission. The variety of contents presents significant news and insights on current issues, offering the relevant contexts and historical perspectives».

PORTUGAL

The Comboni Family and World Youth Day (WYD)

This summer, Pope Francis has an appointment with young Catholics from all over the world in Lisbon for World Youth Day (WYD). For months, in every corner of the earth, groups of young people have been preparing the themes proposed for this WYD centred on the figure of Mary, contemplated as the one who “Immediately set out on a journey” (Lk 1:39). They are also looking for financial support to pay for their trips to the Portuguese capital.

The Comboni Family will be present at WYD with the World Youth Comboni Gathering (WYCG), an initiative that will bring together young people in Portugal who follow Jesus according to the charism and style of St. Daniel Comboni. As many as 120 young people between the ages of 14 and 30 from Europe, Africa and America have signed up. From 26th to 31st July, they will gather in the Portuguese town of Maia to listen to missionary testimonies and participate in activities and dynamics on interculturality and universal fraternity. For some activities, they will join other young people from the dioceses of Oporto and Braga.

On 31st July, en route to Lisbon, they will stop at Fatima for a visit to the great Marian shrine. Then, on 7th August, they will meet again in Santarém to evaluate the experience lived in Lisbon and reflect on how to give this experience continuity throughout the whole year. This aims at avoiding the danger of WYD becoming just “One more experience”, but something that helps the youth to become more committed.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Brother Luciano Giacomelli (21.4.1939 – 4.6.2023)

Luciano was born in Padua (Italy) on April 21, 1939. In 1945, his mother Laura died in an accident. Papa Giuliano entrusted him, together with the other two brothers, to the care of his maternal grandmother. In 1947, the father remarried and, the following year, the fourth child of the family was born.

Luciano attends elementary school with some difficulty. He is often agitated, restless and nervous. After elementary school, he was sent to a boarding school but was unable to settle in and returned home. His father, not wanting to have him idle at home, made him repeat the fifth grade.

The following year, he attended sixth grade, but with poor results. He therefore opted for a job placement school in Padua, but even there he

encountered difficulties. He was extremely restless and it took him four years to pass the three classes.

In the meantime, he had already expressed his desire to become a priest several times, but his father was very much against it: he wanted Luciano to obtain at least a certificate or a diploma before doing anything else.

In 1955, Luciano enrolled at the “Guglielmo Marconi” Industrial Technical Institute in Padua, where he repeated the first class. In September 1957, he entered the Professional School for Coadjutor Brothers, which the Comboni Missionaries had in Thiene (Vicenza), where he attended the mechanics course, obtaining good results in the final exams in June 1958. Luciano applied to be admitted to the Novitiate and was accepted. In 1959, however, he had to return to his family due to health problems. He had to undergo numerous medical tests but with no clear diagnosis. Finally, on 9th September 1963, he made his first religious profession and was assigned to the community of Verona, assigned to the service of sick confreres, to the cloakroom, and in his free time, to the care of the African Museum. In July 1964 he was assigned to the community of Carraia (Lucca) with the role of porter and house clerk.

In 1966, he was sent to the NAP, assigned to the community that the Combonis had opened just a few months previously in Brossard, a district in Montreal, Canada. His task, in addition to supervising the house, was to manage the missionary animation office. In 1967, the publication of the missionary magazine for children, Baobab, began, and Luciano assumed responsibility for its distribution.

In July 1971 he was assigned to the Mother House in Verona, at the “Mission Procure Office”. In 1972, he was assisting at the Assistance Centre for the Sick. Here the “crises” of the past returned, necessitating further tests. He suffered from frequent (at times, almost daily) episodes of a form of neurosis, with depressive reactions... Supportive pharmacological therapies were recommended, but the situation remained unstable. In January 1974, he was busy at the Generalate in Rome for the preparation and realization of an exhibition of African artistic objects. For him, those are months of joy and satisfaction.

In March 1977, Father Tarcisio Agostoni assigned him to Togo and invited him to go to Paris as soon as possible to study French. In July 1978 he was in the parish of Lomé, the location of the provincial headquarters. After a short period of acclimatization, he was assigned to Afanya Mission, as an instructor in the vocational school.

In July 1985, he asked for a sabbatical year outside the community, which he spent in the community of the Little Brothers of Jesus in Spello (Italy).

In July 1987, he returned to Togo, assigned to Togoville as treasurer of the community and head of the Centre for the Blind. In February 1989, he moved to the parish of Kouvé, again as treasurer and in charge of the house. In June 1990, he returned to Italy, appointed to the community of Padua, where he remained until 1997, apparently leading a peaceful life. He would have liked to return to Togo, but the confreres in the mission were undecided: everyone knew that Luciano has a difficult, very unstable character; in short, his return to Togo was “Not recommended”. He was then offered a renewal course in Rome, which began in January 1998, thanks to which he seemed to find some serenity again. On 30th March 1998, he was once again appointed to Togo: Luciano’s joy was immense. In August, he was in the parish of Asrama, in charge of construction. He liked the job and felt really at ease. In January 2003, he was appointed treasurer of the community. In September, he returned to Italy for medical treatment and in January 2005 he felt he had recovered sufficient strength to return to Asrama. This he did and stayed there until December 2007, when he had to return home for further medical treatment.

In 2012 he was assigned to the Mother House in Verona, where he willingly lent himself to helping confreres who, returning from the mission, needed check-ups or stays in hospital. Luciano was always available.

On 31st December 2022, he was taken to Castel d’Azzano, to the Bro. Alfredo Fiorini Centre, in a very poor state of health. For a short time, he was admitted to hospital but his health had deteriorated, forcing his return to the Centre where he passed away on 4th June, at 6.15 am.

(Father Franco Moretti, mcc)

Father Agostino Zanotto (14.12.1932 – 4.6.2023)

Agostino was born in Povegliano (Verona) on 14th December 1932, into a very religious family, blessed with the birth of 9 children. The Lord would “fish” abundantly among them: in 1946, Rosina entered an enclosed convent in Verona; in 1940, Giovanni entered the Comboni seminary (he died in 1998, at the age of 68), followed by Augustine in 1943; in 1955, Luigi, too, decided to become a Comboni missionary (he died in Newark-USA in 2018, at the age of 77), while Maria entered the Pie Madri della Nigrizia (at the time of her vows, she chose the name Anastasia).

As a child, Agostino was as healthy as a fish and showed it.

After elementary school, on 1st September 1943, he decided to follow in the footsteps of his brother Giovanni and entered the “Little Seminary of Padua” to attend the three middle classes. In 1947, he went to the Seminary of Brescia for the two gymnasium classes (he repeated the first).

On 18th August 1950, he sent a formal request to Father General to enter the Novitiate.

In October, went to Gozzano as a first-year novice. On 9th September 1952, he made his first vows. In July he went to Verona for the four years of philosophy and then moved, in 1956, to Venegono for theology studies. On 9th September 1958, he made his perpetual profession and on 14th March 1959, was ordained a priest in the cathedral of Milan by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini (the future Pope Saint Paul VI).

In August 1959, Father Agostino went to San Sebastian, Spain, to the editorial office of *Aguiluchos*, a missionary magazine for children, with the position of editorial administrator. Three months later, he went to Madrid, together with Father Enrico Farè, Representative of the Superior General of the Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Spain, looking for a house that could become the provincial headquarters. They found one in Corso Arturo Soria and, on 2nd February 1960, they inaugurated it. The first thing they did was to launch a missionary magazine for families, too: *Mundo Negro* with Father Antonio as the only member of the editorial staff, at least until the arrival of Father Romeo Ballan, who would take over the direction of the newly founded magazine. In 1964, Father Agostino became superior of the new provincial headquarters and responsible for all Comboni publications.

On 1st October 1966, he went to Rome for a nine-month refresher course. On 3rd June 1967, Father General Gaetano Briani gave him his letter of appointment to the Arua region of Uganda. On June 30, after completing the course, he went to London to learn English.

On 1st March 1969, he arrived in Uganda, and on the 6th, he reached the parish of Nyapea, where he would remain until December 1972.

In Nyapea, Father Agostino found Father Ferdinando Gusmeroli, a long-time missionary in Uganda, as superior of the mission, having arrived there in 1953. From him, he received the first rudiments of the local language, Alur, and some volumes on local culture. Father Agostino carefully observed the elderly superior (He was only ten years older than him, but seemed much older), listened willingly to him, consulted him often, and liked to converse with him. Ferdinando was a bit grumpy and brusque in his speech, but he also had an amazing ability to show subtle kindnesses and absolute respect. Antonio was enthusiastic about these qualities and, as long as he lived, he would never tire of speaking of Father Ferdinando as his “mission master”.

In the 4 years he stayed with him in Nyapea, Father Agostino assimilated his missionary “methodology” and “vision”. In a short time, began to agree with him on the importance of training catechists, pastoral agents and lay

community leaders and liturgical teams in each chapel capable of carrying out a Sunday liturgy without the priest... Both were convinced that it is necessary to form an African Church capable of growing in its autonomy in order to become more and more independent of the work of foreign missionaries. The three watchwords of the "Nyapea duet" were self-administration, financial self-support, and self-propagation. In other words, they had in mind a local Church, founded by missionaries, where one could become clearly and strongly aware of one's own missionary spirit and have the strength to implement it.

Father Agostino, enriched by the experience he had had in the editorial office of *Mundo Negro*, put all his skill into the production of pamphlets, handouts, liturgical volumes and entire catechumenate courses in the Alur language... The handouts copied on his mimeograph were also requested by other confreres in the diocese. At one point, he threw himself into the enterprise of producing the first edition of the Gospels in Alur, agreeing to coordinate the translation work.

Meanwhile, Idi Amin Dada put an end to Milton Obote's regime on 25th January 1971, with a coup d'état. The population welcomed the move with great and general euphoria. A few months, however, were enough to extinguish all hope. The new regime soon proved worse than the one it removed.

In 1972, the government issued new forms to be filled in for every foreign missionary present in the country: the old permits were no longer valid. On 1st December a new government decree was published: every expatriate missionary without a valid "residence permit" must immediately leave the country.

Father Agostino failed to renew his permit and had to leave Nyapea immediately. The people who came to greet him wept. To the chief catechist, Father Agostino said: «Now it's your turn! I'm going, but you and the other catechists stay behind. The Church of Nyapea is now in your hands. And it is not General Amin, but God who wants it this way».

In Rome, Father Agostino's morale was low. Luckily, after two weeks, Fr. Agostoni gave him a letter with a new appointment to Kenya.

Early in May 1973, he went to Nairobi and, on May 14, he went to Tabora, Tanzania, for a Kiswahili course. On 7th August, he returned to Kenya, where he was told to go to a Spiritan mission in the diocese of Machakos, to begin studying the local language, Kikamba. On 1st November, he and Father Antonio Colombo, from the diocese of Arua (Uganda), officially inaugurated the new mission of Makindu.

Father Agostino remained among the Akamba until the end of 1992, at times working in the mission of Makindu and at others in that of Kasikeu.

What he was able to conceive and start doing among the Alur of Uganda, he managed to fully implement here: the training of lay leaders, complete courses for catechists, liturgical seminars on the sacraments of Christian initiation, meetings for Christian couples, weekends of the Marriage Encounter movement... and also openings of schools and dispensaries, and various human promotion projects.

On 1st January 1993, Father Agostino was assigned to the diocese of Marsabit, in northeastern Kenya. Those were years of intense activity publishing catechetical texts, lessons for the catechumenate and liturgical brochures. His “masterpiece” was the printing of a voluminous catechism in English and Kiswahili.

In 2012, he moved to Nairobi, to the Centre for missionary animation and vocation promotion. In 2013 he went to live at the provincial headquarters in Nairobi, on Ngong Road, always ready to provide ministerial services in some nearby parishes. In May 2014, he was appointed to Nakwamekwi, in the diocese of Lodwar, among the Turkana people, in the extreme north-west of Kenya.

Father Agostino was now over eighty and began to feel tired, even though he vehemently denied this. On 25th March 2016, Father General Tesfaye Tadesse sent him an appointment: «Starting on 1st July 2016, you will to the Italian province, and stay at the Mother House in Verona. You have every right to rest a little.’ Reluctantly, Father Agostino accepted but only for a short time. In January 2017, he wrote to Father General: «I want to end my life in Africa. I am ready to go back to Kenya and stay there until my death.”

In December, Father Tesfaye signed a new appointment for Father Augustine: once again to the province of Kenya as from 1 January 2018. He did not wait for that date: in September 2017 he was already in Nairobi. The community of the International Scholasticate was ready to welcome him.

Sunday 4th June 2023, Father Agostino got up early, as usual. A little later, he was in the scholasticate chapel, ready for morning prayer and Holy Mass. After breakfast, he retired to his room. At lunch, he was his usual lively and cheerful self. After chatting with some scholastics, he went to his room for a short rest. At 18.30, everyone was waiting for him for Vespers, but he didn’t arrive. One of the students went to call him but found him dead in bed. He departed this life without disturbing anybody. His body is taken to the nearby morgue. Every morning, prayers were offered for him during morning Mass until the afternoon of Friday the ninth when the body was removed to the cemetery of the old mission of St Austin, where missionaries, priests, nuns and other members of the

Catholic Church rest. Also present for the funeral rites last were the bishop of Marsabit, Peter Kihara Kariuki, and the Archbishop of Nairobi, Philip Arnold Subira Anyolo. Surprisingly, the tomb close to the one where Father Agostino is buried is that of his “teacher”, Father Gusmeroli, who also came to Kenya from Uganda in 1973. God has a sense of humour! (Father Franco Moretti, mccc)

Father Joseph (Joseph) Bragotti (13.9.1937 – 14.6.2023)

Father Giuseppe’s great and enthralling adventure began on 13th September 1937, in Milan (Italy), in the Niguarda district. He was still a child when World War II broke out (1939-1945). He would remember the moments of fear for a long time, but he would also bring with him many happy memories of life in Milan: the football matches played in the street, the school lessons taught to him by his mother Anita, the little chores he did with his father Francesco, the carefree games with his three sisters, and above all the endless hours spent in the nearby parish oratory, where all the programs prepared for boys and young people invariably managed to excite him.

From 1948 to 1951, he attended middle school at Collegio Pio XI, in Desio (Milan). In 1953, after two years of gymnasium school, he entered the archiepiscopal diocesan seminary of Venegono Inferiore, where he obtained his classical high school diploma. On 13th October 1956, Giuseppe entered the Comboni novitiate in Gozzano (Novara). A year later, he was sent to the novitiate in Monroe (Michigan, USA) for the second year. On 9th September 1958, he took his first vows and moved to the scholasticate in Cincinnati, Ohio, for the first three years of theology, then moving on to San Diego, California, for the last year. It was there, on 9th September 1961, that he made his perpetual profession, and on 17th March 1962, he was ordained a priest.

Father Giuseppe (from then on known as Joseph) was assigned as missionary animator and vocations promoter to the community of Montclair, New Jersey. In 1965, he moved to the Mission Animation Centre in Cincinnati, Ohio, with the position of vocations promoter.

On 4th May 1967, he wrote a letter to Father Gaetano Briani, superior general, with a precise request: «I have an incredible desire to devote myself to the work for which I was ordained, while I have energy, health, a lot of enthusiasm and a great desire to work. If you find a bit of room to be filled in the middle of a wood, a forest, or the savannah, where there are people who need a priest (not necessarily a professor), I hope you will remember me».

His request was granted. In July 1967, his superiors appointed him to Uganda, assigning him to the diocese of Gulu, in the north of the country, as assistant pastor of the parish of Gulu-City. Father Joseph soon learned the local language, choosing as his “teachers” the children who hung around the house and the parish courtyard.

His main focus, however, was on the youth: the boys and girls were fascinated by him. Then, he was very soon appointed diocesan assistant for youth movements.

In July 1972 he received a letter from his superiors reassigning him to the province of the United States, with the post of director of the magazine and of other Comboni publications distributed in North America.

In July 1978, he obtained from the General Administration of the Institute the right to consider the Comboni province of North America as his province of origin.

In the second half of 1978, he went to Kampala, ready to take over the management of Leadership magazine.

Those were difficult times for Uganda, once known as “the pearl of Africa”. Idi Amin, who came to power in a 1971 military coup, led the nation into utter economic ruin and caused rampant mass atrocities that claimed the lives of at least 500,000 civilians.

When Father Joseph arrived, tension was high. Between 1979 and 1980, Uganda had four different heads of state. In 1980, Milton Obote regained the presidency through a controversial election that unleashed a new guerrilla war, with about 300,000 civilian deaths. Father Joseph sent friends in America reports of what was happening in Uganda. In personal letters, he recounts his pain and his anger but always has the strength to conclude with words of great hope.

In 1981, civil war broke out between the government forces (mostly Acholi and Lango) and Yoweri Museveni’s National Resistance Army (NRA), which would lead to hundreds of thousands of deaths; many children were used as soldiers. A few months later, while visiting some missions in northern Uganda, Father Joseph was kidnapped by a group of rebels but he was released after a few days.

On 23rd March 1983, he was again assigned to the NAP; on July 1, he was already in the provincial office in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the position of provincial procurator. The following year, he was one of the four provincial councillors and a member of the secretariat for evangelization. In 1985, he was the provincial secretary of animation. In 1986, he was head of the department for mass media.

In April, Father General Francesco Pierli called him to Rome, as director of the Comboni Press Network: a position he was to hold for five years

and which led him to undertake long journeys around the world to collect articles and photographic material, which he then made available to the various Comboni magazines around the world.

From 1st January 1995, Father Joseph was again assigned to the American Province. He went there as soon as he was free, as a guest of the provincial house in Cincinnati. For the first six months, he was in and out of the hospital for medical tests and treatment. In 2008 he was assigned to the mission of San Luis, in the municipality of Petén, in Guatemala. Now aged 71, he threw himself enthusiastically into pastoral work among the Maya Indians of the Q'eqchi group. He stayed there for three years. The experience fascinated him and left an indelible mark on his life.

In January 2011, he went to Rome for a course of ongoing formation and renewal. In July of the same year, he went to Covina, California, in charge of missionary animation and community treasurer. In July 2012, he returned to Cincinnati, a member of the provincial house where he would remain. His health rapidly deteriorated and, in June 2020, he was admitted to hospital with a Covid-19 infection. To convalesce, he was moved to Eastgate Springs, one of the communities for the elderly in the area where the Combonians serve. He decided to stay there until the end and it was there that he passed away peacefully in his sleep on the evening of 14th June 2023. (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Mons. Macram Max Gassis (21.9.1938 – 4.6.2023)

Macram Max Gassis was born on 21st September 1938 in Khartoum to Max Habib Gassis and Fahima Girgis. His father was a Catholic, a member of a family originally from Aleppo (Syria), while his mother belonged to a Coptic-Orthodox family from Luxor (Northern Egypt), who moved to Genetti, a village in the Nile Delta.

Macram attended the Comboni schools in Khartoum and very soon he started to say he wanted to become a priest, and his mathematics teacher, Father Giacomo Mosciatti, encouraged him. But it was the meeting with the Archbishop of Khartoum, Agostino Baroni, that convinced him to take the step. In July 1955 Macram was sent to Sunningdale, to the Comboni novitiate.

On 9th September 1957, he made his first vows and began his theological studies. Two years later, he went to Verona to continue his scholasticate. In 1960 he was in Venegono Superiore (Varese) for the last years of theology. On 9th September 1963, he made his perpetual profession and on 28th June 1964, in the parish "Tempio Votivo" in Verona, Cardinal Krikor

Bedros XV Aghagianian, prefect of Propaganda Fide, ordained him a priest, in the presence of his parents.

At the end of July, he returned to Khartoum and, on August 15 he celebrated his first solemn mass in the city's cathedral. Soon after, he was assigned to the parish of Wad Medani as pastor. Two years later, he was recalled to Khartoum, to the bishop's residence, in charge of the Catholic community of Gedaref. On 1st July, he was the bishop's chancellor, university student chaplain and spiritual director of the Society of Saint Vincent and the Legion of Mary.

In the early 1970s, Father Macram visited the United States several times to raise funds.

Appointed secretary general of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Sudan (SCBC), he immediately set about finding a piece of land in Khartoum to build the headquarters of the Secretariat. Father Macram enjoyed good relations with many senior government officials; he also tried to establish good relations with Islam and did not hesitate to hire Muslims in his Secretariat.

On 4th October 1983, he was appointed by the Holy See Apostolic Administrator of El Obeid. On 12th March 1988, Pope John Paul II would appoint him bishop of El Obeid. On that occasion, Father Tarcisio Agostoni, Superior General, delivered to Bishop Macram the pectoral cross of San Daniele Comboni, a precious heirloom kept by the Comboni Missionaries in Verona, deeming it appropriate that the relic of the saintly first bishop of Sudan should go to the first North Sudanese bishop.

Both as apostolic administrator and as bishop, Msgr. Macram managed to reorganize and develop the diocese. He reopened the parishes of Nyala and El-Fasher in Darfur, the parish of El-Nahud, in Kordofan, and rebuilt that of Mading Achweng, near Abyei. He also reopened the parish of Abyei; he opened a new parish in the Nuba Mountains, in Heiban, and increases the number of chapels in the entire area. In 1987, he built an Arabic language school in El-Nahud - for church personnel who were not familiar with this language and with the Sudanese culture - and, later, countless dispensaries and medical centres.

Archbishop Macram also stands out for his prophetic role through courageous public denunciations of injustices and human rights violations. As the only Arabic-speaking bishop in the bishops' conference, he had numerous talks with government representatives. At a certain point, however, the regime began to file complaints against Msgr. Macram precisely because of his initiatives in defending the Christian population of his country, invoking respect for human rights on the part of the Khartoum government. For these commitments, the bishop was awarded various

prizes in Europe and America. In 1988, he was even among the proposed candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize!

In 1990 he left for a trip abroad. In 1991 a Christian member of the military junta “informed” the Holy See that Msgr. Macram Gassis “Must never return to his homeland”, as he is considered a “persona non grata”.

From 1992 to 1995, for 4 consecutive years, he was a guest of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights in Geneva, and his interventions touched the conscience of those present and he received further awards. The forced absence from the diocese of El Obeid by Msgr. Macram induced the Holy See to provide the diocese with apostolic administrators. 2018 was a particularly painful year for Msgr. Macram due to problems with his health. Also, in 2020 and 2021 he undergoes various check-ups. From 14th to 21st August 2021, he went to German-speaking Switzerland at the invitation of the association “Aid to the Church in Need”, where he celebrated Masses and held meetings in numerous parishes. Also in 2021, John Ashworth, an English lay missionary who worked with him for nearly four decades, published the book *An Angry Shepherd* printed by Pauline Publications Africa-Nairobi, in which he recounts the life of Msgr. Macram, «A Sudanese bishop who fought slavery, religious persecution, enforced hunger and mass murders in a country that was his own and which also suffered many years of civil war [...], a pastor who knew every kind of suffering and has put his life on the line on countless occasions for love of his people».

At the end of May 2022, Msgr. Macram arrived in Pregnana Milanese at the family home of Sergio Rossetti, whom he met when he was a young priest and where he spent long periods over many years. But his health was now in a critical state. After Christmas 2022, his nephew took him to his home in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. On 4th June 2023, surrounded by the love and care of his family, Msgr. Macram died, aged 84.

In Pregnana Milanese, El Obeid, Khartoum, Juba, Rumbek, Nairobi, Washington, New York, Milan, Rome, Florence... Masses were celebrated in his memory. The funeral would take place on 13th June in the church of Saint Teresa in New Cumberland, presided over by Msgr. Ronald William Gainer, Bishop Emeritus of Harrisburg. The remains were interred in the local cemetery, in the sector reserved for priests. (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHERS: Romano, of the scholastic Romanos Sichongwe (MZ).

THE MOTHER: Santa, of Mons. Luis Alberto Barrera Pacheco (PE).

THE BROTHER: Elio, of Fr. Bruno Carollo (†); Sebastien, of Bro. Jean Afanvi (TGB).

THE SISTERS: Gisela, of Fr. Juan Armando Goicochea Calderón (PE); Maria Rosaria, of Fr. Torquato Paolucci (C).

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Sr Ancilla Adele Fumagalli; Sr M. Agnese Chiappa; Sr Orsolina Balzarini; Sr Luisella Musazzi.