

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

825

January 2024



**WE WISH YOU ALL
A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024**

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

1. APPOINTMENTS

Appointments of Brothers as Local Superiors

In compliance with what was decided in the Rescript of His Holiness Pope Francis of 18.5.2022, which determines the conditions for derogation from Can. 588 §2 of the CIC, the GC, responding to the requests received from the respective provincials, has appointed:

- on 4.12.2023 **Bro. Giovanni Luigi Quaranta** local superior of the Community of Venegono Superiore;
- on 4.12.2023 **Bro. Paolo Rizzetto** local superior of the Community of the Provincialate at the Mother House;
- on 14.12.2023 **Bro. Friedbert Tremmel** local superior of the Community of Bressanone.

Appointment of the General Archivist

On 14.12.2023, the GC appointed **Fr. Celestino Seabra Namaneque** as General Archivist as of 1.1.2024.

Formation appointments

On 11.12.2023, the GC appointed **Fr. Alberto de Oliveira Silva** as the Coordinator of the Centre for Ongoing Formation and superior of the Courses community as of 1.1.2024.

- On 11.12.2023, the GC appointed **Bro. Alberto Degan** a member of the coordination team of the Courses of Ongoing Formation and an ex-officio member of the Secretariat of Formation as of 1.1.2024.
- On 11.12.2023, the GC appointed **Fr. Habtu Teklay Tiluk** as the formator and superior of the formation community of Asmara as of 1.1.2024.
- On 11.12.2023, the GC appointed **Fr. Dreyfus Endjegandeyo-Yepoussa** as the formator at the Granada scholasticate as of 1.1.2024.

Appointment of the members of the ad hoc Commission for the preparation of the final text of the Rule of Life

In compliance with what is said in the Chapter Acts 44.3, on 11.12.2023, the GC appointed the following as members of the ad hoc Commission for preparing the final text of the Rule of Life, to be submitted to experts with a view to presenting it to the Holy See: **Fr. Fernando Domingues, Bro. Alberto Degan and Fr. Victor Hugo Castillo Matarrita**. Fr. Fabio

Baldan will collaborate as an external assistant with the Commission and Fr. Cosimo De Iaco will be responsible for relations with the Dicastery for Religious on its behalf. The Commission contact person with the GC is Fr. Elias Sindjalim Essognimam.

Appointment of the members of the Code of Conduct Central Team

In compliance with what is said in the Chapter Acts 45.3, on 12.12.2023, the GC appointed as members of the ***Code of Conduct Central Team*** **Fr. Rafael González Ponce, Fr. Jeremias dos Santos Martins, Fr. Fidèle Katsan Fodagni and Fr. Markus Lorenz Körber**. The GC reference person for this team is the Vicar General, Fr. David Costa Domingues.

2. BROTHERS AS COMMUNITY SUPERIORS

On 18th May 2022, Pope Francis signed a *Rescriptum* giving the possibility to depart from the norms laid down in Canon 588 §2, and it is now possible to appoint a Brother as community superior also in Clerical Institutes; this faculty, once reserved for the Holy See, is now granted to the Superior General. The GC is aware that in recent years the Provincials have entrusted this service to several Brothers. The GC wishes for this situation to be regularised by taking advantage of the new provisions of the Church. For this reason, he asks the Provincials to send to the Superior General the names of the Brothers that they propose (even ex-post) as local superiors, indicating the community and the starting date of this service. It thus becomes an effective rule that the appointment of a Brother as local superior must be proposed by the provincial or delegate with their respective councils to the Superior General, who will consult the GC and then issue the appointment decree.

3. GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MISSIONARY ANIMATION

The General Secretariat of the Mission, in order to implement number 32 of the Chapter Acts, will organise a General Assembly of Missionary Animation. The specific objectives of the Assembly are: 1) to take stock of the Institute's MA; 2) to rethink and assume a vision of AM in the context of the profound epochal changes that are occurring; 3) to relaunch MA through concrete proposals suited to the times; 4) to launch continental collaboration paths in MA.

The Assembly will be held from 22nd to 26th April 2024 (arrivals on the 21st and departures on or after 27th April), at the General House of the Curia, in Rome.

4. INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

The GC, after having listened to the members of the General Secretariat of the Mission (GSM) on the reception of the guidelines on Integral Ecology, poorly expressed in some Six-Year Plans, invites the mission secretariats of the circumscriptions to recover the Chapter's guidelines in practice, in particular with respect to adherence to the Laudato Si' Platform, to conversion to integral ecology and to the initiation of participatory paths to develop specific pastoral care according to continental priorities (which include, among other things, guidelines, good practices to be promoted, methodology common at the constituency and continent level).

5. GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF FORMATION

As per tradition, every six years and after the General Chapter, the General Formation Assembly is convened. This assembly will take place in Rome from 7th to 28th July 2024 and will see the participation of all the formators of the scholasticates/CIF, of the novitiates, of one postulancy formator per continent, as representative of the postulancy formators, of the provincials in charge of the sector of formation in the continents and of the members of the General Secretariat of Formation present in Rome. In the coming months, the GC will send a letter to all the confreres of the Institute following up on the questionnaire that was sent in preparation for the XIX General Chapter, soliciting contributions from all the confreres in the process of reviewing formation.

6. THE COMBONI YEAR OF ONGOING FORMATION - (CYOF)

The GC, after dialogue with the circumscription superiors, is finalising the complete list of participants in the next Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation, which will take place in Rome from October 2024 to May 2025. The dialogue continues with some superiors and with the confreres who are called to experience this special moment for their growth, remembering that it is a right and a duty for everyone to participate. The person in charge of the course, Fr. Alberto de Oliveira Silva, will contact each of the identified confreres. In the meantime, the program for the study of Italian is being prepared for the confreres who need it. The Italian language course will last approximately 4 months, from May to September. The confreres, in dialogue with their circumscription superiors, will in the meantime have to begin the process of requesting a visa to stay in Italy, following the instructions sent at the time by the General Secretary.

7. CONTINENTAL ASSEMBLIES OF PROVINCIAL BURSARS

Two continental assemblies of provincial treasurers will be organised in the coming months: the first, from 23 to 26 January, will be held in Lomé for French-speaking Africa. The second, from 19 to 24 February, will take place in Madrid, for Europe. It will be a moment of review, in-depth analysis and updating of issues related to the economic sector at local, continental and Institute levels, in light of the last Chapter.

8. ACCOUNTING COURSE FOR SCHOLASTICS

From 15 to 20 January, the accounting course reserved for scholastics will take place at the Cape Coast scholasticate (Ghana). It is a week of study on the economic management of the Institute and on the various documents with which the Institute has been provided for the administration and management of assets.

9. LETTER OF THE GC ON TRANSPARENCY IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD

During next January, the GC will send a letter to provincials and circumscription delegates regarding the need to manage resources at a personal, community and provincial level in an ethical and transparent manner. This will be an 'alert' to vigorously underline the constant reference to evangelical principles and ethical behaviour which must find expression in daily action in the economic field, to guide activity and relationships at various levels: confreres, Institute, benefactors and funding bodies.

10. ANNUARIO COMBONIANO

Annuario in paper format

The 2024 edition of the *Annuario Comboniano* is being published. It will be updated with the data received up to 31.12.2023. The Yearbook in paper format will still contain information relating to the confreres and their family contacts for those who have provided or updated them, but will have a very limited circulation and will be reserved for the offices of the curia, the circumscription offices and the houses of formation (council and general management, district superiors and bursars, superiors and formators of scholasticates and CIF). The personal data of the confreres and the contacts of their family members fall into the category of "particular data" (once called sensitive) and for this reason, they are protected by the various regulations regarding privacy, which have become mandatory in many countries. Since it is not possible for us to obtain authorisation for the publication of this data from all the confreres and, above all, from their families, in compliance with privacy regulations, the GC has

decided to limit the distribution of the *Annuario* making it available only to those who, due to the nature of their office, need this information (e.g. contact with family members in the event of serious illness, accident or death of the confrere). The Yearbook will have information regarding the restriction of its circulation and the need for its safekeeping printed on its cover, so as not to make it available to anyone who is not the recipient.

Digital Annuario

The digital yearbook will be published and circulated in the months of January, April, July and October. It will be distributed in two versions:

- a **complete version**, also containing the particular data of the confreres and their family contacts, reserved for the same recipients of the paper Yearbook;
- a **“compact” version**, intended for all confreres with an email address.

None of the recipients may extend the distribution of the complete *Annuario*. They are, however, responsible for distributing the "light" *Annuario* to the confreres of their own circumscriptions who have an email address.

It should be noted, however, that the quarterly publication of the digital *Annuario* makes sense only if the circumscription superiors undertake to provide changes of location and office and updates of the particular data of the confreres (professions, ordinations, mobile numbers, email addresses, family contacts) in a timely manner without unjustified delays or inaccuracies.

11. SIX-YEAR PLANS

Since a number of the six-year plans of the constituencies did not arrive in time, the General Council has decided to reserve a few days in January for an extraordinary consultation dedicated exclusively to the evaluation of the six-year plans and their approval. This consultation will begin on 15th January 2024. The GC asks all circumscription superiors who have not yet done so to send their respective six-year plans to Rome no later than 15th January 2024.

12. UPCOMING CONSULTAS

The next consultas, which will be extraordinary, will take place:

- On 8th January 2024, for decisions regarding the financial field;
- From 15th to 20th January 2024, for the evaluation and approval of the Six-Year Plans.

13. PROGRAMME OF THE JOURNEYS OF THE GC

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie

- from 26th to 30th January – Ethiopia for the Assembly of the APDESAM provincials
- from 1st to 24th February – Kenya
- from 7th to 17th March – Congo

Fr. David Costa Domingues

- from 21st January to 24th February – visiting the province of Peru

Fr. Luigi Codianni

- from 21st to 27th January – Lomé for the Continental Assembly of the Provincial Bursars of Francophone Africa
- from 18th to 25th February – in Madrid for the Continental Assembly of the Provincial Bursars of Europe
- from 27th February to 3rd March – in Castel Volturno for the European Migrants meeting
- from 7th to 17th March – in the Congo with Fr. General

Fr. Elias Sindjalim Essognimam

- from 21st January to 1st February – in Togo for the ASCAF provincials meeting
- from 1st February to 2nd March – official visit to the delegation of Chad

Bro. Alberto Lamana

- from 24th to 30th January – Ethiopia for the Assembly of the APDESAM provincials
- from 31st January to 24th February – Kenya

Perpetual professions

Bro. Alfred Mbungi Mulambu (U)	Kinshasa (CN)	2.12.2023
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Ordinations

Fr. Dapilos Raposa Benjosef Carlos (A)	Naga City (A)	9.12.2023
Fr. Gbedenya Kodzo Daniel (T)	Agbélouvé (T)	16.12.2023
Fr. Agbeli Koffi Daniel Crépin (T)	Agbélouvé (T)	16.12.2023

Holy Redeemer Guild

January 01 – 15 A 16 – 31 BR
February 01 – 15 C 16 – 28 EGSD

Prayer intentions

January – That we may be ever more aware that it is in fraternity and solidarity that we build up peace, guarantee justice and overcome personal, social and global crises. *Let us pray.*

February – That in the ongoing process of reconfiguration within the Institute of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, the meeting of the Provincials may be guided by the Holy Spirit, the true protagonist of discernment and the mission. *Let us pray.*

Comboni liturgical calendar

FEBRUARY

8	Saint Josephine Bakhita, virgin	Memorial
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Meaningful anniversaries

FEBRUARY

4	Saint John de Britto, martyr	Portugal
6	The Martyrs of Japan	Asia
23	Kidane Mehret, Co-redemptrix	Eritrea

Publications

Pierpaolo Monella, mccj, *A nome loro. Testimone di vite carcerate*, by Rosangela Pesenti, EMI Brescia 2023. "Ten stories written with sober, dry language – we read in the Preface – close to the feelings of the teller, aware of the responsibility of translating into words and publicly exposing what he has collected in a condition of privacy. Pierpaolo enters the prison and listens, as a counsellor, as a Christian and, above all, as a man who gets involved in a helping relationship in extreme conditions." Father Pierpaolo has worked in Uganda and Zambia and now lives in Manila.

Tonino Falaguasta Nyabenda, mccj, *Bernardo Sartori. Discepolo del Vangelo e di Maria*, Missionari Comboniani, Cordenons (PN), October 2023. In the preface, Father Fabio Baldan, provincial superior of Italy, immediately introduces us to the heart of the content of the book: «To say Father Bernardo is to say missionary passion... it is to say living prayer...

it is to say passion for Mary... Venerable Bernardo Sartori traces the path of holiness: to be like flames that do not consume; to enter into depths without distancing ourselves; being a Marian devotion that does not become commonplace; to be ecclesial communities that never close their doors."

HOLY SEE

General Procure

On 3rd December 2023, the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, with Prot. N. 609/23, issued the Decree of Confirmation of Dicastery the Order of Religious Profession in the Portuguese language for the Congregation of the Comboni Missionaries. The Archbishop Secretary Vittorio Francesco Viola, O.F.M., expressed the desire that this translation may be for the members of the Institute present in the interested territories an instrument of sharing the one charism for the good of the Church.

BRAZIL

Father Saverio Paolillo awarded Medal for Human Rights

On 7th December 2023, the Comboni Missionary Father Saverio Paolillo, known in Brazil as 'Father Xavier', received the 'José Gomes da Silva' Medal for Human Rights, granted by the Brazilian Bar Association, Paraíba section (Portuguese acronym, OAB-PB), in recognition of his commitment and action in the promotion and defence of the human rights of children and adolescents. For decades, Father Xavier has dedicated himself to the missionary work of promoting and defending human rights, especially those of children and adolescents, as well as to the ministry of prison pastoral care. Father Xavier dedicates this appreciation to his entire team of the 'Dom Óscar Romero' Center for Human Rights (CEDHOR) and the Ministry of Minors (PAMEN) of the Archdiocese of Paraíba, where he renders his missionary service.

On 10th December 2023, the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was celebrated. The protection of human rights is today a more critical and urgent need than many of us can imagine, and the Comboni missionaries, following the example of Saint Daniel Comboni, are committed to the promotion and defence of individual and collective rights.

The Province of the Comboni Missionaries of Brazil is pleased with this recognition and congratulates Father Saverio Paolillo for this result and for his long commitment to the defence of life and rights. Congratulations!

Perpetual profession

Brother Marco Antônio Coelho de Faria, Comboni missionary from Brazil, took perpetual vows of chastity, poverty and obedience on 2nd December 2023, at 5.30 pm, in the church of Nossa Senhora do Belém, in the diocese of Taubaté (State of São Paulo). Father Raimundo Nonato Rocha dos Santos, provincial superior of Brazil, presided over the Eucharist. It was a very beautiful and moving celebration. In addition to the family of Brother Marco Faria and his parish community, the event was attended by representatives of the Comboni Family and Father Gregor Bog-Dong Schmidt, provincial of South Sudan. Brother Marco Antônio Coelho de Faria belongs to the Province of South Sudan. After a family vacation, he will return to his beloved mission. The Province of Brazil thanks Brother Marco Faria for his generous yes, praising and blessing the Lord for the gift of his missionary vocation and consecrated life.

EGSD

Seminar of AMECEA bishops at Dar Comboni, Cairo

From 4th to 10th December 2023, the “Dar Comboni” Institute in Cairo, in collaboration with the association “Aid to the Church in Need” (ACS), organised a seminar for 14 Bishops of the Association of Members of the Episcopal Conferences of East Africa (AMECEA), from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. Also present were two members of ACS, Tony W. Zender and Reinhard Backes. The leaders of the seminar were Father Simon Mbuthia, Father Richard Kyankaaga, Father Diego dalle Carbonare, Msgr. Claudio Lurati and other members of the Dar Comboni staff. The seminar sessions were held at Dar Comboni. The bishops, however, were hosted by the Jesuits at their Holy Family College.

One of the objectives of the seminar was to draw the bishops' attention to the growth of Islamic radicalism in the region, highlighting the urgent need to have people well trained in the field of dialogue. At the end of the seminar, the bishops not only recognised the need to include the field of Islamic studies in the training curriculum of the major seminaries and catechetical schools but also decided to have in each diocese a person specialised in issues concerning Islam, capable of guiding other pastoral workers engaged in this field in developing adequate plans and promoting interreligious dialogue. The bishops also visited the mosque and

University of Al-Azhar, the oldest and most prestigious institution of learning in the Muslim world, founded in 972, as well as ancient Islamic Cairo, immersing themselves in the history of Islam in Egypt.

The visit to the Islamic part of Cairo ended with a visit to the research centre (IDEO) of the Dominican monks, who illustrated to the bishops their work in the field of research and Islamic-Christian dialogue.

The bishops' visit to Egypt, however, was not limited to the relationship with Islam. It also proved to be an excellent opportunity to discover the centuries-old history of Egyptian civilisation and the different oriental and Eastern Christian rites present in the country. The bishops were also able to appreciate the iconic pyramids of Giza, ancient Christian Cairo and the Coptic monasteries of Wadi Natrun, dating back to the 4th century.

During the week, the bishops were received by the Coptic Catholic Patriarch, His Eminence Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak, head of the Catholic Church in Egypt, and visited the major seminary in the Maadi district. In addition, our confrere Msgr. Claudio Lurati, Apostolic Vicar of the Latin Catholic Church in Egypt, organised an evening for the bishops at his residence. On the last evening, the Apostolic Nuncio, Monsignor Nicolas Henry Marie Denis Thévénin, hosted the entire delegation for a dinner.

The bishops said they were very satisfied with the seminar they attended, recognising that they had learned many things. They also asked that similar seminars be organised for other bishops of the AMECEA, and perhaps others as well. After thanking Dar Comboni and the ACN for the initiative, the bishops promised to share their experience with their respective episcopal conferences.

The Comboni Missionaries of Dar Comboni, with the collaboration of ACS, plan to offer similar seminars at least once a year for the good of the Church in Africa and in the world. (*Father Simon Mbuthia. mccj*)

ERITREA

A delegation in difficulty

All the members of the Institute are well aware of the difficult situation faced by our delegation which suffers from isolation, lack of personnel and an absolute lack of internationality among the confreres who work here. The difficulties arise from our government's policies. The biggest challenge we face – and which has lasted for at least eight years – is financial. For years now, the delegation has been 'in the red'. We barely manage to put food on the table and carry on - but in a very limited way - our pastoral activities. We are able to get by thanks to the generosity of

the General Administration and the provinces of Europe and North America, who have assisted us whenever we have needed it.

We are very grateful to them for the help they offered us. But the needs - which show no signs of abating - force us to appeal to your generosity again.

Thank you very much for your fraternal sharing. We pray to God that this sharing may continue. (*Padre Gaim Haileselassie, mccj*)

ESPAÑA

National Assembly of the Comboni Lay Missionaries

During the second weekend of December, the National Assembly of the Comboni Lay Missionaries (LMC) of Spain took place in Granada. It was a very rich and fruitful event in which we had the opportunity to carry out missionary animation in many parishes of Granada and the surrounding areas, presenting the LMC Movement and our missionary vocation.

This year, the assembly had a special quality, because, in addition to celebrating our missionary vocation, we also celebrated, as a Comboni family, the missionary life of one of the veterans of the Movement, María Carmen Polanco.

Throughout her missionary life, Maria Carmen has always been a gift from God to all of us. We consider ourselves lucky because Carmen started her journey a few years before us and therefore, we have always had in her a person to look up to as a role model. We are grateful to have had her as a point of reference in our LMC journey and we thank God for her life given to others and for her enthusiastic dedication to the mission. Dear Carmen, may the Lord continue to take care of you and bless you every day, as he has done so far. (*The LMC of Spain*)

ITALIA

National Assembly of the Comboni Lay Missionaries

The Comboni Lay Missionaries (LMC) of Italy gathered in Venegono Superiore, Varese, from 8th to 10th December 2023 to celebrate their National Assembly. There were about 80 participants from Palermo, Lecce, Florence, Bologna, Padua, Verona, Milan and Venegono Superiore. Also present were two Comboni missionaries (Father Eliseo Tacchella, provincial councillor, superior of the Mother House of Verona and representative of the Comboni Missionaries for LMC-Italy, and Father Alessio Geraci, of the community of Padua), a Comboni Sister and a Secular Comboni Missionary, Mr. Alberto de la Portilla, from Spain, Coordinator

of the LMC, Mr. Marco Piccione, from Italy, a member of the Central Committee, and Father Arlindo Pinto (contact person of the General Council of the MCCJ for the LMC, in Rome, and member of the Central Committee).

In the first two days, five round tables were held on some specific themes, during which the CLMs had the opportunity to share their opinions on the sense of belonging, on the specific service of the laity, on the rules for sending the CLMs on mission in nations other than those of origin, on the national and international organisation and structure of the CLM, and on collaboration within the Comboni Family.

On the afternoon of Saturday, 9th December, participants were able to meet online with the CLMs engaged in missionary service in Brazil, Kenya and Castel Volturno, in the province of Caserta, Campania.

After a long exchange of views, the members present at the assembly decided to adopt in their *training plan* the *formation guidelines* approved in their international assemblies, as well as to support dialogue with the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, in view of the recognition of their 'LMC Movement' as an International Association of the Faithful (AIF) by the Vatican Dicastery itself.

At the European level, it was decided that the LMCs would continue to promote the *Stop Border Violence* campaign against torture crimes committed at our borders.

Next January, the current coordination group (currently composed of two representatives for each local group and, therefore, extremely numerous, so much so as to make their meetings difficult) will meet to elect the new coordination group, made up of only five members, who will be responsible for coordinating the activities of the LMC Movement and animating the common initiatives taken regarding the various topics discussed.

The Assembly ended with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by Father Arlindo. After communion, there was the sending ceremony of Ilaria and Federica who were leaving for the mission of Carapira, in Mozambique, and Julia, who will go to Kenya for a short period of missionary service.

Venegono Superiore Comboni Missionaries welcome 35 migrants

Last 20th November, a loan contract for the use of premises located in the headquarters of the Comboni community of Venegono Superiore was signed between the College of African Missions and the Varese Committee of the Italian Red Cross.

The agreement provides that the Comboni Missionaries make part of their structure available for the reception of adult migrants seeking asylum and

that the Red Cross-Varese Committee manages the CPA (Centro Primissima Accoglienza). The CPA will be operational in the next few weeks and 35 migrants will be hosted.

Present at the signing were, in addition to Father Paolo Latorre, provincial bursar and legal representative of the Institute in Italy, and Dr. Angelo Michele Bianchi, president of the Varese Committee of the Italian Red Cross, Dr. Salvatore Rosario Pasquariello, Prefect of Varese, and the knight Antonio Bison, deputy mayor of the municipality of Venegono Superiore.

In the premise of the act, it is highlighted that «the Community of Comboni Missionaries of Venegono Superiore considers as its fundamental principle that the boundaries between the evangelical message and the fight for the defence of civil rights of the least are tempered and become a decisive and concrete word, an action of hospitality in the provision of spaces for non-profit associations that have as their institutional purposes, and in fact carry out, activities towards or for the support of disadvantaged individuals or those in disadvantaged situations. The style of this action must be inextricably linked to respect for the person and protection of the same in the Comboni style, where every place of struggle against disadvantage becomes a place of mission".

The Prefect thanked Brother Gianluigi Quaranta, superior of the Comboni community of Venegono Superiore, and the provincial superior of the Comboni missionaries, Father Fabio Baldan.

He also thanked the mayor, lawyer Walter Fabiano Lorenzin, and the municipal administrators of Venegono Superiore for sharing the initiative and for everything they will do to facilitate the use of the guests' free time, including voluntary public utility services. He also thanked the citizens and voluntary associations for their solidarity towards asylum-seeking migrants.

IN PACE CHRISTI

Brother Erich Stöferle (03.08.1947 – 30.11.2023)

On 30th November 2023, Brother Erich Stöferle, the last German-speaking brother in South Africa, died. It was the German Comboni Missionaries who began missionary work in that country, almost exactly one hundred years ago. On the occasion of the centenary celebrations, on 14th October 2023, Brother Erich was with his other brothers in the Maria Trost cemetery, near Lydenburg, where he now rests with 36 deceased compatriots.

Brother Erich was born on 3rd August 1947 in Ringingen, near Ulm, into a family dedicated to agriculture and crafts. On 4th November 1967, at the age of 20, he entered the Congregation of the Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart (MFSC) in Josefstal as a postulant, after finishing his apprenticeship as an electrician. The Josefstal farm had just been moved to new buildings, but the community was still living in the old house.

On 1st May 1968, Erich began his novitiate in Mellatz. Two years later, he made his first religious profession and moved to the school for master craftsmen in Saarbrücken, obtaining the title of "master craftsman", a qualification which attested not only to the professional skills acquired but also the ability to manage a business and train apprentices.

From 1971 to 1973, he had the opportunity to put his professional experience to good use during the construction of the new house in Josefstal. He was also the formator responsible for the Brother candidates.

The period following the Second Vatican Council was characterised by great turmoil. The incipient KIM (Circle of Young Missionaries) movement raised great hopes. The traditional image of the missionary Brother, seen as an assistant to the Fathers, was called into question. The objective was specified extremely clearly: Brothers must be professionally qualified collaborators on a par with the Fathers.

The judgment given by Father Anton Baumgart, local superior of Josefstal, on Brother Erich dates back to this period. In his recommendation for admission to perpetual vows he wrote: "During the year of training at the teacher training school in Saarbrücken, quite far from Josefstal, Brother Erich Stöferle clearly showed that he knew what his place was and what his professional goal was. I have never noticed a vocational crisis in him and I attribute this to his maturity. He must have had clear ideas about what he wanted before coming to us."

Brother Erich made his final profession on 11th April 1977, in Kenya, where he had arrived in June 1976.

Four years before reunification (1979), he was chosen with two other German brothers to open and direct the polytechnic school of Gilgil, in the Kenyan diocese of Nakuru. Initially, he was chosen as head of the electrical engineering program, later becoming director of the entire school.

After a refresher course in his homeland, in July 1986 Brother Erich was assigned to the German Province, with the role of local bursar of the Josefstal community and member of the formation group of the Brother postulants. He also took on the task of running the "Opera del Redentore" in the Josefstal area.

In 1993, he returned to Kenya to once again take over the management of the Gilgil Polytechnic School. Both the school and the construction

company associated with it were in a very difficult and precarious financial and personnel situation. It was also the period in which AIDS was literally mowing down the population. In addition, there was political and social unrest, with strikes and complex court cases. In 1995, the school truck was involved in a road accident in which some employees were seriously injured.

Exhausted by all this, in 1998 Brother Erich asked for a holiday in his homeland. In the summer of the same year, during a stay in the community of Messendorf / Graz, he had a haemorrhage and was immediately operated on in the Graz hospital, where he was diagnosed with lung cancer with metastasis. Half of the affected lung had to be removed.

After recovering, in 1999 he decided to leave for the mission again and was assigned to South Africa. The following 25 years saw a succession of chemotherapy treatments, recoveries and relapses. Despite everything, Brother Erich continued to carry out the role of provincial and local bursar, take care of the technical structures of the houses of the Institute, the distribution of the South African Comboni magazine *Worldwide* and many other tasks.

Though sudden, his death was not unexpected. On 30th November 2023, he had a pulmonary embolism, in Silverton, near Pretoria. An ambulance was immediately called, but when NetCare paramedics arrived, they pronounced Brother Erich dead. He was buried in the Maria Trost cemetery. In Ringingen, his parish of origin, a requiem mass was celebrated on 14 December in the presence of friends, family and some Comboni missionaries from the German province. (*Various confreres*)

Brother Giuseppe Menegotto (20.11.1927 – 13.12.2023)

On 13th December 2023, Brother Giuseppe Menegotto returned to the Father's house. "A great Comboni Missionary and a very good person has left us", was the comment of the confreres of 'The Oasis', the Comboni house used to welcome and care for the elderly and sick missionaries, in Zapopan, a city located in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, Mexico.

Brother Giuseppe had recently turned 96, having been born in Morazzone, in the diocese of Milan, on 20th November 1927. He was exhausted: his body, worn out by suffering, was no longer able to withstand the generalised infection that had led to his hospitalisation a few days earlier.

Giuseppe had made his first religious profession on 9th September 1947. Before being assigned to Mexico, he was sent to Thiene (Italy) as a trainer of young aspirants to the Comboni life. Brother Pepe, as some

called him, also worked as a tailor, mechanic, bursar, printer and writer. He left us two books: *Un Leproso Feliz*, 2002, the life of Brother Josué de' Cas, and *El Padre Luis*, 2004, a biography of Father Luigi Ruggera, a missionary well known in Baja California Sur, for his missionary zeal and as a tireless builder of chapels and communities throughout the Californian peninsula.

He arrived in Mexico in 1950. He was part of the third group of pioneers sent to evangelise the lands of Baja California Sur (BCS), one of the 31 federal states of Mexico. In Baja California Sur, in El Triunfo, he took his final vows on 9th September 1953.

There he gave himself body and soul to the work assigned to him. He was especially involved in the printing of Ciudad de los Niños, of which he was one of the founders, and of Ciudad de las Niñas. His dedication and service marked several generations of Southern Californians, who always remember him with great affection and today mourn his passing. In 1986 he was elected General Assistant of the Institute and had to move to Rome, where he remained for the six years of his mandate. During this important assignment, he had the opportunity to travel to various countries around the world, visiting the Comboni missions and encouraging the brothers in their evangelisation commitments, taking a particular interest in the specific vocation of the Comboni Brothers.

In 1991, having finished his service as a member of the General Council, he returned to Mexico, mostly involved in the formation of the Brothers. He would remain in Mexico until last 13th December 2023, when the Good Lord called him into the peace of his Kingdom.

He spent his last years in the "Oasis" Community in Zapopan, Jalisco, in the company of elderly and sick brothers. Even there, despite being elderly and ill, he continued to be a splendid example of consecration and love for the mission.

In an interview given to the magazine *Esquila Misional* in 2021, he confided: "Now I'm here, old and bruised, but I continue to be a missionary. I will be until the end. Do you want to know if it costs me? Here it costs me! If I could just leave, I would leave immediately. But as long as I'm here, I have to continue to be what I am: a missionary. I can offer this suffering for the good of the mission and for the love of the most needy, as did Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, who, even without moving from her convent, became the patroness of the missions."

Brother Carlo Morani (3.09.1946 – 18.12.2023)

A simple man, a good Neapolitan – we could say – who grasped the presence of God in his journey and, like Mary, said yes so that the Jesus that

was formed in him in his daily experiences could become a gift for others, for everyone he met in his seventy-seven years of life. At the service of the Kingdom, humbly, without making a fuss except for his laughter so full of friendship and brotherhood.

I repeat his words in an interview conducted some time ago together with Fr. Mario Fugazza. His first Christmas: it began in Benevento on 3rd September 1946, his birth, he was proud to be a fellow citizen of San Gennaro whom he considered his patron saint. His father was a railway worker and the family moved to Milan when Carlo was three years old. Life was not easy for many people who came from the south to the north in search of work and a future. He says that his vocation was born when he was little. With his aunt who worked at the telephone exchange, he had discovered the address of the Comboni Missionaries of Verona, to whom he had written to subscribe to *Nigrizia*: a subscription later changed to that of *Piemme*, given his age. He received it for two years; missionary enthusiasm also left some room for everyday life such as school, work and friendships. He did his military service in the Air Force and collaborated with the military chaplain of his barracks. Certainly, this possibility of continuing to live his life of faith in a slightly more intense way did him some good. He was engaged and, one evening, as he was leaving a disco, he saw signs here and there with the words: "God loves you". This sentence did not leave him indifferent: he thought about it and mulled it over in his mind until, after two months, he decided to follow the Lord. It was 19th July 1969. Carlo defined this date as his 'second Christmas': a new birth towards a future entrusted to the Lord.

He parted company with his girlfriend, found the address of the Comboni Missionaries in Milan and went to visit them to ask to join the Institute. He would be followed by Father Crimi and Father Baresi. In October 1969 he entered the postulancy in Pordenone. Starting a new path is not easy, but with the help of good formators, he made progress. He began his novitiate in Venegono (Varese) on 5th October 1971 and made his first profession on 12th May 1973. Fifty years of Comboni missionary consecration this very year 2023!

After his profession, he returned to Pordenone for two years, completing his professional preparation and engaging in missionary animation in the parishes of the area.

In September 1975, the time to leave arrived: Brother Carlo was appointed to Mexico. His missionary life would alternate between Latin America and Italy: a first period of five years in Mexico, a second period of seven years in Peru, and a third period of seventeen years in Ecuador. He was also present in some communities in Italy: Rome, Messina,

Naples, Troia, and Brescia. His longest experience was in Naples in two stages. His specialities, if we can call them that, were missionary animation and vocational promotion. He did not lack the word to preach, to meet people, to dialogue. At the same time, in the various communities, he also carried out the service of the local bursar and the person in charge of ensuring the good order of daily life in the house. «The mission – he said – transformed me: I did not go to evangelise, but to be evangelised by people».

Carlo was a missionary Brother, happy with his vocation. He wrote: «I have always liked the word Brother at the level of the heart, of vision, of humanity. I have been and am a 'Brother' at the service of brothers! And he was happy to have realised his vocation on the American continent. He often said: "The Lord was good to me, sending me to America." Even though he had lived in Paris for a few months during his novitiate, he struggled a lot with French; he would have been very uncomfortable with the local languages in Africa. For this reason, he was happy to have been sent to America.

In the last years spent in Brescia, when his health was slowly declining, he continued to follow closely events in Latin America. He used his old computer, read the newspapers and followed the news from the countries where he had lived. He informed himself about the life of the Church, as well as about Naples, which he carried in his heart. "I am happy, he said, also with the current situation, with the suffering of advancing age. Even suffering is a gift from God, and I thank him."

We did not expect such a swift end, but certainly the Lord wanted Brother Carlo with him to celebrate his 'third Christmas' together: the *dies natalis* of full life, the definitive Christmas of the encounter with the God who comes, forever!

Merry Christmas, Brother Carlo!!! (*Father Girolamo Miante, mccj*)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHER: Amadeu, of Father José da Silva Vieira (ET).

THE MOTHERS: Levina, of Father José da Silva Vieira (ET); Mayra, of Father Marvin Fuentes Murillo (PCA); Sitel Hagos, of Father Estifanos Helafu Weldeghiorghis (C).

THE BROTHERS: Giuseppe, of Father Mario Balbiani (PCA); Rev. Giulio, of Father Giorgio Aldegheri (I); Enrique, of Father Rafael Huerta Carbajal (M); José, of Father Dario Balula Chaves (P); Francesco, of Father Marco Passerini (BR).

THE SISTERS: Elsa, of Father Mponda João Mponda (EC); Lola, of Brother Miguel Ángel Niño del Portillo (T); Sara, of Father José Luis Martínez Acevedo (†); Idelma, of Father Antonio Ferrari (I); Celestine, of Father Kakwata Kingwaya Séraphin (EC); Rita, of Father Pierluigi Cadè (I).

THE COMBONI SISTER: Sr. M. Ines Zucchini.