

Familia Comboniana

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

829

May 2024



Here I am!

Ordinations

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Fr. Mbusa Mathemwero Moïse | Butembo (CN) | 08.02.2024 |
| Fr. Mikoza Bienvenu Clémy | Madibou-Brazzaville | 11.02.2024 |
| Fr. Muia Jacob Nzomo | Kiongwani-Wote | 13.04.2024 |
| Fr. Mutinda Joshua Musyoki | Kiongwani-Wote | 13.04.2024 |

Holy Redeemer Guild

| | | | |
|------|------------|------------|-----------|
| May | 01 – 15 ET | 16 – 31 I | |
| June | 01 – 07 ER | 08 – 15 LP | 16 – 30 P |

Prayer Intentions

May – For the victims of the many armed conflicts of today, especially innocent children, women and families who suffer because of so much violence. May the Lord of Peace touch the hearts of those responsible for such evils and bring them to an end. *Let us pray.*

June – That, following the example of St Daniel Comboni, we may keep our eyes fixed on Jesus crucified to assimilate the sentiments of His Heart and bear witness to this through communion between us, with the local Churches and with the poorest. *Let us pray.*

Comboni Liturgical Calendar

MAY

| | | | |
|----|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| 27 | Last Saturday of the month | Our Lady of the Sacred Heart | memorial |
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JUNE

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| 7 | Friday following the II Sunday after Pentecost | Sacred Heart of Jesus <i>Titular of the Institute</i> | Solemnity Togo-Ghana-Benin |
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Meaningful anniversaries

MAY

| | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|----------|
| 2 | Saint Athanasius, bishop and doctor of the Church | | Egypt |
| 18 | Saturday before Pentecost | Our Lady Queen of Apostles | Memorial |

JUNE

| | | |
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| 1 | Anniversary of the foundation of the Institute | |
| 3 | Saint Charles Lwanga and companions, martyrs | Uganda |
| 5 | Saint Boniface, bishop and martyr | Memorial (DSP, South Tyrol, Austria, Germany) |
| 8 | The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary | memorial |

EGYPT-SUDAN

Formation of volunteers for palliative care in Port Sudan.

The nursing team of the Comboni College of Science and Technology has begun the training of 50 volunteers who, once the training has been completed, will accompany people with terminal and chronic illnesses in the community. The first training session took place at Al-Wifaq Health Center. The Center was rehabilitated in 2022, thanks to a project carried out by the Italian Association for Solidarity among Peoples (AISPO - a non-governmental organisation linked to the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan) and financed by the Italian Agency for Cooperation in Development (AICS).

The training program, still ongoing, is the result of collaboration between the Comboni College of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health of the Red Sea State, the Italian NGO AISPO, the AICS and the Catholic parish of Port Sudan.

The situation of the Combonians in Egypt and war-torn Sudan

Last April 15th marked one year since war broke out in Khartoum, Sudan. On that occasion, times of prayer for peace were observed such as the Mass for peace celebrated in Sakakini (Cairo/Egypt) on Sunday 14th, and the ecumenical prayer held in El Obeid (Sudan) on Saturday 20th April. Unfortunately, as early as Sunday the 21st, loud shots were heard in El Obeid in the airport area, not far from our house. The conflict seems to be protracted and the Church is wondering how her presence will have to adapt to this 'new normality'.

In Port Sudan - which is effectively the new capital of the country - schools reopened on April 14th. We Comboni Missionaries run a secondary school in the city centre and four primary schools in the suburbs. Currently, the secondary school is also home to the Comboni College of Science and

Technology, which in recent months has moved its programs online, with the exception of the nursing program, which requires laboratories and hospital practice.

Last April 20th, the University held the final exams for the 2022-2023 academic year, which had been interrupted at the beginning of the war. These exams were held in these centres: the Catholic University of South Sudan in Juba, the Holy Family School in Helwan (Egypt), and the secondary school in Port Sudan. The nursing faculty will continue its activities in the coming months, including the course for palliative care at home for terminally ill patients, which will be held within the parish of the Sacred Heart in Port Sudan.

This year the distance between the date of Easter according to the Gregorian calendar, March 31st (followed by the Latins and Maronites), and the date according to the Julian calendar, May 5 (followed by the majority of Easterners, including the Copts, the Eritreans and the Melkites), is five weeks. The difference is felt most strongly in Cairo, where the two calendars coexist. So, while some of our parishes were celebrating Easter, others had just received the Ashes. We need to pray a lot so that one day we can achieve a joint celebration of Easter.

ITALY

A *Laudato Si'* OASIS in Florence

On Low Sunday, at the house of the Comboni Missionaries (Via Aldini, 2 – Florence), the first *Laudato Si'* Oasis of the diocese of Florence, but also of the whole of Tuscany, was inaugurated.

After a training course on the themes of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis, which began last year, which saw the participation of several groups, from the Saint Ignatius Association to the *Laudato Si'* Circle of Coverciano – founded in the parish of Saint Catherine of Siena – from the Comboni Lay Missionaries to the Florence 7 Scout Group, it was decided to create a place open to all, a place – an Oasis in the city, precisely – in which one may reflect, become familiarised and pray in the light of integral ecology. A real hub, in which to meet to convey and discern the needs and urgencies (environmental and social) emerging from the territory, providing an integrated and integral vision of reality since the cry of the earth must be combined with the cry of the poor.

The inauguration was attended by Antonio Caschetto – today advisor of the global project of the *Laudato Si'* Circles for the *Laudato Si'* Movement (MLS) – which is promoting the spread of other Oases in other dioceses of Italy and the birth – on 22nd April, on the occasion of Earth Day – of the

“Assisi *Terra Laudato Si*” project, the result of collaboration between the diocese of Assisi and the Franciscan families. Antonio Caschetto reminded us that the key words that drive these initiatives are: protect and cultivate.

Representatives of the Quartiere 2 Council and environmental associations also participated in the inauguration day, a tangible sign that the topics covered concern everyone, as believers and as citizens - believers or non-believers, Christians or non-Christians. In the group work and discussion, which took place in the afternoon, issues related to the city, lifestyles, responsibility towards future generations and conversion to integral ecology were addressed.

Opening the doors to the world is a distinctive sign of Comboni missionary spirituality. Numerous priests, coming from three continents (Africa, Asia and Europe) concelebrated, together with some Fidei Donum missionaries from the diocese of Florence and other dioceses.

Creating a network of Laudato Si’ Circles among the Florentine parishes is an important objective, since creating networks and weaving new relationships with other ecclesial associations - there were in fact representatives of the Franciscan Secular Order of Tuscany and of the Diocesan Office for Family Pastoral - is a necessary step if we want to address the current environmental and social crisis, characterised by the impoverishment of human relationships.

The Laudato Si’ Oasis is, therefore, a new gift for everyone. With respect to new environmental and social challenges, Don Milani’s teaching always remains true: “A problem for others is my problem. Ignoring it all together is politics; ignoring it alone is greed.” (*Father Fernando Zolli, mccj*).

Feast of the Friends of the Comboni Missionaries of Padua

“Twenty years ago, I entered this chapel for the first time. I was preparing my thesis and had come to this house to consult some texts. Then I felt attracted to the surprisingly ‘different’ Comboni world, and in this chapel, I met Comboni’s gaze. Those eyes spoke to me. From there my conversion to the faith began, followed by my missionary commitment. Here I learned to keep an open eye on the world, on the situations of humanity. Today I feel like a lay Comboni member and, together with others, we are working to give even more consistency and organisation to our being lay Comboni members.”

This was one of the testimonies heard on Sunday, 14th April 2024, during the Feast of the Comboni Friends of Padua. It is an annual celebration, increasingly popular, which, like a river, brings together various streams,

beautiful and lively, which give freshness to the Comboni charism. They found themselves together – some, after years – confreres who have made different life choices, people who have experienced years of Comboni formation, both in seminars and in youth animation courses (GIM), volunteers, collaborators, neighbours, frequenters of our house and of the sanctuary of Saint Joseph.

The result was a day full of memories, emotions, stories of past and ongoing activities, information on Comboni current affairs. There was no shortage of prayer and mutual thanks. People who were ‘Combonians at heart’ and who passed away were remembered with sincere affection. A phrase was reported from one of them that he often repeated: “They will call me an ex-priest, an ex-priest, an ex-teacher... But they will never be able to say I am an ‘ex-Comboni person’.”

Father Giuseppe Caramazza presented some statistics on the Comboni missionaries and on the changes taking place today, thanks to increasingly numerous confreres coming from African countries. He commented on some Comboni commitments in the mission: the Community of Açailandia (Brazil) and its concern for Creation which is especially threatened in the Amazon Basin; the commitment to the development of the Gumuz language by Father Marco Innocenti, working in Ethiopia; the social action to redeem "street kids" in Kenya, carried out by Father Maurizio Binaghi.

Father Giuseppe also presented the surprising reality of Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya, in particular its Institute for Social Transformation (IST, in the English acronym), created in 1994 by the Comboni Father Francesco Pierli as a centre of innovation and excellence for future leaders, in the practice of social transformation through academic and professional programs offered by the Institute. Father Giuseppe said: “These various activities, which present themselves as ‘social’, are in reality ‘a mission of evangelisation’, because they are a true testimony of charity towards the least, the poor, those whom God prefers and for whom the Lord Jesus was sent.”

Father Eliseo Tacchella, coordinator of the Lay Comboni Missionaries in Italy, recalled the beliefs that Saint Daniel Comboni had regarding the laity and the trust he placed in their missionary activity. He then solicited some testimonies from lay Comboni missionaries from Padua. This was followed by a rich sharing on the personal relationship with Daniele Comboni and with the Comboni Missionaries known in various circumstances, in particular in the community of Padua. There was talk of ‘GIM paths’, ‘mission fields’, missionary animation activities, catechesis in parishes, actions and evenings spent raising awareness on migration, ecology,

human rights, attention to the poorest... The testimonies on the change of personal life that occurred after contact with Comboni.

The atmosphere of the meeting corresponded well to the splendid sunny day. There was an air of celebration, joy, brotherhood, mission and the Comboni spirit.

The Eucharistic celebration - with biblical readings that invited us to be witnesses of the risen Jesus - and the lunch together expressed and consolidated the joyful familiarity that always accompanies the missionary commitment of many Comboni friends. (*Father Gaetano Montresor, mccj*)

KENYA

Two new Comboni priests

Last 13th April, in the church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, in the parish of Kiongwani, two Comboni missionaries, Joshua Mutinda Musyoki and Jacob Nzomo Muia, were ordained priests at the hands of Msgr. Paul Kariuki Njiru, bishop of the newly formed diocese of Wote, erected in July 2023 in Makueni County.

In his homily, Msgr. Njiru expressed his thanks to God for the gift of priesthood in the Church and encouraged Father Joshua and Father Jacob to be men of prayer, obedient and who accept every commitment assigned to them as an opportunity to serve God in his people. The bishop also encouraged the faithful present to help the priests in their ministry: "Your role is not to make the ministry of your priests difficult, but to be resourceful and help them carry out their service effectively."

The celebration attracted a large crowd of Christians, some from the Holy Cross Parish of Kacheliba in the Diocese of Kitale, where Father Jacob served for more than a year as a deacon. A second delegation of Christians came from the quasi-parish of Rankau in the Diocese of Ngong, where Father Joshua spent a few months on diaconal service. Also present were some political figures from West Pokot and Makueni Counties. The parishioners of Kiongwani welcomed the occasion of the ordination with jubilation, considering it a true gift from God and an invitation to deepen their faith. Many of those present spoke laudatory words towards the Comboni missionaries, recalling with gratitude the fact that their parish was started by the Comboni missionaries in the early 1990s.

During the celebration, provincial superior Father Andrew Wanjohi announced that Father Joshua has been assigned to the province of Egypt/Sudan, while Father Jacob has been assigned to Kacheliba, where he will continue his missionary service, now as a priest. (*Father Andrew Wanjohi, mccj*)

MÉXICO

Sahuayo Seminary– 70 years after the laying of the foundation stone

On 20th April 1954, the first stone was laid and construction of the seminary officially began. In the historical archives (*Bulletins of the Congregation* n. 43, April 1955, and n. 45, January 1956) the documentation of that extraordinary day is preserved, with a detailed description of the event and the moving testimony of the participation and generosity of the people of Sahuayo.

At ten in the morning, the bishop of Zamora, Mons. José Anaya Diez de Bonilla arrived for the blessing and was received by the parish priest, Don Felipe Villaseñor, and by Father Amedeo Ziller, representative of the Institute. In the presence of numerous ecclesiastical and civil authorities and a multitude of faithful, the bishop blessed the first stone and signed the parchment which was then placed inside the stone, in memory of the day.

The excavations began on the first Wednesday of February 1954, because the seminary was dedicated to Saint Joseph in the hope of gaining his protection which never actually fell short: a year later, the first group of aspirants were received into the seminary.

Also, in the news of those years, the people made an enormous contribution to the building of the seminary. The fathers who followed the work could recount many moving episodes, especially of middle-class and poor people; all generously offered what they could give – money, jewels, building materials or their own free labour – testifying to how much all of them had always considered the seminary was, in a way, ‘their own’.

PERU

America/Asia Continental Formation Assembly

The America/Asia Continental Formation Assembly took place from 15th to 21st April 2024 in Lima, Peru. The event was organised by Father José de Jesús Villaseñor Gálvez, general secretary of formation, and Father Elias Sindjalim Essognimam, general assistant responsible for the sector, and proved to be a moment of profound fraternity, dialogue, and mutual growth.

The assembly opened with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Msgr. Juan José Salaverry, OP, auxiliary bishop of Lima and responsible for religious life at the level of the National Episcopal Conference.

During the assembly, there was a precious exchange of experiences and reflections, during which the importance of ongoing formation in our lives was underlined, in particular for the confreres responsible for accompanying young people. Particular attention was paid to the role of young people in our journey of service and commitment, recognising their vitality and potential for the enrichment of our communities.

This sharing was a unique opportunity to learn about and better understand the realities and challenges we are facing in the different constituencies in the vocational and training fields, as well as to strengthen the bonds of collaboration and solidarity between us.

We sincerely thank all the participants for their commitment and their help in making it such an enriching experience.

May fraternity, enthusiasm and missionary spirit continue to guide our steps on the path of formation and mission. (*Father Nelson Mitchell, mccj*)

PORTUGAL

Feast of the Maia Families

On last 7th April, Low Sunday, the relatives of the Portuguese Comboni Missionaries met at the Comboni house of Maia for the traditional annual meeting. After the welcome, Father José Júlio Martins spoke about his missionary work in Mozambique, where he arrived for the first time in 1984. During these years he carried out his service in the dioceses of Tete, Maputo and Nampula.

In Tete, he dedicated himself to assisting people in need, at a time when the communist-Leninist government did not allow any religious activity and the region was hit by a long period of drought. In Maputo, he was able to carry out evangelisation activity that was freer and more attentive to religious values, without neglecting the social and cultural aspects. Finally, in Nampula, he dedicated a few years to the training of diocesan seminarians and young Comboni missionary candidates, trying to put into practice the dream of Saint Daniel Comboni: 'Save Africa with Africa'.

The morning ended with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Father Fernando Domingues, provincial superior, who in his homily recalled that every Christian is a missionary and that, animated by the Holy Spirit, is called to bear witness and communicate the love and mercy of God to the brothers and sisters he or she meets every day.

A fraternal lunch followed. Around 4.00 pm, the concluding prayers were held. The approximately 120 people present expressed satisfaction and joy at having participated in the meeting and thanked God for the gift of a shared missionary vocation.

SOUTH AFRICA

Provincial Assembly 2024

Held from 22nd to 26th April at the Maria Trost Pastoral Center in Lydenburg, the annual provincial assembly focused on three aspects: intercultural and intergenerational dynamics in our communities; reflection on the 'merger project' (RSA, MO and MZ) and the Review of our *Provincial Directory*. Participating in the assembly as special observers were Father José Joaquim Luis Pedro, provincial superior of Mozambique, Father Moses Huruwella, vice provincial superior of Malawi-Zambia, and Father Daniel Chisha, provincial councillor of Malawi-Zambia.

The theme of intercultural and intergenerational dynamics, discussed on the first morning by Father José Joaquim, sparked a lively debate among the confreres. Many highlighted how the cultural plurality of our communities is an added value for the human and spiritual growth of each one and, at the same time, a challenge that requires a commitment to recognise the equal dignity of the other's culture, avoiding considering a culture superior to another.

The reflection on the 'merger project' (RSA, MO and MZ) was facilitated by the answers to the questionnaire collected in a document that each participant was able to consult before the meeting. Eleven confreres believe the merger of the three provinces is urgent and necessary; five agree, but are of the opinion that we need to have more time to reflect on it; nine, however, are against the merger. Therefore, it can be said that 64% of the confreres of the Province of South Africa are in favour of uniting the three provinces. Some difficulties are not underestimated, including communication in two languages (English and Portuguese), but it is thought that the merger could help solve the problem of insufficient staff in our province, which is why we cannot always guarantee communities with at least two confreres.

The assembly then addressed the revision of the Provincial Directory in force since 2014. The amendments to the original text were diligently discussed and approved, thanks above all to the work of the secretariats for mission, formation and economy, which prepared their proposals beforehand. Various changes were approved, including the one concerning the transfer of well-established and self-sufficient parishes to the dioceses, as hoped for by the old Directory. Given the difficulty of our communities in sustainability, the assembly instead voted in favour of maintaining economically stable parishes.

The economic difficulties also concern the problem of maintenance of the structures, as some of our communities have highlighted in their reports.

These are churches, chapels, parish halls, as well as, in some cases, the houses in which we live, which have been neglected for a long time and are now in a state of decay. To repair them, financial resources are needed which we struggle to find and which parish communities often do not have at their disposal. There are no easy solutions to the problem. However, the assembly accepted the invitation that in every community we should keep 'an eye on maintenance' in order to intervene promptly with appropriate measures and prevent the deterioration of the structures. Meanwhile, the path that has just begun towards the unification of the three provinces is a concrete step towards realising the request made by the last three General Chapters – 2009, 2015 and 2022 – and by the APDESAM Leadership in 2023. The road ahead is still long and the completion of the project requires the constant commitment of the interested parties, in discernment and dialogue, proceeding together to reach a consensus on fundamental points. (*Father Efrem Tresoldi, mccj*)

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Florêncio de Souza Paz (07.11.1947 – 20.03.2024)

“My choice would be to join the Comboni group of the ABC in São Paulo. Otherwise, I would accept the invitation to move to the Province of Northern Brazil, going to São Luís, in the state of Maranhão, my homeland.” This is the response that Father Florêncio sent to the provincial of North East Brazil, Father Franco Masserdotti, in February 1987. Father Franco’s invitation was motivated by the possibility “that Florêncio would return to his own territory and by the certainty that his preparation and experience would be very precious for contributing to particularly demanding jobs such as that in the immense outskirts of São Luís, entrusted to the Comboni Missionaries, and helping the popular movements and communities of Pará-Maranhão.”

After his first vows, made on 11th August 1974 in São José do Rio Preto (SP), and his perpetual vows, on 17th December 1977 in Rome, Florêncio was ordained a priest on 19 February 1978. Since then, he sought to ‘deepen’ his priestly choice.

In June 1984 he asked the provincial council for a year of ‘absence from the community’, to “experiment with pastoral work and study, in a favourable situation for a more in-depth reflection on my life as a Comboni priest. To this end, I intend to take a parish in the episcopal region of Itapeçerica da Serra (SP).”

In 1985, the parishioners of Santo Antônio de Vila Iasi, in São Paulo, with a signed community appeal, asked the provincial superior of the Comboni Missionaries to allow Father Florêncio to remain in the parish a little longer, “to develop a broad pastoral care, as deputy parish priest, having made a clear ‘preferential option for the poor’.”

Starting in 1990, he was absent from the Comboni Institute for 28 years, due to exclaustation, without exercising his priestly ministry. He taught at public universities and defended his doctoral thesis in Linguistic Studies at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. Having already retired in 2012, he worked for three years as a volunteer in a public cardiac hospital, with the task of welcoming poor patients from different parts of Brazil. He taught Philosophy at the Faculty of Law and Ethics and the Philosophy of Language at the Interdiocesan Seminary of Palmas, in Tocantins.

“Throughout those years – Father Florêncio wrote – I have gone through more or less difficult periods, especially of loneliness, isolation and serious illnesses. I have maintained a constant search for support in personal prayer, in biblical reading and meditation, even if not always regularly, as well as in participation in the Eucharist. The arrival of Pope Francis at the

head of the Church, with his words, gestures and attitudes, which always underline inclusion and mercy, strengthened my personal decision to turn to the General Administration of the Institute and ask, if possible, for my reintegration into the community, to return to a religious, missionary and community life, which I have missed so much.” When asked about his willingness to return to the community and exercise the priestly ministry, Father Florêncio responded to the members of the General Direction with “sincere and sound reasons”. He could, therefore, be admitted to the Institute again and, in July 2017, his reintegration into the Comboni community began.

The first stop on this itinerary was a community in the Province of Brazil. He also spent a period of reflection in Rome. He then went to the Provincial House, in São Paulo, for his first experience of community life, contributing to the service of the Santuario da Cruz e Reconciliação and to the various pastoral needs of the area.

Father Florêncio was respected for his humility and dedication, his friendly spirit and his willingness to go to missions to Africa. In 2018, in fact, he went to Chad. In 2019, however, he had to return to Brazil due to new health problems.

In São Paulo he collaborated in the pastoral care of the Sapopemba region and had the role of bursar at the Comboni Theological Seminary.

In August 2022, Father Florêncio suffered a serious stroke. After three months spent in the São Paulo hospital, he was transferred to São José do Rio Preto (SP), to the Comboni House, for elderly and sick Comboni Missionaries. He was slowly recovering and his health was improving when pneumonia and kidney problems led him to be admitted to the Santa Casa de Misericórdia hospital, where, on 20th March 2024, his earthly life ended. (*Father Enzo Santangelo, mccc*)

Father Lodovico Bonomi (10.10.1939 – 14.04.2024)

“I declare that, when the Lord calls me, I wish to be buried where I die, in my place of work.” It was the wish expressed by Father Lodovico Bonomi, since March 1994. After exactly 30 years, he was buried in São José do Rio Preto, SP, where he lived from January 1997 to December 2001 and from 2009 until his death in 2024.

He was a novice in Gozzano (1959-1961), a scholastic in Crema (as a prefect, attended theology courses in the diocesan seminary) and Venegono, after his perpetual vows on 9th September 1964, he was ordained a priest on 26th June 1965. Intelligent, dynamic, creative, and strong-willed, he was immediately given the role of bursar in the Scholasticate of Venegono (VA).

In December 1967, he arrived in Brazil for the first time, to take over the leadership of the parish of Ecoporanga, in the north of the state of Espírito Santo, together with other Comboni missionaries.

After a year of work in vocational promotion (1973), in the Comboni seminary of Campo Erê, in the west of the state of Santa Catarina, Father Lodovico agreed to work in Rondônia, in the parish of Pimenta Bueno, which already has 30 thousand inhabitants, where “the large estates crush small properties” and there is no government plan to settle families in search of land and avoid conflicts in the occupation of large uncultivated areas. There are also the Larga Indians, who claim the area for their own survival. National groups from the South and large international companies begin to create conflict, occupying and exploiting Indian lands and stealing the natural riches of the Amazon Forest. In this way, the progressive erosion of Indian culture began.

From 1979 to 1984 and from 1988 to 1996, he worked in Porto Velho, the capital of Rondônia. When, in 1982, Bishop João Batista Costa renounced the leadership of the diocese, Father Lodovico was elected episcopal vicar and took care of the diocese of Porto Velho until the arrival of the new bishop.

In 1984, he returned to Italy, where he spent a year in the community of Messina. In 1985, he returned to Brazil and took over the administration of the parish of Alto Paraíso, a municipality with a total area of 2,651 km². He also administered the parish of Jaru from 1985 to 1988. Shortly thereafter, he returned to the parish of Nossa Senhora das Graças in Porto Velho until 1996.

After a vacation in Italy, he was assigned to the community of São José do Rio Preto. In 1998 he became superior of the community and also took over the direction of the Social Work ‘São Judas Tadeu’. At the request of the provincial superior of the time, the construction of the Comboni House began (intended to accommodate the elderly and sick Comboni Missionaries) and, subsequently, of the parish house.

From October 2002 to the end of March 2003, he took time out at the provincial house of São Paulo. In April, the province took over the parish of Sant’Isidoro, in Alto Alegre, in the diocese of Roraima, almost on the border with Venezuela. The choice is motivated by the desire of the Comboni Missionaries to seriously resume pastoral care among the Indians. Father Ludovico and Father John Clark offered to go: the first as parish priest, the second as superior of the community; in 2005, they were joined by Brother Antonio Marchi. In 2008 the community moved to Boa Vista, but Father Ludovico continued to visit the Indians of Alto Alegre. At the

end of 2009, he was reassigned to the community of São José do Rio Preto (SP) where he would remain.

Wherever Father Ludovico happened to live – leading parishes, sharing the life of different communities, or directing the ‘São Judas Tadeu’ Social Work – he earned everyone’s sympathy and respect.

Early in the morning, without fail, he would go to the bakery to buy bread and milk for his brothers. He would then prepare the table and help a little in the kitchen. Good-hearted, he helped the poor, giving them food and money. He also raised chickens to guarantee his confreres fresh eggs every day. He also kept a small vegetable garden for fresh vegetables.

Always present at the daily community prayer, he prepared his homilies well, commenting on the day’s readings.

Eventually, his health began to weaken. He was forced to undergo several operations on his throat, then also on his hip which he broke when he had a bad fall... He endured everything with holy resignation.

His suffering ended on Sunday, 14th April 2024, when Sister Death came to take him, purified, and delivered him, resurrected, into the arms of the heavenly Father.

The people who knew him respected and loved him very much, and the poor mourned for him as for a father. (*Father Enzo Santangelo, mcccj*)

Brother Romano Maran (01.08.1927 – 11.04.2024)

Romano was born in Selvazzano, province of Padua, on 1st August 1927.

He grew up in a very large peasant family (with 9 children) of deep faith.

“It was at home that I learned to pray and work hard”, is the refrain that he would repeat throughout his life. After finishing primary school, he attended the diocesan seminary of Padua as an external student. Meanwhile, he begins to feel the desire to become a missionary. Starting the third year of high school, he entered the Comboni seminary in Padua. In 1939 he was in the Comboni seminary in Brescia, for his fourth year of secondary school, but he remained there for only 4 months: his studies were particularly difficult for him, and he was invited to return to his family. Romano, however, did not give up. In May 1940, he wrote to the superior of the seminary in Padua asking to be accepted as a coadjutor brother. On 1st October 1942, the novitiate began in Venegono. On 7th October 1944, he took his first religious vows.

Europe was still at war and nobody could leave for the missions. In June 1947, after some assignments in Italy, Brother Romano a letter assigning him to the Sudan.

On 7th October 1950, he took his final vows. In 1957 he was assigned to Juba mission in the Bahr-el-Gebel circumscription to assist in the procure.

In 1960, he became a teacher of catechism and religious instruction in schools in the area. In March 1961 he was in Tali mission. After the expulsion of the missionaries from Sudan, he returned to the General Curia in Verona, Italy, as a general administration assistant. In March 1965, when the Curia moved to Rome, Brother Romano also moved to the capital, where he remained until the end of June 1966.

In the meantime, he received a new appointment: the Gulu Region, which included all the missions of Uganda. Before the end of the year, he was already working in the Kampala community, helping to run the house. We have little else to say as his presence was requested in the north of the country, at the Aliwang mission, not far from Lira, to take care of the house and the parish.

In 1969 he was in the mission of Aboke, in the recently founded diocese of Lira, where new parishes were emerging that needed his presence. In 1971 he worked in Iceme, a newly opened mission where the necessary structures needed to be built. In 1973 he was called to Teboke, another new mission to be started. In 1976 he moved to West Nile, to the Maracha mission in the diocese of Arua; while there, he also took care of the nearby Olovo mission, where maintenance work was urgently needed.

In the first months of 1979, Brother Romano was in Italy on holiday. When he returned, he was offered a temporary transfer to the new mission of Obongi, on the White Nile, 100 km north-east of Arua, where Father Silvio Serri was alone. Brother Romano knew well what that meant – starting again almost from scratch - but he willingly accepted.

In Obongi, Brother Romano experienced the tragic death of Father Serri, which he recounts in detail in a long letter to the new Superior General, Father Salvatore Calvia, dated 14th April 1979, at the end of which he expresses his desire to remain in Odongi: "I have no intention to retire from my job, despite the shock I suffered and which was truly terrible... It will be a more comforting testimony for our Christians, who will be able to see that, despite the suffering – in spite of everyone and everything – we want to demonstrate our constancy for the divine mandate, which must always be carried out until the end." Romano took some time off to recover, but, in the meantime, he continued to be available for any service whatever. In 1980 he moved to Lodonga and then to Maracha and Minakulu for a few months. Wherever he was, he often had to go to the Ombaci procurator's office to collect material or repair the car... Travelling was not always peaceful... he had to watch out for checkpoints. Once, he was beaten by soldiers and taken to prison. He was released only after several hours, disturbed and almost traumatised. Nevertheless, the next day he got into his vehicle and drove back to the mission.

After a period of holidays in Italy, he was assigned to Malawi-Zambia. In October 1984, he was already in the mission of Saint Mathias Mulumba, in Chipata, Zambia, which had opened a few months earlier. There was a lot of building up to be done, in fact. His comment was: "Grist to my mill!". In July 1987, he went to reopen Chikowa mission; in July 1989 he was called to Malawi, to Mthawira parish mission, as house manager. He remained there until the end of 1994, when he was sent to the Lunzu Craft Training Center in the diocese of Blantyre which, also thanks to him, would become Comboni Technical School.

He spent the first six months of 2003 in Verona for medical treatment. Once he recovered, he returned to Malawi. He was now 80 years old, but knew well how to organise and guide local workers magnificently. In 2008, he was called to the provincial headquarters in Lilongwe, but after three months he was forced to return to Italy for health reasons.

He then went to Brescia for treatment, staying there until July 2009, when he retired to the Mother House in Verona. In June 2015, he entered the 'Brother Alfredo Fiorini' Centre in Castel d'Azzano (Verona), his last stop where he celebrated his 100th birthday.

Brother Romano died peacefully in his sleep on 11th April 2024, a few hours after receiving Holy Communion. (*Father Franco Moretti, mccj*)

Father Armando Agostini (18.03.1940 – 12.03.2024)

Armando was born in Rucavà di Colle Santa Lucia, in the province of Belluno, on 18th March 1940. He was the first of six children; the fourth child was Sisto, born in 1946, who would follow in Armando's footsteps, becoming a Comboni missionary.

Armando attended primary school in his hometown. In October 1952, he joined the Comboni Minor Seminary in Padua for his high school studies, which he concluded in June 1960.

In September of the same year, he was sent to Monroe, Michigan (USA), for the novitiate and the first philosophy courses. On 15th August 1962, he took his first religious vows and moved to the scholasticate in San Diego, California, for the first two years of theology. In 1964, he returned to Italy, to the Mother House in Verona, for the third and fourth theology courses.

On 9th September 1965, he made his perpetual religious profession. On 26th June, he was ordained a priest in the parish of Colle Santa Lucia, by the bishop of Belluno-Feltre, Msgr. Gioacchino Muccin.

Father Armando was immediately assigned to Uganda. In August 1966, he was assigned to the mission of Moyo, in the then 'Arua Region', as assistant parish priest and teacher in the Senior School. On 11th

December 1969, he returned to Italy for three months of holidays, promising the principal of the Senior School that he would return for the start of the second term. But Father Armando was tired and worn out and needed a lot of rest. He was eager to return as he promised the principal, but his health and other small problems that are not fully clarified recommended waiting. Finally, in mid-December of the following year, he was back in Uganda, in Lira, at the cathedral, as chaplain of the high schools of the diocese.

Six months later, however, he had to return to Italy again due to health problems. He accepted the humble position of doorkeeper at the General House in Rome. He remained there until July 1971, when he returned to Uganda, assigned to the parish of Adjumani, in the diocese of Arua. Shortly after, he returned to Moyo, to his beloved Senior School.

When he spoke in public, Father Armando was always very frank, to the point of being critical of governments. Thus, in October 1976, he was expelled from Uganda for having "used offensive tones towards the nation". Father Tarcisio Agostoni expresses his solidarity and the certainty of his innocence. Meanwhile, Father Tonino Pasolini, provincial superior of Italy, had already contacted Father Armando about the possibility of staying in Italy for a period, obtaining his consent.

From January 1977, Father Armando lived in the community of Pesaro, in charge of missionary animation. After a few months, he moved to Verona, to the Mother House, as administrator of the magazines.

In July 1980 he was appointed to Malawi. He left, full of enthusiasm, for the new mission. He settled in Lirangwe, the headquarters of the delegation, to study the language. Shortly afterwards, he suffered a severe attack of malaria and had to return to Italy.

He then took part in the renewal course in Rome, at the Curia. He wrote a letter to Father Calvia: "I am sorry that you were upset that I returned from Malawi so soon. Aside from the terrible malaria I got, I could not learn Chichewa, and English was practically useless. And then a somewhat anomalous situation arose again, with clear symptoms of nervous breakdown. I have already had two, and I do not want to have another... I would immediately return to the Madi of Uganda, to Moyo... if the superiors and the government of Uganda wanted me, but I doubt it... Please, tell me where I should go, and I will go there." Father Armando was assigned to the General Curia for work in the General Secretariat. He immediately went to Rome and threw himself into his new role with enthusiasm.

He carried out this service until June 1987, when he was sent to Malawi again. He went there immediately, but it was another painful disap-

pointment. In 1988, he returned to Italy, assigned to the Pordenone retirement home, as bursar of the community. He remained there until 1996 when the Pordenone community moved to nearby Cordenons, responsible for ministry and missionary animation.

In July 2006 he was assigned to the community of Trento, as bursar and ministry assistant in the rectory. He was now certain that he would never again be assigned to a mission outside Italy. In 2017, he 'retired' to the Mother House in Verona.

Towards the end of February 2024, he had to be hospitalised. A few days later, he was discharged and taken to the 'Fratel Alfredo Fiorini' Centre in Castel d'Azzano. He spent the last two weeks of his life there. On the evening of 12th March, Father Armando died. His funeral was celebrated on the 15th. Once the ceremony was over, the body was taken to the city's monumental cemetery, where many Comboni missionaries rest.
(Father Franco Moretti, mcccj)

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE FATHERS: Jesús, of Father Rodríguez Pérez Pablo Simón (KE); Stephens, of Father Sebopela Kgomotso Ronnie (C/RSA).

THE MOTHERS: Victoria, of Mons. Dominic Eibu, Bishop of Kotido, (U); Mary Ekutan, of Father Joseph Etabo (M).

THE BROTHERS: Raúl, of Brother Dela Cruz González Santos (EC); Recto, of Father Moisés Estacio Dela Cruz (PCA); Macario, of Brother José Godínez Pérez (M); Andrea, of Father Norberto Stonfer (EGSD).

THE SISTERS: María del Refugio, of Father Gustavo Guerrero Zúñiga (EC); Lucia, of Father Bruno Bordonali (I); Sr. Remei, of Father Isidro Sans Balcells (E); Maria, of Father Alois Eder (DSP); Giuseppina, of Father Mario Andrighetto (I).

THE COMBONI SECULARS: Maria da Costa Barbosa (P); Rosaria Castellano (I).

THE COMBONI SISTERS: Sr. Maria Tenderini; Sr. M. Emanuella Laner.