

# Pausing to make a fresh start



**Dear Confreres,**

We are about to begin the course of the Comboni Year of Ongoing Formation (CYOF) 2024-2025, an initiative that the Institute offers to confreres who have already completed 10-15 years of missionary service. Together we want to *walk towards more life*, as the motto of this year’s CYOF says. We ask you to accompany us in prayer so that this journey may help us grow towards an ever deeper and more authentic donation to God and to the people we accompany.

## **The context**

As we write to you, the General Assembly of Formation (GAF) is still alive in our memory, held here in Rome two months ago with the presence of all the formators of Scholasticates/CIF and Novitiates,

four circumscription superiors and four postulancy formators representing their colleagues in the respective continents/sub-continents. Also present were the members of the General Secretariat of Formation and the General Council.

In addition to the time dedicated to listening to the activities and life of the various formative communities, the GAF has proposed to start a process of reviewing formation, the path of which will be evaluated in the Intercapitular of 2025.

At the ecclesial level, we welcome the appeal of “Jubilee 2025”, which will accompany us throughout the Comboni Year, inviting us to walk together with the whole Church on a path full of hope.

During next October, the month dedicated to the mission, the Church will carry out the second part of the Synod on Synodality, continuing to ask itself how to be a “synodal Church in mission”.

In this particularly rich context, the 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the CYOF will take place in our Generalate, from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.

We will journey together with a fine group of 18 confreres, originating from 12 different circumscriptions, who have already experienced the mission in various countries of Africa, America and Europe. Most have anticipated their coming to Rome to study the Italian language.

### **Emmaus – The courage to ‘stop’**

In the biblical episode *Luke 24:13-35*, we are introduced to two disciples “on the road” (v. 13). They are moving away from Jerusalem. Their hopes have been dashed at Jesus’ tomb. Jesus himself approaches and walks with them (v. 15), and then he questions them (vv. 14-15). They discuss with him, but struggle to recognise him. However, they have the strength – or disappointment – to stop, “with sad faces” (v. 17). The courage to ‘stop’ is the first gift that the Risen One gives to these two disciples! Knowing how to ‘stop’ in life is also important for us, because it offers us the opportunity to listen to words that are good for the heart and are capable of making the most intimate chords of our being missionary disciples to resonate.

► **«The stopped»** (*Lk 24, 17*) – One can remain at the surface of events: their distancing from the group of apostles; their discouragement and bitterness in the face of what has happened; their fears for their safety, etc. For all these reasons, they are moving away from

Jerusalem. But it is necessary to have the courage to go deeper... And so, they stop, they open themselves to the encounter, and they agree to 'accompany' the Risen One along the road, which is a place of unexpected and even risky encounters. In doing so, they discover a profound truth about life: to move forward it is necessary to stop; to resume the journey it is essential to suspend it for a while, to renew one's energies and reawaken new hope.

► Even today, like the disciples of Emmaus, other disciples of Jesus dare to 'stop'. Among them are our 18 confreres who have grasped the gift of the CYOF. They want to grow as men of God, as people of community and as 'mission experts' according to the charism of our founder Saint Daniel Comboni.

► These companions of ours are not alone. Comboni accompanies them, the Institute encourages them, and all the people they have served in these last years of missionary ministry spur them on. They are accompanied, in a particular way, by many collaborators who will facilitate their journey and their reflection. Among the latter, there are also the two of us, the coordinating team.

The Institute proposes the CYOF to confreres who have had an experience of 10-15 years of missionary life and who are living the "middle age" of their life. Mature people, therefore, 'experts', capable... and, above all, eager to recharge and 'restart' with new energy.

Therefore, let us begin this Course full of hope, attentive to discovering signs of life in the journey that we will make as believers, on a personal and community level.

We ask you to pray not only for this ongoing formation initiative but also for the entire process of reviewing formation in the Institute.

May the Good Shepherd, through the intercession of Saint Daniel Comboni and Mary, Star of Evangelisation, bless this CYOF and truly transform it into a 'privileged time' of growth and fruitfulness for those who participate in it.

*Rome, 22 August 2024*

Father Alberto Silva  
And Brother Alberto Degan



An outing through the streets of Rome organised by the “Dante Alighieri School”, to learn something more of the history of Italy.

In class at the Dante Alighieri Language Centre, learning Italian.



## WHAT DO I EXPECT FROM THE CYOF?

«I expect to be able to perform a sapiential re-reading of my life and my missionary experience, to be renewed and grow on the human, spiritual, religious and missionary levels... I expect to grow in the knowledge of Saint Daniel Comboni and in the experience of a real encounter with him and his charism» (Fabrice)

«I hope to succeed in “reconnecting with myself” to relate more deeply to the person of Comboni and Christ, the Master of Mission ... How? By revisiting my missionary experience, grateful for all my experiences and all I met, asking to be healed of my wounds and be enriched by the experience of the confreres» (Jean de Dieu).