

FAMILIA COMBONIANA

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART OF JESUS

834

November 2024

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Perpetual professions

Sc. Ssabayinda Yuda (U) Kampala/U 16.10.2024

Ordinations

Fr. Fernando Uribe Mendoza (M) Ezequiel Montes/M 19.10.2024

Holy Redeemer Guild

November 01 – 15 SS 16 – 30 T
December 01 – 15 PE 16 – 31 U

Prayer intentions

November – That the Comboni Family, rooted in hope and joy, may accompany the young people who are preparing to live the 39th World Youth Day, supporting their search for happiness and fullness, helping them to become protagonists of a new humanity. *Let us pray.*

December – For the Lay Comboni Missionaries who this month are celebrating their Inter-Continental Assembly: that the Holy Spirit may accompany them, illuminate them in making decisions for the good of the mission and keep them faithful to their vocation. *Let us pray.*

Comboni Liturgical calendar

NOVEMBER

Commemoration of deceased confreres, relatives and benefactors	Date to be decided
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DECEMBER

3	Saint Francis Xavier, priest, <i>Patron of the missions</i>	Feast
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Significant anniversaries

NOVEMBER

21	Madonna of Quinche	Ecuador
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DECEMBER

1	Blessed Clementina Alfonsina, Anuarite Nengapeta, virgin and martyr	Congo
3	Saint Francis Xavier, priest, <i>Patron of the missions</i>	Feast Mozambique, Spain
12	Our Lady of Guadalupe, <i>Patron of the Americas</i>	Mexico

Publications

Daniel Cerezo Ruiz mccj, *Se puso en camino* (Essay on the missionary spirituality of itinerancy), 2024, pp. 205, Grupo Editorial Fonte, Burgos, Spain.

Se puso en camino reflects the Master's itinerancy along the roads of Galilee, on the shores of the lake, in the markets, and at the public well. It was during his stay in the mission in China that the author discovered a particular and different way of doing mission, never imagined before. In China, itinerancy proved to be a constant, overwhelming, new and essential imperative. Thus, the missionary began to perceive this new dimension in his life and gave it space, noting feelings and reflections. From his 'first steps', until he must use a walking stick, the missionary will have to face "ups and downs", tortuous roads and bold initiatives: his life will be marked by sending, departure and itinerancy.

In these pages, we find biblical icons that reflect not only the missionary but the entire variegated world in which he lives, that of China, in particular. There are also concrete people, with universal traits that continue to inspire the steps of many others, and some captivating parables, which give wings to the imagination until it reaches the summit of the encounter with the Lord. The author has discovered that itinerancy is an essential characteristic of the disciple and, without realising it, he has had the audacity to insert himself into that long chain of itinerant missionaries who, although not exclusive to China, have been able to experience, savour and suffer in the peculiar, adverse and complex context of the Chinese world.

CURIA

Thank you, Sister. Rest in Peace.

Sr. Maria Vidale, a Comboni missionary, passed away last 8th October in Cesiolo (Verona, Italy), at the age of 85.

We were very saddened by the news of the death of Sister Maria Vidale. For many of us Comboni Missionaries, Sister Maria was truly 'our sister' in the truest sense of the word, with her we shared the love for Christ and the mission.

In particular, the team responsible for the ongoing formation courses, offered in our Curia in Rome to many confreres, feel they have an immense debt to her for the many years in which she collaborated with us in the formation and renewal courses, or in the 'Comboni Years'.

She never refused our invitation to come and talk to us about the history of the Pious Mothers of Nigrizia, especially about the dramatic and painful phenomenon that occurred in modern Islamic history and went down in history as the '*Sudanese Mahdia*', which shook Egypt and Sudan from 1881 to 1898. That movement was a real persecution of the Christians present in those countries and led to the closure of all the missions in the then Vicariate of Central Africa. Missionaries and nuns were taken prisoner by the Mahdi and had to endure unspeakable suffering, both physical and moral.

Sister Maria was transfigured as she recounted the suffering and heroic courage of the eight fellow nuns who fell into the hands of the Mahdists. For her, they were "authentic martyrs, hanging on the cross," but "like granite in their unshakeable faith," and she had not the slightest doubt about the fact that "today they live in the splendour of the Glory of God." She recounted, yes, tragic, painful and fatal events, but always with a calm tone of voice and a spirit full of respect and 'veneration' for that "troubled and holy story", and those taking part in the course 'literally hung' on her every word, listening to her with great attention and interest. It is difficult to forget the way she responded to the numerous questions for clarification that the students asked her. To us – I was there too, invariably – something like what had happened to the two '*wayfarers of Emmaus*' happened: "*Our hearts burned within us!*"

Sister Maria always had 'creative' answers about what 'fidelity to the mission' should be, especially in the most difficult and challenging moments, and she drew her wisdom from her profound knowledge of similar difficult and challenging moments in the history of the two Comboni Institutes.

We all feel solidarity and deep communion of prayer with our Comboni Sisters in this moment of pain, but which opens us to hope.

United with all the confreres who knew her and listened to her, inflamed by the spirit of the missionary Jesus whom she knew how to communicate, we want to offer Sister Maria our heartfelt thanks for her long and precious presence and collaboration, and we ask the Father in heaven to welcome her into his fatherly embrace and give her the reward of eternal joy.

On behalf of all our confreres and the members of the coordinating teams of yesterday and today, I softly whisper to Sister Maria Vidale: "Thank you, sister! Rest in peace!". (*Father Alberto Silva, mccj, Coordinator of the Ongoing Formation Centre in Rome*).

The best storyteller of Comboni history

In her work on the *Studium "Madri Nigrizia"*, of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, Sister Maria Vidale managed to combine, on the one hand, serious, demanding and professional historical research and, on the other, the beauty of the story that is so enriching because it can make of the past a vital reference point for the present.

She stood out for her exhaustive research and the beauty of her story, written and especially oral. Therefore, we will remember her as the best 'storyteller' of Comboni stories: she will find this praise exaggerated, but she will not give up smiling from Heaven!

Furthermore, Sister Maria managed to build her way and her method in a field (that of Comboni historical research) where men dominated and dictated the criteria of the 'historically correct'. She stood out for what she did, without embracing fashionable feminisms, but remaining what she was: a consecrated woman, a Comboni missionary, without giving up being a woman and offering her contribution to the Comboni historical memory. In this sense, we shall be always and ever grateful to her! (*Father Manuel Augusto Lopes Ferreira, mccj, President of Studium Combonianum in Rome*)

Feast of Saint Daniel Comboni at the General Curia

On the evening of 10th October, the three communities of the General Curia celebrated together the feast of Saint Daniel Comboni. The Mass was presided over by our confrere, Card. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, Prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue. The celebration was attended by some diocesan priests, friends, benefactors, and representatives of the nuns belonging to the communities where we offer our ministerial service. Also present was Father Tesfaye Tadesse,

Superior General, who is currently participating in the Second Session of the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in the Vatican. However, the four general assistants were not present as they were engaged in official visits to Comboni provinces: Father David Domingues to the Asia Province, Father Elias Sindjalim to that of the DR Congo, Father Luigi Codianni to the London Province, and Brother Alberto Lamana to the Uganda Province. Father Cosimo De Iaco introduced the solemn celebration with a warm welcome to all those present and a special thank you to Card. Ayuso Guixot. The liturgy was animated by the confreres participating in the Comboni Year of Permanent Formation and by the student confreres.

In his homily, Card. Ayuso recalled that, this year, “the memory of Saint Daniel Comboni is placed within a particularly fruitful moment for ecclesial life,” referring to the missionary month of October, whose theme, indicated by Pope Francis, is ‘*A banquet for all peoples*’, to the Synod of Bishops, and to the upcoming Jubilee 2025. Starting from the readings of the feast, he then highlighted the figure and role of Saint Daniel Comboni, inviting the Comboni missionaries to realise “the richness and relevance of our Founder and his missionary charism, centered on compassion and with a heart open to hope”.

Addressing the missionaries present, Card. Ayuso made a strong invitation “To adopt, not the mentality of the manager, but that of the servant, because we are called to offer our life”; to live “the joy of being Comboni missionaries”; to let ourselves be “surprised by the new, by the other, to meet him; to promote a culture of inclusivity, of encounter, of dialogue, so necessary for our world”; to be “holy and capable”, as Comboni wanted, and to renew ourselves with “hope, because our mission and our responsibility require so much patience, understanding and listening”.

After the Eucharist, there was a fraternal *agape*, characterised by joy and a spirit of communion.

BRASIL

The keys of victory

The delivery of the keys to the 312 families of the resettlement of Piquiá de Baixo (Piquiá da Conquista), which took place on 25th October, is much more than a material sign: it is the consecration of a twenty-year struggle, a redemption of dignity and a test of resistance against the devastating impact of industrial pollution. With each key delivered, emotion overflowed: tears, hugs and a sense of relief, mixed with the

strength of those who never give up, even in the face of adversity. The faces, marked by time and hardship, today shine with the hope of a more just and secure life. During the solemn ceremony, Andrea da Silva Machado, a member of the Community Association of Residents of Piquiá (ACMP), gave voice to the community, reading a manifesto letter made up of thanks and requests and forcefully reiterating that the struggle will continue until full reparation is achieved. His words echoed the pain and hopes of a people who have experienced first-hand the consequences of a development that has left them on the margins, but who have never remained silent. The letter was a strong appeal for justice and commitment from the authorities, welcomed with applause and with deep reflection by those present.

At the end, Andrea delivered the letter to the Minister of Cities, Jader Filho, and the other authorities present, in a gesture that symbolised the commitment that the fight for environmental justice and dignity will not end with the delivery of the keys.

After the reading, the members of the ACMP, Justiça nos Trilhos, the Comboni Lay Missionaries and other organisations that have accompanied the community over the years, handed over the keys and the kits for the bathrooms and the kitchens. Each delivery represented the union and collective strength of the organisations and people who have tirelessly dedicated themselves alongside the residents, making this achievement possible. This gesture of direct delivery, made by those who walked with the community, made the emotion of the moment stronger and the importance of a victory built by so many hands and hearts committed to justice and dignity. This event, full of so many meanings, does not represent the end, but a new beginning for the community of Piquiá.

DEUTSCHSPRACHIGE PROVINZ

40th anniversary of the Lay Comboni Missionaries (LCM)

On 12th October, the Comboni missionaries invited all the former Lay Comboni Missionaries to the house in Ellwangen to meet again after a long time. In January 1984, Hans Eigner was the first LCM to go to Kenya for a three-year assignment. Since then, over two hundred young men and women have followed his example and invested a precious part of their lives in solidarity with the populations of the South of the world, acquiring many experiences of life and faith, trust and intercultural skills.

Over thirty former LCM accepted the invitation, and the joy of seeing each other again was truly great. Everyone said they were grateful for their respective missionary services carried out in Ecuador, Peru, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda, and happy for the opportunity to spend a day together in precious exchanges and interactions.

The provincial superior, Father Hubert Grabmann, after welcoming the guests and the confreres, illustrated the situation and the challenges of the Comboni missionaries in the German-speaking province. Despite the aging of the confreres, we are still in contact with the Comboni Family in other circumscriptions, especially in South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya.

Brother Hans Eigner recounted his personal journey – first in the Comboni Minor Seminary in Neumarkt, then as the first German LCM in Kenya – which led him to decide to become a Comboni missionary himself. He commented: “I went to Africa as a ‘world improver’ and returned to Germany as a missionary.”

Father Günther Hofmann explained the changes that have taken place in the LCM movement over the course of forty years, using photos taken in the missions during this period. After returning from missionary experience, many of them had to complete their professional training.

Today, the LCM are younger and usually spend a year engaged in a Comboni project abroad for which they are well prepared and adequately supported. The cornerstone of being a LCM has always remained the same: living together, praying together and working together.

Christoph Koch, himself a former LCM in the field, informed those present about how the LCM Germany group was formed and how today it maintains online contacts with the international LCM Movement present in the various Comboni circumscriptions. The life situations of the members are different: some are single, others are married and live with their families. All, however, put into practice, in various ways, the missionary charism of Daniel Comboni.

In the afternoon there was the opportunity to meet in small groups to exchange ideas with those who have worked in the same country. Others reflected on Germany as a ‘mission country’. Everyone had their say, and the result was a rich exchange of personal experiences, characterised by abundant wisdom of life.

The day ended with a solemn Holy Mass, in which everyone expressed gratitude and appreciation. (*Comboni-Missionare*)

Feast of St Daniel Comboni

On Wednesday, 9th October, about three hundred Christian faithful, twenty Comboni missionaries from the province of Egypt-Sudan (Egypt area) and as many Comboni sisters gathered in the parish of 'Cordi Jesu', in Cairo, to celebrate the feast of Saint Daniel Comboni. The celebration this year had as its main intention missionary animation and prayer for peace in the province and in the Middle East.

The day began with the Lay Comboni Missionaries in Egypt sharing their experience in Kenya during their General Assembly.

The Mass followed, presided over by Monsignor Nicolas Thévenin, apostolic nuncio in Egypt, and concelebrated by Monsignor Claudio Lurati, bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Alexandria in Egypt, and by numerous priests from different Institutes. Various representations of the faithful from our parishes and chaplaincies were present.

In his homily, the nuncio, after recalling that St. Daniel Comboni, despite having lived only 50 years, accomplished works of great importance, by virtue of his ardent zeal and his great love for the mission, invited all missionaries, especially the youngest, to commit themselves more to the mission with love and determination. At the end of the mass, there was a moment of veneration of the relics of St. Daniel. A fraternal agape followed, accompanied by the screening of photos and videos on the activities of the Comboni missionaries in Egypt and the Middle East.

May St. Daniel Comboni intercede for peace in the world and, in a particular way, in the missions where his sons and daughters are present. May the Lord of the harvest send many labourers into his harvest!

Provincial assembly of Egypt and Sudan

The assembly, held from 16th to 19th October, in Cairo, opened with a half-day retreat preached by Mgr. Claudio Lurati.

Before the war broke out in Sudan, zonal assemblies were usually held in Egypt and in Sudan. This year, however, an attempt was made to connect online the confreres of Sudan and Lebanon with those gathered in the host Comboni House of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, on the hills of Moqattam in Cairo. Unfortunately, the challenges posed by the war, both in Sudan and Lebanon, put a strain on our plans: the community of Kosti has been offline since 12th October, and the community of Beirut has been busy with its annual planning after recent events in that country had called into question the start of the formation year.

For those who attended, however, it was a moment of fraternity and sharing of opinions and concerns. Among the main issues on the table were our response to the war in Sudan, the redevelopment of our presence in Aswan, and our response to the bishop of El Obeid, who has invited us to open a community in the Nuba Mountains. (*Father Diego Dalle Carbonare, mccj*)

Lebanon – Opening of the formation year in Maad

Tensions in Lebanon have been rising in recent weeks, especially since the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on 27th September 27. The situation has worsened since then, with almost daily bombings in the south, around the Bekaa Valley, in the suburbs of Beirut, and now almost all over the country. This new conflict has displaced about 1.5 million people in just three weeks, according to the United Nations, and over 2,000 deaths, according to the Lebanese Ministry of Health.

By God's Providence, our community is located in an area that has not been targeted by airstrikes. Maad is a village in the Jbeil region, located northeast of the capital Beirut.

The tension across the country, however, is worsening the already difficult socioeconomic situation of the population. There seems to be little or no effort to stop the war. In fact, the entire region is on the brink of total war, if not already engaged in it.

We appreciate the efforts made by the administration of the Université Saint-Espiritu de Kaslik (Usek), where scholastics attend theology courses, to keep the faculty open even in difficult times. After a one-week postponement, classes began on October 7, and since then there have been no interruptions. A great sign of hope in such a fragile context! May St. Daniel Comboni always intercede for us! (*The Beirut community*)

Cairo – The academic year opened at Dar Comboni

The academic year at Dar Comboni began last 23rd September, with 15 first-year students and 5 second-year students. This year, there are 4 Comboni scholastics, two of whom (Felix Gama from Malawi and Fiston Muhindo Muhiwa from the DR Congo) will carry out their missionary service-learning Arabic, while the other two (Bien Heureux Tokolet from the Central African Republic and Solomon Eshun from Ghana) are preparing to go to Beirut next year. More students are expected to join, but there may be delays due to bureaucratic difficulties. This year, as in previous years, the Catholic foundation Aid to the Church in Need has sponsored a significant number of diocesan clergy and religious from

African countries to participate in the course. (*Father Simon Mbuthia, mccj*)

ETHIOPIA

In memory of Father Nicolino di Iorio and Sister Sarina Nici

On 10th October 2024, the Catholic Church of Hawassa celebrated a requiem Mass in the cathedral in memory of the Comboni missionaries Sister Maria Sarina Nici and Father Nicolino di Iorio. It was a different way of celebrating the solemnity of Saint Daniel Comboni.

The two missionaries, originally from Italy, returned to the House of the Father in the first week of October. Sister Sarina passed away in Verona, Italy, on 1st October 2024, at the age of 92. Father Nicola died in Addis Ababa on 6th October 2024. He had just returned from a five-week vacation with his parents in Italy and was resting after the flight when Sister Death called him. He was 66 years old.

The Eucharist was presided over by Capuchin Bishop Dejene Hidoto, Apostolic Vicar of Sodo.

Bishop Seyoum Franso, Apostolic Vicar of Hosanna, Father Juan Núñez, mccj, Apostolic Administrator of Hawassa, and Father Asfaha Yohannes, mccj, Provincial Superior, concelebrated together with about 50 diocesan and missionary priests.

At the beginning of the Mass, Father Juan, after welcoming those present, thanked Father Nicola for his tireless work in Hawassa. The cathedral was packed with Sisters from various institutes of the Vicariate and the faithful. The liturgy was held in Amharic and Sidamo. Father Tsegaye Getahun, Secretary General of the Vicariate, gave the homily, recalling the ministry of Father Nicola. At the end of the celebration, Sister Weynshet Tadesse Haile, head of the Comboni Sisters in Ethiopia, and Father Asfaha presented the life of the two deceased missionaries.

Sister Sarina entered the Comboni Sisters Institute in Eritrea. After her formation, she served as a missionary in Bahrain and South Yemen for 16 years. She was then transferred to Ethiopia, where she served in the missions of Dilla, Dongora, Hawassa, Meki and Addis Ababa for 28 years. She conducted formation work in the minor seminaries of Hawassa and Meki. The advancement of women was her great passion. The Comboni Girls' College in Hawassa is a monument to her pioneering work.

Four years ago, due to age and health, she was transferred to the Mother House of the Comboni Sisters in Verona, Italy. "Sister Sarina held her vocation as a religious in high regard. Her life affected so many people and continues to do so today. Her generosity, kindness and care for

others were an example and testimony of her deep love for God and her faith that came from a gentle and delicate humanity,” Sister Weynshet emphasised.

Father Nicola was ordained in 1986 and worked in Italy until he arrived in the Vicariate of Hawassa in 1995, where he remained until his untimely death, except for four years in Italy between 2012 and 2016.

He served the missions of Tullo, Fullasa, Teticha and Daye among the Sidama. He was also rector of the Major Seminary of Hawassa in Addis Ababa and provincial treasurer of the Comboni Missionaries in Ethiopia. For the last four years he was vice apostolic administrator of Hawassa, alongside Father Núñez.

Father Nicola was also involved in the ongoing formation of the religious Sisters, especially through monthly retreats, and in Sunday Mass in English for the international community of Hawassa.

He was appreciated as an exceptional administrator and missionary: generous, friendly and dedicated. “I imagine Father Nicola repeating the words of St. Daniel Comboni: ‘I will die, but my work will not die,’” said Father Asfaha.

Father Tesfaye Tadesse, Superior General of the Comboni Missionaries and radical member of Ethiopia, sent a message of condolence to the Province and Vicariate of Hawassa. “We all thank God for the gift of Abba Nicola, a great Comboni Missionary, capable, spiritually rich and humanly generous,” wrote Father Tesfaye. And he thanked Father Nicola for his human and spiritual qualities, for his sharing of faith, for his simplicity, for his gift of creating friendship, for his gestures of charity.

Some representatives of ecclesial groups, including a catechist from Daye, also wanted to remember the two missionaries and their legacy.

The commemorative Eucharist concluded with a fraternal lunch. The Comboni female and male communities of Hawassa, together with the missionaries of Addis Ababa, Haro Wato, Daye and Qillenso, concluded the day of St. Daniel Comboni with an hour of adoration, meditating on one of his last letters from Khartoum. (*Father Joe Vieira, mccj*)

ITALIA

Acse activities resume

Acse (the Comboni Association for the Service of Emigrants) has gradually resumed its activities since September and is now in full swing. The Italian courses (6 in person and 3 online from A1 to B2), computer science (2), and English (1) are very active, as is the

overcrowded dental service. Dentists and assistants perform about 40 operations per week. Thanks to the contribution of the Pope's Almoner, Card. Karol Krajewski, we are also able to provide small dental prostheses. The weekly distribution of food has now reached 100 or more parcels: 50% for families and 50% for individuals. Thanks to the help of the Pope's almoner, Caritas and generous people, we are always able to offer these parcels, even though the Food Bank has been providing us with only a few food items for over a year. Even children up to 2 years old continue to receive their gift parcels. Migrants, who often have problems with residence permits, housing issues and other things, have the opportunity to be assisted by some lawyers. At the end of November, the cutting and sewing course started, directed by a Senegalese tailor: wonderful things are produced. Scholarships have also had a good increase: there are 52. The €900.00 per year is not a big amount, but it is very useful for university enrolment and for other things. The scholarship holders are well supported, and the good academic results are good: 2 of them graduated last year. All these activities are possible thanks to the members and over 60 active volunteers.

MEXICO

Father Fernando Uribe Mendoza, a new Comboni priest

On 19th October, the parish of San Miguel Arcángel in Villa Progreso, in the municipality of Ezequiel Montes (state of Querétaro, Mexico), joyfully celebrated the priestly ordination of one of its sons, the Comboni missionary Fernando Uribe Mendoza. For the occasion, many Comboni missionaries arrived from various parts of the country, as well as Comboni seminarians and several groups from Sahuayo and San Francisco del Rincón, where Fernando worked in the last years of his formation and where he exercised his diaconal ministry, especially with young people. The celebration began well before the mass, with a procession in which Fernando, accompanied by his family and a nice group of friends and parishioners, moved from his home to the large square in front of the church. The mass was presided over by Msgr. Fidencio López Plaza, bishop of Querétaro, who, in his homily, referring to the gospel chosen by Father Fernando (*John* 15:9-17), emphasised the beauty of discovering the love of God and remaining in him, of loving others as the Father has loved us, and the fact that Jesus called us his friends and not servants and that it was he who chose us and entrusted us with a mission.

Monsignor Fidencio then urged Father Fernando to live these invitations of Jesus and concluded by beseeching St. Michael the Archangel and Our Lady of Guadalupe to always accompany the newly ordained priest in his mission.

The next day, World Mission Day, Father Fernando celebrated his first mass. At the end, it was very moving to see him receive the blessing of his mother, who generously gave him to the service of God and to the mission. Father Fernando was assigned to South Africa where he will exercise his ministry in the coming years. (*Father Ismael Piñon mccj*)

MOZAMBIQUE

Launching of the Bible and Grammar of the Nda language Posthumous homage to two Comboni Fathers

The Comboni Missionaries and the Archdiocese of Beira held a meeting for the launching of two books: the Bible (Mazwi a Mwari) and Elements of the Nda language, grammar and dictionary, to pay homage to their authors, Father Giocondo Pendin (+ Matola, March 9, 2021) and Father Manuel dos Anjos Martins (+ Tete, November 27, 2022).

The event took place on October 8 at the Faculty of Economics and Management (FEG) of the Catholic University of Mozambique. It was attended by Msgr. Claudio Dalla Zuanna, Archbishop of Beira, Msgr. António Constantino Bogaio, Auxiliary Bishop of Beira, the provincial superior, Father José Joaquim Luis Pedro, the rector, Father Filipe Sungo, the mayor of Beira, Albano Carige, religious men and women, lay people and other guests.

The two books were presented by Prof. Samuel Simango, a professor at the FEG, who praised the intense, dedicated and generous work of the two Comboni missionaries. The figures of the two authors, Father Giocondo and Father Manuel dos Anjos, were presented respectively by Father José Joaquim and Father Jeremias dos Santos Martins.

Added to these presentations was the moving testimony of Rosa Paz, a catechist from the parish of Alto da Manga, where Father Giocondo worked while translating the Bible.

The two missionaries lived in Mozambique for many years, studied the local languages in depth and continue to be a point of reference in the safeguarding of the intangible heritage that the local languages represent. (*Father Jeremias dos Santos Martins, mccj*)

Perpetual vows and diaconal ordination

On 10th October, the community of Beira and the parish of San Mateo Evangelista, entrusted to the Comboni Missionaries, celebrated the perpetual vows of the scholastic Sérgio Mário Vilanculo, who is finishing his missionary service. Sérgio will soon leave this community for another mission.

The Eucharistic celebration and profession were presided over by Father José Joaquim Luis Pedro, provincial superior. In attendance were the Comboni Sisters and many friends whose presence gave us so much joy, and the faithful of the parish who were participating for the first time in a profession of perpetual vows. In his homily, the provincial insisted on the seriousness of “professing” the vows before God and the community.

Drawing on the tradition of the people of Israel, he explained that the parish community is responsible for this act of the scholastic Sérgio and must help him to be faithful to this commitment. He then spoke of the presence of the Cross in the mission: a cross that must be loved and embraced as Comboni did, because it is the source of life and true happiness.

On 13th October 2024, in the same parish, Sérgio Mário was ordained deacon. The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Msgr. António Constantino Bogaio, Comboni, Auxiliary Bishop of Beira.

In his homily, Msgr. António emphasised that diaconal ordination represents a very important milestone for the Church: “Dear son and brother, in receiving the diaconate, you are called to seek and live wisdom like St. Daniel Comboni. May the wisdom of God be your greatest wealth, the light that guides every step of your mission, strengthening you to face the challenges of the ministry so that you can be a channel of grace for those you will serve... Do not take this ordination as a privilege, because God does not confer privileges. With it, the Church has one more worker in the existential peripheries.”

The celebration was a moment of great joy: it was the first time that the parish of San Matteo Evangelista hosted an ordination. The parish community, lively and with great dedication, worked with enthusiasm to make this celebration happen. (*Father Jeremias dos Santos Martins, mccj*)

NAP

A Comboni Parish Priest for Sacred Heart Parish

On 14th September, a beautiful day filled with gratitude, Sacred Heart Parish in Riverside, California, gathered to celebrate the installation of Father José Manuel García Oviedo, mccj, as its new pastor.

The Mass was presided over by Bishop Alberto Rojas, concelebrated by Monsignor Gerard Lopez, Vicar General of the diocese and served by Deacons Hector Aguirre and José A. Serrano. The presence of the Master of Ceremonies, Armando Montaña, and several Knights of Columbus made the occasion even more meaningful.

The installation Mass was a truly special event, with guests from near and far. Priests from various parishes in the Diocese of San Bernardino and several Comboni missionaries attended. Among the priests present, in addition to the two Comboni missionaries Jorge Ochoa and John Mungereza, were Fr. Juan Ayala, from the Diocese of Rockford, Illinois, Fr. Miguel Ceja, Fr. Moises Henriquez de Paz, Fr. Adalberto Jeronimo-Garcia, Fr. Marcos Medina and Fr. Leonardo Cuatle Mino. Sister Esperanza from Chihuahua and the Servants of the Word Sisters helped make the day a memorable one for everyone.

Father Garcia's relatives came from Texas, San Diego and Orange County, showing him their love and support. Friends from Chicago, Michigan, Jalisco, Mexico and other parishes of the diocese also took the time to join in the celebration, highlighting a strong sense of community and unity. Their presence and the impressive turnout of over 600 people made the celebration a truly community event.

Father García Oviedo is a very committed Comboni missionary who lives by the words of St. Daniel Comboni: "The missionary must be ready for everything! For joy and pain. For life and death. For welcome or rejection!" His commitment was evident throughout the celebration, as he received the warmth and support of his new parish community.

The celebration continued beyond the mass, with delicious food, lively entertainment and cultural performances. Folklore dancers and mariachi music added a touch of tradition and joy, creating a wonderful atmosphere. A touching moment was the release of doves, a symbol of peace, love and new beginnings.

The success of the event was made possible by the commitment of the volunteers from the various liturgical ministries, the different parish groups and the parishioners, who worked tirelessly together. Their collaboration and hard work made every aspect of the celebration perfect. Father García was visibly happy and deeply grateful for the warm welcome and support of the community.

Father García's installation mass was not only a beautiful ceremony, but a true celebration of faith, community and unity. It marked the beginning of a new chapter for Sacred Heart Church, full of hope and promise for the future.

We look forward to the many blessings and positive impact that Father García will bring to our parish community. Welcome, Father José Manuel! (*Alma Galaviz, Parish Office Manager*).

Fifteenth “Taste of Mission”

On Saturday, 28th September, the Cincinnati Mission Center hosted the 15th *Taste of Mission*, an evening of international entertainment, food, and fun. Guests enjoyed performances by the Filipino dancers of the Pamana Dance Group, the dancing of the German Donauschwaben Schuhplattlers, traditional Guatemalan dances, enchanting music by the Hills of Kentucky Dulcimers, and singing by the Spanish-speaking group AQIS. They also had the opportunity to purchase foods inspired by our missions around the world, including African *rolex* (*popular street food*) and Mexican *tamales*. Each year, this event draws hundreds of visitors from surrounding communities eager to learn more about the Comboni Missionaries in the United States and around the world.

PORTUGAL

Feast of the Founder in Viseu

Last 10th October, the Seminary of the Missions – as the Comboni community of Viseu is known – had the honour of receiving the local bishop, Msgr. António Luciano, who presided over the Eucharist of the liturgical feast of Saint Daniel Comboni. The event also made the news in the media of the diocese of Viseu, which has counted on the presence of the Comboni Missionaries for 77 years. In his homily, Msgr. Luciano emphasised «the nobility and greatness» of Saint Daniel Comboni, “known for his great missionary work in Africa in favour of justice, charity and truth, having dedicated his life to the evangelisation of Africans and to the service of the poorest.”

Even today, he added, “many still do not know the Gospel and have not heard of Jesus”; for this reason, the missionary work of the Church is very important. “All of us who are baptised are missionaries in the reality of our life and our actions”. The Bishop concluded with a special reference to the missionary month par excellence – October – which has the purpose of reawakening in the heart of every Christian how important and urgent is “the mission of each person in the Church.” During the celebration, the Comboni missionaries present, in chorus, gave thanks for the gift of the missionary vocation and asked God for “fidelity to the vocation and to service in the mission towards the poorest and most abandoned.”

25 Years of Perpetual Consecration

On 13th October, 60-year-old Brother José Francisco Duarte da Cunha Neto celebrated his 25 years of perpetual vows at the service of the mission in his hometown, Sanguinhedo de Cota (Portugal). Bishop António Luciano dos Santos Costa of Viseu presided over the Eucharistic celebration which, on that same Sunday, coincided with the installation of the new parish priest. Several brothers attended the celebration, which ended with a fraternal lunch. Brother Neto has already returned to his current mission in Mozambique. Born in Vila de um Santo, a small town in the district of Cota, in the municipality of Viseu, Brother Neto entered the seminary of the Viseu Missions in 1980, after a Comboni missionary visited the school he attended. Certain of God's call to dedicate his life to the human promotion of the poorest and neediest, in 1982 he entered the Comboni house of Maia, the postulancy for candidate brothers, where he took the technical professional course in electric motors for automotive traction.

In 1987 he entered the novitiate of Santarém. He made his first religious profession on 25th May 1989. He was then assigned to the International Brothers Center of Bogota, Colombia, where he attended the course in Religious Sciences at the Pontifical Xaverian University. In that country, with a social context of extreme violence, he did pastoral work in the neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the capital and “discovered the unconditional commitment of Jesus Christ for the poor and the excluded.” After completing his basic training, in 1992, he was assigned to Brazil, then the Comboni province of Brasil do Sul. He worked in Nova Contagem, dedicating himself to the education of children and young people, especially in computer science and in the “integrative school”, where adults and young people studied to finish secondary school. He also collaborated in youth ministry and with social movements.

Brother Neto took perpetual vows on 8th August 1999, in his homeland. He returned to Portugal in 2004. He worked in missionary animation and later in the parishes of Apelação and Camarate in Loures (Lisbon). In 2017 he was assigned to Mozambique, as part of the team of the Paul VI Catechetical Center of Anchilo, archdiocese of Nampula.

During the anniversary celebration, Msgr. Luciano thanked God for the gift of the Comboni missionary vocation of Brother Francisco Neto and recalled that the evangelisation of peoples, starting from the concrete reality of the mission, is a constant and current challenge for consecrated persons and for all the baptised. (*Brother Bernardino Frutuoso, mccj*)

“Comboni Day” at Merrivale

On Sunday, 6th October 2024, about twenty guests, including representatives from St Joseph’s Theological Institute, the formation houses of the Mariannahill Missionaries, the Consolata Missionaries and the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallottines), joined the Comboni Missionaries residing at the temporary postulancy in Merrivale, Pietermaritzburg, to celebrate ‘Comboni Day 2024’ in advance.

This year’s celebration was marked by two events: the official opening of our postulancy and the conferral of minor ministries on some scholastics. The opening of the postulancy is a cause for great joy, as the province of South Africa is usually characterised by few local vocations. This year, however, we were able to welcome three postulants – Reneilwe Kuphari, Eugene Simukoko and Oyama Nkosi – who “solemnly” began this phase of their formation. The ‘rite of initiation’ was expressed symbolically through a nice original gesture: the candidates knocked on the door of the chapel, asking to enter. The provincial superior, Father John Baptist Opargiw, who presided over the celebration, opened the door for them and warmly welcomed them amid the joyful acclamations of the assembly.

The second highlight of the celebration was the conferral of the ministries of lector and acolyte on five scholastics of our scholasticate in Pietermaritzburg.

In his homily, Father John Baptist emphasised the importance of following the example of the Good Shepherd, whose main characteristics are compassion and knowledge of the sheep. He also urged us to cultivate our personal spirituality and our identity, to be well-rooted in Christ.

After the Eucharist, the extended community of the scholasticate/postulancy invited all those present to share a moment of fraternal agape. The presence of friends from nearby religious institutes and parishioners from our parish of Saint Joan of Arc contributed to making the day truly joyful and fully missionary. Saint Daniel Comboni, pray for us! (*Father Aldo Sierra, mccj*)

IN PACE CHRISTI

Father Giovanni Vedovato (23.11.1926 – 12.9.2024)

Giovanni was born in Borgoricco, in the province of Padua, on 23rd November 1926. “At the age of 5,” we read in a short autobiographical writing about his novitiate years, “I proclaimed a Christmas poem with

grace and gusto: 'This night / Baby Jesus came to my bed / and said to me: / here I am, / what gift do you want from me? / If you want to give me the greatest gift, / make me love you more and more, / oh my dear and good Jesus.' I received a great round of applause, and everyone said to me: "You will become a priest."

In fact, in October 1938, Giovanni entered the Apostolic School of Padua. For the novitiate, he went to Florence, where he took his first vows on 9th September 1947. He attended the scholasticate in Rebbio and Venegono Superiore, where he made his perpetual profession on 9th September 1952. On 30th May 1953, he was ordained a priest in Milan by Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster. Father Giovanni spent the first years of his priesthood in Italy, until 1960, as a vocations promoter in Veneto. He was then assigned to Spain where he remained until 1976, first in San Sebastián, for a short period, at the editorial office of *Aguiluchos*, the magazine for children. Soon Father Enrico Faré, superior of the Comboni group in Spain, charged him with looking for a temporary house for the novitiate in the Valencia area, with a view to building a new house for the scholasticate as well. Father Giovanni threw himself headlong – as was his style – into this undertaking, seeking and finding land, legal permits, benefactors, friends, collaborators and builders.

In mid-1964, some Comboni Brothers arrived from Italy who had just been expelled from Sudan, where they had built churches, schools and houses in very different conditions. As expert bricklayers and carpenters, together with a team of Spanish workers, in two years they completed the building for over 100 people in Moncada (about ten kilometres from Valencia), where Father General Gaetano Briani arrived for the inauguration in 1966. The house was soon filled with novices and students of philosophy and theology, who attended courses in the nearby diocesan seminary. And Father Giovanni sang the *Te Deum* in his heart. These were the years of the blossoming of vocations and missions and the expansion of the Comboni missionaries in Spain. After Moncada, Father Faré sent Father Giovanni to Barcelona, to open another house as a base for vocational promotion and missionary animation. Father Giovanni found a building suitable for the purpose, around which a network of friends and collaborators arose.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Comboni missionaries also considered a presence in Galicia, in Santiago de Compostela, where Father Giovanni was carrying out another construction, which unfortunately turned out to be expensive and less successful.

In 1977, he was assigned to Italy for about ten years, mostly in Florence, close to his parents, who were deeply wounded by the tragic death of

their son, Father Marco, also a Comboni priest, killed at the age of 38, in October 1968, in Mirador, Brazil.

1987 marked a new missionary departure for him. This time, he was assigned to the province of Peru, which also included a community located in Santiago de Chile, in Chile, opened three years earlier for missionary and vocational animation, and it was here that he was assigned. However, the residence in Santiago was small: it needed to be repaired and expanded. But this was his cup of tea: he looked for and soon found a good solution relying, as always, on the help of friends and generous benefactors. He remained in Santiago de Chile for 9 years.

In July 1996, Father Giovanni returned permanently to Italy, where he was assigned to the community of Lucca, for pastoral ministry and... to renovate the residence.

At the beginning of 2022 he was transferred to the community of Castel d'Azzano, Verona, where on 30th May 2023, he celebrated the 70th anniversary of his priesthood. He died here on 12th September 2024.

Father Giovanni was a man with a big heart. He always cultivated healthy relationships with people who were good and generous towards the missions. Supported by a strong faith, he always trusted in God and in Providence. He was a zealous and welcoming confessor in the sacrament of reconciliation, for which he was sought by priests and lay people. Passionate about Comboni, the Institute and the mission, he was always generous in helping people in need, both brothers and lay faithful. Gifted with great interior freedom and inclined to human and social commitment, he was always joyful and positive in his relationships with everyone. *(Father Romeo Ballan, mccj)*

Father Pierluigi Cadè (11.01.1932 – 14.10.2024)

Father Cadè was born on 11th January 1932, in Zanica (Bergamo). While still a boy, he entered the Piccolo Seminario Comboniano in Brescia for middle school and high school. In 1949 he began his novitiate in Gozzano and concluded it on September 9, 1951, with temporary vows. Immediately afterwards, he moved to Verona, to the Mother House, to begin philosophy. In 1955 he went to Rome to begin his theology studies. On 1st March 1958, he was ordained a priest. He remained in Rome for a year, during which time he attended a course in missiology. In July 1959, he was a professor in the novitiate in Gozzano. He remained there for a year and was then called to Rome, to the community of San Pancrazio, for pastoral service among the youth.

In July 1963, Father Pierluigi was assigned to the missions in Burundi when the work of the Council was beginning in Rome. He returned to Italy

in June 1965, shortly before the bishops' work in Rome ended (8th December of that year). For 12 years he had the extremely difficult, if not downright hostile, task of working with young people and seeking new paths, both to present the vocational proposal in a new way and to design a training path inspired by the ideas that emerged from the Council.

Between 1970 and 1977, he was Provincial Secretary of Formation, spiritual director in the scholasticate of Venegono, formator of scholastics in Rome and, finally, formator of postulants in Florence. I was a young student who joined the Comboni missionaries in those very years. I remember that they were extraordinarily stimulating years for us young people: we wanted to change the world, but we represented a real nightmare for our formators at the time. During my novitiate, Father Cadè was charged by the superiors to come to us to mediate a crisis that had arisen between us novices and the Novice Master, who did not understand us and had difficulty managing us. He, however, managed to restore serenity and peace, because he did not present himself with authority, but sought dialogue and took an interest in finding answers to the problems we had.

In July 1978, Father Pierluigi was assigned to Mexico, as parish priest of the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish, diocese of La Paz, until 1988, when he was assigned as parish priest of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, in Ciudad Constitución, also in the diocese of La Paz, until July 2004. He then returned to the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish, until 2010.

At the basis of his vision of mission was the parish that, upon his arrival in Baja California, he found organised in small base communities (he called them 'chapels'). From the very beginning, he saw them as 'privileged fields' to organise Christian life, which he considered as a 'journey of faith', where two things must be put together: the encounter with the Lord and the change of life. Certainly, he had to make a long personal journey to enter into the spirit of the documents followed by the Mexican Church and, above all, into the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which in Latin America has known particular 'trends', not only at a biblical level, but also at a theological level, mainly in the field of ecclesiology and pastoral care.

With this extremely solid wealth of knowledge, Father Pierluigi organised Christian communities, starting with the formation of pastoral councils of which he keeps repeating: "We must open up to the participation of lay people and women, but also to everything else." He produced a series of pamphlets that he used in his training activities for community leaders, catechists, parents and their children who attended catechism, seminarians, Sisters and priests.

At the beginning, the things he did were seen as “novelties to be taken with a pinch of salt” but then, little by little, everyone began to see the fruits and copy them. The catechism books he wrote and published were adopted at the diocesan level and, often, even outside of it. He was sent to preach retreats to seminarians, priests and nuns, and then he also began to be called for courses of retreats both within and outside the diocese.

He inaugurated the ‘Via Crucis’ through the streets of the city and representations of the passion of Jesus, something that always attracting large crowds. In the parish already dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe he built an important sanctuary, which quickly became the spiritual centre of Ciudad Constitución and the nearby region, where there is still a group of faithful very close to him, who continued to keep in touch with him even after his return to Italy, in 2013.

He defined himself as a “Mexican from Bergamo”: originally from Bergamo – and he was very proud of his roots – and Mexican by vocation and by choice; in fact, he asked to be buried in the sanctuary he had built. In October 2013, Father Pierluigi – now eighty years old – felt that the time had come to ‘retire’. He returned to Italy and was assigned to the ‘San Tomio’ Rectory in Verona, as superior of the community. He only stayed there until the end of the year, dedicating himself to the ministry of confessions and spiritual accompaniment of the many people who frequent the church run by the Comboni missionaries.

In January 2014, he was transferred for treatment to the Father Ambrosoli Centre in Milan, which welcomes sick and elderly brothers. He was always ready to go to the nearby church to meet people, hear confessions, and give spiritual direction. To keep him in his room, a high fever or something serious was needed, to the point that the confreres were forced to invite him to slow down, but often without success. People wanted to see him for two simple reasons: his genuine humanity and his profound wisdom.

In December 2021, he was taken to the Fratel Alfredo Fiorini Centre in Castel D’Azzano, because he needed more targeted treatment. In July 2022, he arrived at the Center where Father Franco Noventa was his roommate. With him, Father Pierluigi shared not only the space but also many moments in which he approached him to stay with him, talk to him, and pray with him as long as Father Franco could; he would then pray for him and support him with his closeness and affection. Father Franco died on 12th October 2024. Two days later, on Monday the 14th, Father Pierluigi joined him and their heavenly Father.

The plan to have him buried in the Marian sanctuary of Ciudad Constitución was abandoned at the last moment. He was buried in the cemetery of his hometown, Zanica.

Father Cadè had an email with a curious name: *patriarca58@gmail.com*. It was, perhaps, how he really felt and how he wanted to be remembered. Even many who knew him like to remember him as a patriarch of the Old Testament, full of years, but above all of wisdom and lightness, acquired on the path of life. The email address contains a number: "58". These are the final two numbers of the year of his priestly ordination: 1958. Sixty-six years ago! Yes, perhaps it was precisely this type of person that Jesus was thinking of when he spoke of the father of the family who extracts from his home treasure things both new and old (cf. Mt 13:52). (*Father Giovanni Munari, mccj*).

LET US PRAY FOR OUR BELOVED DEAD

THE MOTHERS: Romualda, of Mons. Victor Hugo Matarrita (RCA); Maria, of Father Lino Spezia (I); Benedeta, of Father Titus Makokha (KE); Francisca, of Father Rafael Armada (E).

THE BROTHERS: Ferdinand, of Father Hubert Unterberger (DSP); Jerome Nkurunziza, of Father Charles Ndagij'Imana (KE).

THE SISTER: María de Jesús, of Father Ignacio López Toro (M).

THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: Sr. Lina Lalla, Sr. Maria Vidale, Sr. M. Margherita Filippi.

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