

# COMBONI MISSION

*Spring 2024*

**The Grand Lady of Pacificism**  
**Pages 6 - 7**

**Missionaries Killed in 2023**  
**Pages 10 - 11**

**You Write**  
**Page 23**





# COMBONI MISSION

Spring 2024

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IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

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## From the Editor



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# Preparing for Easter

*"Conversion, Justice, communion and joy is our daily mission"* are the words of the first verse of a popular hymn sung in Brazilian Churches reminding us that the Lenten efforts are not just an annual spiritual celebration but has to be a constant daily mission. This spring edition appears during the Lenten period and it brings reflections for us to help take the opportunity for change and being more outward looking and missionary in our daily lives. Search out **page 17 Journey through Holy Week** and **pages 18-19 Preparing for Lent**. I hope they can help us to prepare ourselves for celebrating the great feast of Easter!

We are once more walking the road of a New Year with its joys and challenges. Pauline Watts spent **A very different Christmas, pages 8-9** and New Year visiting and caring for homeless youth in India. Inspirational! Also, the youth in South Sudan, led by their bishop Carlassare made a pilgrimage to pray and call people to work for peace in their country. Read about their witness on **pages 20-21 Courageous young people**.

We never fail to remember our missionaries struck down whilst serving their mission to spread the Good News. 20 missionaries during 2023, amongst them 7 lay people, were killed.

Pope Francis calls us to reflect on these killings 'Let us ask ourselves, then: do I care about and pray for those who, in various parts of the world, still suffer and die for the faith today? And in turn, do I try to bear witness to the Gospel consistently, with gentleness and confidence? Do I believe that the seed of goodness will bear fruit even if I do not see the immediate results?' We can learn about these martyrs on **pages 10 -11. Missionaries killed in 2023**.

**"The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church,"** wrote Tertullian, an early Christian author. As we approach the feast of Christ's resurrection, we pray that the Church may be strengthened by the blood of the martyrs and continue to share in the resurrection of Jesus. **To all our readers and benefactors, a Happy and Blessed Easter!**



Fr. John

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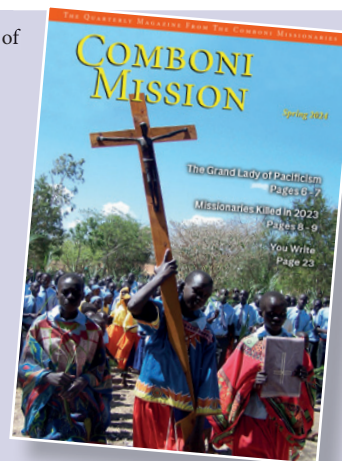
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# CONTENTS

Spring 2024

Editorial Page 2

Contents Page 3

Getting to know the Combonis Pages 4-5

The Grand lady of Pacificism Pages 6-7

A very different Christmas Pages 8-9

Missionaries killed in 2023 Pages 10-11

Brazil-a floating Church Pages 12-13

Chad – Koupor Pages 14-15-16

Journey through Holy Week Page 17

Preparing for Lent Pages 18-19

Courageous Youth Page 20-21

The Listening Heart Page 22

You Write Page 23

St. Daniel Comboni Page 24



Page 4



Page 6



Page 8



Page 12



Page 14



Page 18



Page 20



Page 23

# Getting to know the Comboni Missionaries



## Supreme Witness: Father William Nyadru

The Cross is part and parcel of every Christian vocation. For each Christian, the sharing in the Cross of Christ takes on a different form. For some, the identification with Christ's sufferings reaches the point of giving their lives as in the case of those Comboni Missionaries who wished to remain faithful to their missionary vocation 'until death' as taught by their Father and Founder, St. Daniel Comboni.

The following excerpt is from *Supreme Witness: Comboni Missionaries Killed in the Line of Duty*, an account of the lives of 25 Comboni Missionary priests, brothers, and sisters who died in the service of the Gospel in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Brazil and Mexico. The book *Supreme Witness* can be acquired at any of the Comboni mission offices in England, Scotland, Ireland.



iStock Credit: artisteer

### Father William Nyadru – A Victim of Sacrificial Killing

He was found lying face down in the grass. His arms and hands were crossed to support his head. He had been shot through the back with two bullets. Beneath him, the ground was still moist with his blood. There were no witnesses. Father William was only thirty-one years of age. A Confrère remembered the words he had spoken on the day of his Final Vows three years before, "Lord, here I am with your grace to do your will for ever. May my life be a joyous witness of your love among the poor." William Nyadru was born at Pakele in Northwestern Uganda on March 28, 1960, the eldest of four children. At twelve years of age, he expressed the desire to become a priest and entered the Diocesan Junior Seminary in Pokea. After A-Levels he was admitted to the Major Seminary in

Alokolum to study philosophy as a candidate for the Diocese of Arua.

### The transition to Missionary

It was in Alokolum that he became increasingly attracted to the idea of becoming a missionary priest and decided he would join the Comboni Missionaries. But it was not easy. The Rector and Staff did not want him to leave. William later wrote, "I asked my Superiors in the Major Seminary to let me become a Comboni Missionary, but they tried to discourage me, saying that there was a great need for priests in my home Diocese." Deciding whether to give William permission to join the Comboni Missionaries was very hard for his Bishop, Angelo Tarantino, who was himself a Comboni Missionary, but who wanted to keep this gifted young man for the Diocese. William eventually obtained

permission, however, thanks to his persistence and determination. During the years of initial formation, first in the Postulancy in Gulu and later in the Novitiate in Namugongo, William was greatly admired by all those who came into contact with him, for his sharp intellect and wit, his openness and obliging nature, and his pleasant company.

### Journalistic career

After his First Vows in Namugongo, William went to study theology at the Gregorian University in Rome from 1984 to 1987.

From there, at the request of his Superiors, he went to take a Master's Degree in Journalism at City University in London. On August 20, 1988 he was ordained a priest in an open-air Mass in his home Mission of Moyo in Northwestern Uganda. A few months later he was assigned to the Mission of Morulem in Eastern Karamoja to gain some pastoral experience before being appointed editor of *Leadership Magazine*, a monthly magazine founded and run by the Comboni Missionaries in Uganda. In a letter dated January 26, 1989, he wrote, "I have just arrived at the Mission of Morulem



Fr William greeting a friend





Uganda martyrs Namugongo shrine

among the Labwor and have already started learning their language, Lebthur. It is a relatively easy language to learn, similar to Acholi. However, Lebthur has some significant variations from Acholi due to the linguistic and cultural impact of the neighbouring ethnic groups – the Langi, the Teso and the Karimojong. I have just started to get to know the people and the Parish. I am excited about the ‘Small Christian Communities’ established in the Mission. I believe the meaning of my missionary presence among the Labwor is to share with them our experience of the Lord and to be a link between the Church in the Diocese of Arua and the Church in Karamoja. The presence of an African Comboni Missionary among them is thought-provoking because to date they are only used to white Comboni Missionaries.”

### The last journey to Moroto

It was early morning on Friday 25, October 1991, when Father William said to one of his Confrères that he intended to go to Moroto to collect the tithe forms which were ready at the Diocesan Printing Press and needed for distribution to people at Church on the following Sunday. Moroto was about a hundred miles away. The road from the Morulem to Moroto branches in two: with one way going through Matany, and the other through Lopei and then joining the Kotido-Moroto road. The way through Matany became impassable in the rainy season while the road through Lopei, although longer, always remained in fairly good condition whatever the weather.

It was not the first time William had gone to Moroto by motorcycle. It is just a few

hours’ away and one can leave Morulem in the morning and be back by the afternoon. For years nothing had ever happened along that road. No one had ever been robbed. So Father William set off from Morulem without any apprehension, expecting to be back home in the early afternoon. However, by evening, he had not returned. The Confrères began to worry. Before the advent of mobile phones almost all the Missions in Uganda had a radio transmitter that was used for communicating. At the usual 8:30 p.m. ‘radio call,’ the Confrères in Morulem called the Missions of Matany, Kangole and Moroto inquiring as to the whereabouts of Father William. They all said they had not seen him. It was night-time and some parts of the road were flooded by the recent heavy rains. It was agreed that early the next morning three search parties of Missionaries would set out from Morulem, Matany and Moroto to look for him.

At 1:00 p.m. the group travelling from Moroto to Morulem through Lopei found tire marks on the road where a motorcycle had evidently stopped abruptly. On the right side of the road the tall grass had been trampled upon. About fifty yards from the side of the road, the missionaries found the motorcycle of Father William in a clearing, undamaged and with the key still in the ignition. The engine started at once. A few yards away, they found his helmet. A few moments later one of the party, Sister Sylvia Pisetta cried out, “William! William!” Fifty yards further on, about one hundred yards from the road, they found the body of Father William lying in the grass. He had been stripped naked, except for his underwear. His arms and hands were crossed supporting his head

which was face down. One foot was crossed over the other. It appeared that Father William had been forced to take that position by three individuals who had then stood over him.

The missionaries laid the body of Father William on a stretcher and carried him to St. Kizito Mission Hospital in Matany where many of the Staff commented on the serenity of his countenance. One of the doctors there confirmed that the heart of Father William had been pierced by two bullets which had entered through his back as he was lying on the ground. He had evidently been shot at very close range as there were scorch marks on the skin where the bullets had entered. The body was taken to the Church in the Mission of Morulem. The Local Bishop, Denis Kiwanuka, celebrated the Funeral Mass the following day with many of the Faithful present despite the recent heavy rainfall. Father William was then taken to the Mission of Moyo in Northwestern Uganda where he was laid to rest in the cemetery there with fellow Comboni Missionaries.

### A sacrificial killing?

The footprints around the body of Father William indicated that the killers were three in number. Why did they force the Father to lie prostrate on the ground? Karimojong warriors traditionally ‘shoot to kill’ without compelling the intended victim to lie down or to take a particular posture. One theory was that the killers were former soldiers, given the tendency of such individuals in Uganda’s recent past to humiliate civilians who fell into their hands by forcing them to kneel or bow down before them.

A Comboni Missionary, who had worked in Karamoja for many years, commented: “We cannot exclude the possibility of a ritual execution in the case of Father William.” This was the explanation put forward by a number of the Faithful around Matany. A few weeks before, a local witchdoctor had apparently decreed to a group of warriors that the sacrifice of a person travelling by motorcycle was required to ensure the success of the cattle raid they were planning against the neighbouring Matheniko ethnic group. Several details support such a theory: the killing took place in the bush far from any homestead or village, the victim was stripped naked and forced to lie face down on the ground and the motorcycle and helmet were left untouched close by. The police and the army did not attempt to investigate the murder so perhaps we will never know the truth.”



# THE GRAND LADY OF PACIFISM

## Dorothy Day (1897 – 1980)

**B**orn into a godless family, active as a radical journalist, she discovered God because of the joy of expecting a baby. The father of the baby left her, when she decided to have the baby baptized. She faced life as a long loneliness with her only daughter Tamar, but God used her to gather the poor into the Catholic Worker movement and to give a voice to Catholic pacifism in the USA. She saw the Catholic Church as *“the church of the immigrants, the church of the poor”*.

On December 28 1927, Dorothy was received into the Catholic Church. A special period commenced in her life as she tried to find a way to bring together her religious faith and her radical social values. She was praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary, with tears and anguish, that some way would open up for her to use what talents she possessed for her fellow workers, for the poor. In 1932, Dorothy met a Frenchman, Peter Maurin, an eccentric kindred spirit, a vagabond visionary, twenty years older than her. A strange team, they got along immediately like a house on fire. Together they started the Catholic Worker newspaper and later opened Hospitality Houses for the poor and homeless whom Peter called the *“ambassadors of God”*. It was the time of the great depression and thousands of people found themselves jobless and soon crowded the Hospitality Houses all over the United States. The Catholic Worker became a national movement. Over 100 of these houses are still functioning nowadays. The Catholic Worker attitude toward those who were welcomed wasn't always appreciated. These weren't the “deserving poor,” it was sometimes objected, but drunkards and good-for-nothings. A visiting social worker asked Dorothy how long the “clients” were permitted to stay. “We let them stay forever,” Dorothy answered with a fierce look in her eye. *“They live with us, they die with us, and we give them a Christian burial. We pray for*



*them after they are dead. Once they are taken in, they become members of the family. Or rather they always were members of the family. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ.”*

The Catholic Worker also experimented with farming communes. But what got Dor-

othy into the most trouble was pacifism. A nonviolent way of life, as she saw it, was at the heart of the Gospel. She took as seriously as the early Church the command of Jesus to Peter: “Put away your sword, for whoever lives by the sword shall perish by the sword.” For many centuries the Catholic Church had





Brothers and sisters in Christ

Photo: iStock, urbazon

accommodated itself to war. Popes had blessed armies and preached Crusades. In the thirteenth century St. Francis of Assisi had revived the pacifist way, but by the twentieth century, it was unknown for Catholics to take such a position. Wars did not lack during Dorothy's lifetime: the Spanish civil war, the Second World War, the Vietnam War. Every time she renewed her pacifist commitment, unmindful of the cost. Hospitality Houses had to be closed, the Catholic Worker lost thousands of readers. One of the rituals of life for the New York Catholic Worker community beginning in the late 1950s was the refusal to participate in the state's annual civil defence drill. Such preparation for attack seemed to Dorothy part of an attempt to promote nuclear war as survivable and winnable and to justify spending billions on the military. Dorothy described her civil disobedience as an act of penance for America's use of nuclear weap-

ons on Japanese cities. The first year the dissidents were reprimanded. Then every year until the rehearsal was cancelled in 1961, there were arrests. Concern with the Church's response to war led Dorothy to Rome during the Second Vatican Council, an event Pope John XXIII hoped would restore "the simple and pure lines that the face of the Church of Jesus had at its birth." In 1963 she was one of 50 "Mothers for Peace" who went to Rome to thank Pope John for his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. Close to death, the pope couldn't meet them privately, but at one of his last public audiences blessed the pilgrims, asking them to continue their labours. In 1965, Dorothy returned to Rome to take part in a fast expressing "our prayer and our hope" that the Council would issue a clear statement, "Put away thy sword."

She saw the unpublicized fast as a "widow's mite" in support of the bishops' effort to

speak with a pure voice to the modern world. Dorothy had reason to rejoice in December when the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World was approved by the bishops. The Council's described as "a crime against God and humanity" any act of war "directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants." The Council called on states to make legal provision for conscientious objectors while describing as "criminal" those who obey commands that condemn the innocent and defenceless. On the way to sainthood Dorothy Day lived long enough to see her achievements honoured. In 1967, when she made her last visit to Rome to take part in the International Congress of the Laity, she found she was one of two Americans -- the other an astronaut -- invited to receive Communion from the hands of Pope Paul VI. On her 75th birthday the Jesuit magazine *America* devoted a special issue to her, finding in her the individual who best exemplified "the aspiration and action of the American Catholic community during the past forty years." Notre Dame University presented her with its Laetare Medal, thanking her for "comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable." Among those who came to visit her when she was no longer able to travel was Mother Theresa of Calcutta, who had once pinned on Day's dress the cross that is worn only by fully professed members of the Missionary Sisters of Charity. Long before her death, Dorothy found herself regarded by many as a saint. No words of hers are better known than her brusque response: "Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed so easily." Nonetheless, having herself treasured the memory and witness of many saints she is a candidate for inclusion in the calendar of saints. In 2000, Cardinal John O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, initiated her cause for canonization with the following words: "*If any woman ever loved God and neighbour, it was Dorothy Day!*" She worked for, lived with, and died among the poorest and most abandoned. In the drama of her life, she found first beauty, then truth and, ultimately, God in the poor. "*Those who cannot see the face of Christ in the poor are atheists indeed*" she said. "*I firmly believe that our salvation depends on the poor*".

On November 29, 1980, at the age of 83, Dorothy Day died peacefully at home, in the Catholic Worker Community. At her side was her daughter Tamar Theresa. After a lifetime of voluntary poverty, she left no money for her funeral. It was paid for by the Archdiocese of New York.



Working for Peace

Photo: iStock, Alejandro Rivera



# A Very Different Christmas, 2023

## With the children of Don Bosco, Ashalayam, Kolkata



I became involved with Don Bosco, Ashalayam when I was working alongside Fr Andrew at Salesian School Chertsey. Fr Andrew managed to set up links with them and each year would take out a small group of 6th formers to visit the homes and see the children that their parents were sponsoring. The friendships that ensued were a delight to witness.

On 23rd December, 2023, I found myself boarding a flight to Kolkata, via Dubai, wondering exactly how I'd found myself here. Christmas in Kolkata was never the plan! But this would be my 5th and final trip and I didn't want to miss out on that!

There were a few glitches on the way - delayed take-off, almost missing my connection, circling Kolkata due to fog and on the point of being diverted due to lack of fuel. Oh yes, and my suitcase going awol. However, once the glitches were out of the way, I was ready for what would be a very different and wonderful Christmas.

I caught up with my friends, Fr Andrew, his mother Muriel and brother Sean, on the 2nd leg of the flight and we were met by a beaming Fr John Chalil who then took us to Don Bosco Park Circus where we would spend the next 10 amazing days. This was my 5th trip so I knew exactly what to expect - Kolkata is an assault on the senses in every sense of the word. The traffic noise, the seeming chaos everywhere, yet everything miraculously seeming to work. Crossing the road proved rather more hazardous than usual and I imagine that's because it was holiday time. On more than one occasion, a



*The Christmas team! ex-student Rajesh, Fr Andrew, Pauline, Muriel, and Sean.*

kindly local would signal me to follow them as they navigated the cars, vans, rickshaws; for which I was extremely grateful.

And so, on Christmas Day we visited Ashalayam, which is the main home for the street children of Kolkata. All the children from the different homes gather here for celebrations. On arrival, we recognised many faces but due to the pandemic, (the last time we visited was 4 years ago in February, 2020) quite a lot of boys had moved on. The government will only allow them to be supported here up until the age of 18. Still, there was plenty of catching up to be done.

Many phone calls were made to alert the boys who had left that we were here unex-

pectedly. I can't express how lovely it was to see several of them, now aged 22, who managed to make their way to Howrah to see us. It was the most wonderful day which ended with a meal of biryani, dhal and chicken; all cooked by the boys!

In previous years, we have visited other homes further afield such as Kaliani, Bhatta Nagar and Asha Tici but because of the Christmas break we were a bit more limited. However, we did have the opportunity to have a lengthy meeting with Fr George, who is overall in charge of the homes, and were able to better understand the system and how things were progressing almost 4 years on from our last visit.







We had a particular focus on what happens post 18 and also how to stretch and support those boys who are more academically able. One thing is key. Education is the only way out of poverty - just as with our Nekemte project - and having a very good standard of English is essential for them to progress substantially in the workplace or in further education. This has become the main aim of our fund-raising and sponsorship donations.

Asha Nayan was the next home we visited and easy to get to as we could walk there in about 20 minutes. This home is more specifically for those boys who want to learn. Again, lots of familiar faces, just older and bigger! We had a lovely time with them as they showed us their work and where they studied. And they're very keen to practice their English. It's really such an inspirational place. There's a counsellor there now which was much needed as we can only imagine the trauma some of the boys have been through before being welcomed into the homes. One of the workers there regularly went out into the streets at night to find lost and abandoned children. He would give them a card with the name and address of Ashalayam, but never take anyone with him.

Who to trust? Too many predators about so the children could make their own way there without the fear of being abducted. We stayed for lunch, which of course the boys had cooked and was yet again delicious.

One of the ex-Ashalayam boys, Rajesh, often visits Asha Nayan and takes the boys to play football in the afternoons. They look up to him like a much-loved older brother. Some of these boys have no parents. Others have family who live on the streets but can't support their children so send them here where they will be well-fed and receive an education. Other ex-students send a portion of their salary to Ashalayam to give back in as much as they can. Not all are success stories with a happy ending, but thankfully there are many.

Of course, no trip to Kolkata would be complete without a trip to Mother Teresa's house. It's a beautifully serene place which is perfect for quiet reflection. Her small room is above the kitchen so it must have been insupportable during the summer. Many people come here to pray at her tomb and leave prayer requests for the Sisters of Charity.

My daughter said to me on the phone one night towards the end of our trip - "at least

this is your last trip." I thought, "Hmmm, I'll deal with that one when I get home!" Because of course, half way through the trip, the familiar words "next time" were appearing in our chats. And so, before we'd even left, we were making plans for February 2025.





# Missionaries killed in 2023

## MISSIO/England and Wales

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**Last year, 20 missionaries met violent deaths worldwide: one bishop, eight priests, two Religious Brothers, one Seminarian, one Novice, and seven lay people were killed.**

**S**adly, the past year saw many missionaries and pastoral workers become victims of violence as they were going about their everyday lives and activities.

Many of them were killed in places and situations marked by conflict - by soldiers, militia, terrorist groups or individuals wielding weapons.

In the mystery which unites them to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, these witnesses of faith also share in the pain of Christ for all the innocent who suffer unjustly. The gift of their lives reflects Christ's salvation offered to all humanity and manifests God's love for all.

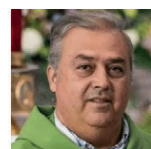
During the Angelus on St Stephen's day, Pope Francis said: 'There are many in our world who suffer and die to bear witness to Jesus... the seed of their sacrifices, which seems to die, germinates and bears fruit, because God, through them, continues to work miracles (cf. Acts 18:9-10), changing hearts and saving humankind.

'Let us ask ourselves, then: do I care about and pray for those who, in various parts of the world, still suffer and die for the faith today? And in turn, do I try to bear witness to the Gospel consistently, with gentleness and confidence? Do I believe that the seed of goodness will bear fruit even if I do not see the immediate results?'

**Fr Jacques Yaro Zerbo**, 67, was killed on 2 January while on his way to carry out pastoral activities in the Boucle du Mouhoun region of Burkina Faso. The unidentified armed men murdered him and drove away in his car.

**Fr Isaac Achi**, 61, died on 15 January during an attack on his parish in northern Nigeria. The armed group, unable to access the presbytery, set fire to it. Whilst a fellow Priest, Fr Collins Omeh, was wounded as he fled the house; Fr Isaac was unable to escape the flames.

**Diego Valencia**, 65, Sacristan of the Parish of Nuestra Senora de La Palma in the province of Cadiz, Spain, was killed on 25 January whilst trying to stop an attack on parishioners by a young man armed with a machete. The perpetrator was later arrested by the police.



**Fr Juan Angulo Fonseca**, 53, Parish Priest of Nuestra Senora of Guadalupe in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, was shot and died on 10 February. Sources claim that this well-respected Priest fell victim to a family member over a land dispute. (Image: Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish).

**Monsignor David O'Connell**, 69, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles (USA), was shot by his housekeeper's husband on 18 February. The perpetrator was later arrested and confessed to the crime, possibly motivated by a dispute over money.





**Br Moses Simukonde Sens**, 35, a Missionary of Africa from Zambia, was killed on 29 March by a stray bullet near a military checkpoint in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's capital. (Image: Missionnaires d'Afrique).

**Fr Javier García Villafaña**, 35, an Augustinian and Parish Priest in the Archdiocese of Morelia, Mexico, was murdered when his car was riddled with bullets whilst on his way to celebrate Mass on 22 May.

**Fr Charles Onomhoale Igechi**, a recently ordained Priest of the Archdiocese of Benin City, was killed by gunmen along Agbor Road, in Edo State, Nigeria on 7 June.

**Gertrudis Cruz de Jesús** and **Gliserina Cruz Merino**, both young catechists, were killed on 15 June, during a conflict between armed groups while on their way to a Eucharistic procession in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. They belonged to a movement for the recognition of the human rights of their people - the Triqui.

**Fr Pamphili Nada**, died from his injuries on 19 July, whilst being taken to hospital. He had been attacked with a blunt object by a mentally unwell man in his parish of Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Arusha, Tanzania.

**Seminarian Na'aman Danlami**, 25, perished in a fire which was deliberately set on 7 September by armed bandits, after they failed to kidnap the Parish Priest of St Raphael's Parish of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

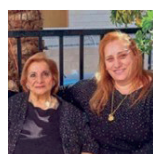
**Godwin Eze**, 31, a Benedictine Novice kidnapped from the monastery in Eruku, Kwara State, Nigeria, was shot dead and his body thrown into a river by an armed group on 18 October.

**Br Cyprian Ngeh**, 40, an exemplary religious nurse of the Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Conception was attacked and stabbed to death in Bamenda, Cameroon on 7 November whilst walking back to his Congregation's Health Centre.

**Journey Barbante**, 24, and **Janine Arenas**, 18, students and committed volunteers of the Catholic chaplaincy community of Mindanao's State University in the Philippines, were killed on 3 December by a local group retaliating to military operations. They were among the victims and casualties of the bomb which detonated during the celebration of Mass on the first Sunday of Advent.

**Fr Stephen Gutsell**, 65, died on 10 December, following a knife attack during an attempted break-in at the church in Fort Cahloun, a small community in Nebraska (USA) that he had led for 11 years. The suspected attacker was arrested by police.

**Fr Léopold Feyen**, 82, a Salesian of Don Bosco from Belgium, was stabbed to death by an unidentified killer in the parish of St Mary Help of Christians in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo on 12 December.



**Samar Kamal Anton**, and her mother, **Nahida Khalil Anton**, were killed on 16 December by snipers as they were walking to the Convent of the Sisters of Mother Theresa, in the parish complex of the Holy Family in Gaza. One was killed as she tried to carry the other to safety. Both belonged to a prayerful group of Catholic and Orthodox women committed to serving the poor and the disabled. (Image: Christians MENA).

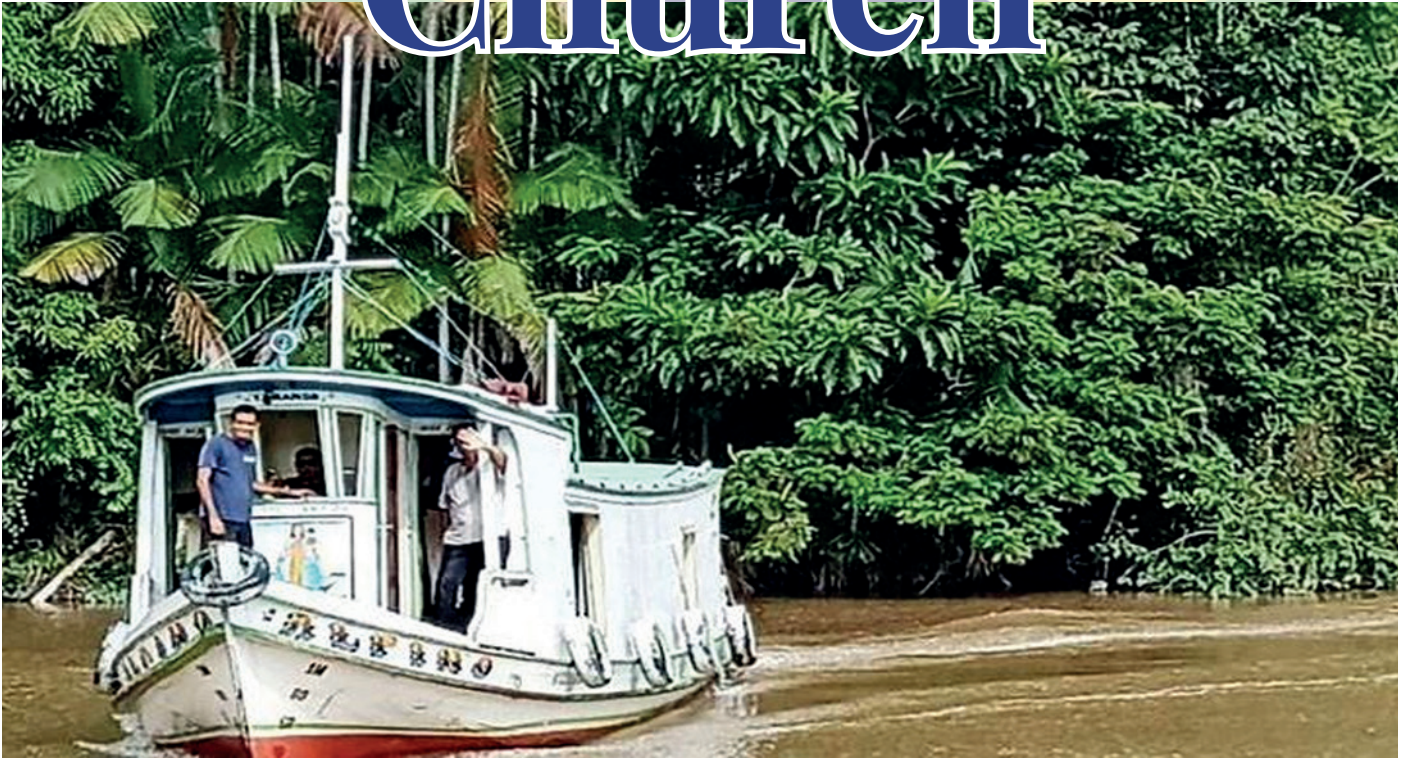
*All information is supplied by Fides, the Vatican-based news agency of Missio, and by Vatican News.*

**Please join us in giving thanks for the work and witness of these sisters and brothers of ours. May they rest in peace and rise in glory Amen.**



# BRAZIL

## Our Floating Church



*The Alpino, the boat used by the missionaries. Photo Swm*

**There are more than 120 communities distributed on the islands of the large Santana archipelago on the Amazon River, in Amapá. The fundamental role of community leaders: an urgent need to have permanent deacons. Two missionaries explain their pastoral activities.**

**W**e are in the North of Brazil, in the diocese of Macapá. Father Raul, a PIME missionary, originally from Guinea-Bissau, has been parish priest of the large archipelago for just over a year. The parish has 120 communities in 16 sectors, which take their name from the birds of the region. Some are close to each other, others are not. Therefore, the parish does not have a 'mother church' on the mainland, but only an office in the city of Santana and a pastoral centre for meetings in the community of Guajará.

The communities are located in the State of Pará, in the municipalities of Afuá, Gurupá and Breves. "Our itinerary

lasts from ten to fifteen days, and includes training, Mass, and celebrations of the sacraments. Once back in the city, we redo

the planning to resume this pastoral itinerary as soon as we can", explains Father Raul. The Alpino, the boat that the mis-



*The communities take their name from the birds of the region. Photo Swm*





*The parish has 120 communities. Photo Swm*

sionaries use to travel, has everything a parish church needs: books and liturgical objects, basic food parcels for needy families and food for the journey. Father Carlos, who is Mexican and has been curate of the parish for six months, says: "Boating on the river is not like driving in the city. Real-time communication is difficult because, on the islands, not everyone has access to the internet. Another challenge is economic because, although the parish is the largest in the diocese, it is the poorest. And there is the problem of guaranteeing our presence in all areas: for example, the community of São Bento, on the island from Roberta to Breves, is about 7-8 hours away by boat and its accessibility depends on the tide".

Although the logistics are challenging, this is not the biggest concern for the missionaries: "The pastoral difficulty at the moment is the lack of catechists in some communities", explains Father Raul. "In our absence, it is the local leaders and coordinators who provide assistance and accompany the faithful. When we return, six months after the last visit, they inform us of the community's difficulties and achievements. Therefore, lay people are indispensable to pastoral activity: if the parish moves forward, it is thanks to their work. In a spirit of synodality, everyone tries to do their part," says Father Raul.

Elton Monteiro de Costa leads the community of Guajará in the absence of priests. He celebrates the Word on Sundays, visits families and recites the rosary with them. Despite the autonomy, Elton admits: "The arrival of the priests is a

bright moment for us. It is the warmth of the emotion of a different community. It is a light that lights things up more and more". The feeling is mutual, confesses Father Carlos: "The greatest happiness I feel during the visits is when I perceive the joy of the people when the priest arrives. Everyone is waiting anxiously to celebrate the sacraments, receive some training and spend the whole day in community".

This year the communities worked on the theme of the Synod, convened by Pope Francis: 'Participation, communion and mission'. There were moments of training and reflection, starting from the answers to the Synod questionnaires. At a local level, the parish has taken a concrete step: "We are putting into practice the three

words: participation, communion and mission, uniting small communities to create a spirit of sharing. We work so that this mentality of synodality and openness embraces the entire parish", says Father Carlos, adding that the majority of people have accepted this new ecclesial configuration and that, with the unification of smaller communities, it becomes easier for missionaries to carry out visits and pastoral work.

The missionary admits that the visits are insufficient for good pastoral and social work in the islands: "It is important to have a fixed place, a house within the territory so that we priests can be more available to anyone in need, and guarantee a service that goes beyond scheduled visits". This would also allow us to welcome people who come from abroad and want to have a missionary experience on the islands. Father Raul, in turn, imagines another project: the permanent diaconate, as a result of the synod experience. "We have concluded that it is necessary to have direct collaborators in the area during our absence. Not just people to meet local needs, but willing to dedicate their lives as a vocation to the service of the universal Church". The priests say they are dedicated both to raising awareness and encouraging lay people who feel this calling. Currently, the parish has one active permanent deacon, as well as a candidate in training, and the two missionaries are confident that in the future they will have others: "With the help of deacons, leaders and local coordinators, the pastoral work will be much better", they conclude.



*The parish is the largest in the diocese. Photo Swm*



# Chad – Koupor

## Mission of Hope

**In a remote corner of Chad, three missionaries of the Immaculate Conception give a simple Christian testimony.  
Walking alongside people.**



*Sister Hilda has worked in Africa for 36 years. Photo A.Pozzi*

**H**ilda, Shephali, and Irene are three Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception present in Koupor, in the south-west of Chad, on the border with Cameroon, where they arrived in February 2019.

In the past, there had been some Burundian sisters, but none had been there for five years. “They gave us a big party when we arrived!”, they remember. Even though no one knew them, and most people aren’t even Christians. Yet these three nuns, with their great simplicity and unbelievably poor means, manage to make people

experience, through small gestures, a sense of respect and care for the people with whom they share their lives.

Just being there is a great sign because in Koupor, as well as in the surrounding villages, there is nothing and no one. There are no state works of any kind and no NGOs. Everything is lacking: roads, water, schools, health centres... People live in extreme poverty and are increasingly at the mercy of a changeable climate, balanced between terrible droughts and devastating floods. Either there is no water or there is too much.

Now is the time of the floods, but until a few weeks ago the savannah was scorched by temperatures above 50 degrees, and water and millet – the basic element of nutrition – had become very rare commodities.

In the rainy season, however, when the earth appears wrinkled and furrowed by deep cracks, real lakes are created that further accentuate the isolation of this village and the entire area. Even the missionaries, who normally travel by bicycle or motorbike on sandy paths, must use the canoe to travel over these expanses of





Everything is lacking: roads, water, schools, health centres... File swm



Sr. Shephali. Her main commitment is to the group of girls. Photo: A. Pozzi

water that are increasingly associated with devastating climatic events that cause destruction and displacement of people.

It is a land of extremes in which these three nuns from different countries, generations and experiences live their mission, and today find themselves sharing the joy of bearing witness to the Gospel in this part of the world also through gestures of closeness and charity.

Sister Hilda, from India, is a veteran of the group. She has 36 years of experience in Cameroon, first in the South in Ambam, and then in the Far North. "When I arrived, it was a very poor and abandoned region, but I saw great changes. Here, however, there is nothing".

This mission in Koupor is a constant challenge. Not only due to the climate but especially due to the backwardness of the place. Even the simplest things become complicated. She experiences this every day in the dispensary they renovated. Everything is very basic but clean and

tidy: there is even a small laboratory, solar panels, and a water pump. "But there are no medicines", Sister Hilda says, showing us the almost empty warehouse. "The government doesn't give anything except vaccines and it's not easy to get them because transportation is extremely difficult. Normally we get them from Caritas which also pays the salaries of the staff".

There are currently two nurses and a midwife. But the patients are very few as are the women who come to give birth – five in the last month. Almost all of them continue to have their babies at home and go to the dispensary only in case of complications, sometimes making difficult journeys by motorbike or on the back of a donkey.

Nurse Valentin shows us the register of visits: fewer than three thousand patients a year, an average of nine a day. "People don't come to the dispensary because often they don't even have the few pennies needed to pay for medical tests or medicine, but also because they don't even know that they can get treatment here. This is why we are doing a lot of awareness work and vaccination campaigns in the villages", explains Sister Hilda. "But it's a question of mentality. People often don't understand the importance of going to the dispensary or even of sending children to school".

The other two nuns who dedicate themselves to the education of girls and to pastoral care, as well as to mission schools,



A mother with her child. Almost all women continue to have their babies at home. They only go to the dispensary if there are complications. File swm





*Sister Irene is in charge of pastoral activities, catechesis for children and young people. Photo: A. Pozzi*

also experience this. Sister Shephali has just returned from Bangladesh, where she went on holiday after a long-forced absence due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She also has 17 years of experience in Cameroon behind her. Then she got back into work in Koupor, just across the border in a similar territory and with similar people, but with very different challenges. Her main commitment is with the group of girls in the cutting and sewing course which also becomes an opportunity for broader training, also carried out in extra-curricular moments in a small house within the mission.

"The course is spread over three years. The first two are attended by about fifteen girls each. The third only from the best", explains Sister Shephali, while she tries to start the lesson with girls who arrive late, some children crying and others running away. "It is not easy to give continuity to this course, because they themselves live in precariousness. Some start and then stop coming, others get married, and others have children. There is one now who comes with her child". Everything must be managed with a lot of patience and determination.

Sister Shephali knows well that for these girls it is a unique opportunity not only to learn a trade and contribute to their families' meagre finances, but also to have a minimum amount of training. She adds "Many of them are illiterate and so, in addition to cutting and sewing courses, we do some literacy, French language, hygiene and cooking courses, and what is called 'Eva' here: education in life and

love".

Unfortunately, in these areas, girls are often excluded from the education system, which in Chad is very precarious. The mission is building several schools or replacing classrooms made of millet stalks and straw with brick buildings. But then there is a lack of qualified teachers and those who exist are not paid. The Koupor school – the first in the entire area, founded by Oblate missionaries – and the surrounding ones all belong to the community. That is, they are managed by a committee of families who have to pay all the expenses, including salaries. In Koupor, where there are 230 students, the staff is complete and usually manages to keep to the schedule. But this is an excep-

tion. The mission also provides most of the books, but there are not always enough for all the teachers. For this reason, there is also a small library that is managed by some volunteers, together with Sister Irene.

Originally from Papua New Guinea, Sister Irene is the youngest of the group. Before arriving in Chad, she spent a few years in Italy and seven months in Cameroon. She now takes care of pastoral activities, and the catechesis of children and young people. She reflects "Koupor is a very isolated and closed context, in every sense, which develops very slowly. We continually experience this by going to the villages for pastoral work. What we do is first of all is to give support to the catechists who carry out the bulk of the work and we verify the progress made by the Christian communities. The people are always welcoming, even if they often have nothing".

The children, then, are always very much enjoying themselves. Above all, it is their voices that fill the silence of the evening, when darkness descends and envelops everything. A single faint light, that of the mission chapel, illuminates the darkness and is soon filled with songs and prayers. The parish priest and the three missionaries of the Immaculate lead a small procession of children, women and young people who gather in this circular building, similar to the local homes. The sound of the tom-tom gives rhythm to the songs. And prayer gives meaning to the day. It is a precious moment of thanks, trust, and hope in the flow of lives marked by precariousness.



*The father with his two sons sitting outside the home. File swm*



# **Journey through Holy Week:** **Humble Servant, Universal Light, Victorious Love**

In the quiet cadence of life's daily refrain,  
a servant emerges, with joy his domain.  
Chosen, embraced, he's a radiant light,  
that's guiding all hearts through the darkest of night.

His footsteps an echo of humble grace,  
Good News spread to the whole human race.  
We're inspired to serve as Jesus did,  
in acts of love our spirits bid.  
His example we follow and a trail we blaze,  
we're guided by love through life's intricate maze.

The Spirit bestowed, an unseen tie,  
from God the Father to Jesus to you and I.  
Named and sent, our purpose to ignite,  
light-bearers are we, that bring hope to the fight.  
No need for shouts, ours a peaceful choice,  
a steady, calm though forceful voice.

Amidst the clamour where darkness is rife,  
we pray for peace, for what gives life.  
Becoming ourselves instruments of peace,  
by example we show animosities cease.

And though discouragement and temptations do assail,  
Christ's strength in us will always prevail.  
As in moments of doubt when we may seem to sway,  
we remember love's guidance will never betray.

Our journey through Holy Week,  
in love's triumphant embrace;  
the story of Grace, Redemption, Resurrection,  
we joyfully retrace.

The Spirit in our lives imbued,  
baptismal vows again renewed,  
We sing a chorus of thankful gratitude,  
Knowing that the victory's won!







# Preparing for Lent

*iStock Credit: stertser*

As Ash Wednesday approached Father Thomas planned to discipline himself, to reign in, as it were, his earthly desires. His build up was well practised after 20 years as a parish priest. He would begin to devote more time for prayer, cut out alcohol; and of course, visit the sick; so as to add to his acts of denial acts of mercy; and to grow in his love for Jesus.

There were many elderly parishioners; but the young, especially teenagers were visibly absent from the Mass, and the youth group had folded up after weeks when nobody came. Father Thomas had noticed that Mary Simms had not appeared at Mass for two weeks running; she was a regular and devoted to her faith since child-hood. She never missed

Mass; so, he decided to go and visit her, concerned for her wellbeing. Mary was a widow for ten years now and without children. She was an only child herself and her only living relative was an Uncle Bob in Australia. As well as attending Mass she cleaned the church every week and delighted in polishing the brass candle sticks. She led a rosary prayer group in her house, once a fortnight, and was a volunteer at the local charity shop.

Father Thomas took the number nine bus to Rochester Street and walked five minutes to Mary's house, number nine, Virgil Gardens. To his surprise Mary opened the door with a smile on her face, and looking in the best of health in this her seventy fifth year. She invited

him in and pointed towards the front room.

"Is tea ok Father, or would you prefer something stronger?" she called, as she went into the kitchen. He shouted back, "Tea's fine, Mary, Lent's not far away."

He heard her laugh and sat back, relaxing in a cosy arm-chair. She brought forth a pot of tea and a plate of custard creams, his favourite.

"Best let it brew for a bit Father, I know you like it strong. Anyway, to what do I owe this pleasure?" Although she knew why he was here.

Father Thomas touched his collar nervously, wondering how to put it, seeing as she seemed perfectly well, and wondering why she had missed Mass for two weeks running.



"Well Mary, I know how devoted you are to the church and I presumed you had missed Mass through sickness.... so.... I took it upon myself to visit and see how you are."

She smiled at Father Thomas and offered him a custard cream which he politely refused. Then she took a deep breath and said,

"Father, would you agree that we sometimes have to make sacrifices for the Lord?"

"Yes, of course," he said, especially as Lent approaches." He wondered what this sacrifice entailed.

Mary smiled again, and answered, "you know Father I'm very committed to my faith. My Mother before me, God bless her soul was the same. She brought me up and taught me that the Holy Mass was the pinnacle of our faith; to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord was to receive Eternal life.

In all my years I have been faithful; despite, dear Ted, bless his soul would often tempt me on a beautiful Summer's Sunday to a day out at the sea-side. Yes, I know Father, Saturday night Mass was an alternative, but Sunday was the sacred day for me and to miss Mass; well, my mother would turn in her grave; so, I never gave in to his prompting."

Father Thomas had leaned forward, his hands in prayer and touching his lips; as he gazed at Mary, wondering what this sacrifice would be; certainly not custard creams, that's for sure. She poured the tea, placing his cup in front of him; and after taking a sip of her own she carried on with her tale of sacrifice.

"Now Father, where was I? Oh, yes sacrifice for the Lord. You know Father I always wanted a child of my own. Ted and I longed for it to happen; but the good Lord, in his wisdom did not answer my prayers; well maybe the answer was no. There was a lad, Michael his name, I'm going back years now, he was from a few doors down; he used to come to visit us.

He was fifteen, did odd jobs around the house. I used to bake a cake when he came. We were sitting in the front room one day and as you know I have a painting of our Lady above the fire place. He looked up and said, "Who's that?" That's Mary the mother of Jesus I said. He

couldn't stop looking at the painting.

Then every time he came, after his chores he would sit in the lounge and gaze at the face of Mary.

He wasn't a catholic nor had been brought up in any faith; but here he was sitting at the feet of Mary. Father that boy went on to become a catholic priest!"

His tea was now cold, as he still wondered what her sacrifice would entail. She went on,

"Do you know of Padre Pio, Father?" he nodded and she carried on. The Lord called him to a life of great sacrifice and he received the stigmata, the very marks of the crucified Christ. The church in their bafflement reacted by stopping him saying the Mass publicly. During the Nazi reign of terror priests were ordered not to celebrate Mass in Auschwitz. If they were caught, they were put to death. There have been priests and lay people throughout history, who one way or another could not receive the body and blood of Jesus; and we too of course during the pandemic. I know Father that you are familiar with these facts; but I wish to make a point. Two weeks ago, I sat in this room gazing at the face of Mary. I thought of Michael, a young man who answered the call of Jesus and I considered all those young people without faith and living the ways of this world; far removed from the love of our dear Lord; and I knew what I had to do. Until Easter Sunday I shall not attend Mass or receive the body and

blood of my Lord and I will pray for the young people to come back to Mass and to our forgiving Lord."

Father Thomas was speechless; knowing her devotion to the Eucharist. He knew there would be no point in trying to persuade her to return to church; and could in fact be going against God's will by doing so. He stood and placed his hands upon her head, praying,

"May our Lord bless you and sustain you in your sacrifice and answer your prayers."

He turned to leave. "Father remembers Michael in your prayers. I have received a letter from Afghanistan. He is being held hostage for refusing to deny his faith."

She led him to the door. And as he set off towards the bus stop, he tried to understand this woman's faith, her love for the Lord and her prayers for the youth through her love of a young man named Michael; and he knew that this Lent would somehow be different from those that have gone before.



*The Mother of Jesus,  
a drawing by  
Harvey Martin.*



# Courageous Young People Walking 125km in Weeklong Pilgrimage to Witness to Peace



**A large group of young people set out from Rumbek to Tonj, some 125 kilometres, in a seven-day pilgrimage. They started on Sunday, January 7 to sensitize communities in the East-Central African nation of Sudan on the need for peace. In the picture: Bishop Christian Carlassare and the youth of Rumbek on their peace pilgrimage to Tonj. Credit: Good News Radio/Rumbek Diocese.**

**D**rawn from the 17 Catholic Parishes of the South Sudanese Diocese, the 96 young people who were joined by some Priests as well as women and men religious serving in the Diocese have been doing five-hour morning walks and spending the afternoon hours taking part in the activities of the communities where they are welcomed.

“Their aim is to demonstrate to members of the local communities along the way, the importance of living in communion with each other”, the Local Ordinary of Rumbek Diocese, Bishop Christian Carlassare, told ACI Africa. Bishop Carlassare spoke to ACI Africa on Tuesday, January 9, the third day of the peace pilgrimage. The pilgrims had already been to at least four Parishes, at-

tracting more participation in the pilgrimage along the way.

They started by marching along the streets of Rumbek in South Sudan’s Lakes State, passing through the four parishes within Rumbek township, and ending up at Loreto Rumbek Primary and secondary school, where they spent their first night. From Loreto, they headed to Abiriu, a locality some 30 kilometers from Rumbek where the young people had “a wonderful ecumenical experience,” Bishop Carlassare said.

“A protestant Church in Abiriu welcomed us in their midst,” he recalled. Also Mazzolari Teacher Training Institute at Cueibet under the leadership of members of the Society of Jesus.

“We will go to many other parishes and hope to visit many chapels and com-

munities,” the Italian-born member of Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus (MCCJ), who has been at the helm of Rumbek Diocese since his Episcopal Consecration on 25 March 2022 added. He continued, “The response has been very encouraging. In total, we are about 100 people on the move. We are however joined spiritually by everyone in our Diocese and in communities where we are welcomed along our journey.”

Bishop Carlassare said that the intention of the peace pilgrimage has been to bring together youth from different Parishes and institutions of the Diocese of Rumbek to have an experience of journeying together, to know each other, and to foster communion with each other. Organized under the theme, “Be Seeds of Hope”, the pilgrimage is guided by the





Credit: Bishop Christian Carlassare.

message that Pope Francis delivered on his peace pilgrimage to South Sudan in February 2023.

On January 9, the pilgrims meditated on two key words related the theme of the day, "To Journey", namely, "Memory and Commitment: to remember the footsteps of those who have gone before us with a good example in order to achieve the common goal of communion" and "to commit ourselves towards unity and love", one of the pilgrims posted on the WhatsApp wall of Rumbek Diocese.

The bishop continued, "By preaching the Gospel of Christ to reach out to our family members and brothers and sisters and doing the work of Charity and to be

compassionate to one another by accepting the suffering of each one of us for the glory of God and to bear witness to Jesus Christ."

On January 9 in an interview with ACI Africa, Bishop Carlassare said, "Our theme comes from the call of Pope Francis last year for us, to be 'seeds of hope.'"

He added that the pilgrimage was inspired by the Holy Father who referred to himself as a 'Pilgrim of peace' when he visited South Sudan. "We are having a pilgrimage that is an experience of prayer, a feeling of being in touch with God and with one another and understanding the call we have received," Bishop Carlassare said, adding, "The second word is 'walk-

ing', involving movement where we have to be active in the peace that we so desire. The last word is to journey and that means not being stuck in our own places."

The Catholic Church leader, who started his Priestly ministry in South Sudan in the Catholic Diocese of Malakal in 2005 told ACI Africa continued saying "We feel that we are called to be pilgrims along with Pope Francis."

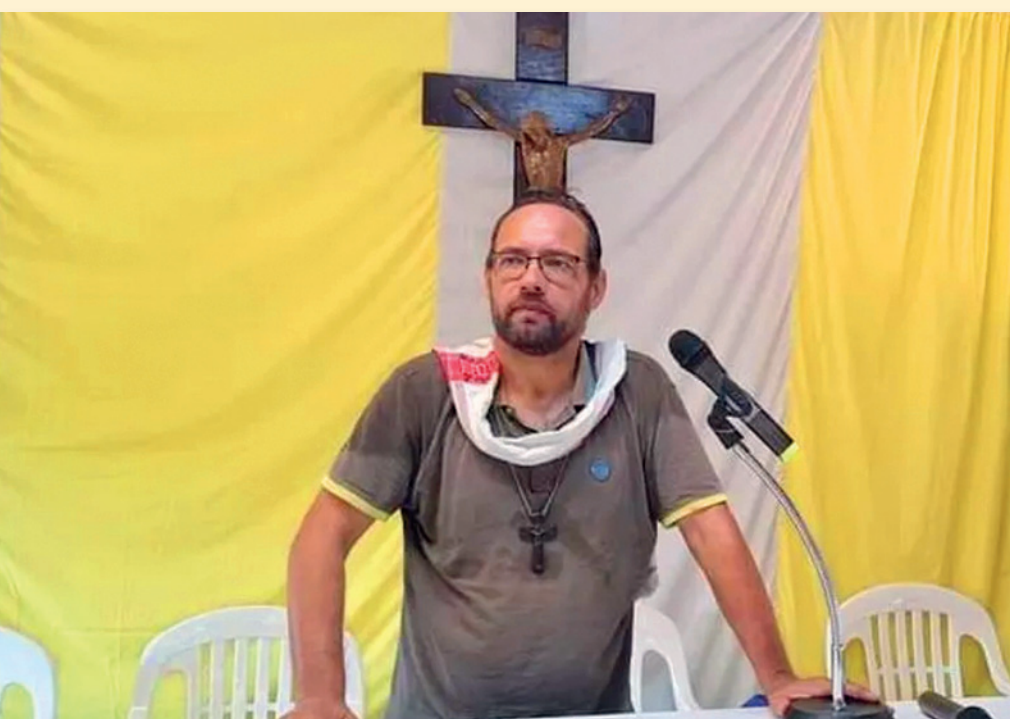
"We have to continue the journey every year. Our youth are coming together to pray and to share the hope for us. The hope for peace where the youth are no longer manipulated by those in power. We don't want to see young people marching on the streets with guns ready for violence. We want to see them being able to change the course of history," Bishop Carlassare told ACI Africa on January 9, the day the pilgrims walked 25 kilometres, from Abiriu to Cueibet.

On Wednesday, January 10, the fourth day of the weeklong pilgrimage, the pilgrims embarked on a 21-km walk from Cueibet to Angrial. "We are still contemplating on Pope Francis' message to be Seeds of Hope that in the future will produce fruits," one of the pilgrims shared on the WhatsApp wall of the Diocese.

Ahead of the pilgrimage, on January 7, the Feast of the Epiphany, Bishop Carlassare shared this poem and reflection, which concluded with his pilgrimage prayer:

*Why are you so confused, Herod?  
Why do you fear the Lord who comes?  
He does not pull down any human kingdom.  
He who opens the door to the kingdom of God.  
Like this you may end up buried under your palace  
Whereas the wise Kings left their palaces of old  
For something better than myrrh, frankincense and gold.  
They did not set foot on a journey because of the star.  
But they saw the star because they began to walk  
a lifelong pilgrimage alongside all kind of people  
Always ready to welcome dreams of fraternal love  
Always ready to open new paths of hope  
To find the Lord of Life in every poor shack  
Of every new Bethlehem.*

May the youth of Rumbek have a blessed and fruitful peace pilgrimage!



Bishop Christian Carlassare. Credit: Good News Radio/Rumbek Diocese



# THE LISTENING HEART

## Dropping in for a hot cuppa and a hearty blether.



Fr. John Clark mccj

**A**ny healthy human body tells us that each individual has two ears to hear and one mouth to speak. So, the ears win two-to-one for listening. In these past recent months, the East End Deanery of the Glasgow Archdiocese with the invaluable work and expertise of the daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul have managed to launch a project called LISTENING WITH THE HEART. It includes the participation of the laity, religious Sisters and the clergy of the Deanery.

We can all agree that Covid 19 has turned our world upside down. This is no exaggeration. In terms of pastoral ministry, the need for demonstrating compassion, giving comfort and solace to those who have been afflicted by this terrible pandemic became so evident. The simple idea of having a blether with a cuppa tea or coffee and someone to listen to you with the heart was born.

The Listening Heart aims to be a place of

welcome where people can meet and share their anxieties and worries in trust. To listen one must have a good ear, two ears in fact and one mouth that moves slowly to make sure one captures the better parts of truth, especially what the sufferings of people are undergoing. So many are suffering and become unheard and invisible. The heart usually feels not listens. It is inside the very heart that one keeps what is wholly personal and confidential. A willingness to listen deeply and respectfully calls for a discerning heart I sincerely mean we have a lot to learn for the suffering poor.

### THE HEART OF LISTENING. HEART SPEAKS TO HEART.

Words that are sincere and real can help people. Such words can bring comfort. I believe true religion and spirituality are tied up with the heart.: hearts that are penetrated with love of God for the needy. We know God is present in those who are hungry and thirsty, the strangers and those who are naked, sick and imprisoned, for what we do to them, we do to Him., St. Matthew 25, 35-40. We dare to care.

A delicate heart is a heart that feels, feels compassionately, for those who suffer. It comes extremely close to those who battle courageously through the tribulations of life with all its ups and downs. It brings home the message we have to be real and human, just like Jesus of Nazareth who learnt to listen with the heart for nearly thirty years to the Nazareth folk and their litany of miseries.

The volunteers are there to listen with all their heart.

They are not there to solve everybody's problems. They just

have a listening heart as they confront various situations and in-depth problems that are brought to their attention. They learn as they pay careful attention. They discern and direct people to other services when and where necessary as they are connected with a number of organizations locally. Although still in its infancy, they manage to staff the place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 12 noon until 2 pm. We are achieving a small client base slowly in a true missionary spirit of working at home and abroad as we try to touch the suffering lives of those around us.

Our fervent simple runs like this:

*Compassionate God,  
Your listening ear is bent towards the cry  
of the wounded.  
Your listening heart of love fills with tears  
for the suffering.  
May it daily recommit us to be a compassionate presence  
For all who struggle with life's pain.*

(Adapted from HEART OF COMPASSION-JOYCE RUPP).





# You Write

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**Thank you once again for your most welcome letters. It reminds us that some people do read our missionary magazine! Reading today is becoming less and less a daily pleasure.**

**To encourage you all our readers: to let us know your thoughts and opinions, I will post here my address so that your comments come directly to our office!**

**Editor, Verona Fathers - Email: [jdcomboni@gmail.com](mailto:jdcomboni@gmail.com)  
London Road, Sunningdale SL5 0JY#, Berks, England**

Inspired by the gospel passage from Matthew 25, 31 – 46 ...  
“I was a stranger and you made me welcome. I was hungry and you gave me food...” we are motivated to take part in the call to transform our divisive society and make it more harmonious and peaceful. One of our readers felt called to inform his local MP Tim Farron regarding two articles published in our Winter edition of ‘Comboni Mission.’ I find it important to include the correspondence in our ‘You Write’ feature as an example for us.

He wrote:

Dear Mr. Farron,  
Israel and Gaza

I enclose a copy of the Winter 2023 issue of Comboni Mission magazine.

It contains two articles which relate to the conflict between Israel and Gaza.



Map of Gaza and Israel. iStock credit: FGTradeLatin

*Eyewitness Report: Echoes of the Nakba*

*Who is my Neighbour? A reflection on the situation in Israel and Palestine*

As the missionaries live and work among the people in the

areas they write about, they can provide a different and more independent view of the situation.

I hope you will find these articles interesting.

Your sincerely

S.W. Shaw

Kendal, Cumbria.



Children for Peace. iStock credit: Dimitros Karamitros

*Here follows the reply:*

Dear Stephen,

Thank you very much for your recent letter with regard to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Thank you also for a copy of the Comboni Mission magazine.

It is very useful to read and hear other perspectives. It reminds us that there are many nuances in the culture and history of the region that we will not be aware of but which should nevertheless, colour our understanding of the ongoing conflict.

I am desperate for the killing to end and for a lasting peace to be secured. I have been in touch with ministers regularly to share the views of my constituents and I will continue to push the UK government to be peace-maker in the region, whether at the UN or through other international mediation.

With best wishes

Tim Farron MP



# *St Daniel Comboni*

(15th March 1831 – 10th October 1881)

## **The Comboni Family**

About 4,000 men and women - sisters, brothers, priests, secular and lay missionaries – today embody the charisma and the passion of St Daniel Comboni for “the poorest and most neglected” on the frontiers of mission. Together with a large number of supporters and collaborators they form the great Comboni Family

**at the service of the Gospel**



## COMBONI MISSIONARIES

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