

COMBONI MISSION

Summer 2023

**Fr Alfred Kotol and
the Combonis
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**Sacred Heart Novena
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COMBONI MISSION

Summer 2023

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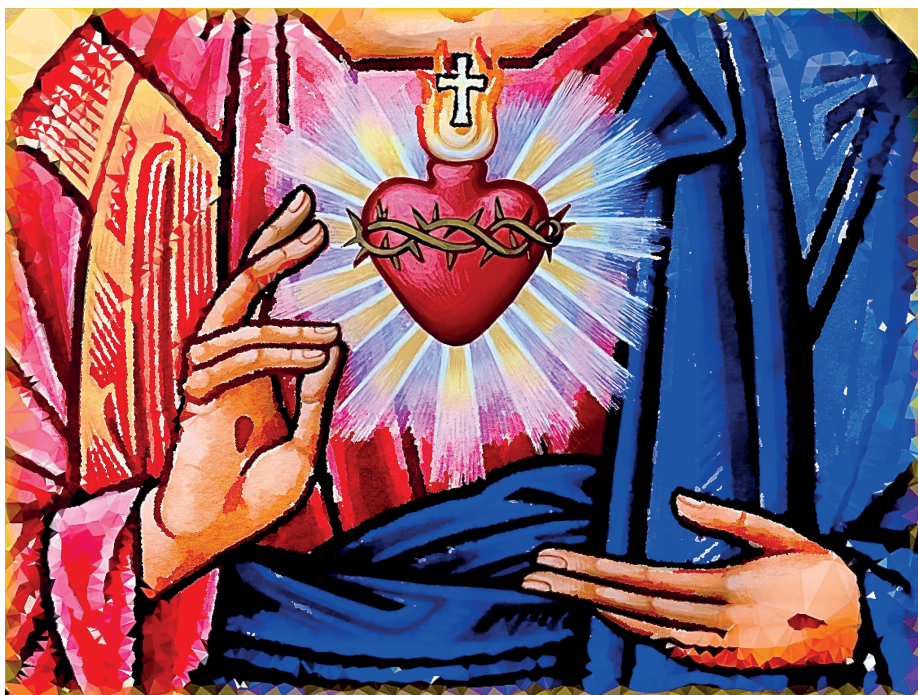
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From the Editor



Once more we come to celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart and this summer edition is here to help us be able to deepen our devotion. On the back page we remember the intentions that will be placed and remembered by our priests in Masses during the month of June. You, dear readers, are invited to forward your prayers and intentions. We put before us many intentions as our Church prepares to celebrate the Synod of Bishops in Rome: pray for its success; for the World Youth Congress in Lisbon, gathered with pope Francis; for Vocations to all ministries within the Church, for peace in Ukraine and other parts of the world. No doubt you dear reader will be able to add so many more!

We place these petitions on the altars of our houses here in England, Scotland and Ireland. May the love of the Sacred Heart come to bring peace and harmony to the world.

Poem

By Fr. David Bohnsack mccj

*Raising eyes to horizons new
Thy heart's a beacon in the night
With flame divine of love's pure light
That leads us to what's just and true*

*Your cross and crown of thorns show too
Triumphant symbols of the fight
Raising eyes to horizons new
Thy heart's a beacon in the night*

*We're strengthened for you paid our due
Renewed in faith and filled with might
Not judged set free and given sight
Divine love gives a wider view
Raising eyes to horizons new*

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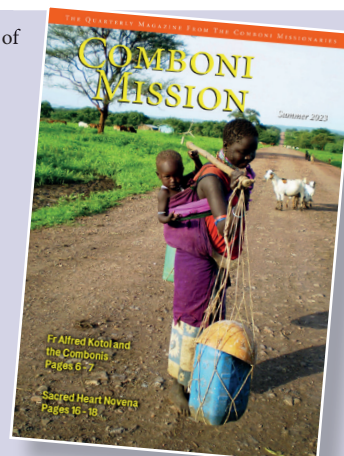
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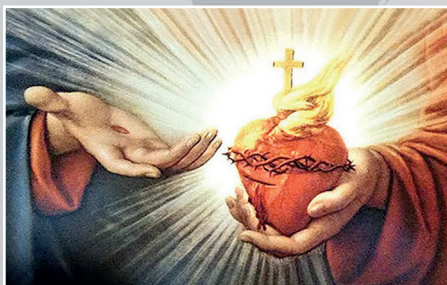
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Getting to know the *Comboni* *Missionaries*



Mission Diary of Fr. Mandozi Tondi-ise Franck, in Sudan: “Hoping against all odds”



Living in a minority context. Prioritize education. The danger of youth gangs. Father Franck Mandozi tells us about it. “These are South Sudanese boys and girls aged between 13 and 35, coming from very poor families, whose parents are often not at home to educate them and send them to school. (...) The challenges are great, but the missionary spirit encourages and moves us to work hard and to hope against all odds”, writes the missionary.

I remember very well Saturday 8 September 2018 when I arrived in Kosti, a city 315 kilometres south of Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. I had spent two years studying Arabic in Cairo and after being ordained in 2017 in my home country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I was on my way to my first missionary assignment as a priest. Although I was welcomed by four companions,



Many children live abandoned and turn to violence and gangs.

two of them were soon assigned to other missions and we remained the three African priests who now form the Comboni community.

Kosti is a pastoral region of the archdiocese of Khartoum administered by Msgr. Daniel Adwok Kur who, a month after my arrival, made me responsible for liturgical and catechetical pastoral care. I accepted with some hesitation because I had hardly had time to get to know the reality of the area. Since then, I have regularly organized formation meetings in various parishes with both pastoral workers and priests. However, I devote most of my time to accompanying the schools of our parish of St. Paul.

We work in a very difficult context. First of all, due to the heat in this part of the country, where on some days, between March and June, temperatures can reach 50 degrees. But the most diffi-

cult thing is living in a totally Islamized environment. Christians represent just 3% of the population and often do not have access to some social benefits.

They are a minority exploited by the current political system which treats Sudanese Christians as second-class citizens just because they are not Muslims. For this reason, they are sometimes deprived of their rights and cannot get promotions at work. This is one of the main reasons why Sudanese Christians are so poor and find it difficult to secure education for their children, many of whom end up in the military or as unclassified policemen.

Most of the people we accompany to our parish, and whose children study in our schools, are South Sudanese. Our neighbours, who are considered refugees here, are doubly marginalized if they are Christians. Some fortunately

live as domestic workers in Arab Muslim homes. However, since the arrival of Covid-19, these jobs have decreased due to the economic crisis and inflation.

The reality of the South Sudanese concerns us as a Church. In 2014, Bishop Adwok decided to open the doors of educational centres in the parish of St. Paul, so that the children of South Sudanese and the most disadvantaged families in the area could have access to a good education. Since I arrived, I have monitored these schools, whose classrooms are located in the places of worship of the parish.

We hosted more than 1,600 students this year. 90% are children of South Sudanese refugees and the remaining 10% come from very poor families of Sudanese nationality. 92% are Christian and 8% Muslim. Of our 85 teachers, 50 are Christians and 35 are Muslims.

The challenges we face are complex. Many families are unable to pay their children's school fees, even if they are very low. Finding teachers is also a constant problem because we can't pay them very well and not all of them have the right level of education.

Furthermore, the mobility of people is so great that we can run out of teachers from one day to the next. Another challenge has to do with many of our students whose parents were killed in the fighting in South Sudan. It's not easy to take care of these children. From the school, we try to look after them and create a serene environment around them that allows them to socialize and adapt to the situation.

In and around Kosti we are experiencing another situation that worries us a lot. We are talking about the emergence of the so-called negas (gangs), which have become a great danger to the population. These are South Sudanese boys and girls aged between 13 and 35, coming from very poor families, whose parents are often not at home to educate them and send them to school. These kids have no moral values and are very violent. They use knives to attack, injure or kill people for no reason. The challenges are great, but the missionary spirit encourages and moves us to work hard and to hope against all odds.

A lasting friendship with the Comboni Missionaries

Fr Alfred Kotal, a Ugandan diocesan priest, recently spent some time in England and in this short article recounts his close friendship, over a lengthy period, with the Comboni missionaries in his home Diocese.



Fr Alfred

It was the evening of the 14th of March 2023, during my recent visit to the UK, when Fr Franco, superior at Horsforth, Leeds, asked me if I could preside at the Mass on the anniversary of the birthday of the Founder of the Comboni Missionaries, St. Daniel Comboni. Without hesitation I agreed wholeheartedly as I owed so much to the Comboni Missionaries and this was an opportunity to show my gratitude.

He told me to say what I know about Daniel Comboni, moreover, coming from Uganda and Karamoja in particular. I would not lack what to say not about Daniel Comboni as such but about the work that the Comboni missionaries have done and are continuing to do in Karamoja since they were the primary evangelisers of the region and how they have been part of my vocation to the priesthood and during my priestly ministry.

I first met the Comboni Missionaries in Morulem parish in 1984 and the Parish priest was Fr Gabriel Durigon. I was greatly touched by his enthusiasm and liveliness

whenever he was presiding at the Mass because he fully participated in being a presider and a participant as well, he liked singing, clapping and could even jump when he was touched by the singing of the choir.

My journey to the priesthood, however, was influenced by a Comboni Missionary Sister, Sr Antonietta Pedrazzini who taught me catechism. During the catechetical instructions, I was always quick at giving answers whenever questions were posed so this made me her favourite such that whenever there were celebrations within the parish, she would pick me and another young girl to accompany her.

Two years later in 1986, a Diocesan priest from the local minor Seminary came to our primary school looking for

those who were interested in joining the Seminary. I enrolled myself together with my cousin and many other boys, we did written exams though I didn't get the pass mark. I was called for oral interviews organised by a Comboni priest Fr Filipi Giuseppe, who later became the Bishop of Kotido Diocese.

It was the following year in 1987 when Sr Antonietta herself drove up to Morulem parish looking for me because I had been admitted to the Diocesan Minor Seminary for the academic year 1988.

I spent seven years there and later joined Katigondo National Seminary for my Philosophical studies. During my pastoral spiritual year, I was assigned to teach at the Diocesan Minor Seminary between 1998/1999 where I met Fr Guido Oliana



Fr Alfred celebrates Mass in a community



Procession with Branches on Palm Sunday

MCCJ who was the Rector and the Vocations Director as well. In 1999 I was admitted to Ggaba National Seminary for my theology which I completed in May 2002.

In June 2002 I was assigned to Kangole Parish in Moroto Diocese which was being run by the Comboni Missionaries for a period of six months of ministry as a Deacon before being ordained a priest in December 2003. After my ordination I was assigned as curate in the same parish.

It was barely one year (2004) when I was enjoying my first years of ministry as a priest, that I was asked by the bishop to go back to school to further my studies in the field of education so as to come later and help the schools in the Diocese. In the words of Bishop Henry Ssentongo he said, "Our friends (Fr Martin Devenish, the Provincial Superior by then) the Comboni Missionaries of the London Province have offered us a scholarship and so I am choosing you to go and pursue studies in the field of your interest in the UK".

I was put into contact with Fr Martin Devenish whom I had met as a young seminarian pursuing Philosophy in 1997 when he was working at Kanawat Parish in Kotido Diocese.

In 2005 I was admitted to Trinity and All Saints college where I pursued a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and in

2006 enrolled for a master's degree in International Educational Management at the University of Leeds and graduated in 2007. During my studies I was living in the Community of the Comboni Missionaries in Leeds.

On returning to Uganda in 2007 I was assigned as a curate at Nakapiripirit parish where I worked for one year. In 2008 I was appointed as the Diocesan Youth Chaplain which I did for 12 years and continued with the Youth Ministry even later when in 2009 I was assigned as a formator and Dean of Studies at the Diocesan Minor Seminary where I worked for two years and later, I came back as Rector of the same seminary from 2014 to 2020.

In January 2020, I was appointed as the Parish Priest of Amudat in Moroto Diocese and I work among the Pokot of Uganda. We are two priests in the Parish. Hardly had I spent two months in the parish than we had the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to the closure of the Churches.

With the opening up of the Churches, we then began to traverse the wide parish which has 13 outstations which are sparsely populated to preach the Gospel. The Parish stretches from one end to another about 150 kilometres. We face a big challenge from the Pentecostal churches coming from Kenya since we share the border

and given the vastness of the parish, they establish small churches in the villages and proselytise the people. We have a shortage of catechists who are well trained to assist in the pastoral ministry. The Pokot language is also a hard nut to crack, both of us are trying to learn the language so as to be able to communicate with the people who predominantly speak Pokot and some Kiswahili.

We are planning this year as a Parish to construct a Youth Centre in which Youth friendly services will be availed given that the youth are a big majority in the Parish and they need proper guidance. The project looks big but we shall first begin with a multi-purpose hall which will be used as a meeting and a prayer place for the young people and also for other groups in the parish. We shall put in place recreational activities for the youth where they can play football, volleyball, netball and other activities. It will also be a learning centre for the young people where we shall put educational resources to engage students and young people during holiday time.

I then concluded my homily by saying that as a Diocesan priest, I am a spiritual grandson of St Daniel Comboni and we are fulfilling his great plan for the regeneration of Africa in his dream to "Save Africa through Africans" and spreading the Gospel far and wide.

“Freely you have received, so, freely give.”

My name is Monica Luparello. I was born and raised in Palermo, Italy. After graduating in medicine and surgery, I entered the Congregation of the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

You might say that surely the profession I had chosen was already in itself a way of helping others and that religious consecration was not necessary. But a vocation is a gift, received... without having asked for it! My “choice” was therefore a response to the invitation to be, rather than to do, to belong and to be offered up, rather than to exercise a profession. Being a doctor was the means through which I could live this belonging and this gift. I

think it was very painful for my parents, partly because, understandably, that was not exactly what they had wished for me, and also because this choice meant a geographical distance, with all its consequences.

I left Palermo in 1992 to begin my religious formation and since then I have only returned for holidays.

I took my first vows in 1995 and then went to Switzerland to study French and wait for my visa to Chad. I worked for three years in Chad at a hospital which was under the responsibility of the Comboni Missionary Sisters. Later on, I was transferred to Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, with an intermediate

period in Belgium to study Tropical Medicine. Over 25 years of my missionary life, I have been moving – coming and going – between Chad and Mozambique.

I still vividly remember the first impact Africa had on me... the stifling heat when I arrived at the airport of N'Djamena, (capital of Chad) ...it was as though fire was rising from the runway. And then the mosquitoes during the night and the threat of malaria. I was somewhat dazed and wondered if I'd ever be able to live there. But those first impressions were impregnated with joy for having arrived there, and at the same time sadness for the health situation I found at that time, especially outside the big urban centres.

I also remember a feeling of gratitude that I was not alone. Sisters who were “more experienced” in missionary life welcomed me and introduced me to life there through their explanations and their experiences.

I have tried to live the medical profession as a way of evangelization. Perhaps, with respect to other colleagues who work with other motivations, at certain times, religious consecration helps you to be faithful, to share deeply with people the most difficult situations that arise. It helps you to try to embrace and live a simpler lifestyle, certainly very different from the usual life the medical profession offers normally, and therefore a life much closer to people.

I was also asked to work as a professor at the Catholic University of Mozambique, in Beira, the second city in the country, in the “Faculty of Health Sciences”. Here too, for some time, I was in charge of some aspects of management.

I have enjoyed so many things... and have learnt so much! I could summarise it by saying that I learned to say “Good



Sr. Monica with some little friends



morning”, to say “Thank you”, and I have been taught to collaborate with others, to walk and move forward together. The staff I have worked with at the hospital has helped me to say “Good morning” before doing or saying anything else, even in an emergency. I was always ready to intervene quickly, to correct an attitude, or an erroneous treatment... but whatever I said, the answer first was always the same “Good morning, sister”, and then we could face everything that came our way. After a couple of times, I understood the lesson and began in the same way. There’s always time to be nice, to treat each other with respect!

As for the “Thank you”, I remember a particular moment, after a difficult birth, during the night. After it was all over and while I was administering some stitches, the grandmother of the very young mother, to my astonishment, took off some of her clothes and began to dance before me: imagine – a grandmother who dances at night in a maternity ward! The sister who was with me explained to me that this was the woman’s way of thanking me for the help I had provided them with. She thanked me with her whole being, her heart and her body. Deep down we are an indivisible entity and everything in us experiences the joys, the emotions, the

pains of our life... The people with whom I have lived in Africa are capable of giving thanks and have taught me to do so, because we don’t really merit all that we are or all that we possess. Everything is a gift!

With regard to the challenges, apart from the climate, a great difficulty has been the differences in culture and in priorities. I had to “restart” (reset) my mind, my way of thinking and interpret-

ing reality... I had to learn to know, understand and appreciate the people with whom I live and work, to let myself be enriched by their way of being, so different from my own. And I have also had to learn to know the Lord in another way. To do this I have needed time and also tears and patience.

Another big test was the change from working in a hospital to teaching at a university. This was a new occasion to “restart” and to get to know the country in which I had previously worked, from another point of view and in a different geographical reality. For the first time I was a missionary in a big city... and since I had city roots, I immediately got used to another lifestyle much more like the one I find when I return to Italy on holiday.

I no longer worked at a hospital with all its demands. Instead, I had before me young people who were thirsty for knowledge and with whom I had the great joy of sharing what I had learned from books and at work.

In the 10 years that I did this work I think I was able to “revise” the entire course of medicine. I also had the grace of seeing so many students attain their degree, and later the joy of collaborating with me in the formation of their younger colleagues!

A phrase to sum it all up would be “Freely you have received, so, freely give”. The Lord continually shows me compassion and asks me to do the same, by promoting life and goodness and thus preparing the way for an encounter: between Him and those He loves.



Laity in Africa Cautioned against Fostering Clericalism, Elevating “the Clergy too much”



Members of the the African Synodality Initiative (ASI) at a workshop that was held at the headquarters of the Jesuits Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) in Nairobi, Kenya to constitute a Synodality Resource Team (SRT) which is expected to deepen the engagement on the Synod on Synodality. Credit: ACI Africa.

Clericalism is not just a problem of the Clergy, members of the newly constituted Synodality Resource Team (SRT) for Africa have said, and called on the Laity to play their role in de-clericalizing the Church.

In a two-day workshop they held to devise ways to deepen the understanding of a Synodal Church on the conti-

nent, the SRT members who shared their experiences with the Synod on Synodality noted that the phenomenon of clericalism had surfaced prominently in synodal conversations.

They described clericalism in various ways, including members of the Clergy abusing their positions, the Clergy feeling that theirs is the final word, as well as refusing to share out

roles that the Laity can perform.

The Principal of the Nairobi-based Jesuits' Hekima University College said that clericalism is manifested by “Priests who do things that can be done, even in a better way, by the Laity.”

Fr. Marcel Uwineza highlighted a role such as financial administration of the Church, noting that any Catholic

Church professional can handle church finances.

“There are Priests who don’t take breaks from work for fear of losing control,” Fr. Uwineza said.

The Rwandese Jesuit Priest recalled that months leading to Kenya’s August 2022 general elections, it was the Clergy who dominated in the Church statements that were released to the media, and added, “In other places like Germany, it is the Laity who take a centre stage in addressing social issues.”

It was observed that parishioners in some places are usually frustrated when they meet to discuss matters of the Church, knowing that it is the Priest who has the final word, whatever they come up with in those meetings.

Clericalism is also seen in a Priest’s abuse of position, thinking that they are better than everyone else, “When they feel that they are super humans,” Fr. Uwineza said, and added, “I always tell students at Hekima to never forget that their calling to Priesthood doesn’t make them better humans than anyone else.”

According to Bishop Willybard Lagho of Kenya’s Malindi Diocese, clericalism is also brought to the fore in the internal conflicts between members of the Clergy who, sometimes, engage in power struggles.

MORE IN AFRICA

“When a Priest is transferred and finds a project in progress, ignores it and starts a totally new project, forgetting that it is the same Christians who contributed towards the project he ignored, that is Clericalism,” Bishop Lagho said.

However, it also emerged during discussions that the team held at Afri-cama House, the Jesuits Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) headquarters in Nairobi, that the Clergy are not solely to blame for clericalism in the Church.

“Sometimes, it is the laity who ele-

vate the Clergy too much that clericalism starts manifesting itself,” Fr. Uwineza said during the workshop that was convened by the African Synodality Initiative (ASI), which is a partnership between the Jesuits Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM), the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA).

He added, “I remember one day after celebrating Mass, a woman came to me and expressed her bitterness over my allowing women to distribute communion.”

According to Dr. David Kaulem of Arrupe Jesuit University, the Laity advance clericalism when they fail to perform their roles in the Church, leaving everything to the Priest.

“I believe that it is us lay people who are more Clerical in terms of engaging and participating. There are many things we can do as men, women, youth and children in the Church but we don’t do them,” Mr. Kaulem said.

Members of Africa’s SRT team agreed that de-clericalizing the Church requires formation.

The team has embarked on the development of a manual to be used in various training activities to deepen the understanding of “a Synodal Church”.

The Synodality Formation Module, after it is completed, will be used in various formation programs in schools, in Seminaries, in Small Christian Communities (SCCs), and in all other communities inside, and even outside structures of the Church.

Meanwhile, Bishop Lagho has called for the rethinking of Church structures, such as SCCs that he says have been presented as “exclusive clubs”, locking out many Christians who do not feel like belonging to such communities.

Just how free are Catholics to attend, or not to attend SCCs? I believe that there are many good Catholics who,

because they don’t feel like joining these structures, end up leaving the Church,” he said.

In SCCs, members who lose their loved ones are entitled to some contribution, the Kenyan Catholic Bishop shared, adding, “To me, this is not the true spirit of evangelization.”

He also expressed the challenges of journeying with Muslim students attending Catholic schools where the teaching of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is not allowed.

“I work in a place where 95 percent of students attending our Catholic schools are Muslims and I feel that to deny them the opportunity to learn Islamic education is not a spirit of synodality. When they are denied this opportunity, many leave our schools and go to places where they are allied to learn IRE,” Bishop Lagho said.

He added, “I also feel that when we forbid the teaching of Islamic education in our schools, we create a vacuum that is filled with extremists that see an opportunity to teach these children their Islamic version of education.”



Agnes Aineah is a Kenyan journalist with a background in digital and newspaper reporting. She holds a Master of Arts in Digital Journalism from the Aga Khan University, Graduate School of Media and Communications and a Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics, Media and Communications from Kenya's Moi University. Agnes currently serves as a journalist for ACI Africa.

A Heart With A Cross On Top



We are living in tough times that are heavily burdened with great suffering and call for hearts of compassion and solidarity, of feeling united in the heart with those who are suffering. The all of this suffering is not far from us in so many ways. All our readers and myself are very much aware that many kinds of the suffering cross exist like earthquakes, wars, famine, loneliness, tensions and family disagreements, hardships. Just stop and think for a moment about what is happening between Ukraine and Russia and fatal earthquakes that shook Turkey and Syria, Ecuador and Peru, leaving so many lives and habitats destroyed. Evidently, the numbers of the migrant populations both internally and externally have largely increased.

I frankly struggle to live in today's world of gigantic challenges to the Gospel message of justice, peace and reconciliation. I have met so many people in my fifty years of priestly missionary life who could have dribbled around me to reveal what the heart of Christ with His Cross on top had meant to them in their great and unbearable pains and sufferings they have lived through. To such heroes and heroines, I pay my sincere admiration.

To have a heart certainly does not mean to be neutral, indifferent and numb to the suffering of the poor and needy. Devotion to the Sacred Heart has nothing to do with sugary piety. Jesus, truly God and truly man, for over thirty years lived the ordinary life of Nazareth like most people. That surely took some doing.

Today's spiral cost of living – food prices, energy costs and renting are crucifying so many people. Food banks and warm banks augment day by day. Domestic violence does not stop to raise its ugly head. So much inhumane suffering. Oh God, when will it all stop?

From his birth to his death Jesus lived with the victims of injustice. He reached out to people at the margins, to people at the lowest levels of society – outcasts and the maligned. As we live in such a world of horrors, hurting and heartbreak I am reminded of the motto of World Mission and Samaritan's Purse:

***Let my heart be broken by the things
that break the heart of God.***

We must have the courage like Our Lord, who with His pulsating heart of compassion got thoroughly involved in the mess of people's lives. Allied to the pain, anguish, loss and grief of others, if only I could sincerely pray to the Sacred Heart:

***BREAK MY HEART WITH WHAT
BREAKS YOURS.***

God cannot be blind to the injustices and to so much man and woman – made suffering that must break His heart as He watches our world tearing itself apart through selfishness, greed, intolerance, inequality and oppression.

Vocation Story of Bro. Marco Antonio de Faria: “God is always present”

Marco Antonio Coelho de Faria, a Brazilian Comboni missionary brother, shares his vocational journey and the mission he carries out among the Nuer in South Sudan. “In 2020, I was sent to the South Sudan mission and was assigned to work among the Nuer, a Nilotic ethnic group living in the Upper Great Nile region. With a semi-nomadic lifestyle, the Nuer live in flooded areas where there are no roads, no telephone network or internet”, the missionary writes.

I feel very satisfied with the path to which God has called me and which I have agreed to follow. Previously I had some goals in life that I was trying to achieve and I thought if I achieved them, I would be a happy man. At 18 I started studying Mechanical Engineering at university, graduating at 23; and I immediately started working in a large company, with a good salary. I often went with my friends to parties and played many sports.

At some point in life, I began to reflect more deeply on the meaning of life and happiness. I asked myself many questions about my person, about my happiness. The answer was always: the love that one can give. So, I tried to understand how to live more fully this greatest feeling of the human being. First, I joined a youth group and started helping those most in need; then, as a seminarian in my diocese and, finally, as a Comboni Missionary Brother, to be sent, in the words of St. Daniel Comboni, to “the poorest and most abandoned in the universe”, concretely, to the African people.

In 2020, after finishing basic training with the Comboni Missionaries, I was sent to the South Sudan mission and was assigned to work among the Nuer, a Nilotic ethnic group living in the Upper Great Nile region. With a semi-nomadic lifestyle, the Nuer live in flooded areas where there are no roads, no telephone network or internet. This region can only be accessed by cruising the River Nile or by helicopter.

In Nyal, where our community has settled, the only practicable means of transport is the palm-wood canoe. In this culture, men are allowed to have multiple wives. The number of wives indicates the man's material wealth since marriage is concluded with




the payment of a dowry to the bride's father. The value of the dowry generally varies between 25 and 50 cows, taking into account factors such as the bride's height, her health, her cooking skills and her level of education.

The figure can exceed 50 cows if the bride has completed secondary school, which is very rare, as women's rights are almost non-existent in this society. Education is so precarious that there are almost no qualified teachers. The more qualified people look for other jobs, usually in NGOs, because they receive a much higher salary. There are no hospitals in this area. There are only small health posts where patients are often cared for by volunteers with little or no professional training. People called doctors often haven't even finished secondary school.

Mortality is very high due to the lack of equipment, qualified medical care and medicines. In the midst of so many difficulties,

our missionary presence is essential to give some sort of encouragement to these people. It is beautiful and very gratifying to see how they celebrate when we visit them in the more distant villages. There are hundreds of baptisms at each visit. The party involves the whole village. This experience is teaching me a lot.

As they say: “Kuothe a thin!”, which means “God is always present”. Without this trust in the presence of God, it would be almost impossible to live. I have also learned to understand and accept what is different and to be more compassionate. Now I realize that many things that I used to consider essential are actually not. Today, for me, the truly essential thing is to give oneself to one's brothers according to the teachings of the Gospel. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry states in his work *The Little Prince*: “The essential is invisible to the eye”.



The Wayward Son

A barren and desolate north land.

I was always a rebellious youth. Even as a child I screamed when I did not receive what I wanted. As a teenager I longed for the pleasures that existed outside of the security of home. I'd watched as my older brother worked on the estate. I despised his dutiful responses to Father's requests; and never with a smile on his face. I became expert at escaping at night. Fed by curiosity and a recklessness that excited me. I was drawn in by a gang that breathed freedom into me; and a desire to throw off all restraint. Drug-fuelled all-night parties; from which I stumbled as the Sun rose, back home before the house had stirred.

I wasn't a fool, I knew my father was becoming aware of my wandering mind, if not my wandering body. I was a gardener on the estate; but I was lazy. I let the weeds grow; and the crops suffered. Time and again I took advantage of my mother's love and my fathers' patience. My elder brother resented me; but was too afraid to venture out of the family estate and to experience all the world had to offer.

One night at the usual wild party I thought to myself, why limit my forays into the pleasurable world? Why not have it all? I decided I would leave the narrowness of

home and not become like my elder brother; a dull edifice of a man, made of stone rather than flesh. I went to my Father and appealed for my share of the inheritance; for if I had to wait for him to die It might be too late to enjoy all the pleasures of what I dreamt were coming to me.

My father reluctantly gave in to my desire and gave me my share of the inheritance. I did not linger for I could not bear to see my father's disappointment and my mother's deluge of tears. I packed essentials for the journey and headed for the North country. I'd heard that the way of life there would suit all my needs. The wine was the best and the women plentiful; known to be the most beautiful in the world. I found a decent and comfortable place to stay; and began my new life. I was ecstatic at my new sense of freedom. Wild parties followed by long days in bed, usually with a beautiful woman; no more slinking back home in the early hours; no more scratching around amongst a weedy vegetable plot. At last, I was free and I revelled in it!

But in the blindness of fulfilling my selfish desires I did not see what was

happening in the land. The sun baked the ground; and no rain fell; relentlessly, day after day. Soon there was little food to be had and no wine to drink. Many people left to start a new life elsewhere. All the rich left, taking the beautiful women with them. As for me my inheritance had gone. I could no longer stay in my comfortable lodgings; and went to look after pigs, hired by a mean and ungracious farmer; who gave me a shack to live in and barely food enough to sustain me.

I envied the pigs, grunting around, sleeping all day, without a care in the World; while I cleaned up their mess and brought fresh straw. I kept having thoughts of returning home. Why even the servants were better off than me; virtually starving in this hell-hole!

So, one day I left the pigs and the barren north land; and with great trepidation I headed south towards the family home. It was a long and gruelling journey; and many times, I was tempted not to return. I was ashamed at the life I had led; but most of all I was hungry and wearing tattered garments and in great need. I was afraid of my father's anger and a fear that he would reject me. This was my anxiety by day and



never seen him run before; and I would have considered him past the age to do so! As he came towards me, I repeated my prepared speech which just tumbled forth from my mouth; but I did not complete it; for something was happening that I had not accounted for. My father embraced me, drawing me close. I was overwhelmed and began to cry. My father was so happy to see me and hold me, it seemed as though he could not speak; instead, he kissed me and drew me even closer.

His words when they came were instructions for the servants.

“Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And go kill the fattened calf; for we must eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was dead; but is now alive again; he was lost and is found. His words rang with joy in my ears,

“Son of mine, son of mine, son of mine!”

Everyone was cheering as we made the procession home. HOME, how that word brought comfort to my whole being. My mother came to the door of the house when she heard the cheering. She also ran to meet me; tears of joy this time running down her face. She told me later that my father went out every day looking and hoping for my return. I had not realised how much he loved me. They held a welcome home party; but my elder brother did not attend. My father also went out searching for him. Perhaps one day he too will come to realise the fathers love, just as I had. I was so glad to be home!

my dark dreams every night. I had rejected the family, so why should they accept me?

I knew I deserved punishment for wasting my inheritance; and deep down I hated the thought of returning home a complete failure and a laughing stock to all the servants; and especially my elder brother. The nearer I came to the estate the more I desired to turn and run from this humiliating experience. Surely, I couldn't just expect to turn up and everything to be just as it was when I left? But the thought of a warm house and plenty of food kept me pressing forward. I even formed a speech in my mind which I then proceeded to speak out loud, like a mantra to keep me going.

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and you. I'm no longer worthy to be your son; make me like one of your hired servants.”

Surely this would appease my father. I could live in the servants' quarters; and he wouldn't even have to see me. Yes, my brother would be happy with that; and I would be the butt of his jokes forever; but

that was a small price to pay as I shivered at the cold wind and I groaned as my stomach rumbled.

I was still a long way off when I saw a man hurrying towards me. Had something terrible happened? Was he running in fear? Or did he mean to harm me? I thought to turn and run. Then I realised as he drew closer; and I rubbed my eyes at first, unsure of what I was seeing. It was my father. I had





SACRED HEART NOVENA

2023

Introduction

This Novena is for the nine days leading to the Feast of the Sacred Heart, which falls this year on 16th June. Maybe you will pray this Novena alone, with family or friends or as part of a parish group. Wherever and however, you walk these days, know that his Heart is there for you.

Novena Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, your heart was moved with love for those who came for help in their need. You healed the sick, you fed the hungry, you forgave sinners, you cried over Jerusalem. Above all, you showed to those who were prepared to listen the way to true life, for you are the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Lord, your heart is still moved today by your people and their many needs. Open my heart to hear your word, to accept your love, and to respond to your call. In particular, I beg you to grant me the favour I ask during this novena (make your request silently), provided that it will contribute to my own eternal good and to the building up of your Kingdom of love, peace and justice here on earth.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

First Day (8th June): Open Heart

Scripture

“With what gift shall I come into The Lord’s presence and bow down before God on high? Shall I come with holocausts, with calves one year old? Will he be pleased with rams by the thousand, with libations of oil in torrents? Must I give my first-born for what I have done wrong, the fruit of my body for my own sin? What is good has been explained to you, man; this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:6-8)

Meditation

In this prayer, Micah turns to God out of fear more than love. He sees God as one who must be pleased or he will send disaster your way. He wants a road map, clearly outlining what God needs from him so to keep him safe. God speaks to the heart rather than the mind and gives a clear message that remains central to our call to be better people. Easy to remember these lines but they bring a challenge but that challenge, if accepted, brings a deep sense of peace.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, remind me of Micah’s question and that God is not vengeful. May I recognise the many opportunities life presents to me where I can act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with you, my God. Strengthen me for the journey, open my eyes to see and my heart, like yours, to respond. Amen.

End with the Novena Prayer

Second Day (9th June): Tender Heart

Scripture

“Now soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. When he was near the gate of the town it happened that a dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of the townspeople were with her. When the Lord saw her, he felt sorry for her. ‘Do not cry’ he said. Then he went up and put his hand on the bier and the bearers stood still, and he said, ‘Young man, I tell you to get up.’ (Luke 7:11-14)

Meditation

Nain apparently was and is a very small town. This is noteworthy since, just before this Gospel moment, Jesus was addressing large gatherings of people in centres that were heavily populated. Among his words to them were "Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate" – so the living of these lines takes us off road to a quiet place where a woman grieves the loss of her only son. This moment speaks to the willingness of Jesus to be where he is needed, irrespective of who needs him or the size of the location. Recognise him today, where you need him. Know that he stops with you as he did with the grieving mother and her handful of neighbours. Tenderness is truly a blessing.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, may I see in this moment, your tender heart and your abiding presence. This woman's grief is real and present and today there are many like her. Give me a compassionate heart, eyes to see and ears to hear, the depth of grief being carried by many in my town too. With you, may I encounter and bring peace to troubled and grieving souls. Amen.

End with the Novena Prayer

Third Day (10th June): Listening Heart

Scripture

Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before The Lord'. Then The Lord himself went by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. (1 Kings 19:11-13)

Meditation

We often go on pilgrimages to religious locations at home and abroad. Places like Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje or more locally Knock, Lough Derg or Croagh Patrick. Perhaps we have been to or would like to go to The Holy Land. Why do we go? In the hope that we will receive blessings for ourselves and others, that our

prayers might be answered and our eyes open to a truth that needs to be revealed. Often, as in this passage, God is found not in the dramatic but the simple moments of life. Do you feel a breeze on your cheek? Maybe just stand where you are now and listen.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, Elijah did not find you in earthquake, fire or mighty storm. You revealed yourself to him in the gentlest of breezes. May I recognise you in the simple moments of life, moments of kindness, trust and life. Perhaps you will speak to me today in the embrace of a loved one, the smile of a child, the wave across the street, the car that stops to let me cross the road. Allow me to be the pilgrim and remind me the pilgrimage may need to take me no further than my front door. Amen.

End with the Novena Prayer

Fourth Day (11th June): Generous Heart

Scripture

Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?' He only said this to test Philip; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered, 'Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each'. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 'There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that between so many?' (John 6:5-9)

Meditation

There is a lovely expression: "It wasn't off the grass he/she licked it". Usually this is used in the context of someone doing something decent and it is recognised that the decency was in the family – the generations before. The example given has led to a moment of kindness. The little boy at the centre of this story, must have had good example. He offered all he had and did so with an innocence that did not take into account the vastness of the crowd. The adults did the maths and knew that the offering was not sufficient. God does not see things as mathematically as we might. He saw quality not quantity.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, give me the innocence of

the child who offered what was his to offer. In this, remind me, that I can make a difference even in the most difficult of situations. Allow me to draw from the example of the generations and lead me to way of life that may, in time, be an example for others. Amen.

End with the Novena Prayer

Fifth Day (12th June): Saddened Heart

Scripture

Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness. And when he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest'. (Matthew 9:35-37)

Meditation

Jesus is truly a man of the people and seems to be continually amongst them. Apart from those moments, recorded in scripture, where he goes to a lonely place to pray, he always seems to be with people. This leads him to a deepened awareness of how lost so many of them are and to a sincere desire that they not be left unaccompanied or cared for. Are there people around us now who might need that touch of care? Do we allow ourselves be moved to pity, to sorrow, when we encounter the plight of others? How do we respond?

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, I know what is like to feel harassed and dejected. I know too what it means when someone reaches out to me, in kindness. Remind me that labourers in the harvest do not have to be ordained and that you recognise in all of us, the gifts and talents you have given us. Give me the courage today to open my eyes, recognise the needs that are there and to take the necessary steps in reaping the harvest. Amen.

End with the Novena Prayer

Sixth Day (13th June): Attentive Heart

Scripture

Now on the eighth day they came to cir-

cumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. 'No,' she said 'he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'But no one in your family has that name,' and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John'. (Luke 1:59-63)

Meditation

Zechariah, when given the news that, despite their advanced age, he and Elizabeth were to have a baby was told the son was to be named John. Unable to accept the truth of this revelation, he was struck dumb and remained without speech until this moment in Scripture. Remembering what he had been told, he had communicated this to Elizabeth and she shared the name with her relations. The naming of the child with a name outside the family was a break with tradition. Only when Zechariah wrote "His name is John", was the power of speech restored. More importantly, in this moment, God's will was fulfilled. In that place and time of silence, Zechariah came to a deepened awareness of God's will. It was a time of attentiveness – of attentive listening. That time is ours now.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, give me moments of silence when I can hear again your word to me. Remind me of Zechariah whose disbelief turned to attentiveness and who saw your will fulfilled. May I know today that I too am part of your divine plan and have my line to deliver that may bring others to place where they recognise too the wonder of your name and the blessing of your presence. Amen.

End with the Novena Prayer

Seventh Day (14th June): Transformed Heart

Scripture

"I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you" (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Meditation

Hardness of heart is a real danger for all of us. We witness much sadness in our world, watch violence unfold on our television screens and sometimes allow rows and

tensions to blind us towards the needs and pains of other people. During these novena days, maybe we might recognise the potential for that hardness of heart and give thanks that we can receive new heart and new spirit. May we search for avenues that lead us in this direction and genuinely explore opportunities to be the better person – the Spirit-filled person.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, it is said that your words put fresh heart in people. They recognised in you one who taught with authority and your teaching made a deep and lasting impression on those who listened in faith. Open my ears to your teaching and my heart to respond. Amen.

End with the Novena Prayer

Eighth Day (15th June): Open Heart

Scripture

Her husband Joseph; being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home. (Matthew 1:19-24)

Meditation

Joseph is rightly titled "a man of honour" and one open to God's will though it impacted heavily upon him. It is noteworthy that many of the revelations to Joseph occurred during his dreams – his sleep. Attentive to these dreams and aware that God speaks to us in a variety of ways, Joseph is open to respond positively to the Lord's requests and promptings. Today, we might reflect on our own willingness to be open to God's will, not least when it seems difficult. As we prepare to sleep, maybe it is an opportunity to invite God into our dreams that we too may know more clearly his wishes – his "dreams" for us.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, as we reflect today on Joseph's role in the unfolding of your story, may we like him be open in heart, mind and body. May we find the courage to walk your path, even in our uncertainty, confident that you are the author of our journey. Amen.

Finish with the Novena Prayer

Ninth Day (16th June): United Heart

Scripture

And their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?' (Luke 24:31-32)

Meditation

We recognise these lines from that evening of the first day of the week, when two heartbroken disciples walk the seven miles to Emmaus. Jesus walks with them, listens to them, speaks to them and joins them at table. He opens their minds and hearts to the reality of the days that had just passed and their place in the story of salvation. He leaves them but not before joining his heart with theirs. He left them with a feeling of deepened awareness of the love he held in his heart for all people – for us. On this Feast Day of The Sacred Heart, we might strive to encounter the Lord on our own walk, invite him to our table, hear his word and allow our hearts to burn as he explains the scriptures to us.

Prayer

O, Sacred Heart, may I see in the image with the lamp, the presence of one who knows my needs and my gifts. May I allow that image and the lamp to light the path so that I may walk in your presence and truly show to the world that I am Christian in name and in fact. May your presence ever abide, my faith ever deepen and my awareness of my need for you increase. Amen.

Finish with the Novena Prayer

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RWANDA

Mending Broken Hearts



This April, Rwanda commemorates the 29th anniversary of the genocide. The bitter fruit of the ethnic division between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa has distant roots. Father Marcel Uwineza, a Rwandan Jesuit reflects on those tragic events and the progress made towards reconciliation and peace.

The genocide (April-July 1994) was made possible following a process of mutual dehumanization; then it was the Tutsi who paid the highest price (some say 800,000 dead, others say 500,000), but the Hutu, by the tens of thousands, also suffered the same fate.

The murders took place in public but also in religious spaces: schools, administrative buildings, social centres, churches and places of worship, etc. Structures that should have been for defence and comfort were transformed into scenes of massacres.

In recent years Rwanda – even if relations with the DR Congo and Uganda remain problematic – has made internationally recognized economic progress.

The government has pushed for the creation of a non-low-income economy based only on agriculture but also on entrepreneurship and services. The fight against infant mortality and malaria has achieved considerable success with the increase of dispensaries, clinics and the use of anti-mosquito nets.

In many ways, however, it seems easier to build new infrastructure than to rebuild people's hearts. For true human and inner growth, the young people of Rwanda need someone to help them read the country's history. Education has been made accessible to many, regardless of ethnicity.

However, it is a great challenge to find work and put what you have learned to good use. The unemployment rate is still too high but, while the need to grow further remains, it must be recognized that the country has made considerable strides in improving living conditions.

Looking back on the tragic events of 1994 and the following years, the memory recalls, among other things, the schoolchildren of Nyange High School, killed by the Interahamwe militia in March 1997, when their leaders refused to divide them along ethnic lines. The sacrifice made by these students continues to inspire many.

Computer and technology education expanded after thousands of miles of fibre-optic cable were laid across the country

boosting the use of the internet. Finally moving from a single national university in 1994 to over ten private universities in 2022 has certainly contributed to changing the mentality of Rwanda. Women have also achieved prestigious goals: today they represent over 60% of the national parliament, a higher percentage than in all other African countries.

Women have been at the centre of reconciliation efforts in traditional Gacaca courts, managing to help people confess to what happened in the genocide. Thanks to them, I myself learned the circumstances of the tragic loss of my brothers and sisters. Though imperfect, the Gacaca courts have helped in the process of reconciliation, while also reducing the huge number of people languishing in prison.

As a Jesuit priest, today I am serene because I have understood how my wound connects me deeply to God, allowing me to see his grace. And I manage to help others who are still suffering the consequences of the serious events that occurred, to seek reconciliation and peace.



'LECTIO DIVINA'

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Reflection composed by the Lectio Divina Group, Sacred Heart Church, Sunningdale

Lectio

John 6:51-58

51 "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' 53 So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55 for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

Meditation

The Context

The Chapter 6 in John's Gospel corresponds to the Institution of the Eucharist in the rest of the Synoptic Gospels.

By the Sea of Galilee, Jesus is answering to the request of the crowd to give them the "Bread of God". This Bread will not be like the Manna that God gave the people of Israel. The Manna was a sign of the care and guidance of God during the long pilgrimage of forty years through the desert to the promised land¹.

That bread had to be given every day and eventually it was not satisfying. Jesus is giving something greater than a momentary relief of their hunger. The Bread and the Blood of Jesus are His very life given once in Calvary and for all.

The Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

“The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ is a Christian liturgical solemnity celebrating the Real Presence of the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ in the elements of the Eucharist.

Two months earlier, the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper is observed on Maundy Thursday in a somber atmosphere leading to Good Friday. The liturgy on that day also commemorates Christ’s washing of the disciples’ feet, the Institution of the Priesthood and the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Feast of Corpus Christi was proposed by St. Thomas Aquinas, in order to create a feast focused solely on the Holy Eucharist, emphasizing the joy of the Eucharist being the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Having recognized the authenticity of the Eucharistic Miracle of Bolsena at the behest of Aquinas, in 1264, the pontiff, then living in Orvieto, established the Feast of Corpus Christi as a Solemnity and extended it to the whole Roman Catholic Church.”

The Dietary Taboos of the Jews

For the Hebrews, the killing of animals was an interference with the perfect harmony existing when God made the universe. Thus, Prophet Isaiah described the peaceful coexistence in the animal world as a sign of the arrival of the Messianic Times². Then, there will be no need for animals to feed on other animals or for man to shed their blood³.

In the Biblical context, blood is a life-giving principle because life fades away through the shedding of blood. This is the reason behind so many dietary restrictions⁴.

Thus, the blessing with blood was used to clean the people of Israel of their sins,⁶ and borrowing this Old Testament Tradition, Christians identified Christ with the Holy Lamb without spot, whose Blood, shed on the cross at Calvary, washes away the sins of the world⁶. The Eucharist re-enacts that only Sacrifice making it present along Centuries and until the end of time⁷.

It is very likely that the words of Jesus were shocking to the faithful Jew of his time. Let alone talking about eating the flesh or blood of animals, Jesus talks about giving his own flesh and blood. They are the life giving principles that last up to

eternal life.

The Body and Blood of Jesus become for the believer Food for the faith journey. When we eat His Body and Blood, we are transformed into Him. Jesus can truly say that “He will abide in us”.

If by law of nature our food is transformed into our own body by the assimilation of the nutrients, the believer who eats Jesus’ Body and drinks Jesus’ Blood becomes more like Him, s/he assumes His life and becomes a living presence of God on earth.

The Eucharist in other Christian Churches

After the Reformation, some Protestant Churches denied the presence of Jesus in the Bread of the Eucharist, and interpreted Jesus’ words as merely symbolic speech.

Orthodox Churches⁸, on the other hand, believe in the very presence of Christ. They celebrate the Eucharist in such awe and wonder that only Priests and Bishops are allowed to set eyes upon it. Popular piety understands that the laity are not worthy of contemplating such great Mystery with their eyes.

Ancient churches in Ethiopia have tunnels built from the Bethel (house where the Eucharistic bread is baked) to the temple, so that no one would see the bread even before consecration.

However, the Catholic faith allows us to understand Incarnation in its most radical way. God taking human flesh and sharing the human condition in its entirety, except for sin. We grasp and will never let go of the full humanity of Jesus who is bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh⁹. The Eucharist is celebrated to be eaten. However, along the centuries the devotion of Eucharistic Adoration and Processions spread widely up to the point of becoming one of the most practiced Catholic prayers:

When we say that we become the Eucharistic people we stress the mystery by which Christ lives in us and we make Christ present in the messy world.

We become charitable because we believe Christ is present in the poor and needy.

We built hospitals and schools, because we take God’s interest for the needy at heart.

Charity is at the heart of the Church and a Church who does not take the spiritual and corporal works of mercy seriously, cannot be called ‘Catholic’.

¹ **Ex. 16:4:** “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not’”.

² **Isaiah 11:6:** “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.”

³ **Isaiah 65:25:** “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.”

⁴ **Leviticus 7:26-27:** “You must not eat any blood whatever, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements. Any one of you who eats any blood shall be cut off from your kin”.

⁵ **Leviticus 16:15:** “He shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the curtain, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat”.

Leviticus 17:11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement.”

1 Cor. 10:16: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?”

⁶ **Hebrews 9:12-14:** “He entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit[a] offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

⁷ **1 Cor. 10:16:** “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?”

⁸ “There are a lot of symbolic representations in the Orthodox Church. In an Orthodox church there is no thing or action which does not carry meaning of spiritual weight and for sure all of these are based on Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition. According to Orthodox theology, symbols reveal the fact that something is hidden to us. However, the devotee keeps a meaningful silence against the mystery that, at the end of time all will be exposed from the hideout. This is because we, as is, are incapable of knowing the reality in full measure. This is a fundamental method of Orthodox theology in order to interpret the concept of mystery. The symbols of the Church

⁹ **1 John 4:2-3:** “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus[a] is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist”.

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
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Father John,

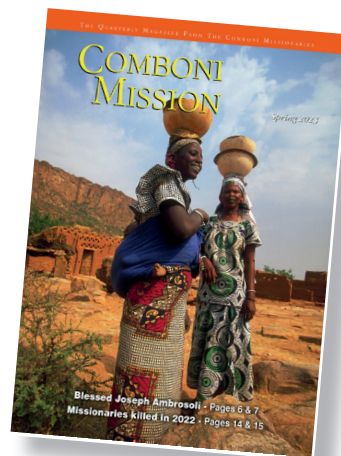
I enjoyed the Spring Edition of Comboni Mission, especially the article on Fr John Clark, partly because he hails from Sunderland, arch-rivals of my Newcastle, but more importantly, because he was ordained by Bishop Hagan (not O'Hagan), who was from the Brooms Church, Leadgate (not St Patrick's, Consett, though they are not far apart).

Why my interest? Well, Bishop Hagan was my late wife's "Uncle Jimmy", and had been Bishop (before retirement through ill-health to the Little Sisters in Sunderland) of Makurdi, Northern Nigeria, in which diocese I coincidentally went to teach in a mission school run by Irish Franciscan Brothers for two years soon after his retirement.

We had an appeal from Father, not General, as he was eager to point out, Franco this morning, and I was pleased to be able to have a brief chat with him.

Keep up the good work.

Regards, John Fryer



Dear Father,

Thank you for your lovely calendar! I would love to be able to attend your Open Day but age (I'm now 90 years old!) doesn't permit.

I once paid a visit to Sunningdale with my late husband.

I met Fr Clark and was able to give him a donation to help children he worked with. It was so lovely to read about him in your latest Comboni Mission magazine.

Sincere good wishes to all.

Mrs. Sheila Brenda, Ely Bridge, Cardiff.

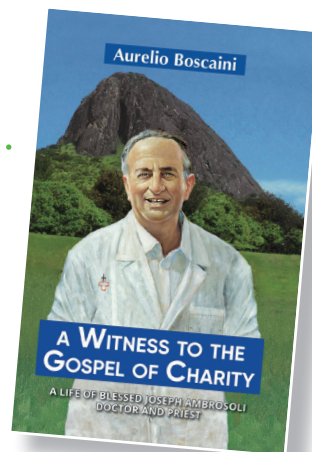
Dear Father

Thank you so much for the book telling the life of Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli which I enjoyed reading.

Such an inspiration of what one can achieve in life! Asking for your prayers and assuring you all of ours!

Yours sincerely

S. Richardson, Sheffield



World Youth Day. Pope Francis:

“All together in Lisbon! A new beginning for the young and for humanity”.

“I hope and I firmly believe that the experience many of you will have in Lisbon next August will represent a new beginning for you, the young, and – with you – for humanity as a whole”.

The World Youth Day will be celebrated in particular Churches on November 20 next and at international level from August 1 to 6, 2023 in Lisbon with the theme “Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39).

Pope Francis comments: “In these troubling times, when our human family, already tested by the trauma of the pandemic, is racked by the tragedy of war, Mary shows to all of us, and especially to you, young people like herself, the path of proximity and encounter”.

Francis writes in the Message for the XXXVII World Youth Day, which highlights a verb in particular – to arise – whose meaning includes that of “waking up to the life all around us.” After the Annunciation, “Mary could have focused on herself and her own worries and fears about her new condition. Instead – points out the Pope – she arises and sets out, for she is certain that God’s plan is the best plan for her life.”

Thus “Mary becomes a temple of God, an image of the pilgrim Church, a Church that goes forth for service, a Church that brings the good news to all!”. Mary in particular “is a model for young people on the move, who refuse to stand in front of a mirror to contemplate themselves or to get caught up in the “net”.

Mary’s focus is always directed outwards. She is the woman of Easter, in a permanent state of exodus, going forth from herself towards that great Other who is God and towards others, her brothers and sisters, especially those in greatest need.” “Each of you can ask: ‘How do I react to the needs that I see all around me? Do I think immediately of some reason not to get involved? Or do I show interest and willingness to help?’, is Francis’ question to young people.

“To be sure, you cannot resolve all the problems of the world – comments the



Pope – Yet you can begin with the problems of those closest to you, with the needs of your own community”, following the example of Mother Teresa.”

Francis points out: “How many people in our world look forward to a visit from someone who is concerned about them! How many of the elderly, the sick, the imprisoned and refugees have need of a look of sympathy, a visit from a brother or sister who scales the walls of indifference! What kinds of “haste” do you have, dear young people?”

“What leads you to feel a need to get up and go, lest you end up standing still? Many people – in the wake of realities like the pandemic, war, forced migration, poverty, violence and climate disasters – are asking themselves: Why is this happening to me? Why me? And why now? But the real question in life is instead: for whom am I living? The haste of the young woman of Nazareth is the haste of those capable of putting other people’s needs above their own.”

Francis goes on to note: “How many testimonies have we heard from people who were “visited” by Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother! In how many far-off places of the earth, in every age – through apparitions and special graces – has Mary visited her people! There is practically no place on earth that she has not visited.”

A “healthy haste”, points out the Pope, “drives us always upwards and towards

others.” Yet there is also an “unhealthy haste, which can drive us to live superficially and to take everything lightly. Without commitment or concern, without investing ourselves in what we do. It is the haste of those who live, study, work and socialize without any real personal investment.”

“This can happen in interpersonal relationships – argues the Pope. In families, when we never stop to listen and spend time with others. In friendships, when we expect our friends to keep us entertained and fulfil our needs, but immediately look the other way if we see that they are troubled and need our time and help. Even among couples in love, few have the patience to really get to know and understand each other. We can have the same attitude in school, at work and in other areas of our daily lives. When things are done in haste, they tend not to be fruitful. They risk remaining barren and lifeless.”

Finally, Francis returns to highlight the importance of dialogue between generations: “to bridge distances – between generations, social classes, ethnic and other groups – and even put an end to wars.”

“It is no coincidence that war is returning to Europe at a time when the generation that experienced it in the last century is dying out,” is the Pope’s analysis: “We need the covenant between young and old, lest we forget the lessons of history; we need to overcome all the forms of polarization.”

Month of the Sacred Heart

30 MASSES

*will be offered at our three mission centres in honour
of the Sacred Heart, for these and your intentions*

For your spiritual and
material needs and
for health in mind
and body

For peace and
justice in the
world, especially
where there is war
and conflict

For sick and
terminally ill among
your relations and
friends



For the needs of
your family,
especially for
serenity, unity and
the practice of the
faith

For all Comboni
Missionaries of
the Heart of Jesus,
particularly those
who are ill or exposed
to danger

For any specific
intention(s) you
may wish to make

*O, how much upon the Cross
Didst thy bowed head, O Christ,
Thy hands flung wide, Thy open heart Breathe forth love.
Son of God who didst come to redeem the lost,
Condemn not the redeemed
Crying out Thee from the valley of tears.
Good Jesu, hear thou our groaning,
And take not the measure of our crimes.
We implore thy wounded Heart,
O tender God*

*Write your intentions for the sacred heart masses on the leaflet provided
and return to your nearest mission office.*



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www.combonimissionaries.co.uk
www.combonimissionaries.ie
www.southworld.net

