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Comboni

Mission Newsletter

From the base up: Provinces collaborate, envision, plan for brighter future

by Mary Bertolini

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so you can do something about it now.”

- Alan Lakein

The Comboni Missionaries have taken this proverb to heart. They, like many other religious orders, have come to terms with the average age of general membership hovering just above 65 and the number of new vocations decreasing while the workload is always increasing. They are wise enough to know that, like honey, if they spread themselves too thin, their strength

dwindles.

With these realities in mind, and believing that God believes in the Combonis, the General Administration, along with the provincials and delegates of the Institute (50 in all) met in Mexico in September of 2006. There, they worked to lay the foundation of a plan for requalification and renewal of the Institute, a plan they could develop over time and ultimately present in

tailored form at their 2009 general assembly in Rome. They brought with them the *Ratio Missionis*, a wealth of information that was collected and organized through a process that involved all the members of the Institute. From the bottom up came the foundation of a plan for renewal and regeneration of St. Daniel’s family of missionary priests and brothers. These men open-mindedly applauded gifts and acknowledged

weaknesses, faithfully called upon the Holy Spirit every step of the way, and accepted with realism that, while the future holds great promise, it will also demand sacrifice.

Knowing change involves

risk, the group in Mexico chose the parable of the *pearl of great price* as a biblical point of reference for their meetings. This parable, applied to the Comboni

The charism of St. Daniel demands a presence in areas where people suffer the same needs as the African peoples Comboni Missionaries were originally called to serve.

situation, tells them clearly that the time has come *to give up some things* in order to attain a *greater good* and be more relevant. When they speak of redefining their presence, regrouping, handing over activities and reestablishing a balance between commitments and personnel, they speak exactly of taking risks, of daring to make changes in order to attain something that will better serve the mission.

From Mexico, the Comboni provincials and delegates went back to their provinces and set up continental meetings to continue toward a

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Immersion Excursion

Father David Bohnsack and three mission-minded men set out for Peru to experience the “Church of the poor.”

From the base up... (continued from page 1)

program of renewal that would best benefit their mission areas. Those provincials from the Americas met in Sao Paolo in February 2007. They, like their confreres globally, focused on their specific needs, set priorities, and sent the results to Rome. Once the general administration accepted this stage of the plan, the group went on to meet again in Chicago in July 2007. Also present at this session were two assistants to the general, Comboni Frs. José Magri Odelir and Tesfamariam Ghebrecristos. This Chicago meeting was historic in the sense that it was the first time all the provincials met together in the United States.

Father José, interviewed in Cincinnati just after the Chicago meeting, provided information to help the general readership better understand what took place:

“We agreed to focus on certain parts of the plan and join forces among the provinces, to share and work collaboratively with

respect to those specific aspects chosen as *priorities*,” Fr. José said.

Evangelization with a focus on people of African descent and indigenous peoples took a high place on the list. Fr. José provided a global perspective by saying that the Comboni Missionaries were born for Africa. For the first 75 years, we served Africa only, our mission vision being to spend ourselves for the *poorest and most abandoned* and to evangelize in such a way that vocations from among the Africans themselves would be the vehicle for carrying the “Good News.”

Father José explained that the charism of St. Daniel demands a presence in areas where peoples of African and Latin American cultures suffer from the same needs as the African peoples the Comboni Missionaries were originally called to serve.

“Through ministry to the most marginalized, especially those with roots in Africa, we hope to

form a cyclical process,” Fr. José said – that eventually there will emerge new strength, interest, awareness, and vocations that will go back to serve in Africa where we first began.

Comboni Missionaries hope their presence, message and work in the Americas will help further develop the missionary nature of the Church.

Father José stressed that the desire to collaborate and share resources is strong and sets the stage for a clustering of provinces into three zones: Amazonia (Brazil Northeast, Brazil South); Andes (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru); Northern Region (Central America, Mexico, North American Province)

The approach will be gradual but consistent toward more efficiency and collaboration among personnel, houses of formation, magazines, mass media centers and distribution of financial resources.

When asked to sum up his feelings towards the future, Father José said what he has seen and touched in the NAP assures him that the future will build on an already solid foundation.

“I feel we have a sense of light and hope. Light in knowing better the concerns of the whole Institute and the provinces. Hope in the way of collaboration in carrying out a plan developed not only at the administrative level but also with input from all the confreres and global participation of the provincials and delegates. In the end, we will have a plan that we can truly claim as *ours*.”

God will assure the yields! ▼

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Comboni

Mission Newsletter

Award-winning

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A note from the Provincial...

Summer begins and ends with fireworks. Lots of noise and excitement followed by a trail of smoke in the sky, and everybody goes home.

The summer “fireworks” of the Comboni family left us with more than a puff of smoke in the sky. Missionaries from Africa and South America who came to preach summer Mission Appeals brought new light to the minds and hearts of people who listened to the Word shared with a different accent and lived through different experiences.

The gathering of the Provincials and delegates of the Americas in Chicago brought a breath of fresh air to our province and encouraged us toward a closer collaboration in living out our Comboni charism.

The mission awareness events on South Sudan and Darfur raised our awareness and moved our consciences to a deeper commitment to work for peace.

The visit to Peru by young men interested in the mission ministry allowed them to see the different

bright faces of the human family.

Our vacations gave us a chance to connect with family and to spend time with people who, while they appreciate the privilege of their condition, choose also to keep an eye on the missions where marginalized brothers and sisters are thirsting for their love carried out through awareness, prayer, and support.

Father Valentino’s 23 years of ministry in the North American Province have been pure gift. Val’s goodness, optimism and big heart have kept him the same as the young missionary who 60 years ago left for South Sudan for the first time. His light will not fade just because he is changing places. We wish him the best as he plans his move to Verona.

What happens between Memorial Day and Labor Day is, for most of us, a variety of events like vacations, retreats, festivals and family gatherings. They bring “explosions” of different intensity and leave behind memories to be relived later on. But every experi-

ence carries with it the opportunity of something deeper than just the “fireworks” of the moment.



Louis Gasparini, mccc

If you’re the missionary preaching the Word of God or asking help for a particular need; if you’re the one listening from the pew to the testimony of one who has given his life for the missions; if you’re priest or doctor, parent or teacher, farmer or waitress or CEO, what matters is the kind of person you are. The Truth in your inmost self is what sheds a brighter light and leaves in the hearts of people you encounter something more than just a puff of smoke. When we share that Truth and live it among those around us, we truly become gifts to each other.

As the summer comes to an end, may we continue to show our love of God and share His Truth in such a way that we light up the world for all we meet. ▼

Very Rev. Louis Gasparini, mccc

Letter to the Editor:

Comboni Missionary Sister says good-bye to Baltimore; welcomes new mission in Africa

I am now in Africa, my “promised land” – the land of St. Daniel Comboni! On June 13, I arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, where I’m preparing to go to South Sudan.

A few days after my arrival, I had the most beautiful welcome. Another sister and I had gone to the street market. We were walking along and the children ran to shake our hands. While in this market I received a special blessing from one of these children. A little girl saw her brothers greeting us and wanted to do the same. She ran toward me with her arms open.

Seeing her, I knelt down to greet her. She put her arms around my neck, and we shared one meaningful embrace.

To the Comboni Missionary Sisters and the community in Baltimore, Md, I thank all of you for your prayers, friendship and hospitality. I would like especially to remember the people at St. Matthew’s Parish. It is a special place where parishioners can express themselves in their own cultures and traditions. The richness of these cultures creates a friendly environment. Soon everybody

feels at home. This great nation of the United States has a long history of immigration. It has the gift to have within itself people of every nation in the world. St. Matthew’s Church is an example of how these different cultures are a blessing to the whole nation.

I thank God for the people I met in the United States. God bless you all!

“I will bless those who bless you...” Gen. 12:3

—Sr. Marisela de los Santos Lopez, cms

Got Freedom?

by Peter Ciuciulla, mccj



Last checked, well over 100 countries hold a national celebration of an Independence Day sometime during the year. People have fought for, longed for, died for freedom – theirs and others – for as far back as history goes. Think back to biblical times. The name Moses is a symbol for freedom.

How many Independence Days have you celebrated in your lifetime? Every one of them in honor of freedom.

But what makes a person free? When I asked myself that, I answered this way: I know I'm free when I can exercise my right to make choices about my life and property. We all differ in what we own, but we do share some common elements. We own our own bodies and our own minds, and we want to decide what's best for us. We share in the collective ownership of communities, and we want to participate in the decision-making processes of the communities we're part of.

Did you ever sit down with somebody and tell them a problem, and in no time at all, usually before you even finish your thought, you hear "You should ..." and "If I were you, I'd..." You realize pretty quickly the person isn't listening but imposing.

How, then, do we help each

other protect and exercise our freedom? I think it comes down to a simple choice – give or take. Does my neighbor give, or do I take?

The way I make myself available to people is key to helping them be free. I tell you what's good for you. I say you need this or that because I see, from *my* perspective, that it's good for you. You need a new car, you need to get out of an unhealthy relationship, you need to get organized, you need, you need, you need. I impose my vision of the world on you. (For your own good, of course!)

OR...

I invite you to think for yourself, to be the protagonist in deciding what's best for you, individually or collectively. I am available to you, and if you *choose to give me the power*, I walk with you as you come to decide what's

best for you and how to achieve your goal. If I see to it that all the thought processes originate and come to completion with you, then I am helping you to be free.

You might come up with a less than perfect decision. Goodness, you may even make a mistake. Anybody ever buy a "lemon?" – but it will be your mistake, freely made.

I was three years into my 12 year mission in Chad, Africa before I realized that I was imposing my European way of thinking on the

people in my parish. Efficiency, timelines, deadlines, western thinking – all this thrust upon a people who didn't use clocks or calendars!

I experienced my epiphany when I came to realize that it was the people of Chad who hosted me, not the other way around. And from that day on, I let go and grew into their culture. I began to wait for that invitation to help. Always, though, even after invited suggestions from me, the people made their choices from among themselves.

At one point, we received an offer for a large donation, but with the offer came the stipulation that we use the money for projects that the donor felt was best for the community. We declined the donation because the people had no voice in deciding what their most urgent needs were or how best to use the money to meet those needs. A good example of taking power over someone.

For a perfect role model in helping our neighbor to be free, we have only to look at Jesus. He never imposed Himself on anyone. He never went up to someone and said, "You know, I really don't think you should be sitting around begging at the gate. It'd be better if you just got up and walked." Jesus always waited for an invitation, even for a miracle.

Give or take – let's keep this in mind as we celebrate freedom – yours, mine and ours. ▼

"For a perfect role model in helping our neighbor to be free, we need only to look at Jesus. He never imposed Himself on anyone."

Missionary of Love: LaGrange Park priest retires to Verona, Italy

Comboni Fr. Valentino Saoncella intones, “*He came to show us how we can love you, Father, by loving one another. He came to take away sin, which keeps us from being friends, and hate, which makes us all unhappy...*” These words are from the Eucharistic Prayer for Masses with children and are his favorites because of their simplicity, directness and most of all, because of the love expressed between God and his creation – the love that should exist between us all. Father Val uses this blessing even in the absence of children at daily Mass at the Comboni Mission Center in La Grange Park, Ill. It could be a reflection of this man’s entire life.

Born on San Valentino’s feast day, February 14, 1920, in Casale di Scodosia in the province of Padua, he was the last child born to Siro and Luigia. “My father was a lion and my mother, a lamb,” Father Val says.

Both parents shared great faith and Siro was pleased when young Val told him he wished to be a priest. He hoped Val would head a parish someday. But later, when Valentino’s vocation sharpened to embrace the missions, Siro took to his bed for eight days. He knew full well the life expectancy of a missionary at the time. But in the end, the father gave his blessing.

And so, in 1939, on the same day that Hitler began World War II, he joined the Comboni Missionaries and studied in Rome and Milan until his ordination in 1944.

“Italy at that time was in total chaos,” Father Val said, “with the King welcoming the Allies and the Germans looking upon Italian

Valentino Saoncella, mccc



After November, Father Valentino can be contacted through the Comboni Mission Center in La Grange Park, Ill. or directly at:

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troops as traitors.” He was even detained by the Gestapo for several days as a suspected member of the resistance.

At the end of the war, “fulfilling my dream,” he was assigned to the town of Wau in the province of Bahr El Ghazal in South Sudan. He would spend the next 17 years living in the midst of conflict between the Sunni Muslims in the North and the Africans of the South after colonial rule ended in 1956. During this time, he was arrested on false charges of aiding the rebels and jailed for eight days. On another occasion, he was threatened with execution. In 1964, the military regime in Khartoum expelled all missionaries and

Father Val was forced to return to Italy. He served as Provincial Superior of Troia in southern Italy.

In 1970, he was reassigned to the United States as pastor of St. Michael’s Parish, an inner-city church in Cincinnati. “It was then I experienced the great love, faith and not inconsiderable suffering of the poor in the United States,” he said.

In 1989, he came to the Comboni community in La Grange Park and without a doubt has served as its spiritual heart and soul.

Comboni Fr. Aldo Pozza who served alongside Father Val told me, “Father Val does not have the word ‘No’ in his vocabulary. If he had the power to do so, he would give away each brick of this building if he thought it would help the poor or relieve suffering in any way.” Love is at the heart of everything he says and does. He believes that God is – above all else – a God of love.

Now, because of physical infirmities, but certainly not because of any diminution of spirit, and after a great celebration at The Ascension of Our Lord Parish in Oak Brook Terrace on August 5, Father Val has decided to return to Italy. There, he will be reunited with his great friend, Comboni Fr. Paul Longo, and many of his confreres at the Comboni residence for retired priests and brothers in Verona.

Father Val’s favorite Eucharistic prayer continues, “*For such great love, we thank you with the angels and saints...*” Yes, Father Val, we join together in thanks for our own special “San” Valentino. ▼

-Terry Quilico

Immersion Excursion

A Taste of Mission in Peru

Three young men set out on the journey of a lifetime May 7 to May 22.

From the busy cities of the United States to the slums and mountain villages of Peru, they went to discern a vocation, to see the reality of mission and to meet some of the Comboni Missionaries.

Comboni Fr. David Bohnsack accompanied Ryan Rahrig, David Liska and Jerry Suelzer to the parishes of Palca and Chorrillos. The mountainous Palca and the slum-area of Chorrillos just south of Lima gave the men a sense of diverse mission settings and of the great needs that are present in the mission.

“The trip was a great help to the guys to ‘step out of their comfort zone’ and experience the Church of the poor,” Father David said. “They were continually impressed by the hospitality and friendship given them, and they showed a great missionary spirit in wanting to learn from the people and the culture.”

On returning to the United States, David and Jerry wrote to the *Comboni Mission Newsletter* to tell us of their mission experiences:



From clockwise: A Peruvian girl in the small mountain villages of Palca; David with a parishioner in Palca; the guys stand beside a sign for the favorite local drink, “Inca Cola.”



Ryan, David and Jerry at the Chapel at Ricran, Palca Parish.

Going to Peru was incredible – I’m still realizing how the trip has affected my life.

It was my first experience in a developing country, and I learned much about another culture and how different life is for people outside the United States. Everywhere I looked was something new – something unusual and surprising. There is so much life on the streets with people selling things and stores spilling out onto the sidewalk. There is also so much poverty. The people clearly have very little and are just getting by.

The language presented a problem. My Spanish was weak and I missed a lot of what was said – that was frustrating at times, but when I made an attempt to at least try, I found people were very patient and we were able to communicate.

There were times when I wanted to get back home to my comfortable routine – not having that option, I was forced to make the best of it. I’m glad I did.

In the end, I came away with a strong desire to learn Spanish better. I feel a deeper need to make something worthwhile of my life.

It was good to meet the Comboni Missionaries. I had a different idea of who the missionary is. I thought life would be quieter in their houses, but there were jokes and laughter as well as sharing about more serious things. They were fun to be with and I appreciated our times of prayer together.

It was impressive to see the people celebrating their faith up in the mountains as well as on the outskirts of Lima. There is a lot of work to do in the missions, and I was hoping to see more of the Comboni brothers. One thing that stands out for me was the time I spent with a group from a parish who coordinated projects to keep the youth occupied with positive social interaction instead of joining gangs. Some of the problems they face are similar to those in some United States cities.

I am thankful for this opportunity. It has given me much to reflect on and pray over. ▼ -David Liska

We often see pictures of missionary life, but it's totally different to actually be there and experience it.

In Peru, I saw the variety of things that any given missionary priest does – work in administration, teaching and some of what you would think a missionary priest would do... going around to different places, saying Mass and serving the people. I think I met every different type of temperament, personality, and background within the Comboni Missionaries.

For those trying to discern a vocation, this is definitely a good way to get experience and see what mission consists of first hand.

My favorite part was our stay in the mountains. We were there four days, and it gave us a good chance to get the feel of Peru in those small villages. I liked talking with the people after Mass, or out on the streets. Most were friendly but also shy. Once they



From clockwise - Father David visits with elders in Palca; the guys help build a chapel 30 miles outside Palca parish; they visit an ancient Incan aquaduct in the area of Nazca.

got going though, they loved to talk and get to know you better.

We had a nice variety between the city (Lima) and the mountains (Palca). There really is a big difference between the two. The mountains are calmer while the city and our time in Chorrillos, a district of Lima, was more hectic. The pace of the traffic and the people are just faster in the city. Though it seems a missionary can be as busy as he wants to be, there is always more to do.

Getting to see the Church in another cultural context was a great opportunity. It helped broaden my view of the Church and its people. It helped me feel more solidarity with the body of Christ and experience the universality of the Catholic Church. I learned something from the simplicity of the people – the way they sang and worshiped. It helped me remember that Christ calls us all to be child-like in our faith and trust in Him. ▼

-Jerry Suelzer



From left - Ryan, Jerry, Father Hans Heiber, David, and Father Eduard Falk in Palca.

Around the Continent

Class of '56 "Band of Brothers" reunites in Cincinnati

In June, the members of the graduating class of 1956 had their second annual reunion at Comboni Provincial Headquarters (Sacred Heart Seminary) in Cincinnati, Ohio. Most of the alumni had not seen each other since last year's reunion. This year, all but one



Members of the Sacred Heart Seminary Class of 1956 shared memories and fraternity in June.

classmate was able to attend.

"We had a ball," said alumnus, **Frank Mercurio**, "It's almost like we've never been apart."

Mr. Mercurio has a message for other former Sacred Heart Seminary students who would like to be reunited with their classmates:

"Two years ago, I decided I wanted to contact as many members of our graduating class as possible. The thought of a 50 year reunion kept popping into my head. I tried to dismiss the notion as old-age sentimentality. But, I reasoned, it would be great if we could get together again and rekindle old friendships. After all, we ate, studied, played, and prayed together for years. We were, undoubtedly, a true 'band of brothers.'

"I hoped if we could locate one another, we might start to communicate and share a little of our lives with each other. Now-a-days,

with the internet's development, it's easy to shoot off a greeting of Happy Birthday, Merry Christmas, or share some wonderful event in our lives – like the arrival of a new grandchild.

"Last year, in our first attempt, six of our original eight classmates were able to come together at Comboni Mission Center to celebrate our 50 year reunion. It was so wonderful, we decided to set aside one day every year for this event.

"I'm hoping that other SHS graduating classes might want to do the same. If you need information on how to set up your own gathering or reunion,

you can send me an email at fxmerc@gmail.com."

Cincinnati and Montclair events promote awareness of Darfur and South Sudan

Comboni Frs. **Luciano Perina** and **David Bohnsack** teamed up August 22 to present "Two Lives for Sudan: Darfur and the South," a mission promotion event in Cincinnati. The event, held at the **Sisters of Charity Motherhouse**, highlighted the "unspeakable tragedies, but also the faith, hope and resiliency of a people who need their stories to be told."

On August 6 in Montclair, N.J., Comboni Fr. **Michele Stragapede** examined the issues at the heart of the genocide in Darfur at an event entitled "Sudan's Gift to the World"

Father Luciano, Father David and Father Michele have spent many years working with the Sudanese. Their vivid stories of mission work and evangelization in the war-ravaged country

unveiled a seldom-seen aspect of the conflicts in Sudan.

Monroe Ladies' Auxiliary plans festive fall

- The Comboni Ladies' Auxiliary's first summer visitor was Comboni Fr. **Mario Casella** who was stationed in Arua, Uganda for many years. He concelebrated the Mass with Comboni Fr. **Paul Donohue** June 7 at St. Joseph's Chapel in Monroe, Michigan. The Auxiliary then celebrated Father Casella's 53rd ordination anniversary and his 80th birthday. Lunch and a Missionary Rosary followed.
- Comboni Fr. **Mike Barton** was in Monroe in June and visited many of his friends and benefactors. He stopped by the Auxiliary flower sale to see the hardworking "flower ladies" – **Terrie Noland, Gert Bazick** and **JoAnn Althaver**.
- In September, Comboni Fr. **David Bohnsack** and Comboni Br. **Dario Laurencig** will visit the Auxiliary. They will present slides and pictures of their missionary experiences. Members will then plan the Comboni Day Celebration in October.
- In November, Comboni Fr.



From Left to Right: Fr. Paul Donohue, Richard Klug, Fr. Mario Casella, and Clare Klug

Ethiopian meal inspires new eyes for mission

Peter Ciuciulla will celebrate the annual Memorial Mass and display pictures from his time in Chad. The Auxiliary will also celebrate its 55th birthday.

Vespas, iPhones and more at Dinner Dance in LaGrange Park

The **St. Comboni Fest** on

August 25 marked the beginning of raffle sales for the **Comboni Dinner Dance** November 10. The raffle offers first



place prize of a brand new **Vespa Motor scooter**, a 2nd place prize of **\$1000** and 3rd place prize of a new **Apple iPhone**.

Chances are \$10 apiece or three for \$25 and are available through the Comboni Mission Center in La Grange Park, Ill. The 41st annual Dinner Dance will be held at Alta Villa Banquets and the event will bestow the *Comboni Spirit Award* to **Phil Stefani**, the noted Chicago restaurateur for his work with the Stefani Children's Foundation, and **Grace and Gino Toscano** will receive the *Comboni Benefactors Award* in recognition of their long support for the Comboni Missionaries. For raffle or Dinner Dance information please call (708) 352-0784.

CORRECTION: In the article "St. Cecilia: a diverse community" (Summer 2007) Mass attendance was incorrectly stated. Attendance at the four Sunday Spanish Masses (7:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., noon, 7 p.m.) is 3,500, while attendance for 9 a.m. Sunday English Mass is about 70.

*Bart Hisgen was the Associate Director of Peacebuilders Initiative, an innovative program of the Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. The program prepares Catholic high school youth for leadership roles in peacemaking, reconciliation, and conflict transformation, and inspires them to consider ministry as a life choice. He, his wife Cynthia Miller, and their two sons Solan and Aidan will be entering the Orientation program of the **Comboni Lay Missionaries** this Fall.*

The quest for relationships lures us to mission. Relationships with people in other parts of the world, conversations in new languages, encounters with other people's hopes and dreams for the future. Within these components of mission is an invitation, an opportunity to experience something of life through the lens of another human person within another community.

One specific encounter comes to mind. My wife and I were living in a rural community in western Ethiopia when friends called us for a meal. During our 20 minute walk through a forest dotted with coffee bushes, the rainclouds began their daily deluge. We stepped into their house through a cloud of thick smoke coming from the three-stone stove in the kitchen and were offered a small cup of strong coffee, a piece of fresh bread, and a small dish of honeycomb as appetizers. As we engaged in conversation over several hours, our hosts offered us an extravagant meal.

Such hospitality disturbed nearly every idea we had of missions. We thought we had better ways of worshipping God, better ways of educating young people, and,

truth be told, better ways of being human. Part of us thought mission involved distributing our wisdom to people in Ethiopia. That afternoon, however, our host's hospitality and generosity brought us to a deeper reality.

Through this encounter, we gained new insight into mission. Before our meal in Ethiopia, we believed missions involved sharing our conviction that God was reconciling all the world to Himself through Jesus. After this meal, we were convinced that mission also involves more: it is a way of thinking and acting, a way of speaking

"Receiving hospitality leaves us with a sense of connection to our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world ... such acts restore our hope in humanity."
- Bart Hisgen

and living with others. Mission involves a willingness to develop new ways of being in relationship with others as well as openness to be surprised by God.

Common experiences like the one described above do not easily fade from memory. Receiving hospitality leaves us with a sense of connection to our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world. Such acts restore our hope in humanity and give a sense of belonging to one another. We are empowered to live, think, and act in ways that honor these relationships. ▼

-Bart Hisgen

Comboni Auxiliary Rummage Sales spread mission at home

Every Wednesday morning the dim and cavernous basement of the Comboni Provincial Headquarters in Cincinnati is flooded with light and alive with activity.

Ten or so members of the Comboni Auxiliary are busy sorting, folding, stacking and planning for the bi-monthly Comboni Missionary Rummage Sale.

Since the early 1970s, a time when the Comboni Provincial Headquarters was called Sacred Heart Seminary and the Comboni Missionaries were the Verona Fathers, about 12 people from surrounding parishes in Cincinnati have been donating their time, talents and support to aid the Combonis and animate the lay people of Cincinnati in the missionary work of the Church.

They do this in four ways: praying, offering Masses for the missions, assisting with fundraising projects, and learning more about mission work and

mission awareness.

On the suggestion of Comboni Fr. Charles Busetti, who died in 1980, the Auxiliary grew to host all kinds of mission promotion activities – rummage sales, festivals, Bingo nights, luncheons and arts and crafts shows. Through the years, they have organized so many mission promotion projects that it's hard to remember them all.

Many people will recognize them through December visits to the Christmas crèche. These are the folks that keep the arts, crafts, and refreshment room open down the hall from the annual Nativity scene.

These same people put on the enormously popular Rummage Sale. As Cincinnati bargain shoppers know, the Comboni sale is one of the best in the city – stuff a brown grocery bag for \$5. From 9 a.m. on the morning of the sale, the basement is crammed with ardent shoppers and mission supporters alike.



Faye Durden inspects a shoe-rack full of toys.

Terry Kunky, president of the Auxiliary, has been a member since 1982. While she enjoys the time spent in the group and the friends she's made there, it is the knowledge that they too are missionaries working to bring the light of Christ to those who need it most that keeps her coming back – week after week.

“When you see pictures of people in Africa, and you hear their stories, you want to help. You want to do something that helps them,” she said. “You know you're working for a good cause.”

Kay Luster, a founding member and former president of the group agrees. As a wife, mother and now a grandmother, there wasn't much chance of her going to the missions herself so...“you do what you can where you're planted,” she says.

But one problem continues to plague the members of the Auxiliary.



Mary Anne Bauer organizes merchandiside for the August Rummage Sale.

(continued on page 11)

What:

Comboni Rummage Sale

When:

The first Friday of every other month: February, April, June, August, October and December

Where:

Comboni Provincial Headquarters - Cincinnati, Oh



One of the youngest Auxiliary helpers, Devin Mentzel, sets up for the next sale.

Auxiliary Rummage Sale *(continued from page 10)*

“We need new members,” Kunky said. “Help!”

Most members of the Auxiliary have been involved for decades and as the group ages, it’s becoming harder and harder to do the Rummage sales and other promotion activities. And while the group is going strong, they would like to secure the future with a new generation of dedicated and mission-minded members.

Through their work, prayers and sacrifices, the Comboni Auxiliary has seen the missionaries through

“When you see the pictures of the people in Africa, you know you’re working for a good cause.”
– Terry Kunky

good times and bad, and though many transitions have taken place at the Cincinnati Mission Center and within the Auxiliary itself, one thing remains the same: every Wednesday morning members of the Comboni Auxiliary can be found in the basement and garage of the Comboni Provincial Headquarters promoting the missions and working for the evangelization of the poor and abandoned with hearts for the world. ▼

-Katie Walker

For information on joining the Auxiliary, call (513) 474-4997.

Spotlight on a Mission Soul : St. Josephine Bakhita

Just like them, she knew suffering. She was abused, neglected, forgotten by the world. But with the help of God, she became one of the greatest success stories of modern time. Perhaps this is why the people of Sudan continue to spread a growing devotion to their country’s first saint – Josephine Bakhita.

The Sudan Catholic Radio Network recently launched Bakhita Radio, 91 FM, the new Comboni-run network mother station, in St. Josephine’s honor. As patron of Sudan and an outspoken promoter of the missions, she is especially important to the Comboni Missionaries.

Born in St. Daniel Comboni’s beloved Sudan, Josephine was a child when she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. The experience was so traumatic she forgot her own name and received “Bakhita,”

Arabic for “fortunate,” instead. Her owners abused and overworked her. She was permanently scarred by whips and branding.

One day, an Italian Consul and his wife bought her. The family treated her with dignity and introduced her to the Catholic faith. She took the name Josephine at baptism and developed a deep devotion to Mary.

After Josephine obtained her freedom, she joined the Daughters of Charity and was known locally as “our Black Mother.” The poor and suffering would flock to the doors of the convent to be welcomed into St. Josephine’s open arms.

In later life, after her biography was published, St. Josephine became a sought-after speaker and dedicated herself to raising funds for the missions that were so close to her heart and home.

She would later say of those who enslaved and mistreated her:

“If I were to meet the slave-traders who kidnapped me and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For if that did not happen, I would not be a Christian and Religious today,” she said. “The Lord has loved me so much: we must love everyone!”

Josephine died in 1947 after a long illness. At the last, as she lay suffering painful flashbacks to her slave life, her companions heard her quietly murmur, “Our Lady, Our Lady,” – a joy-filled greeting for the only mother St. Josephine had ever known. ▼



Sister sees many ways of being mother

Sister André Rothschild knows that life as a Comboni Missionary Sister can be adventurous – demanding – dangerous – always fulfilling, but seldom boring.

Growing up a regular kid in 1950s Pensacola, Florida, little did she dream she would one day trek across parched deserts, canvas through coffee plantations and dodge highway bandits. But in spreading the Gospel and educating the children of Kenya, Sister André has led an adventurous life and probably seen more of Kenya than the average Kenyan.

2007 marks 40 years of religious life for Sister André. In 1967, she started on a life to “better a little corner of God’s world.” Some would say she’s bettered much more than that.

Since 1967, she’s spent most of her years in Kenya involved in vocation promotion, teaching and adult education. Transferred to the United States in 2005, the mission coordinator for the Comboni Sisters is also the coordinator of the RCIA program at St. Matthew’s Parish in Baltimore, Maryland.

After working in Kenya for 22 years, Sister André is ready and eager to connect to the people of the United States when sharing the message that living as a religious missionary is not only full of excitement and adventure, it’s a deeply rewarding lifestyle.

But the U.S. is a lot different than Kenya, and Sister André

must face new challenges, especially in a world filled with distractions.

“Here, the media bombards young and old alike,” she said, “but especially the young. They are caught up in appearances, the Hollywood thing. We all have to do a lot of weeding to focus on what’s important.”

Sister André even had to do a little weeding of her own. In grade school, she was attracted to the religious life, however when high school came around, she focused on parties, boys, and being a regular teenager.

“How do I want to live my womanhood?” Sr. Andre asks. “God has given me the capacity to bring life. Now how do I want to bring life?”

“But even though I pushed it back, that seed of a vocation was always there. It was like a song that kept coming back.” So in her senior year of high school, Sister André

answered the call to the religious life and never looked back.

Through her work and the work of missionaries like her, she has seen great results and has affected the lives of countless people in her African ministry.

“It’s controversial,” she said. “Some people say the missionaries destroyed cultures. That may be true in some instances, but Africa changed because of the missionaries. Missionaries brought in health and education, the gospel value that every person has worth, that we are all God’s children, the



Sister Andre works with a widow in Kenya. The woman came to the convent every day to beg for food.

dignity of the person and especially the dignity of the woman.”

Her message in both Kenya and the United States challenges people to follow the call to mission and make the world a better place – whether in religious life or not.

“We are all consecrated by baptism, but the question is, how do I want to live my consecration?” Sister André asks. And a special message for the girls: “How do you want to live your womanhood? God has given you the capacity to bring life. Now how do you want to bring life? Do you want to have your own kids? That’s one way of being mother, but there are a number of ways of being mother in the world.”

Sister André’s rewarding work in both Kenya and the United States has her excited and primed for the rest of her life as a Comboni Missionary Sister. ▼

- Katie Walker

Two benefactors join Accorsi Society's prestigious ranks

The late Mary Bradley qualified for membership in the Fr. Hamlet Accorsi Legacy Society when she remembered the missions with a very generous gift in her will.

"All of us at the Comboni Mission Center in La Grange Park, Ill. are deeply grateful for Ms. Bradley's friendship and for this wonderful act of kindness," said Fr. Angelo Biancalana, local superior of our office in the Chicago suburbs.

"Remembering the missions in one's will or living trust is one way people can make a really significant gift to the work of the Church, something far beyond what they could ever manage during their lifetimes," Father Angelo added. "Charitable gift annuities of \$5,000 or more are another popular option."

Rita E. Herbert called recently, becoming a member of the Accorsi Society when she told us that she has named the Comboni Missionaries as a beneficiary of an annuity she holds with a commercial life insurance company.

This is just one of many ways that benefactors can use the products of life insurance companies to make gifts to the Comboni Missionaries. When such gifts exceed \$5,000, they entitle benefactors for recognition as members of the Society.

This most commonly happens when a life insurance policy outlives its original purpose. In such cases, a benefactor may choose

For information on including the Comboni Missionaries in your will, trust, or other estate plans, call our Development Office at 513-474-4997

to name the Comboni Missionaries as the new beneficiary of the policy. Or a person may wish to gain a tax deduction by donating a paid-up life insurance policy.

The Accorsi Society honors friends in Canada and the United States who tell us they've included the Comboni Missionaries

in their estate plans. Members' names appear on a plaque outside the main chapel at Provincial Headquarters in Cincinnati, and they're remembered in prayer every day.

For information on including the Comboni Missionaries in your will, trust or other estate plans, call our Development Office at 513-474-4997. In preparing your will or trust, be sure to use our legal name and address:

- In the **United States**, please use: Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, North American Province, 1318 Nagel Road, Cincinnati, OH 45255.

- Those in **Canada** should use the address of our office in Kitchener: Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, 148 Madison Avenue South, Kitchener, ON N2G 3M6.

You can also write to these addresses to let us know you've remembered the Comboni Missionaries in your estate plans. That way we can immediately enroll you in this society's prestigious ranks. ▼

Help the missions and help yourself!

You can make a significant gift to the work of the Comboni Missionaries without sacrificing the security of your investments. You benefit in several ways with a charitable gift annuity (CGA) from the Comboni Missionaries.

- You get a fixed payment for life that almost always exceeds what you can get with certificates of deposit.
- There can be tax advantages on both the initial gift to the Comboni Missionaries and on the payments you receive from your CGA.
- You'll enjoy income security for yourself and/or someone you love.
- You may be able to avoid capital gains tax on part of the assets you transfer for the Comboni Missionaries if you fund your gift with appreciated stocks.
- Best of all, the gift you make when you establish your CGA will support the work of missionaries, who are working with the poorest of the poor around the world.

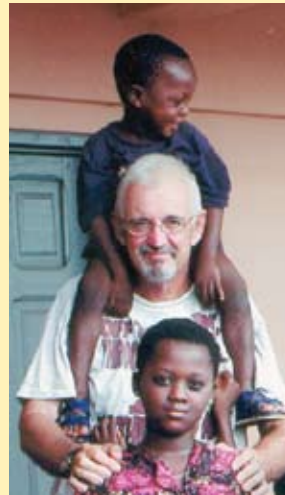
To learn more about charitable gift annuities from the Comboni Missionaries, complete and return the envelope in the centerfold. There's no obligation.

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| Here are the rates you'll get for a guaranteed retirement income for life! The following rates reflect CGAs for the life of one individual. | 65 | 6.0 | 70 | 6.5 | 75 | 7.1 | 80 | 8.0 | 85 | 9.5 | 90+ | 11.3 |
| | 66 | 6.1 | 71 | 6.6 | 76 | 7.2 | 81 | 8.3 | 86 | 9.9 | | |
| | 67 | 6.2 | 72 | 6.7 | 77 | 7.4 | 82 | 8.5 | 87 | 10.2 | | |
| | 68 | 6.3 | 73 | 6.8 | 78 | 7.6 | 83 | 8.8 | 88 | 10.6 | | |
| | 69 | 6.4 | 74 | 6.9 | 79 | 7.8 | 84 | 9.2 | 89 | 11.0 | | |

Have you ever considered becoming a Comboni Lay Missionary?

We're a Catholic community of men and women who live out our faith by walking with the poor of other lands, helping to build a more just and compassionate world. Following a 14-week training program, our lay missionaries serve a three year assignment in Africa or Latin America. Join us on a journey of love and compassion as we reach out to our brothers and sisters around the globe. Visit our Web site at www.laymission-comboni.org.

Join us on a journey of love and compassion as we reach out to our brothers and sisters around the globe.



Introducing the new candidates for the Comboni Lay Missionaries!

The Comboni Lay Missionaries have four candidates joining their orientation program from September to December, 2007. They will attend language school in January 2008, and reach their placements by Spring 2008.



Michael Florino
Mike is originally from the Richmond, Va. area. Mike was a high school teacher in the Richmond school system and has three

years previous experience working as a teacher in a refugee camp in Northern Uganda. We hope to send Mike to serve again in East Africa.

David Parrilli

Dave is originally from Skokie, Ill.. He was a third grade teacher at a Catholic elementary school in Chicago and worked for almost ten years as a Camp Counselor, and later as Camp Director, in the Skokie Park District. Dave has extensive travel experience in Latin America, and we hope to send him to serve in Guatemala.



Cynthia Miller and Bart Hisgen

Bart, Cynthia and their two children, Solan and Aidan Miller-Hisgen, are originally from the Chicago area. Bart worked with the Peacebuilders Initiative through Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, giving retreats and workshops to Catholic youth. Cynthia has worked as a bi-lingual caseworker and full-time mom. They have two years of experience volunteering in Ethiopia, and we hope to send their family to serve in Peru.

Looking back with Fr. Hugo Riva, mccj

As a young boy in 1930s Italy, Comboni Fr. Hugo Riva used to help his uncle haul milk from the farm to a bustling seminary in Milan.

“All the seminarians would tease me as I passed by,” he said. “When are you going to join us?” they would shout from the windows.”

Luckily, for Father Hugo and the thousands he has touched in his life as a Comboni Missionary, he soon heeded the call of God and the seminarians. By fifth grade, young Hugo was studying to become a priest.

At 81 years young, Father Hugo continues to enjoy a career that has taken him all over the world – from Sudan, to Italy, to the border of the United States and Mexico. Through it all, two constants have followed him in his missionary quests: his dedication to the Blessed Mother and his firm resolve to practice the virtue of obedience. He goes where he is told.

Now stationed at St. Donatus parish in Blue Island, Ill. Father Hugo enjoys poetry and staying in touch with his large extended family. He also doesn't know the meaning of the word “retirement.” Obedience to God and his superiors continues to drive his life.

“My name is Hugo and so I

go,” he jokes. “My name is the password to my life.”

Father Hugo's sharp memory reminds him of the many blessings of his missionary life as well as the adventures encountered along the way.

He can tell you about conversations with countless cardinals; he even spoke with Pope Paul VI. He had a knife held to his throat in Chicago and was run out of Sudan by a Christian-suppressing government who accused him of being a witchdoctor and summoning the rain.

Since the 1960s, Father Hugo has served in the North American Province ministering to Native Americans, African Americans and Hispanic immigrants. At every parish Father Hugo goes, the Blessed Mother is always there waiting.

“All the churches I've ever served have been consecrated to Our Lady, and likewise all the important dates of my life fall on her feast days,” he said, noting a special devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas.

Father Hugo likes to say, “God is love, and if you love people, people love you.” His evangelizing mission is a testament to this beautiful philosophy. ▼ -Katie Walker



On 40 years of ordination March 25, 1990

*The Lord was good to me,
Calling me for His ministry!
It was a special divine vocation,
Coinciding on His memorial
Annunciation,
Under the protection of our
Blessed Mother,
Chosen by His heavenly Father,
To bring Jesus to us, as Savior and
Brother.*

*I thank you, Lord, for your call,
Sharing with me your priesthood and all,
Your blessings and protection,
In my ministerial location.
To be a Comboni Missionary,
Is a real gift, extraordinary.*

*Working among people the most poor,
Is a great challenge for sure,
I thank you, Jesus, with all my heart,
Trying to do my daily best part,
I'll serve you and your people,
Around every steeple,
Many years went by,
Looking up to the sky!
I implore the divine inspiration,
For my work and motivation!*

-Hugo Riva, mccj

AFRICAN WORLD
MISSION
SUNDAY MASS

Cincinnati, OH - The Archdiocese of Cincinnati invites Catholics of all cultures to celebrate our universal Catholic heritage with “**The Gifts of the African Catholic Community**,” at 2:30 p.m., Oct. 21, 2007. Join the mission community for the “**African World Mission Sunday Mass**” followed by music, singing, dance, food, art and vendors at **St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church**, 15 Liscum Drive, Dayton, OH, 45427-2801.

For more information visit:

www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission

Comboni parish echoes Our Lady of Fatima's plea for peace

In 1917, Europe was engulfed in the chaos of the First World War. A newly-born communist state was about to spread atheist tentacles around the globe, and colonialism held a death grip on most of Africa.

That year, the Blessed Mother, in her usual way of entrusting the most important communications to the poor and humble, appeared to three impoverished Portuguese children with a message for the whole suffering world:

"Pray! Pray unceasingly the Rosary for an end to war and for world peace," Our Lady of Fatima begged.

Comboni Fr. Gabriele Perobelli of the parish of Notre Dame de Fatima says this same message is just as important now as in 1917. His church is located in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Re-

public. That country, like most in Africa, has suffered for centuries. There, world peace seems a long way off.

Father Gabriele was speaking at a celebration Mass on May 13, the feast of his parish's patroness. Only a week earlier, on May 6, nearly 300 newly baptized had received their confirmation.

Ninety years after Our Lady's apparition, Africa is embroiled in violence, poverty, and the still-smouldering effects of colonialism. In the Central African Republic in particular, rebel troops have clashed with government forces in recent months, forcing thousands of families to flee their homes.

Just as Our Lady's message for world peace was a mix of urgent warning and endless hope in her Son, so was Father Gabriele's mes-

sage to his parish a mix of realism and optimism in the patronage of Our Lady and the goodness of God. With 300 lives newly consecrated to the Holy Spirit, it seemed a perfect opportunity to echo her plea.

Father Gabriele invited all present to join him in surrendering to the justice and will of God with work and prayer. For peace, there is no other way. ▼



a statue of Our Lady of Fatima reminds faithful to pray for peace

-Katie Walker

Comboni

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