



GAZING AT THE ROCK

from which we have been hewn



“Unfortunate Africa was the first love of my youth. I left behind what was dearest to me in the world and came to these lands sixteen years ago to offer my work for the relief of its age-old misfortunes”.

(Daniele Comboni)

LETTER

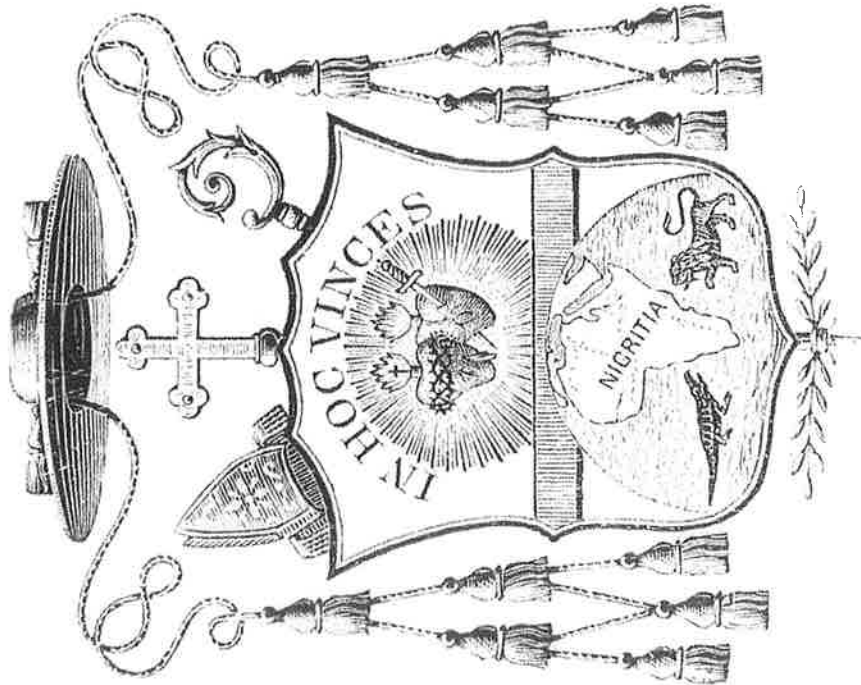
*of the General Councils
of the Comboni Institutes
to the members of the Comboni Family
and to those who recognise themselves*

in the spirit of

DANIEL COMBONI

on the occasion of his

BEATIFICATION



Rome, 6th April 1995

Publication of the Pontifical Decree super miro

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40. Congregatio Pro Causis Sanctorum: Positio, CVI.
41. A. GILLI - P. CHIOCCHETTA, *Il messaggio di Daniele Comboni*, EMI 1977, pp. 8687.
42. cf. Letter of the Pope to priests, Holy Thursday 1955.
43. RM, 40.
44. RM, 32.
45. Copenhagen Conference, March 1995.
46. González, F.: Comboni, en el corazón de la Misión Africana, EMN Madrid, 1993, pp. 153-173.
47. cf. Paolo VI: To all of you: Allocution to the member Bishops of SECAM, Kampala 31.07.1969, in *Africa Pontificia*, edited by S. PALERMO scj, Rome, Ed. Dehoniame 1993, pp. 194-199.
48. *Mutuae Relationes*, 11.
49. African Synod: Message, 9.
50. cf. Letter of the General Councils of the Comboni Institutes, 1989, n.10; cf also *Litteras*, 1 & 3.
51. JOHN PAUL II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1994, p. 103.
52. African Synod: Message, 16.
53. Santo Domingo, 124.
54. Synod of Bishops for Europe: We are Witnesses of Christ who has Freed us (28 November - 14 December 1991), nn. 6 & 11.
55. Declaration of the V Plenary Assembly of Asian Bishops, Bandung, Indonesia, 27 July 1990.
56. cf Positio p. 954.
57. cf MDC, 101: a free paraphrase of the Formula for the Oath of missionary brothers, handwritten by Comboni (Verona, 2 November 1879).
58. cf Letter of 6 September 1881, S,7051-7054; & S,7174.

Note:

- S = The Writings of Daniel Comboni (SCRITTI), Comboni Missionaries, Rome, 1991.
- MDC = Aldo Gilli, Pietro Chiocchetta, *Il Messaggio di Daniele Comboni*, EMI.

GREETING

"We are the happiest people on earth because we are in God's hands."

We greet you with these stupendous words of the Founder (S,5082). We address all those who recognise themselves in him: in his missionary charism and his spirituality.

In different ways and in separate roles, but equally precious in God's eyes, we are passing on in the Church and in history the gift of the Spirit which he received and for which he lived.

We turn first of all to the members of the two Institutes which, being founded by him, have shared his joys and the burden of the mission: the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus and the Pie Madri della Nigrizia (Comboni Missionary Sisters).

Then to the Secular Institute of Comboni Missionaries, which has revealed a new way of bringing the charism into the life of the Church.¹

And to all the Institutes and Associations of consecrated persons who, founded through the mediation of Comboni Missionaries or Sisters, express, each in its own way, the ecclesial fruitfulness given by the Spirit to Daniel Comboni.

Finally, this message - through the three Institutes - is meant to be addressed and delivered to all those who follow the Comboni way in some form: Comboni Lay Missionaries, benefactors, all relations and friends.

What we say to you is meant to be addressed to ourselves first of all. With you we feel that we are heirs of Comboni; for you we have accepted the service of authority - simply in order to guarantee a creative continuity in oneness and in communion.

MEANING OF THE MESSAGE

A special time of grace begins with the Beatification of the Founder. The Church's recognition is an ecclesial event that must be read "in the pure light of faith" (MDC,50).

The life of Daniel Comboni that began at Limone-on-Garda in 1831 and ended in Khartoum in 1881 was a holy existence, rich in events. He was a true Catholic, a great missionary and Bishop.

Let us fix our gaze on him to perceive more profoundly how he followed Christ, welcomed the Word, practised heroic faithfulness to the Church and loved the "poorest and most abandoned" peoples of *Nigrizia*.

Many voices will resound in praise for what the Lord has done through the life of Daniel Comboni. First among them will be the homily which the Pope will deliver during the liturgy of the Beatification.

All the contributions - some new, some already belonging to our tradition - that illustrate the life, the story and the spirituality of the Founder, will not be neglected. They are gifts held out to us and which, frequently, reveal a long habit of living with the father of our missionary vocation.

The meaning of this message of ours derives, of course, from the service entrusted to us. We feel the burden of the responsibility of speaking in his name: to understand his life, scrutinise a hundred years and more of history, and turn our gaze towards the future, as he would have done.

We believe that, in the Communion of Saints, Daniel Comboni lives in God and is present to us. He has always followed his followers, and he has been father and guide to all who have listened to him and asked for his intercession.

cation of which Comboni speaks has this historical "flavour" of some of the most famous and noble missionary enterprises.

32. *Litteras*, 2 (Missionarii Comboniani Cordis Jesu et Missionariae Comboniane - Piae Matres a Nigritia- LITTERAS mittunt ad Coetum Specialem pro Africa Synodi Episcoporum, Romae 1994)

33. "One of Comboni's intuitions: the role of women in the apostolate of the Church (p. 920 of the Positio: a beautiful passage, very rich in sharp paedagogical observations)". See: Historical Consultor, in *Relatio et Vota* 21.02.1989.

"Then our hero (= Comboni) brought in Sisters from six countries of Europe and the Middle East, because he was convinced that the evangelization of Africa could not penetrate deep enough without the collaboration of women in the front line". Cardinal Arinze in *MCCJ Bulletin*, 175 (1992), pp.11-12. See also Comboni's letter to Fr (now Blessed) Arnold Janssen (S,5834).

34. cf S,3322ss., 4002-4005.

35. PIERLI, F.: *Come Eredi*, Missionari Comboniani, Roma 1993, pp. 120121. "It can be stated, without fear of contradiction, that the fraternal communion that is characteristic of our Institute, which is traditionally linked to devotion to the Sacred Heart, has its roots in the experience and the intuition of Comboni himself" (*ibid*). This enlightening judgement can be applied to all the Comboni Institutes.

36. *Summarium* of 1942, XXI Testis, p. 194.

37. Holy Week is the week of new creation. It starts on Palm Sunday and finishes on Holy Saturday. The Passover of Resurrection of the Lord is therefore the octave: the day that will never end. Christ is risen and is present for ever. "The Lord has placed his seal on his Day, which is the third after the Passion. However, in the weekly cycle, it is the eighth, following the seventh, that is, after the sabbath, and so the first of the week. Christ... has marked his day with the badge of the Resurrection" (St Augustine).

In the Old Testament, the "eight souls saved in the Ark" were the symbol and figure of the people that will be saved by the Lord's Passover: the eighth day that never turns to night. It is therefore the day of Christian hope.

38. CONTRAN, N.: *Missione vale la pena*, EMI 1992, pp. 112-113.

39. The Cenacle is a centre of radiating light. Mission always starts from the cenacle, where the Holy Spirit was poured out on Mary and the Apostles. Comboni writes his famous words while talking of his Institutes. They are words which should be meditated on constantly. cf S,2648.

possible; and in faith he discovers everything human and divine that is expressed in "others". "That great soul, burning with the purest love," states don Gennaro Martini of Comboni, "embraced all Africa with immense love, to bring her to God... He enchainned all the hearts that he encountered". (ibid).

17. Propositions of the Synod on the Religious Life to the Pope (n.39).
18. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1303.
19. cf CHIOCCHETTA, P.: "Le Opere di Dio Sono Così", Comboni Missionaries, Rome 1991, p. 225.
20. cf the list in Positio, pp. 774-77.

21. The unique passion/love that Comboni had for the re-birth of Africa included the other two dimensions: for Christ (the source and centre of all his life) and for the Church ('sacrament' of Christ).

22. RM, 21.
23. EN, 75.
24. Message of the African Synod, 14-15.
25. See Lumen Gentium, 39.
26. cf Scritti, 4383.
27. To make the meaning of the affirmation clearer, we quote the details at some length:

"In July 1869, the German Jesuit missionary Leo Meurin, Bishop of Lom-bay, on his way to Rome to take part in the first Vatican Council, visited the Comboni Institutes in Cairo. Later, during a lecture in Cologne, he gave this testimony: "Gentlemen, trust in the worthy cause of Rev. Comboni, and especially in him personally. Providence has placed him in the most difficult site of missionary activity. I came here to collect donations for my mission. But I give way to Comboni. His needs are much greater than mine. Cologne can be proud of having collaborated in the setting up of a Mission whose founder will one day be called by posterity the Francis Xavier of Central Africa". Cf an article by Adolf Kampl in NIGRI-ZIA, March 1981, p.48.

28. Homily of Archbishop Zubeir, 10.10.1993 in Khartoum.
29. EN, 76.
30. cf EN, 76.

31. In the Malbes experiment, Comboni makes explicit reference to the missionary experiences of the Benedictines in evangelization and formation in Europe, and to the Reduccionnes of the Jesuits in Paraguay. He talks of helping the people to love their land, to "cultivate" it. So the edu-

We have looked simultaneously at the life of the Founder and at ours, within the Institutes and in the contexts of our ministerial apostolate and of the world to which we are sent.

We now place before you some actions, words and basic attitudes from the life of Comboni which, in our view, contain his call to remembrance and to renewal.

Our hope is that each one, absorbing the message, may enter into dialogue with the Founder. It is then that we will hear the words - or at least one word - addressed to each of us personally. It is enough that this one strike the heart and make it vibrate: it is the breath of the Spirit given us by the Founder, through his intercession. And with this light and warmth, the journey will become easier.

Caught up in our "arduous and laborious" missionary task, we see Comboni come to meet us in this way:

Comboni: his hour is ours

Comboni: holy and able

Comboni: prophet in the power of the Spirit

Comboni: son of the Church

Comboni: missionary, founder of Christian communities

Comboni: father of a "little Cenacle of Apostles"

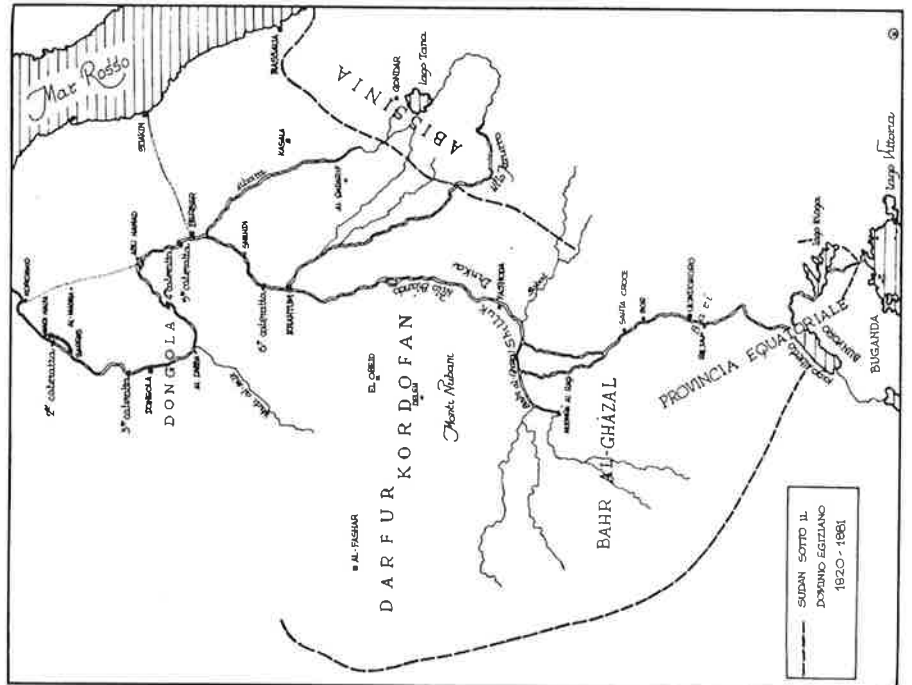
Comboni and the new age of mission

NOTES and SOURCES

1. cf Letter of the General Councils of the Comboni Institutes on the occasion of the Positio, Rome, 14th May 1989, Whit Sunday. This Letter follows on from the one published by the three General Councils for the Positio, which was another important moment in the process towards the Beatification of our Founder.
2. cf Redemptoris Missio (RM), 92: "I see the dawning of a new missionary era".
3. The Beatification/Canonisation of a Founder is also the definitive word of the Church on the Charism: that is, the authenticity of the Founder's way of looking at the mystery of Christ and of the grace received from Him as participation in that mystery. Thus, the "canonical" nature of his reading of Christ through his life and charism is authenticated and, in consequence, so is that of his disciples (cf MR,11-12).
4. Tertio Millennio Adveniente (TMA), 23.
5. TMA, 32.
6. TMA, 32.
7. RM, 66.
8. cf also the participation at the Synod of Fr Thomas Oliha Attiya, Superior General of the Apostles of Jesus.
9. The mystery of the Cross in Comboni is equivalent to what Paul wrote about himself in 2Cor.11:23-28; 12:7-10 (and in the light of Phil.2:1-11). The "piercing with the lance" is fundamental to Comboni's vision, in the way it is stressed in Jn.19.
10. CONTRAN, N.: *Il Sogno di Alfredo* (Alfredo's Dream), EMI 1993, p. 129.
11. RM, 90.
12. Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako, to the Provincial Assembly of Comboni Missionaries, Khartoum, 09.03.1995.
13. CHIOCHETTA, P.: Daniel Comboni: Papers for the Evangelization of Africa, EMI 1978, p. 100.
14. cf Scritti, 2742.
15. Beatification at Trento on 30th April 1995. Comboni wrote a letter to Pope Leo XIII petitioning the introduction of the Cause (19.09.1879, cf S,5795-5802).
16. cf Summarium (extract from the Positio super virtutibus), p. 52. The true "man of faith" does not close himself in a personal, unique and incommunicable experience, but opens up to enclose everyone in himself, as far as



Verona 1857:
Fr Nicola Mazza blesses his five missionaries who are about to leave for Central Africa.



"Central Africa is the most arduous, the most needy, the most vast... mission of the whole Catholic apostolate".

* We are approaching the end of this millennium. We do not know what our future will be like. There will be trials for us, as there were for you. But the threshold of the third millennium is illuminated by the presence of the Risen Lord. The mission belongs to Him. And our endeavour, a continuation of yours, is His undertaking. And for this reason, it will live.

Daniel, our father and brother, keep on praying for us, as you promised to do when you lived on this earth.

"Lord Jesus... grant that we may experience his protection and imitate his virtues, especially his trust in you, his love for the Cross and his zeal for the salvation of the poorest and most neglected"

We greet you with brotherly affection.

David Lunday Sup. Gen.
 P. Manuel Coullon
 P. Joseph Fieigi
 P. Louis Casse

m. Mariamela Sandi
 Sr. Mir-Peter Juth
 Sr. Johannes Ayelle
 Sr. France Furato
 Sr. Giovanna Squarara

Silvana Bordignon
 Cristina Surin
 Isabella Dolmandis
 Campoli Maria Grazia
 M^{rs} Jovi Nebot

COMBONI:
HIS HOUR IS OURS

1. The Lord is always on time with us. The Beatification is part of this divine management: the stages of the canonical process, often laborious, have their proper historical sense. There is also the element of mystery: why now? It is up to us to interpret the meaning.

1.1 It is the hour of thanksgiving

Comboni perceived the presence of the Holy Spirit in the decisions of Propaganda Fide: "...it is obvious that the Holy Spirit is guiding ... I cannot find words to express my gratitude" (S,3682). We too are grateful for the gift of the Beatification, that gives us illumination in the complex events of the end of the millennium.

1.2 It is the hour of the "new missionary era" 2

In the letter he sent to the Fathers of the first Vatican Council, Comboni compares the pastoral practice of the Bishops of his time with the missionary mandate given them by the Lord. He asks us to examine whether we are children of Vatican II. Just as he was a leader in the missionary reawakening of his time, so we are asked to respond to the *ad gentes* missionary challenge in the new missionary era.

1.3 It is the hour of self-renewal in the charism 3

That seems obvious when a Founder is beatified. For us, it means self-renewal within a choral renewal of the Church. The Pope looks forward to this: "The Great Jubilee... is aimed at an increased sensitivity to all that the Spirit is saying to the Church and to the Churches (cf Rev.2:7ss), as well as to individuals through charisms meant to serve the whole community" 4

In taking up this appeal, it should suffice to remember what sentiments Comboni had towards the person and the wishes of the Pontiff.

1.4 It is the hour of joy and conversion

Some characteristics of jubilees belong to our celebration:

- The joy, praise and thanksgiving " ...for the gift of the Incarnation of the Son... for the gift of the Church... for the fruits of holiness which have matured in the lives of so many men and women..."⁵ How can we not think of the gift of holiness to Comboni and of the heroic witness of so many of those who have followed him? Wonder and praise for the birth of local Churches and for the fruits of the Spirit present in them.

- "Nevertheless, the joy of every Jubilee is above all a joy based upon the forgiveness of sins, the joy of conversion".⁶ Comboni wrote: "I am a sinner, but there is forgiveness, and God's help" (S,976). We admit the limitations of our weak humanity: the sins that have prejudiced unity, our misunderstanding of the peoples we have evangelized. Individuals and communities are reconciled in the joy of conversion.

- The joy of seeing the fruitfulness of the life given by Comboni. A fruitfulness that shines out in us and in many young people through the radical and total dedication *ad vitam*, with new and courageous impulses, in the preference for humble and difficult places.⁷

1.5 It is the hour of listening to the Church

Two recent events in the Church have produced teachings that are very close to our life and identity.

- The Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Our Comboni Family was represented by Fr David Glenday, Superior General, and by St. Faiza Gress Melek, an Egyptian Comboni Sister in S. Sudan. The Pope, in choosing them as member and auditor respectively, together with the Comboni Missionary Archbishop Paolino Lukudu of Juba,⁸ honoured Comboni too, his charism and those who have followed him. The Founder will have rejoiced in heaven over this gathering, and supported with enthusiasm its priorities, asking us to carry them out in communion with the local Churches.

* Exhausted and burned up by fever you continued, in those last months, to ride across the desert; you pushed on towards new peoples, you inflicted fierce blows on the slave trade with the help of local authorities. The dream was becoming reality. And you made plans for the future. And you were just a few steps from sister death!

* During this intense final effort, because of your disinterested defence of an apostle of Africa, Virginia Mansur, the Lord let you suffer the heaviest crosses, those that crush body and spirit.

What was the Word that the Father was saying to you through this final bitter trial of your earthly life?

And what is the word you have left us, along with it?

All your life for Africa. If you had had a hundred, if a thousand lives, you would have given them all to Africa.

But events were now leading you to the interior disposition of renunciation of everything, even of what was the meaning of your life, in order to save a single person. And so you remembered an episode of 17 years previously⁵⁸ and Jesus Christ "who would have shed all his blood for a single soul" (S,7053).

The Spirit made you ready to lose everything - honour, reputation, even the missionary service that had been given you by God. And so we are left with the prophecy that is your first and your last, in which you reveal to us where the source and the final aim of your work was to be found:

"There is nothing firm or stable outside of Christ and his Cross" (S,6989).

The Living God, who sows Life where humankind inflicts Death, sustained you with his promise: along with the single person, he has given you the multitudes.

* When your eyes closed on this world, a great darkness fell. The terrible Mahdia came. Your sons and daughters experienced its bitterness deep in their flesh and in their souls. But the work was God's. It did not die.

Daniel Comboni,

generations of confreres and sisters have longed to see this day. We are present in their name too, at this event which brings joy to the whole Church.

* Help us to penetrate your mind, your spirit and your feelings. Share with us your deepest experience: when you crossed Garda for that first great detachment from your family, your home town and your childhood; in Verona, when you discovered the Missions in the story of the Japanese Martyrs and in meeting your first missionaries from Africa;

when you yourself crossed the sea to reach and live in those torrid regions, home of that portion of humanity that the Lord was giving you as a bride, with a dowry of a suffocating climate, fevers, hardships, the death of your closest collaborators; when you travelled here, there, everywhere with the one passion of your life in your heart and on your lips: Africa.

* You returned to your Africa eight times.

But you were always with her, and she with you.

Wherever you went, in the towns and cities of Europe, it was of her and only of her that you spoke to everyone, humble or powerful.

And in her arms you laid down your head to return to the house of the Father. In her lap you were buried.

* You experienced all human feelings.

Sometimes it seemed that everyone was helping you, and other times that they had all abandoned you.

You did not refuse anyone. You tried to involve all in the arduous, passionate mission, and you struggled against everyone for the sake of that mission.

- The Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: "Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World".

The reflections and conclusions that emerged during this important meeting of the Bishops helped us to understand that, when we responded to the gift of the Lord who consecrated us to Himself to proclaim the Gospel, we knew that it would give a radical direction to our apostolic vocations: to be with Jesus and to follow his way of life, in order to be sent out into the world.

* * *

May Daniel Comboni intercede for us:

** that in the hour in which he is glorified before the Church, we may remain faithful to the Spirit who invites us to renew ourselves in his charisma;*

** that we may tend, uninterruptedly and with renewed zeal, towards those missionary situations that are the poorest and most neglected, that ask of us, as he asked of his first collaborators, men and women, the total giving of our bodies, of our souls and of our spirit.*

* * *

**"COURAGE FOR THE PRESENT,
AND ABOVE ALL FOR THE FUTURE..."56**

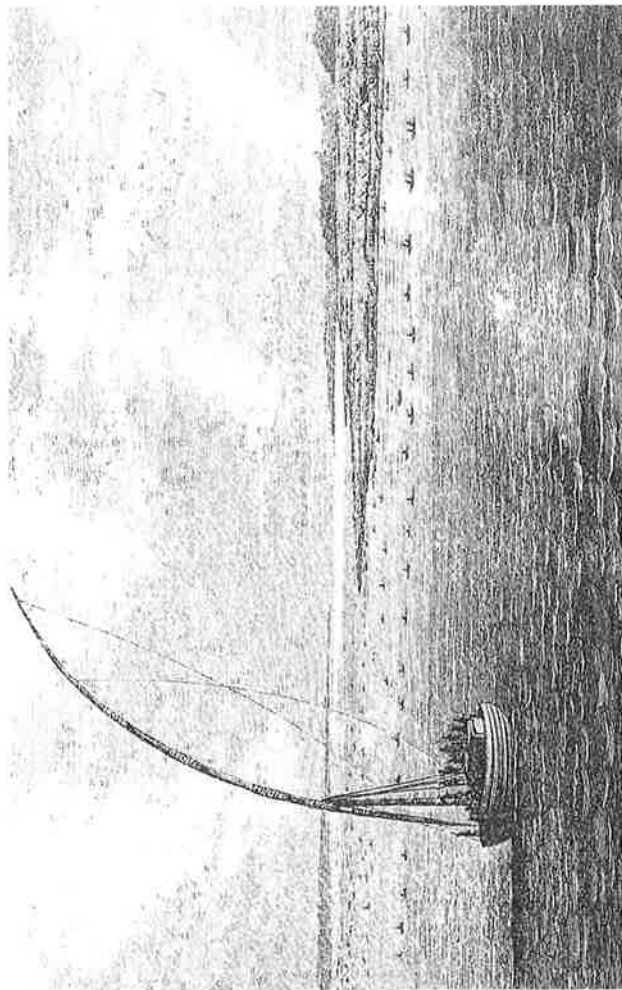
Jesus displayed his glory on the Cross. At his death, Daniel Comboni bequeathed us our greatest inheritance: the unshakable certainty regarding the development of the Mission, and the salvation in Christ of Africa.

A fortnight before dying (24th September 1881), he affirms, in a letter to Simeoni:

"I have to confess that I have never been better endowed than now with true and tested missionaries and Sisters: they are all steadfast and solid, and unshakeable in trials" (S,7149).

And he continues to trust us, who bear his name as a symbol of total dedication to God and to the mission. Each of us strives to be true to this trust, at a time when faithfulness is constantly threatened, and must be won, and prayed for as a gift. For this reason, *«of our own free will we bind ourselves by an oath before God to serve in perpetuo the Mission, never turning back from this firm resolve of ours, even in the face of death, but abandoning ourselves in the arms of Providence».*⁵⁷

* * *



"Rather than a river, the Nile looks like a lake, undulating in the ancient Eden..."



"... and one enters an immense stretch of burning sands..."

**COMBONI:
HOLY AND ABLE**

2. Daniel Comboni used to point out three main intentions when he asked for prayers: crosses, funds and "... personnel for the Work, both men and women, that are clothed in the spirit of Jesus Christ and animated by his love... It is necessary to hurry with great strides in the ways of God and in holiness, and not stop until we reach Paradise" (S,2374-75). He wrote this in 1870, aged 39. During the last months of his life he reminded Sembianti: "... carry on as you have done so far, because I know exactly how you want them: holy and able. The one without the other is worth little to one who follows the life of an apostle. No man or woman missionary can go to Paradise alone" (S,6655). He asks only one thing for himself and his followers: "Pray ...that we may all become saints in saving Africa" (S,5976).

He was not born a saint, and would state: "... I am only too certain that I am a long way from holiness" (S,2569). He listened to the Spirit and was purified by the grace of the Heart of Christ: the Church has recognised the heroic level of his virtues.

We are struck by some of the characteristics of his spiritual journey. We can visualise him leaving Limone as a child, on a journey that will end on the banks of the Nile. Underlining some stages becomes an invitation to compare our journeys with his.

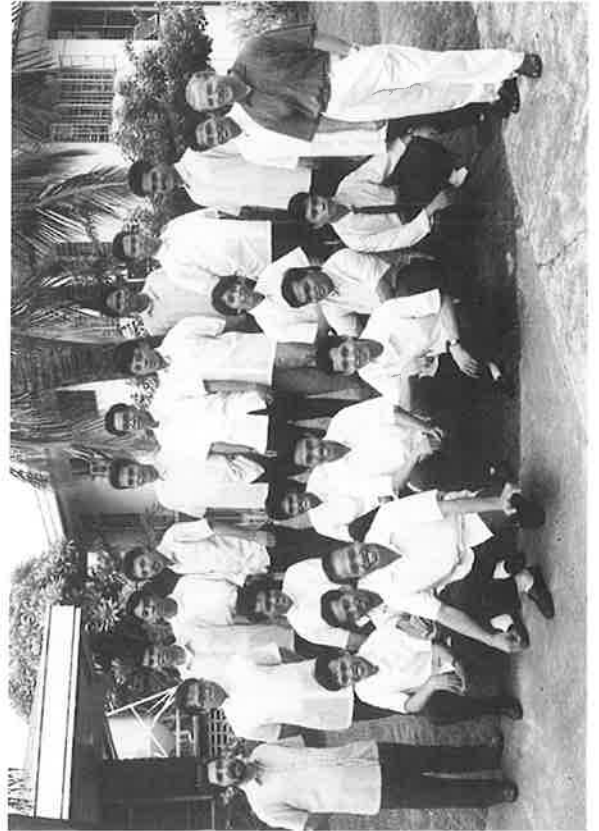
2.1 To do the will of the Father

During his first journey to Africa Comboni writes to his father (09.12.1857) and gives him heart: "Let God be the communications link between me and you. May he guide our undertakings, our affairs, our destinies; and let us rejoice that we are dealing with a good master, a faithful friend, a loving father" (S,188).

And in another letter to his father a few months before his own death, he writes (18.07.1881): "May the Lord be with you always; I hope that He may always be with me, too, because I



in Latin America and the North America



in Asia

have always served him, and I still serve Him and will always serve Him until I die, amidst even the greatest crosses and sufferings, and the sacrifice of my life" (S,6900).

The son confides to his father the confidence he has in the Father. It is a life-long fidelity to God's plan for him. The vocation he receives coincides with the hour of Africa, which is the hour established by the Father in his plan of salvation. "Because God wants people to work for Africa" (S,938). He puts his whole life into this certainty: "This Plan, I believe, is God's work" (S,926), and he finds confirmation of this in the approval of the Church.

In this act of obedience to the Father he feels he is the "useless servant"; he knows that he is responsible for only a tiny part of the Father's great project. "I am deeply convinced that I am just a zero - indeed, a poor sinner" (S,2427).

Perseverance was not easy, even for him. We have his example with us when our own faithfulness is challenged: "I have an unshakeable trust in God; for Him alone I have risked and will risk my life, and act and suffer, and will die" (S,1452).

2.2 *The encounter with Christ in the mystery of His Heart*

Comboni had come to know the Lord Jesus in the faith of his parents, in the religious instruction received in Limone, and in the actions of the holy life of Mazza. When he decides, at the age of almost 18 (6th January 1849) to dedicate his life for Africa, he has a glimpse of the Cross and of the possibility of martyrdom, and he is driven on by the grace of the Heart of Jesus. He will reveal this to Cardinal Simeoni: "Although I am broken down physically, through the grace of the Heart of Jesus my spirit is firm and vigorous; and I am resolved, as I have been for the last 30 years (from 1849) to suffer everything..." (S,5523)

It is the living person of Christ that he meets, who stays with him and who is the inspiration and the power of his missionary activity. Christ made manifest in the Pierced Heart: that continues to beat for souls, welcomes the whole of humanity, shrives up all the evil of the world in its burning, agonised love, and



The path of Comboni's charism:
- from Verona, and in Europe



in Africa

We would like to conclude this final section by letting the Churches that receive us speak:

* From the Message of the African Synod:

"Like the Incarnation, inculturation reaches its apex in the Paschal mystery, in which Christ bears witness to the truth until he pays with his blood, and brings together on the Cross everything that is true and holy in cultures, to make them the place where the Holy Trinity is manifested. He is the First Witness". 52

* From the conclusions of the Conference of Santo Domingo:

"The new Evangelization has to be able to awaken a new missionary enthusiasm in the Church, which is being guided ever more strongly by the strength and the power of Pentecost". 53

* From the Synod of Bishops for Europe:

"The Churches of Europe must also increase their cooperation with the local Churches of the other continents... The ad gentes missionary dynamism belongs, in fact, to the history and the Christian make-up of Europe, and is a constituent of its identity..."

The cry of the suffering Christ reaches us today, with dramatic intensity, from the South of the world". 54

* From the V Assembly of Asian Bishops:

"The Church exists to evangelize. To Asia and its millions of inhabitants, we say: the Lord is the focus of the desires of history and of civilization, the centre of humanity. We hope that the sons and daughters of the Church in Asia, aware of these motivations, take up their evangelizing mission". 55

* * *

will build the Kingdom there. It is always this Jesus who evangelizes, as the divine Shepherd; the missionary in prayer feels his passing: "... immersed in profound prayer, in the midst of this unbounded solitude, it seems to the missionary that he hears the voice of the divine Shepherd searching for the little black sheep that is lost, and his confidence is given new life..." (S,4949).

The Pierced Heart of Christ is everything in the apostolate: consolation, hope, comfort, refuge, centre of communication. To imitate him and conform to him, it is necessary "to keep one's eyes always fixed on Him, loving Him tenderly, and constantly trying to understand more completely the meaning of a God who died on the Cross for the salvation of souls" (S,2892).

2.3 Along with the Pierced Heart, the Cross of Christ⁹

"My whole trust is in the Cross" (S,3202).

At 37, Comboni feels exhausted: his labours have drained his physical energy, but matured his spirit: "I can already see and understand that the Cross is such a friend to me, and is always so close to me that I have chosen her, for some time now, as my inseparable and eternal Spouse" (S,1710). In the Cross he has discovered how to read his life. And also the ills of his time, the difficulties in his missionary work, the depth of suffering of Nigrizia: slavery, famine, sickness and sin. The instrument of the death of Jesus has become the means and the sign of Redemption, the only chance of liberation for the miseries it comes across: "Only Jesus, through His sacrifice on the Cross, intended slavery to be eradicated and true freedom proclaimed" (S,1820).

The ideal union with this "Spouse" becomes concrete acceptance of crosses: indeed, he asks for them, longs for them, gives thanks when he receives them. He is an example to his followers, whom he educates in the school of the Cross; he calls it the only true knowledge, "basis of a solid formation for Africa" (S,3392).

Comboni Missionary history has honoured and transmitted this aspect of the life and spirituality of the Founder. In various ways, silent martyrdoms have been suffered. But some of our

brothers and sisters have been given the grace of "martyrdom" and are, with Comboni, our models. How can we forget the Mahdist storm and the heroism of the missionaries, especially the Pie Madri della Nigrizia? Brother Alfredo Fiorini, one of our youngest "martyrs", wrote these words in a poem entitled "Comboni":

*He, like Christ, has left us the sign
of a life totally committed,
the sign of a death radically welcomed
as a precious gift from God.
Signs for us, his sons and daughters,
to be re-interpreted in our own lives,
in our own deaths,
for the Kingdom of God.*¹⁰

2.4 Zeal as apostolic wisdom and God's glory

Daniel Comboni's every gesture and choice show his zeal. "I cannot live - I have never lived - except for the salvation of souls" (S,7141). His missionary passion was infective, and aroused much admiration. Allowances were made for certain rough edges in his character, because of the evident oblation of his life.

His zeal was not simply readiness and good will: it was continuous growth in holiness, and purification. He suffered, and accepted, various set-backs in his plan of action and the carrying out of his projects. In this way, his understanding of the pastoral action of love matured. His commitment in the social field and to works of charity and welfare was not the aspect that took up the whole of his life. It was born of the "Charity" that poured forth from the Heart of Christ, pierced on the Cross. "What is needed is love that forms able people" (S,6655).

He was sometimes misunderstood, and he was calumniated. He did not look for gratitude: "Good has to be done, always, for the sole glory of God and for the benefit of souls" (S,1004). Remembering the preceding three characteristics of his holiness, we discover that the root of his zeal was the glory of the Father, following the way of the Cross, after the example of the Heart of Christ.

7.4 What place in the new age of mission

To listen to what the Spirit says in the communion of the Church is a sure criterion for fitting into the role designed for us.

As part of the post-Conciliar renewal, the General Chapters of our Institutes have re-written the Rule of Life, returning to the charism of Daniel Comboni. In the discernment and programming at Chapters, priorities are chosen, commitments are reviewed, targets are set. All this then flows down to Provincial and local community level, because communion must be expressed both towards the local Church and towards the Institute.

In the serenity of daily apostolic commitment identified in this way, there are some preferential areas that reflect the Comboni history, and must not be forgotten.⁵⁰

- Comboni did everything he could to awaken Europe to its missionary duty.

It is now our duty to throw bridges between the South and the North of our world. Contribute to close the deep rift that divides the world. This is the renewed prophecy of Daniel Comboni.

- Comboni did not get many results.

We might find ourselves in situations where witness is the only way we can be present. With Comboni, and like him, we draw hope and strength from the words of the Pope: "The Gospel is not a promise of easy successes. It does not promise a comfortable life. It makes demands. It is, at the same time, a Great Promise, ... of victory through faith for the person subject to many trials and setbacks".⁵¹

- Comboni came face-to-face with Islam.

Since then, relationships with Islam, never easy, have marked our history. Now we recognise the need for and the difficulty of dialogue; and now, too it is a priority for us in the animation of the Church on this aspect. It becomes the paradigm of our ability to manage other inter-religious encounters.

Are we willing and prepared?

We are proclaimers of the good news with the splendour of the truth and the fire of charity. Means and personnel for this are a great blessing and a great gift. They bear witness because the structures are very modest and the attitudes are evangelical: they demonstrate both the work of God and the gratuitousness of our service.

7.3 *Save Africa by means of Africans*

In Uganda, the land of the Martyrs, and of a large presence of Comboni missionaries, Paul VI asked Africans to become missionaries to themselves.⁴⁷ It was a recognition of the missionary wisdom of Comboni, as expressed in the Plan. We have called attention several times to particular aspects of this document, which is fundamental to our missionary story.

In living this new age of mission, the figure and the work of Comboni will help us to discern its values, and the true paths that are the lasting novelty in the journey of the Church. And we are invited to listen to the Churches where we are present, so as to understand their response to the Spirit, while making our own charism present in them.

- Methodology and Local Churches: every Institute has its style of apostolate that allows it to become part of the life of the Church in a way that is not vague and ambiguous.⁴⁸ Seeking and respecting this identity must go along with sharing the options of the local Churches. This is not easy: "metánoia" in the apostolic life is a gift, and a continual spiritual effort.

It is consoling to become part of a local Church that is born of our ministry, and to see how it "develops a pastoral activity, organises its liturgical life and takes on missionary tasks..."⁴⁹

- Inculturation of the Gospel: following in the footsteps of the Founder, our contribution to inculturation has been notable - and to some extent, still unknown. Not only through study and writings, but also through projects, activities, patient sharing. Wherever we are. Each Church and community is called on to discover its own genuine expressions of faith. Our presence is a fraternal reminder of the urgency, the necessity and the limitations of inculturation.

He often paid tribute to the solid zeal of his missionaries. He could see examples of holiness flourish. He wrote of Sister Giuseppa Scandola: "The holiest sister we have is the sacristan in Khartoum, Sr Maria Giuseppa. Oh, she's a real saint!" (S,6473). "Let's leave aside the outstanding holiness - and I mean, holiness - of Sr Maria G. Scandola, that really shines out in a person of such heroic humility" (S,6653).

Apostolic zeal unified the whole personality of Comboni: he was an outstanding practitioner of the "being able" that he urged in his followers. He put people on their guard against uncontrolled zeal that could be desire to stand out, or false prophecy. He also shunned the seeking of "human comforts" (S,2700), which were certainly far less attractive than all the conveniences of today. He sums up the whole with these words: "What we want is souls, the glory of God, and to die for Christ" (S,4770).

* * *

** These few main lines of the holiness of the Founder should help us to enter into dialogue with him. He is no longer among us in his physical life, and he cannot continue to give us concrete example. But he is with us. He is living, with the Father. He intercedes for us.*

** His life in the flesh that was lived in the Spirit, did not reveal to us, once and for all, 'his Christ'.*

We are called to penetrate further and further into his life: and we will be more and more captivated. Each one will find a gesture, a word, an attitude that will help him or her to grow in the knowledge of and conformity with Christ.

It is the Founder who becomes one who teaches Christ, a guide who leads us to Him.

** Nor does the event of the Beatification reveal the full reality of Daniel Comboni. Our loving trust in the power of his intercession drives us to work to ensure that his "holiness" be fully manifested (Canonisation).*

His image as a witness who lived in a "state of martyrdom" could be turned into a powerful stimulus for the whole Church in the present missionary period of new Evangelization.

** In our Institutes, Daniel Comboni is the foremost, true, effective vocations promoter: "Then, when we are in Heaven (and we want to get there all right!) we will crucify Jesus and Mary with our incessant prayers, and we will pray so hard that, either for love or for... He will be forced to work miracles and raise up Pauls and Xaviers; so that the hundred million souls in unhappy Nigrizia may be converted to the faith as soon as possible" (S,2459).*

** Let us take up the invitation of Isaiah:*

"Look upon the rock from which you have been hewn" (Is.51:1).

"The renewed effort towards the ad gentes mission requires holy missionaries" .¹¹

"You have holy roots. The branches must be holy too. I told the Comboni Missionaries in Rome that the Beatification of Daniel Comboni will put holiness within the charism of the Congregation. I am sure you will make the best possible use of that" .¹²

tion has come for Africa. The People of God is missionary by its very nature, and Daniel Comboni knows instinctively that, in participating in his Plan, the Church will build herself up solidly, through living out her missionary calling. He recognises, too, that the prophetic voices of heroic people have sounded in the Church over the ages, and have led to admirable undertakings. Therefore he himself steps into the era of the missionary movement, with a contribution that stands out for its courage and its originality.⁴⁶

His clear and precise missionary vocation, that leads him to speak and to act, inspires certainty in those who meet him: his Plan is not his, but has been communicated to him for implementation. His proposals - not much different from those of other apostles of his time - derive their novelty from the spiritual and historical power they possess. And they also present a clear scale of values and priorities that are necessarily linked and dependent on each other.

His appeal is based on the conviction that the Plan is both a divine work, and one of outstanding charity. Now is the time to carry it out; a reply is needed, urgently. In answer to Comboni's explicit request, over 200 religious houses are praying: it is the element that he considers complementary to the missionary work, and that he cannot do without: the prayer that implores the coming of the Kingdom. His invitation to leave for the Mission, his call for personnel, solicits the involvement of the community, which produces men and women ready to dedicate themselves totally, in response to the divine vocation. Lastly, the charity of the whole community is called on to open up to these new frontiers with the money and the use of any means that offer the very best to such a great undertaking.

The wisdom of this global proposal highlights more than one providential link with the activities of Comboni Missionaries in the Church today.

Our presence in the media field is a great asset: it is born from the Word and is expressed in ecclesial communion.

Those who have lived mission know that these words are completely true. Read with reference to the new age of mission, on the threshold of the third millenium, they tell us that:

- The truth of the Gospel of salvation of Christ can be proclaimed, welcomed and absorbed only in the mystery of the Cross. It is only in the power of the Paschal Mystery that the world will be saved.
- Every methodology must submit to the litmus-test of the Cross. In the city centres and the slums of history; among the rich and listening to the cries of the poor; to young nations and to those belonging to ancient cultures.
- So any missionary experience whatsoever has to be understood and lived as a continuation of the journey that began on Pentecost morning, at the door leading out of the Cenacle. It is an ecclesial journey, through the express will of Christ.

Those words of Comboni, read in the light of the famine and plague, contain an admonition: to fix our gaze on whoever is on the Cross of Christ, to give them preferential assistance, as the Samaritan did.

- There are still vast areas of humanity living "with no God, no faith, no Church" (S,2311).
- A billion and a half people are crucified by a life of "total indigence".⁴⁵
- Persecution bears the disturbing faces of religious fanaticism and of new and rabid nationalism.
- New kinds of poverty and of sickness are appearing.
- Multitudes of people are oppressed by the machinations of organised crime.

The Founder chose the foolishness of the Cross: it is the way of apparent weakness that Jesus himself chose freely. It remains, then, the only way.

7.2 Animation means involving the whole Church

A "catholic" heart beat in Comboni: for him it is imperative to bring to the attention of the whole Church that the hour of salva-



SEGRETARIA DI STATO

PRIMA SEZIONE - AFFARI GENERALI

Dal Vaticano, 20 aprile 1995

N.369.868

Reverendissimo Padre,

sono lieto di significarle che il Sommo Pontefice ha stabilito che la cerimonia di Beatificazione del Servo di Dio Daniele Comboni abbia luogo la domenica 17 marzo 1996, unitamente a quella del Servo di Dio Guido Maria Conforti, Fondatore dei Missionari Saveriani.

Nel comunicarle quanto sopra, La prego di voler prendere gli opportuni contatti con gli Uffici interessati. Profitto della circostanza per confermarvi con sensi di distinto ossequio

della Paternità Vostra Rev.ma
dev.mo nel Signore

St. le
Sott.

Reverendissimo Padre
P. GLENDAY DAVID KINNEAR

Superiore Generale dei Missionari
Comboniani del Cuore di Gesù
Via Luigi Lilio, 80

00143 ROMA

COMBONI AND THE NEW AGE OF MISSION

7. Comboni, as a servant totally dedicated to the mission to the poorest and most neglected of his time, rejoices in Heaven to see vocations like his own in the Church, and to hear the earnest appeal of the successors of Peter.

"The *ad gentes* mission is still at the beginning". "Therefore it is necessary to direct missionary attention towards those geographic areas and those cultural situations that have remained outside the influence of the Gospel".⁴³ The fact that the Church is wholly missionary "requires that there be *ad gentes* missions, for life, and through a specific calling".⁴⁴

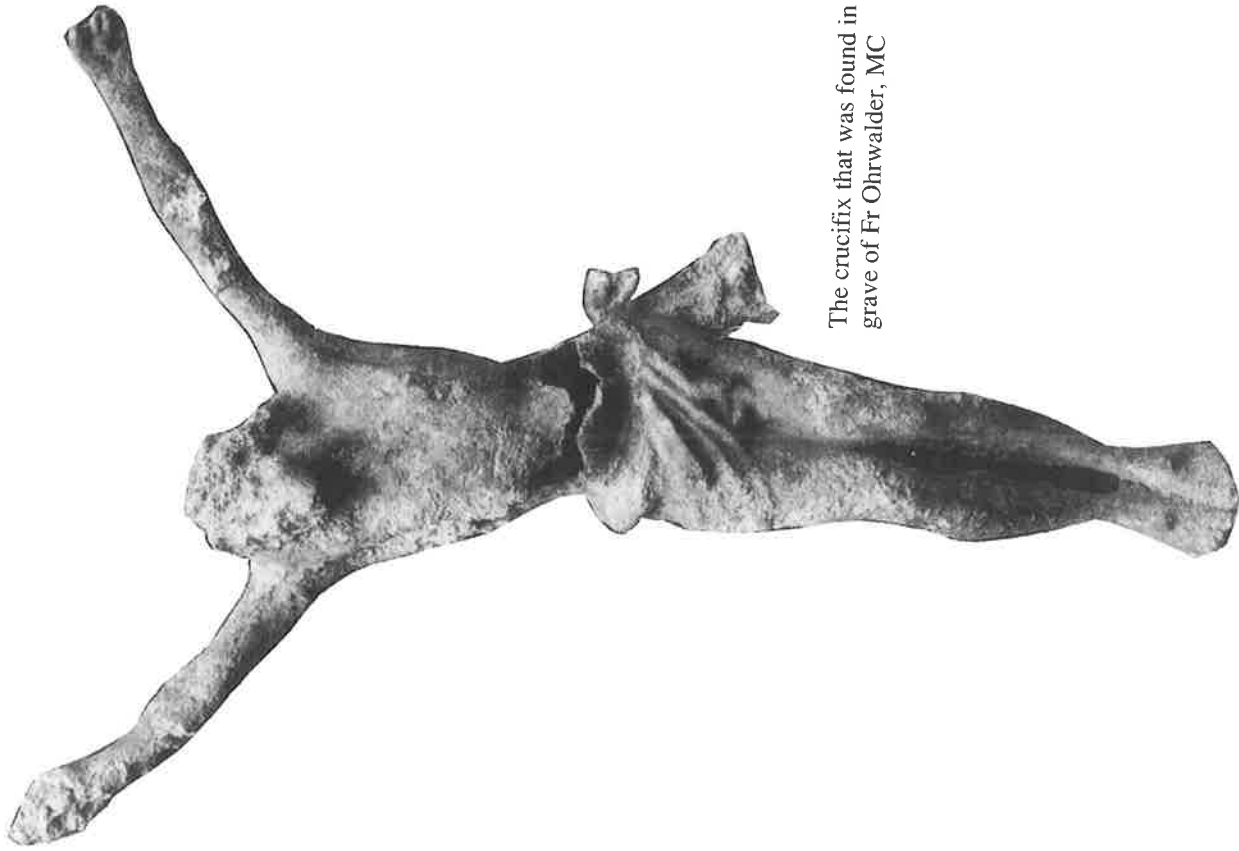
With our gaze on Daniel Comboni, on his person and his charism, let us travel through history mindful of the spirit which guided his life:

"The missionary does not ask God for explanations about the mission he is given, but acts on His word and on that of His representatives as a docile tool of His adorable will" (S,2702).

Coming to the end of our journey through his life, let us gather together some of the principles that inspired him and that brought plentiful fruit in the Spirit. In his day they were already thought of as a novelty; today, on the eve of the third millennium, they take on the significance of a renewed prophecy.

7.1 Mission flourishes at the foot of the Cross

"God's works must always be born at the foot of Calvary. The Cross, opposition, obstacles and sacrifice are the ordinary token of the holiness of the undertaking: and it is along this path, scattered with tribulations and thorns, that God's works develop, prosper, reach their perfection and triumph. This is the loving and wise management of divine Providence, confirmed by the history of the Church and by all the Apostolic Missions on earth..." (S,6337). This was in 1880, writing to Canossa about the famine and plague in Central Africa.



The crucifix that was found in the grave of Fr Ohrwalder, MC

"I have an unshakeable certainty of the triumph of the Cross".

**COMBONI:
PROPHET IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT**

3. In telling don Mazza about the birth of his Plan, Comboni writes: "When I arrived in Rome I wasn't even dreaming of the Plan. Providence has guided my mind and my heart" (S,931).

It was the brilliant light of the Spirit of God: a pure gift of grace, for which his docility to his calling had prepared him. A charismatic moment and a Christian event, that needs to be constantly remembered and studied:

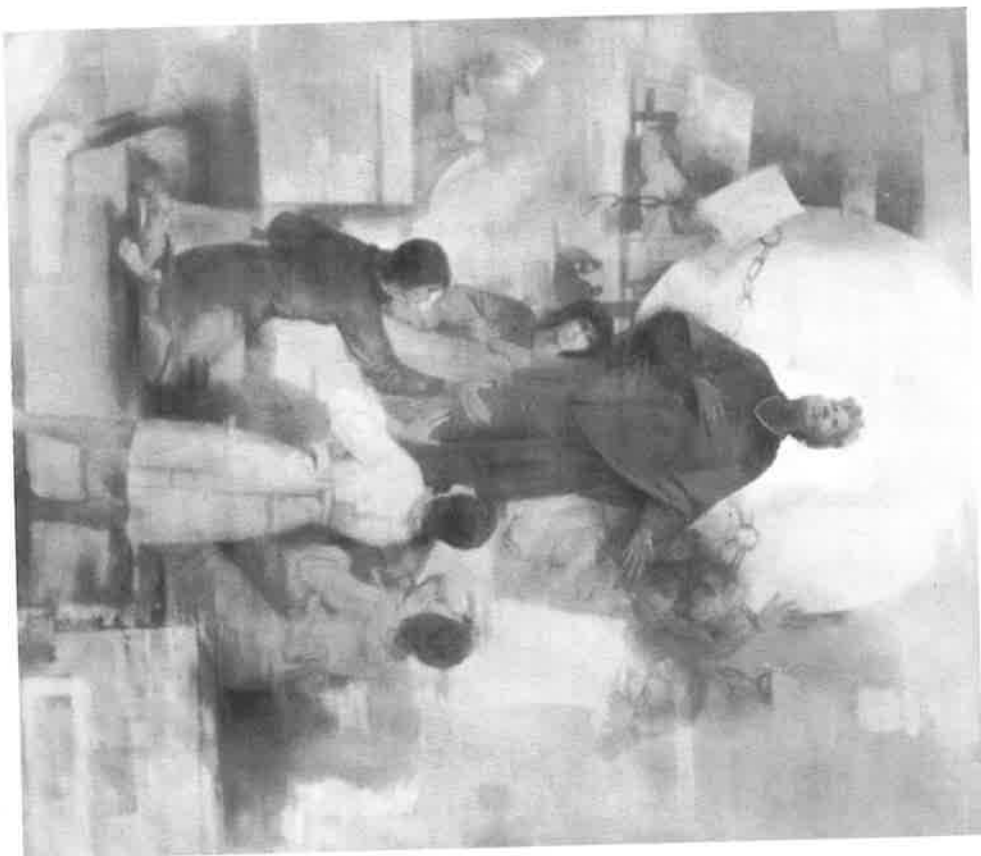
"Thanks to the light that pours down on him from on High, Comboni 'sees' the sorry state of Nigrizia; and thence ascends to the 'common Father' who is awaiting the return to the one fold of the scattered flock of Africans; for love of them too, the Son has been crucified; and from his pierced Heart "a divine power" (= the Holy Spirit, in Comboni's language) stirs up and sustains the missionary option."¹³

In Comboni's whole life the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit are evident. He often names the Spirit with typical expressions: divine power, impulse of love, burst of flame, grace of the Heart of Jesus.¹⁴

Comboni sees the action of the Spirit in the Church taking concrete expression in the person of the Pope, in Propaganda, and the Bishops: those whom he obeys through his faith-vision. And to obtain the light of the Spirit he enjoys the powerful intercession of the Queen of Nigrizia, "the indescribable dwelling of the Eternal Divine Spirit" (S,4003).

3.1 A life illuminated by faith

Comboni achieved the most mature moment in his journey of faith - which had followed the normal stages of any baptised person - through the witness of his missionary life. His faith had been passed on to him by the community of believers, had been accepted personally, and then communicated to others.



"There is certainly a precise reason that the name of the first Blessed of Sudan should be Bakhita - the Lucky One.

*To God the praise, honour and the thanksgiving, now and for ever.
Let all the Sudan sing with one voice: AMEN! AMEN! ALLELUIA
AMEN! AMEN! ALLELUIA!*

+ Gabriel Zubeir Wako
Archbishop of Khartoum, Sudan.

From his family, his parish, in the Mazza college, he received the Sacraments of the Faith and the living examples of faith. He never forgot them. Just as he always conserved as an indelible memory the heroic sacrifice of his parents in not standing in the way of his vocation: a generous sacrifice on which he meditated frequently. Providence planned that Blessed¹⁵ Giovanni Nepomuceno Tschiederer should confer on him Confirmation, the Subdiaconate and Diaconate, and finally the Priesthood (31st December 1854): acts that pin-pointed, symbolically, the time and the place of the passage of the Holy Spirit between two great souls.

His relationship with the Holy Spirit - which is always personal - is fully revealed when Comboni begins to live out his vocation. He is led by the Spirit, and becomes witness and teacher of Faith for many.¹⁶

He used to admonish people that it is not enough to pray with words; the fire of faith is needed. Contemplate the mystery of Christ on the Cross with faith: that is what makes us blessed and ready for anything, even martyrdom.

3.2 *Prophetic action in the Spirit*

The enduring image of Comboni in the history of the Church and of peoples is proof of his prophetic character. He is called a prophet, and his work prophetic.

Without taking on the air of a prophet, he fulfilled the characteristics of one. Like every prophet, he had a role in the ecclesial community that arose from his calling. He felt called to give his life in Africa, under the banner of the Cross. He considers this a consecration to a state of life which is similar to that of Christ and of the Apostles. Providence does not only choose, it gives the aptitude too.

Like the Old Testament prophets, the prophetic author of the Book of Revelation discloses to the churches what they are (Rev.2-3). The Plan and the Postulatum are two great instances of prophecy in the Church, urging her to take Christ to Africa.

How much impact did the many women with whom he made friends have on the character, the spirit, the human feelings and the missionary dedication of Comboni?

And how much humanity and strength to persevere were infused into him by those who were his immediate collaborators in the apostolate in Africa: Teresa Grogolini, Giuseppa Scandola, Vittoria Paganini, Virginia Mansur, and many others?

And how much did their feminine character receive from him, a man with a single passion, a father and Founder? And from the first missionaries, priests and brothers, and from Fr Ohrwalder?...

Woman as mother and sister: she illuminates the human existence and arouses the highest sentiments a man can have.

Man, as father and brother: he triggers the revelation of the spiritual beauty of woman, in its pure freedom of self-giving.⁴²

* * *

*"He was always a loving father, who always knew how to love them, and was understanding... Through his example and by what he said he encouraged everyone to be tolerant towards everyone else, and he always found new words of comfort".*⁴⁰

** He continues to be our father: we can turn to him. In the intercession of founders, the grace which includes all others is that of perseverance, to "stand firm and go ahead". The grace of fidelity, which is "composed of successive conversions, each more profound than the last, each marked by the imprint of the Spirit of God. ... because human freedom is always fragile and endangered; one can never presume tomorrow's fidelity: it is not written in our hearts, but in the Heart of God. And there is no fidelity in humankind except in God's faithfulness: tomorrow belongs to God alone..."*⁴¹

** Cenacle: it is also a place where we become aware of human weakness: of the treachery of Judas, of the resistances of Peter, of the quarrelling of the disciples over "who was the greatest", of their fear of the Jews even after the Resurrection. But was it not in that Cenacle that the Lord washed the feet of his disciples and gave them the commandment of love?*

*Was it not for them and for all, the weak and the petty, that he broke the bread and gave them wine to drink - his body and blood?
Was it not to them, defeated and fearful, that he appeared with the gift of his Peace?
Cenacle is an experience of pardon given and received, of the glorious power of the Cross.*

** Cenacle: it is fraternal love, that sustains us as "women" and "men" consecrated to a common mission, to the furthest ends of the earth.*

On the other hand, his genuinely prophetic charism makes him act on behalf of and for the good of the community (1Cor.14:29-33): in order to render true service to the Church he has suffered much and is ready for martyrdom.

The Founder intercedes that we might all practise prophecy in the Comboni Family. His attention to the Church now urges us towards ecclesial discernment, the elements of which were outlined by the recent Synod on Consecrated Life:

"Does this "prophetic" activity, especially if unusual, derive from the charism of the Institute?

Does it show clearly the assent of faithfulness and of obedience to the Magisterium?

Does it spring from a life given to prayer? Is the subject normally docile to the Holy Spirit?

*Does it bring creative responses to pastoral challenges?"*¹⁷

3.3 *Heroic missionary fortitude*

The Church considers that Comboni showed heroic Christian fortitude. It is a moral virtue. It is also a gift of the Holy Spirit, given in the Sacrament of Confirmation: "... to spread and defend the Faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross".¹⁸ This special power of the Spirit was clearly demonstrated in his life.

In a heartfelt defence of his missionary activity, he writes: "Let them say what they like in Verona, but the Pope and all the most influential and best missionaries of the East are convinced that it was the unshakeable determination of the bungling reprobate of a Comboni; and now I'm beginning to perceive it a bit myself, and also that by the help of the fervent prayers of the whole world and the heroism of the most bitterly tried of my collaborators, I have managed (*servus inutilis sum*) to prevent the arduous mission from collapsing" (S,6171).¹⁹

Comboni is a great inspirer of fortitude: eschewing personal ambitions and anchored firmly in the communion of the Church. He gets over difficulties because he is certain of his vocation;

because he works in the interests of Christ and of the Church. And he does so even when it seems that he is abandoned by everyone, even by God and the Pope.

3.4 *Dialogue as a gift of the Spirit*

Comboni was a born communicator. He put this natural gift at the disposal of the Spirit to communicate his missionary ideal and to involve - possibly - everyone. His rescript was the widest the human heart could imagine: the whole world to be given its human dignity through the mediation of the Church, universal sacrament of Salvation.

He wanted to involve believers in carrying out his Plan, so he started with the Pope, Propaganda Fide, the Bishops, right down to an appeal for "the moral and financial support of the Catholics of the whole world" (S,843). He contacted holy people and the most outstanding representatives of the missionary and renewal movements in the Church at that time.²⁰ He also got in touch with so many Institutes and associations of men and women that one asks how he managed to bear the burden of such a far-flung dialogue. And there was another sphere: that of government officials and philanthropic and cultural societies.

When he met powerful people or was faced with the political matters of the time, his one concern was to plead the cause of the neglected people of Africa. Like other saints, he takes his place in history as a man with a single passion: for him, the "re-birth of Africa".²¹

But how can we reconstruct the spiritual motivations that showed his docility to the Holy Spirit so harmoniously?

He understood that dialogue is not easy. It requires a severe ascetical process.

He started off by listening to the other person, being uncritical of differences.

His community was the starting-point of his dialogue. It was where and with whom he lived that he found the natural, and the most important, place to exercise face-to-face encounter with others, understanding, forgiveness.

them to go out and talk. From that Pentecost morning onwards, in whatever manner, time or circumstance it originates, the action takes place only in the power of the Spirit.

Daniel Comboni, a prophet in the power of the Spirit, lives in the Comboni community that evangelizes in the Spirit.³⁹

Comboni's experience, with that of his companions and Sisters, remains as a charismatic point of reference. This is codified, for each Institute, in the Rule of Life which, approved by the Church, proposes ideals to be reached. It is up to us to announce the Gospel as a group, faithful to the praxis of the Apostles and of Comboni. Therefore, let us remember:

- Comboni set off for an unknown mission: there is always some new aspect to discover. The difficult part is to discover it together, as a community in which the Spirit operates. This same Spirit of Jesus cannot make us discover contrasting things.

- Comboni had great confidence in the Africans: we are not going to people from whom the Spirit is absent. We have to discern this presence, listen to the experiences of the people all together, and so enter the sphere of action of the Spirit.

- Comboni was for the most neglected: but in obedience to the Church he would have travelled the whole world. This has happened for his Institutes, which now work in four continents. And where we are sent, there also is the Founder sent, with his charisma.

Is it not perhaps a sign that he is pleased about this, when the miracle recognised by the Church took place in Latin America, in favour of a young Afro-Brazilian who knew absolutely nothing about his existence or his holiness?

* * *

* *Those who lived with Comboni bore witness to his great humanity, and the gift of spiritual paternity that he had received along with the charisma as Founder.*

With people he did not know, he was quite open about his Christian and cultural identity. He did not dissimulate to please them.

Lastly, in his dialogue he expressed a sense of poverty and lack of pretence. He knew that the Spirit was present in the other person too, often very mysteriously.

* * *

* *The Church always re-discovers Her identity when she allows the grace of the Holy Spirit to renew Her. Similarly, looking at the work of the Founder, animated by the Spirit, is stimulation and renewal.*

* *The teaching of the Church re-confirms and makes present Comboni's experience: "the Spirit is the main agent of the mission of the Church",²² we are only the servants. The Spirit is always present, and transforms peoples; and is "the principal agent of evangelization".²³*

* *In the Message of the African Synod, it is significant that three terms, apparently quite different from each other, are united to indicate the concern of the Synod fathers. They are: evangelization-inculturation-holiness.²⁴ The final appeal says:*

"The primary need on the eve of this XXI century in which our identity is, as it were, crushed in the jaws of a merciless history, is that prophets come forward to speak in the name of the God of hope, for the creation of a new identity. Africa needs holy prophets".

* * *

6.3 *The Cenacle as a place of prayer: with Mary*

The Church about to be born waits in obedience and prayer for the promised Spirit. The Apostles and some disciples, men and women, gather around Mary the Mother of the Lord, who guards and contemplates the mystery of her Son. She is, for all of them, the model of communion, peace, concord and docility to the Spirit.

Comboni was totally immersed in the mystery of Christ crucified. He wrote: "The omnipotence of prayer is our strength" (S,1969). The omnipotence of which he speaks is the understanding of God's plan of salvation for him and for his undertaking, and the strength is what comes from carrying it forward.

He lived on prayer: there is still a lot to discover about his hidden, night-long prayer. From his choice of vocation to the decisions "taken after much praying" (S,7134), his attitude is that of the *orans*, symbolised by one whose arms are constantly raised in prayer.

In this way he became for his followers the example and teacher of prayer, and of the value, the efficacy and the quality of prayer.

As regards prayers and devotions Comboni was a child of his time, so it is quite amazing to see his contemplation of and his closeness to the humanity of Christ, and the consequent familiarity towards the Holy Family of Nazareth: "I ask the counsel of the Lord, of Our Lady and of St Joseph, and they have always helped" (S,6524). He saw in them people consecrated to the will of the Father and to the mission of salvation.

He exulted when "the Virgin Mary has called an African girl to be one of the virgin Brides of Christ" (S,5297), and he will consecrate the Sisters of his Institute to Mary. They should take inspiration from Her, to become bearers of Christ to others.

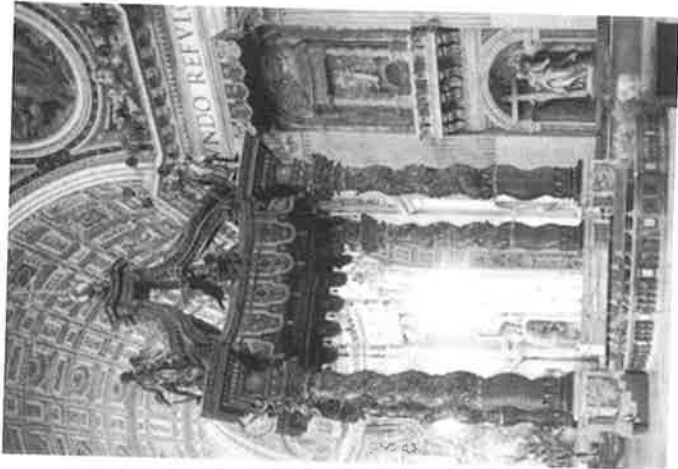
The Cenacle and Nazareth: Mary and Joseph; places and persons where and with whom our Founder was truly at home.

6.4 *Pentecost: it always starts from here...*

The wait, united in prayer, ends with the out-pouring of the Spirit: the miracle of interior transformation takes place, driving

Rome, 15th September 1864

"As I prayed near the tomb of St Peter, there flashed into my mind the idea of a Plan for the regeneration of Africa".



Other priests in his time aroused the same sentiments. In Comboni - and in others who have left their mark on the Church - the time of Holy Mass was the high-point of a eucharistic life.

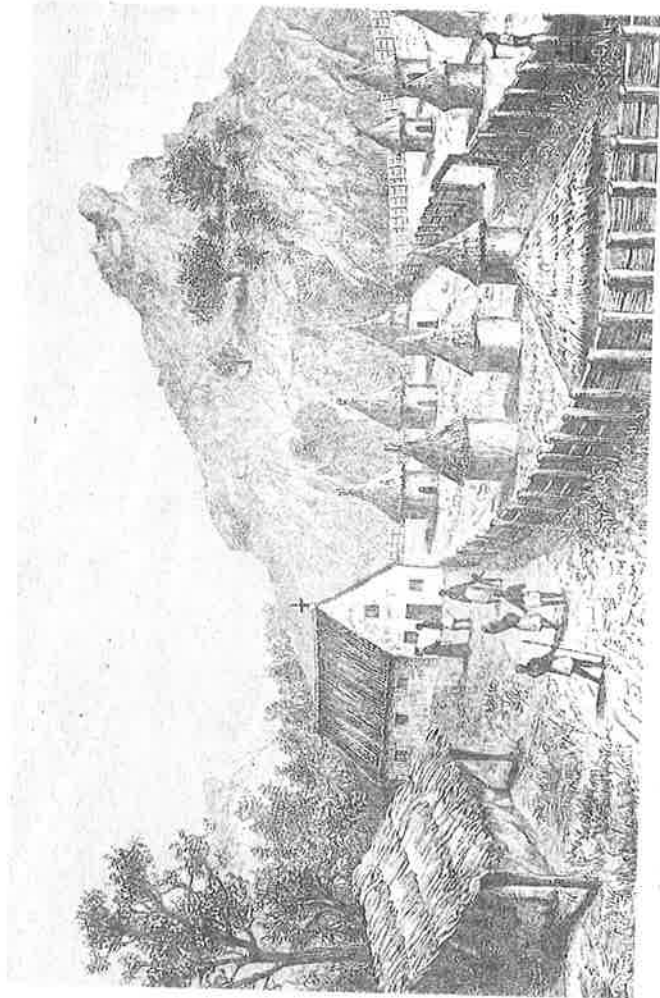
A year before his death, at a very difficult time, he would write: "...but my strength lies in the Most Holy Sacrament" (S,5044). The rules he gave on this point regarding the life of the Institutes and the communities demonstrate his conviction that put the Eucharist as the real and operative centre of Christian existence, not simply the ideal centre.

For our own missionary future, let us take to heart some brief references:

- Life as praise and thanksgiving: in Comboni giving thanks, even for crosses, was as natural as breathing.
- Sharing and charity made historical reality, for the poor, of the breaking of bread at the Lord's Supper.
- The Eucharist, as the future of the mission and of the world, was expressed in the courage of faithfulness in trials.
- The sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist was lived in the presence of droughts and famine, his illnesses, the scourge of slavery.
- Comboni would always celebrate the Sunday Eucharist himself. He was the pastor who kept the flock united through the Sacrament that is the basis and maker of unity: it was a little flock, but the expression of a great hope for the future. The Eucharist is the pledge of future glory. Right from the present it introduces us, step by step, into the reality of the eighth day: that of the Risen Lord, the Day that never draws to an end.³⁷

The extent to which the relationship between Eucharist and life has been assimilated in the Comboni tradition can be seen from a fact in the life of Maria Teresa Lazzarotto, from the Institute of the Comboni Secular Missionaries. Among some objects she always had with her in an envelope were a holy picture-souvenir of her First Communion and a small strip of paper, on which she had written:

"Lord, help me to do what you will because you will it - and how you will it for as long as you will".³⁸



Malbes: "The Settlement is destined to become a wholly Catholic city... helped to keep the faith".

Fatherhood and brotherhood, despite human limitations and divisions, survived beyond the premature death of the Founder, the Mahdist revolution and its devastating consequences, and the opposition that arose in Europe too, from various quarters. This shows they had a solid foundation:

"The relationship that Comboni formed with his followers is a relationship in which the Heart of Christ is the go-between, the same Heart that emerges from the Priestly Prayer of the Lord. For him, the basic motives for communion are not human, even though these are important and must be given their due worth, but supernatural".³⁵

The history of our Institutes has recorded wonderful episodes of the experience of brotherhood. The "reunion" itself has to be interpreted in this light: the Heart of Christ, the Founder, the Mission!

The Institutes that are Comboni's heirs take the experience of community within religious life as a commitment assumed in the Church for the service of the Mission. It is a divine gift, that has its beginning and its model in the Trinity. The international make-up of our Institutes, as put into practice and desired by Comboni, fulfils and witnesses to "catholicity". This universality, which is possible at the foot of the Cross that makes us brothers and sisters, becomes a treasure and a sign of communion for the peoples we evangelize.

6.2 *Missionary life as 'Eucharistic' life*

The Cenacle experience begins on Holy Thursday: Eucharist and Priesthood are the departing gifts of Love. The choir of admiring witnesses who have taken part in Comboni's Eucharists is unanimous:

"When he celebrated Mass, his behaviour was saintly... At the altar he seemed an angel come down from heaven, his voice, his movements were pleasing to all, and were an invitation to prayer; and that is why people crowded into church".³⁶

COMBONI: SON OF THE CHURCH

4. The Founder lived during a period in history when the Church was particularly opposed. It seemed to him that a great danger threatened, and this made him suffer and pray that God would deliver the Church from the enemies of Christ.

But beyond and before this historical aspect there is the overall relationship Comboni had with the Church: as a Catholic, then a missionary, and finally a Bishop. Without the Church he would not be Comboni. It is like life between persons who are in love: there is respect but also contrast, love and loyalty in seeking the truth, sharing, and a longing to carry out the Plan come down from Above. And always, over everything, reign obedience and fidelity. As a leading figure in the missionary movement of the last century, Comboni stirs the Church and drives her to a new witness: through the opening up of Africa and the involvement of all the churches with ancient traditions. From the Church he had received everything; in Her he had known the Lord who "loved the Church and gave himself for Her, to make her holy" (Eph.5:26).

4.1 *His sense of belonging to the Church*

Knowing that to belong to the Church was a great, divine gift, he would not allow any other interest to supersede it. Comboni expressed this more than once, often in a striking manner.

This sense of belonging matured in the school of "my father Nicola Mazza". In the austere life of this priest, in the strictness of his education methods, in his openness to the missions, the young Comboni discovered the ecclesial dimensions: holiness, seeking after truth, missionary outreach.

However, not everyone was on the same level as Mazza. Comboni thus realised that the Church has to be loved as She is. But this is true love, and so admits him to the mystery of the Church. His belonging becomes increasingly aware. When he

finished his secondary education, he asked, following the usage of the time, to take the clerical habit, and decided to offer his life to God in the service of the Church. He spent two days before the crucifix: and he will live in the Church always spiritually at the foot of the Cross, which is the "seal of God's works" (S,994).

As Vatican II will stress,²⁵ he understood that the only way to belong fully to the Church is to stake one's life on two options: to strive for holiness and to serve through the call one follows. Which is what he did. And this prepared him for a grace which is granted to few: the charisma of a founder. A gift bestowed on him, but in the Church and for the Church.

To rediscover Daniel Comboni means to make ours his way of being in the Church. To understand, as he did, that in all circumstances and despite everything, the words of Jesus attributing the "solidness of rock" to Her are true.

4.2 *He loved the Church: "My Lady and my mother"* (S,7001)

There is nothing casual about the choice of these words. They are found in a letter to Cardinal G. Simeoni (03.09.1881): his heart is breaking, there are so many problems - and it is the last month of his life.

This mature love of Comboni the bishop should be approached like a sacred place, removing one's shoes. Love is truly faithful when it overcomes the ordeal of misunderstanding and calumny. Obedience and love are affirmed in a later passage of the letter, when Comboni expresses a conclusion which is contrary to that of a prelate. He loves the truth, and he speaks it respectfully ("But I say - quietly - exactly the opposite", S,7002), but he will not deny his critical intelligence.

As has often happened in the history of the Church, Comboni put to the test those who had the service of authority, so that the treasure entrusted to him would be accepted. It is the presentation of a gift of the Spirit that, normally, is not recognised immediately. The members of the Church and the charismatic Founder are discovering the truth together. This discernment, which keeps in mind the past while searching in the signs of the

COMBONI: FATHER OF A "LITTLE CENACLE OF APOSTLES"

6. Everything in the life of Daniel Comboni spoke of mission. He knew he was continuing the work of the Apostles. They had been prepared at length by the Lord Jesus, and in the Cenacle had received the supreme gifts and teachings that had consecrated them as a community of Apostles.

To guarantee a future for the Plan, he founds the Institutes in Verona and Cairo as "a little Cenacle of apostles". He senses the atmosphere of the Cenacle in his life: the presence of the Lord and of his Spirit, with that of Mary, the Mother.

He consecrates his undertaking to the Heart of Jesus, and places it under the protection of Mary Immaculate: he knows he must imitate the love of these two Hearts, and make them present to the persons who will follow him.³⁴

His fatherhood is based on the love of the two Hearts which he depicts joined together on his episcopal Coat of Arms.

6.1 *Comboni exercises his paternity and creates brotherhood*

He was convinced that love is fundamental in the formation of missionaries and of communities: "what is needed is the charity that makes people able" (S,6655).

Jesus had given the example, selecting men that were all different in culture, character and profession, though all Jews. The Founder brought all kinds of characters into the community, so long as they shared its ideal: "We are all driven by a single ideal... to sacrifice our lives for the love of God, for the love of His holy Church, and for unhappy Africa" (S,2510). Knowing the difficulties, he places as the centre of communication between himself and his missionaries "the most sweet Heart of Jesus" (S,5869).

He exercised a paternity that was patient and quick to forgive. He advises one collaborator/formator: Try to treat everyone kindly and gently; if you cannot achieve ten degrees of perfection, let us at least get whatever is possible, even just one" (S,6111).

times for the way forward, inevitably contains the mystery of the Cross for all concerned.

He is intimately convinced that he himself, his mission and his projects are guaranteed only in and by the Church: by Her authority. Not out of human designs, but through the express will of Christ. He loves the Church and will always love her, because Christ has left to Her the deposit of the Gospel that Comboni intends to proclaim.

4.3 Comboni's obedience as fidelity in ordinary matters

There are points of contact between love and obedience in the Church: love is the basis of obedience. This is the law of evangelical freedom practised by the Founder. He is so convinced of the need for obedience that he uses paradoxical expressions to make his meaning clear: "I have sold my will and my whole self to the Holy See... and I intend to work solely under its guidance and authority; I would even refuse to convert the whole world - if by God's grace I were in such a position - unless it were under the command and authority of the Holy See" (S,2635). To work under authority is not just to practise a virtue. It is much more: it is a sign that God himself guarantees the work and will grant the means, personnel and "everything" necessary to succeed:

"If it is clear that this is in accordance with the pleasure and the wishes of the Church, then we will have the money, the people, effective collaboration and everything; and the Plan will get off to a good start. Otherwise my efforts, and those of others, will be worth less than nothing" (S,959).

This quotation is from a letter addressed to Cardinal A. Barnabò (26.12.1864) a few months after the drawing up of the Plan. Two words show Comboni's radical approach to obedience: "everything" and "nothing". But when he talks of the efforts, that is, of the apostolic ministry, two other terms catch the attention: "mine" and "those of others". For himself, the sisters, the priests and the lay people, there is the risk of fruitless effort. He places readiness to obey as one of the key elements in forma-



Liberated prisoners of the Madhi.

Fr Joseph Ohrwalder MC, two Comboni Sisters and a Catholic girl, Adila.

"The missionary or the Sister of Central Africa has to be a lamb to the slaughter,
a person destined to suffer very much for Jesus Christ;
nothing else, because anything else means not being apostles."

tion for the mission: "the first instruction to give to the postulants: to die totally to one's own will, and sacrifice oneself entirely until death through perfect obedience" (S,2281).

The value of the obedience of the Christian and the missionary is contained in that portion of mystery that is always found in the decisions of superiors: it is the area in which we exercise our faith and submit to the will of the Father expressed through the Church.

4.4 Missionary apostolate is the continuation of the Mission of the Son of God ²⁶

This is the service to which Comboni is called in the Church. He repeats it with conviction and wants everyone in the mission to make a daily renewal of consecration to "Jesus the Apostle". It is one of rules of the men's Institute in Cairo (1870) - among those intended to help candidates for the mission in their spiritual preparation:

"...⁶ Act of consecration ad Iesum Apostolum of one's labours and one's life, to be made in common every morning and evening" (S,2234).

The one to turn to, the one to whom labours and life are consecrated, is the Person of Christ. Comboni knew that for such a difficult mission, powerful and shared convictions were needed. So the whole community consecrates itself daily to Christ.

In the fervour of those first years of formation for the mission, while continuing to tell his followers that their one ideal is to proclaim Christ and his Word, he will write:

"It is, however, a great comfort to me to think over and over that they have already been freed for the past eighteen centuries, through the Blood of Christ (...) and that Christ has bought them as his own inheritance, through his most precious Blood" (S,2300).

Apostolate draws the veil from this mystery of a salvation that has already taken place. The apostle must be attentive to the persons he meets: they have been bought by Christ at great cost.

meritorious task, but extremely arduous and exhausting, in order to be a stone hidden in the ground, that may never come to light, but that becomes part of the foundation of a new and colossal edifice that only posterity will see spring up..." (S,2701).

** In the African Synod we have admired, in the composition of the members and their living witness, a part of this wonderful edifice: there is a whole people of disciples in the Catholic communities, in the chapels, in the numerous works of charity and of human development, in the seminaries and in the convents. Everything started when the seed was hidden. Now, the witness goes on, the encounter with peoples and with their cultures, the Christian initiation and the opening to new ministries.*

Now too, the fruitfulness of Comboni the Founder goes on. His charism is expressed not only in the work of the three Institutes, but through the conviction and commitment of relatives, friends, benefactors, collaborators, families open to the missions, and in the recent initiatives towards Comboni Lay Missionaries and their associations.

** The Founder refers us to the words of that great African bishop, St Cyprian:*

"The sacrifice to offer to God is the people joined together in the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit".

* * *

help received "... from some of my Ladies, who are my friends for ever, because the Catholic woman is everything" (S,970).

In the Plan he envisages the formation of African women because, to a great extent, the regeneration of the great African family will depend on them.³²

To transmit his charisma, he founds at Verona (1st January 1872) the Institute of the Pie Madri della Nigrizia (now Comboni Missionary Sisters) with the aim of "forming... virtuous missionary women to consecrate themselves entirely to the missions of Central Africa" (S,2884).

Providence gives him exceptional persons: evidence of this are the heroic examples of religious women who are the first in history to penetrate into the interior of the African continent, and persevere there right until the deaths of the Comboni Missionary Sisters who were prisoners of the Mahdi for long years. Of one, Teresa Grigolini, to whom a heroic and mysterious destiny was reserved, he will write: "She has intelligence, ability, outstanding piety... Add to this a constitution of iron and amazing activity; and she can look after herself in Arabic, too: this is the kind I mean: here in Khartoum she has brought to Christ and to the practice of the Sacraments certain souls, that I wouldn't have thought possible" (S,6653-54).

Their ministries are not supplementary, but spring from their missionary vocation and their female nature. The Comboni Sisters and Comboni Secular Missionaries carry on this tradition, and are a stimulus and help to other women who work for the Gospel within the Comboni charisma.³³

* * *

** The beginnings of Comboni's mission have the characteristics of the community in Acts. The Founder had been clear with candidates in stating what would happen at the beginning, and what would have resulted in time:*

"In a word, the Missionary of Africa must often reflect and meditate that, indeed, he is engaged in a very

* * *

** Other aspects of the missionary make-up of Daniel Comboni will appear later. For the present, at this point in our journey through the life of the Founder, we have discovered the source of his love and obedience. And we can already perceive a design beginning to appear. This word, so dear to Paul, sums up the plan of God which culminated in Christ and in his Church. For those whom God loves, the design unfolds through predestination, vocation, justification and glorification (Rm.8:28-30).*

** Comboni is definitely an example of a faithful response to this design of salvation. His love and dedication in the Church, his spiritual fatherhood of the disciples who follow him, express the desire to communicate God's design to others: "We cannot live or breathe except for Jesus, and to win souls" (S,6846).*

* * *



It is in the conception and implementation of the "Catholic Settlement of Malbes" that the missionary genius of Comboni is expressed in its fullness. Malbes has an intrinsic value as an idea, rather than in how long it lasted.³¹ The new Christian has to continue to be educated and to grow in the faith, in suitable historical surroundings. This is how Comboni puts it: the new African converts are poor; they would have to go back and work for the Moslems, and "in contact with them they would lose their faith" again, and so "to provide for their souls" and to assist their families, they find a place to stay and land to cultivate at Malbes.

Faith is a precious gift. Therefore Comboni was always most attentive to provide an adequate initiation into the Faith. When he felt that people were ready, he gave the Sacraments with great joy. Thus, he writes: "At Defen I baptised eight adults. There are plenty to be baptised here, but I am taking it slowly" (S,6853).

5.4 Female Ministries in Comboni's Plan

Comboni was asked why his unimportant and tiny Institute had succeeded where others had withdrawn. He lists the reasons, concluding: "... and because, in the apostolate of Central Africa I brought in the omnipotent ministry of the woman of the Gospel and of the Sister of charity, who is the shield, the strength and the guarantee of the ministry of the Missionary" (S,5284).

Comboni's mission opens the eyes of the Church to this new prospect: there are no frontiers or difficulties in the apostolate for which the Spirit does not equip the Catholic woman. From the earliest experiences of his life, Faith is linked to the actions and the piety of a woman: "It seems like last night that I was learning to make the Sign of the Cross at my mother's knee" (S,342).

It is his contact with Our Lady, to whom he consecrates himself and the mission, that gives him the deep-rooted conviction regarding the role of women, even in his arduous mission. Comboni knows the history of the Church, and knows how many holy women were evangelists. He feels that in desiring their presence in the most difficult mission on earth, he is being guided by the Holy Spirit. In Paris he gives high praise to the



THE FRUITS (Khartoum, 10.02.1993)
John Paul II at prayer with Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir and Sudanese Catholics.

What prevails over all is thanksgiving: "Blessed be the Lord, whose wonderful help we have experienced during all our journeys!"

5.3 Educator in the Faith

In the description of his journey to Khartoum as Bishop, Comboni notes: "After 13 days in the desert we reached Berber, and I baptised some adult converts, regularised some marriages, confirmed, left the Sisters from Verona there, and set off for Khartoum" (S,5276).

It is the only positive note in a disastrous journey: he was gathering the fruits of his labours and those of his collaborators in educating in the Faith those persons to whom he could now administer the Sacraments. The first Catholic communities were being born.

The strategy provided for a period of experience in Egypt. He explains in a report (06.06.1871): "The existence of an Institute in which they are educated in the Faith and in all the branches of culture, as in Institutes in Europe, has already worked miracles in Egypt" (S,2525). To educate in the faith meant, for him, to propose a whole new model of life to a person: inspired by Faith in Christ, but managed within one's own culture and with the possibility of being situated in a new social history.

Then from Egypt to Central Africa. Here is where the local collaborators visualised by the Plan come in. African priests would be the ideal, but their preparation would be long and painstaking. Men and women missionaries would be assisted by men and women catechists: "I have managed to train competent catechists... Local people with this training are essential for the survival of the mission" (S,3409). One of their tasks, when the time is ripe, could be to run the whole mission (S,2779).

Within the scheme of total formation of the human person, aiming not just at the religious conversion of Africa but, in the more global sense, its "regeneration", the importance of "Missionary Brothers" alongside the missionary priests right from the beginning of missionary activity, can easily be perceived.

COMBONI: MISSIONARY, FOUNDER OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

5. It was said of Comboni during his life: "One day posterity will say that he was the Francis Xavier of Central Africa".²⁷

The time he spent in Africa and in the direct apostolate was relatively brief: yet he left an indelible mark. He died and was buried in Africa. Sudanese Catholics consider him their father, their ancestor in the Faith.²⁸

In the Rules of 1871, Comboni had stated that the special objective of the future mission would be the evangelization of the peoples of Africa, "who are those in greatest need, yet the most neglected, in the Universe" (S,2647). He himself, starting from Egypt, worked in the area that is now Sudan. For him, the regions of Central Africa were the ones "still languishing practically abandoned in their sorry state, with no Pastor, no Apostles, no Church and no Faith" (S,2311).

He loved the Lord who sent him; he loved the people he encountered. He lived and understood the message he was proclaiming. He was an attentive observer, so as to penetrate the hearts and the culture of peoples. In his letters he mentions over 70 ethnic groups, and describes several of them in great detail.

Let us recall some of the aspects of this rich experience. Our Founder lived them intensely, and in a personal and very original manner.

They are still valid for every missionary age: for us his sons and daughters. The Spirit suggests how we can bring together the timeless Gospel and the changing history of humankind.

5.1 Witness and teacher in the Faith

A great teacher of how to discern authentic witness, the Founder should be followed both for the example he gave and for his steadfastness. He strove to be an authentic witness. In his

quest for authenticity we find the kind of questions put by Paul VI to any evangelist who wishes to be credible: "Do you really believe in what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you preach what you believe?"²⁹

Comboni's conscience assured him that he was a witness:

- "It is to save souls and render true service to the Church that I have suffered so much, and am ready for martyrdom" (S,4475).
- He lived chastity for the Kingdom, and used to say: "missionaries have to be strong in chastity, with God's grace" (S,6844).
- He was totally great-hearted and generous. He drew up great projects for the redemption of slaves (S,579-96), and had no regard for his personal interests, only the good of Africa (S,6082).

Comboni demanded of himself and of his followers to be witnesses first of all. "God knows how much my heart has suffered..." (S,1506), he wrote to Canossa when he had to send away a collaborator. And he gave the reasons for his painful decision: "It is important for the new mission to make a good impression..., it is necessary that honour and respect should stand out above all, and that the greatest decorum and holiness be used in the ministry, for the sake of the glory of God..." (S,1506).

He was the sower of the Gospel: others have harvested the fruits of his witness. In his footsteps, many of his followers have passed on his charisma and carried forward his witness. It will be celebrated in the event of the Beatification.

Sons and daughters of Comboni, we live in a world where "the signs of rejection of Christ" abound. It "demands" that we be evangelizers who speak of God, and that we know Him, that we are quite familiar with him, as though we saw the invisible.³⁰

5.2 Comboni's journeys: pilgrimage towards people

Through his witness, the apostle makes contact with other persons. Now begins the journey into their world and their culture, and to discover their soul. This phase is symbolised, and partly carried out, in Comboni's journeys. It is not easy to calculate their value in the overall balance of his missionary life. They are a sum of anxieties and joys, of energies consumed and dangers run, of persons met and peoples known.

Recalling a few of these moments will show us how arduous it is - and what a divine gift - to make contact with people to evangelize them.

The basic attitude is expressed by Comboni, writing to his parents from Jerusalem: "I was always with you in spirit, so that I didn't take a single step without imagining that I had you with me on this religious pilgrimage" (S,27). Every journey has a sacred aspect, and in this he does not depart from loved ones. Think of all the letters written during journeys, to friends, collaborators, superiors. He mentions only some of the purposes: to make the reality of missionary life known, and to ask for prayers: "Here let me note just some of the tremendous hardships (of the journey) - though still dear to me because sent by God - in which I was submerged. You will tell people about them... so that they pray for me, and for the conversion of Africa" (S,5273).

Limiting ourselves to just the African journeys - the ones in Europe are rich in other Comboni values, to do with missionary animation - they took place in two areas: the desert and along the Nile. They are biblical places. The desert as struggle: the exhausting effort to push on, the solitude, making camp and breaking it again, hunger and thirst. The Nile: sailing up it into danger; making very slow headway, fear of attacks or of shipwreck, prayer. All these things, and others, are read about in his reports on his journeys.

Comboni writes about the peoples he meets: he can estimate their material and spiritual poverty, but he discovers their worth too. "Another thing that struck me greatly is the respect, the obedience that this people has for the great chief..." (S,4059).