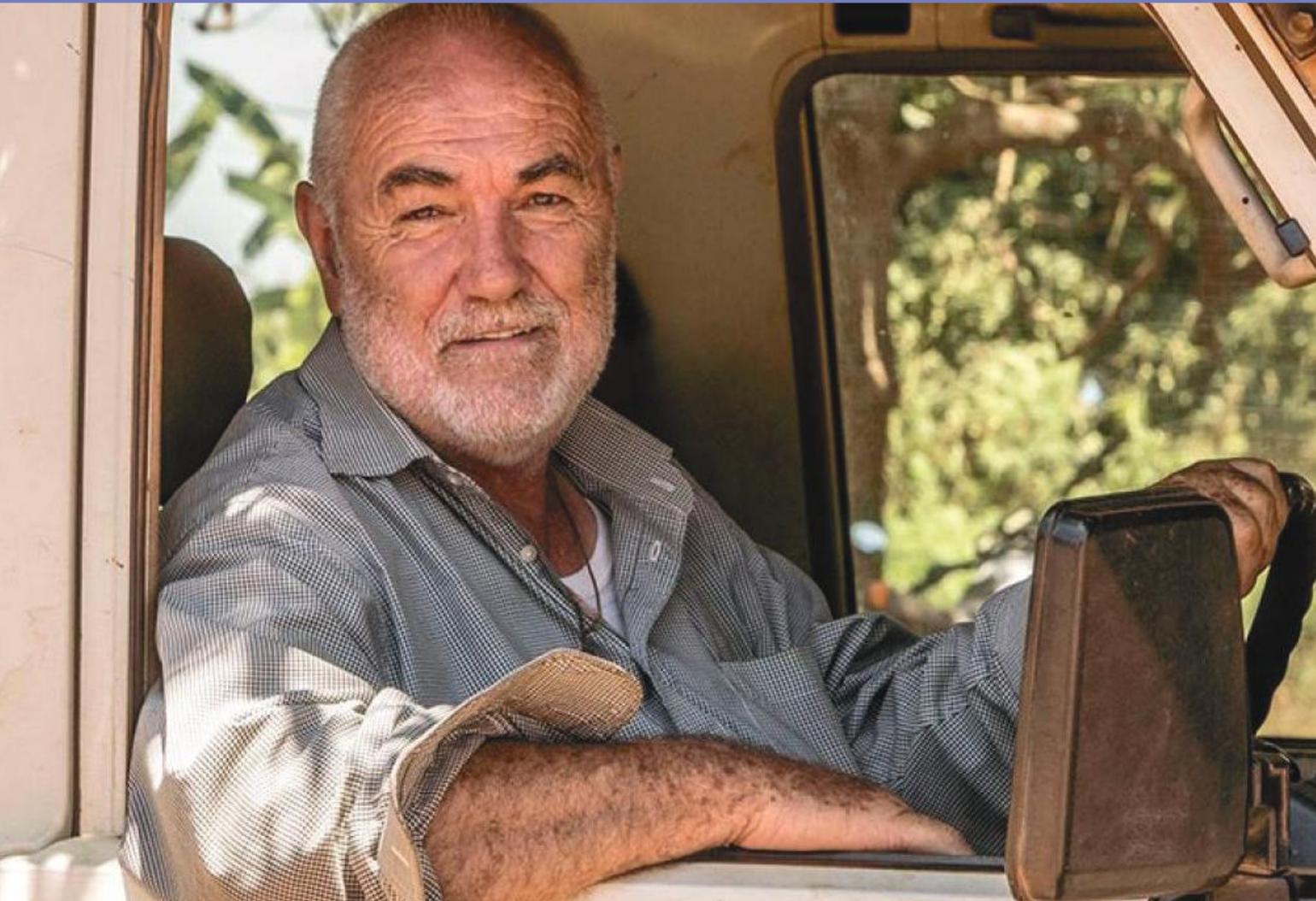


Spring  
2022

# ComboniMissions



## **Effatá Program Supports Migrant Women**

The Comboni Missionary Sisters protect women on the border

## **Counting the Cost**

Comboni Missionaries taken by Covid

**The Story of Joseph  
Marok Garang**  
South Sudanese  
hospital region's lifeline

## THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES

The Comboni Missionaries have celebrated more than 150 years of service to the poorest and most abandoned people of the world.

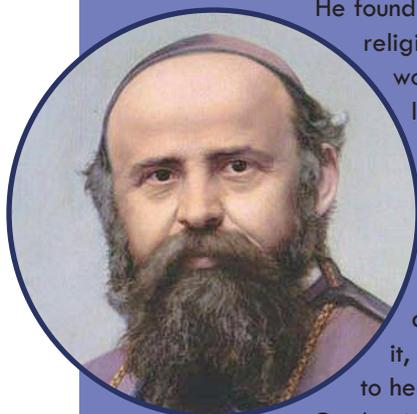
St. Daniel Comboni had a dream for Africa, for the Gospel, and for the future of the Church that would lead him far from his home in Italy and the culture and comforts he cherished. He knew that the scourges of slavery, exploitation, and colonialism failed to respect the human dignity of the peoples of Africa, and of the poor and marginalized in every corner of the world.

He founded two Institutes of religious life, for men and women, and today inspires lay missionaries and people around the globe to share in the noble mission of bringing the Gospel—and the peace and justice of the kingdom of God—to all who have never heard it, and to those who need to hear it again. Today, the

Comboni Missionaries serve in more than forty countries in Africa, America, Europe, and Asia.

True to St. Daniel's vision "to save Africa with Africa," the missionaries themselves come from all reaches of the earth, working together in a common cause.

They have been working in North America for eighty years, focusing on pastoral work among African-Americans, Appalachians, Native Americans, and Hispanics, seeking always to adapt their ministries and their methods to the people they serve.



## From the Editor's Desk



One of the stories in this issue is a heartbreaker that I knew would need to be written. In the early days of the pandemic, you may remember, Italy was especially hard hit. Religious communities, tight-knit and communal by nature, suffered huge losses, including our own Italian-based order. But we also lost missionaries in the field, those who could not stop serving their people, even at grave cost. Of the sixty Comboni Missionaries claimed by the coronavirus, we have taken a closer look at three. All of them are irreplaceable and will be missed.

We also look at the good work the Comboni Missionary Sisters are doing among migrant communities in Mexico, where women are especially vulnerable targets of crime and exploitation.

Brother (and doctor!) Rosario Ianetti shares a story that reveals how essential good nutrition is for those recovering from serious illness, and how just a dollar a day can make a life-saving difference.

And our Meet a Comboni Missionary series continues with a profile of Fr. David Bohnsack, a favorite here in the U.S. and everywhere he serves.

We pray your Easter and spring bring signs of new life and hope into your world. Thank you for your support!

—Katie

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Volume 60, No. 1

A \$15 annual donation is greatly appreciated.

*Comboni Missions* (ISSN 0279-3652) is an award-winning publication of the Comboni Missionaries and a member of the Catholic Press Association. Published quarterly.



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**Carlassare Heads to Rumbek**

Overcoming last year's attack, the Comboni bishop-designate takes the helm at his diocese in South Sudan.

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**Meet a Comboni Missionary**

Fr. David Bohnsack, mccj, reflects on his life and mission.

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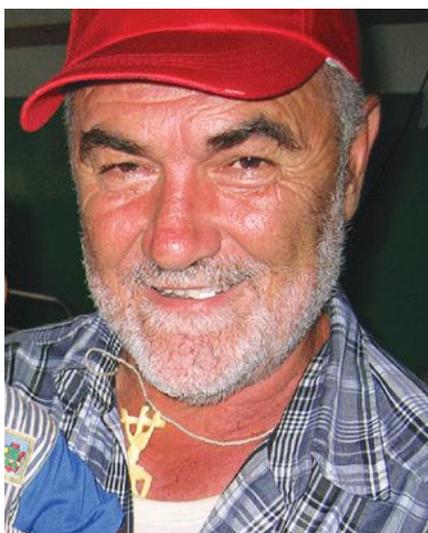
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Sixty Comboni Missionaries were taken by Covid. We celebrate just three of these remarkable lives.

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**The Story of Joseph Marok Garang**

A Comboni hospital in South Sudan is a lifeline for the region



## Carlassare Eager to Assume Post in South Sudan



Still recovering from an attempted assassination in Rumbek, South Sudan, bishop-designate and Comboni Missionary Christian Carlassare met with Pope Francis on March 14.

“The pope just told me not to be afraid because the Lord provides, and then he gave me his blessing,” Carlassare told SIR, the news agency for the conference of Italian bishops. The episcopal consecration was postponed from May 2021 to the Feast of the Annunciation this year. Pope Francis plans a visit near Carlassare’s diocese, touring the capital of South Sudan, on July 5-7 this year.

The missionary said, “I offer the pain I’m going through so that the Lord our God may purify the church of Rumbek from all errors and things like this may happen no more; no room for violence, division, and selfish desires that come from the devil.” ■

## The Pope’s Prayer Intentions

### April

#### Health Care Workers

We pray for health care workers who serve the sick and the elderly, especially in the poorest countries; may they be adequately supported by governments and local communities.

### May

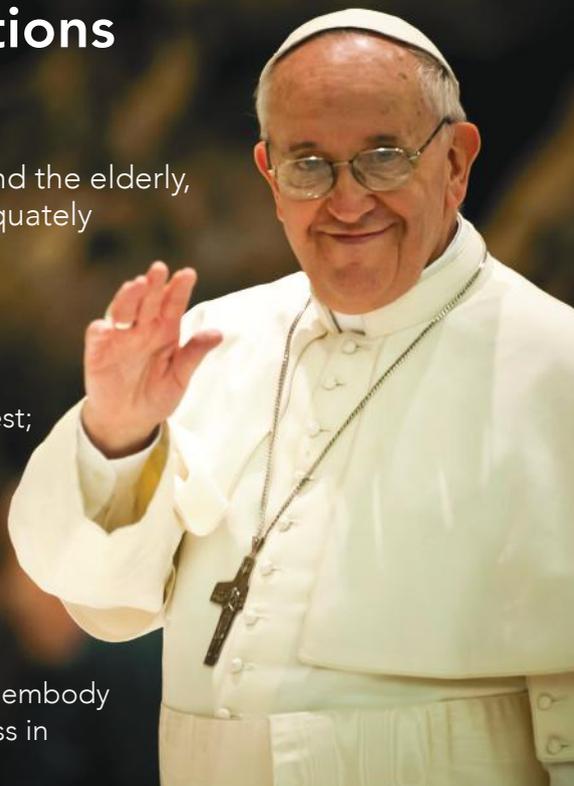
#### Faith-Filled Young People

We pray for all young people, called to live life to the fullest; may they see in Mary’s life the way to listen, the depth of discernment, the courage that faith generates, and the dedication to service.

### June

#### Families

We pray for Christian families around the world; may they embody and experience unconditional love and advance in holiness in their daily lives.



# A Prayer to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

In response to the violence in Ukraine, on March 25, Pope Francis consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is the prayer of Pope St. John Paul II.

O, Immaculate Heart! Help us to conquer the menace of evil, which so easily takes root in the hearts of the people of today, and whose immeasurable effects already weigh down upon our modern world and seem to block the paths towards the future!

From famine and war, deliver us.

From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war, deliver us.

From sins against the life of man from its very beginning, deliver us.

From hatred and from the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, deliver us.

From every kind of injustice in the life of society, both national and international, deliver us.

From readiness to trample on the commandments of God, deliver us.

From sins against the Holy Spirit, deliver us.

Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry laden with the sufferings of all individual human beings, laden with the sufferings of whole societies.

Let there be revealed once more in the history of the world the infinite power of merciful Love. May it put a stop to evil. May it transform consciences. May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of hope!



## AFGHANISTAN

### Tenuous security threatens aid efforts



Seven months after Afghanistan’s fall to the Taliban, the Security Council on Thursday renewed the mandate of the UN special political mission in the country, charging it with a robust set of priorities, ranging from coordinating humanitarian aid delivery to human rights monitoring and facilitating dialogue. The adopted text renews the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for one year with a shift in priority tasks.

In light of the rapidly evolving situation on the ground, the mission with focus on coordinating the provision of humanitarian assistance, providing outreach and good offices for dialogue, and promoting good governance and the rule of law.

Through the text, members also called on Afghan political actors and stakeholders — including relevant authorities as needed — to coordinate with UNAMA in implementing its mandate and ensuring the safety, security, and freedom of staff movements.

## UKRAINE

### Catholic parishes become “humanitarian hubs”



As internally displaced Ukrainians flee the Russian bombardment of their cities, Catholic parishes in the country have turned into “humanitarian hubs,” the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church said.

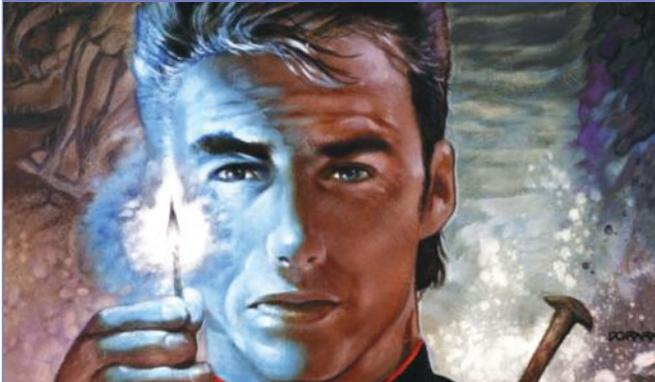
In a video message on March 22 from the embattled Ukrainian capital, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk thanked Catholic parishes in the regions of Kyiv, Zhytomyr, and Vinnytsia for working “to deliver humanitarian aid where it is really needed.”

“Today, I would like to especially thank our pastors and volunteers who are tirelessly serving their people in these weeks and days,” Shevchuk said.

“Looking into the eyes of our priests, our pastors, our volunteers, in their eyes I saw the victory of Ukraine, because they are working for it, they live for it, they live in our very churches themselves,” he said.

## UNITED STATES

### New graphic novel features Catholic exorcists



The action-packed “Soulfinder” graphic novel series is about a fictional “special forces of exorcists” within the Catholic Church.

“‘Soulfinder’ is about a major order of combat veteran exorcists who are recruited to engage in spiritual warfare with a demon called Blackfire until the end of time,” Douglas Ernst, the writer and creator of the series told CNA.

The 42-year-old writer began the series to fill a void in today’s comic-book world — and in the culture.

“The heroes that I grew up reading are often unrecognizable because the creators at Marvel and DC are activists posing as serious storytellers,” he explained. “I created ‘Soulfinder’ because I wanted to give people solid stories and artwork that also imparts something good, true, and beautiful.”

“I know that one day I will stand before my Creator and I’ll have to give an account of what I’ve done with the talents I’ve been given,” he said.

## HAITI

### Hunger on the rise in wake of earthquake



Alerting that 4.5 million Haitians are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, the World Food Programme (WFP) pointed to lower-than-expected humanitarian food assistance and continued fallout from the last August earthquake as key drivers.

“Hunger levels are rising unabated as persistent political instability, growing inflation and recurrent disasters continue to conspire against the people of Haiti,” the agency advanced.

Briefing the media in Geneva from the Caribbean island nation, WFP Country Director Pierre Honnorat noted the situation is worrisome, “being the worst registered since 2018.”

The ongoing economic crisis in Haiti, characterized by a weakening currency against the US dollar, soaring inflation, and a hike in fuel prices in previous months, has reduced the purchasing power of many poorer households, making basics like food, unaffordable.



Comboni Missionary Sister Pompea Cornacchia poses with migrant women.

# Effatá Program Supports Migrant Women

Pompea Cornacchia

Every day, hundreds of migrants — young women, boys, and children arrive at the Bethlehem Shelter Center. The Tapachula Diocesan Center is not their destination, however. Coming from Honduras, El Salvador, Cuba, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Haiti, they have something in common: They want to pursue the “American dream.”

Tapachula, a city in the state of Chiapas, is a place of transit. It is among the most dangerous Mexican border cities. Neighboring Guatemala, this small city witnesses daily the crossing of thousands of

migrants from Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia.

The Comboni Missionary Sisters established a crisis intervention program called “Effatá” at the Bethlehem Shelter to assist and serve migrants. “Effatá” (“be opened”) — the Spanish form of the Aramaic “Ephphatha” — is a powerful word that expresses a desire for and a commitment for life. A community of four Comboni Missionary Sisters from Costa Rica, Mexico, and Italy welcome and provide support and compassionate care.

Three of the sisters are dedicated to listening and healing. Through spiritual and therapeutic accompaniment, migrants strive to integrate their trauma. Under the sisters' care, migrants renew their hope, self-esteem, and courage.

Another sister teaches handicrafts. Most adults and children engage joyfully in art therapy and develop their creativity.

The intervention focuses on two stages. One is the accommodation of the population in shelters or refugee camps.

The other is the repatriation to their countries to help in the reconstruction process, or preparing them to continue their journey. The first stage of the intervention includes training health promoters and community leaders. Then, they learn to promote "crisis interventions" directly with affected populations.

The goal is to alleviate, empower and journey with them, and share life, while they wait for the documents to continue their journey of hope, toward safer destinations. The program helps migrants in the following ways:

- Offers spaces to let off steam, manage stress and project themselves positively into the future
- Facilitates the acquisition of hope, initiative, and self-esteem to cope with whatever they will experience
- Promotes and strengthens their psychosocial support networks
- Empowers them to search for alternative, post-disaster solutions
- Helps them become instruments of change with their fellow migrants, even if they are repatriated back to their places of origin.





A group of women take part in a prayer to bless absent loved ones, as part of the Comboni Missionary Sisters' "Effatá" program to assist migrants in Tapachula, in the state of Chiapas, Mexico.

**LET US PUT OUR HANDS TOGETHER:  
LET ALL THOSE WHO LOVE JESUS CHRIST SHARE THE SAME DESIRE, THE SAME GOALS, THE SAME COMMITMENT.**

**—ST. DANIEL COMBONI**

The Mexican border is filled with the tears, nightmares and dreams of those who cross it daily. According to the National Institute of Migration, about 460,000 migrants crossed into Mexico in the first

half of 2019 alone. Migrants seek asylum or ask to continue their way up north. In addition, young people flee gang violence, while others are forcibly displaced. Poverty, inequality, social unrest and lack of opportunities are other factors that cause people to leave their families and country.

Before the arrival of the caravans of migrants to the southern Mexican border in 2018, the Comboni Missionary Sisters participated in the campaign of humanitarian attention. From this experience, the sisters observed that the reception accommodations for migrants in

Tapachula were few and limited. People encountered severe difficulties in finding shelter and food. Vulnerable migrants such as single mothers with young children, large families, pregnant women, unaccompanied children and adolescents, older people, LGBTI persons, and survivors of sexual violence face even more precarious situations. Tapachula is also home to the Siglo XXI ("21st Century") migration station, where thousands of migrants are detained.

In response to the humanitarian emergency, the opening of the Comboni Missionary Sisters



The Diocese of Tapachula is in Chiapas, Mexico. The country's southernmost state borders Guatemala and is a gateway for migrants fleeing Central America.

community in Tapachula began in mid-May 2019. Since then, our sisters have committed themselves to promoting migrants' human rights in partnership with the shelter Hospitalidad y Solidaridad ("Hospitality and Security"), a space for refugees and asylum-seekers. In the last two decades, migratory transit through Mexico has become a critical human mobility phenomenon, both for its magnitude and the conditions under which it occurs. The massive migration flows have attracted the attention of academics and media. Understanding the causes and effects of migration, and the risks and vulnerability of those who enter the Mexican territory irregularly is crucial.

The "ordinary" transit of Central Americans, the so-called "caravans" or "exoduses" that started in 2010 and continued in 2018, 2019, and 2020, received mixed messages from the Mexican government. The government promised support and temporary residency to immigrants, but it did not provide security; instead it detained and deported them.

In 2020, the pandemic lockdown put migrants and refugee claimants at risk at the border and in detention centers. Stuck in the middle of the pandemic, they became even more vulnerable to violence, robbery, human trafficking and organized crime in the local Mexican cities they passed through.

When borders were closed, migrants were left unattended as centers failed to provide them with safety. Migrants also faced this situation in Tapachula. Feelings of incomprehension and despair, and loss of direction turn into open defiance. For the moment, stranded people, asylum-seekers, and refugees say that they are exchanging the "American dream" for the "Mexican dream."

Through the women's healing program, we see that when women lighten their emotional "backpack" load, their energy flows and healing happens. Some women arriving at the center carry an accumulated amount of pain, and at times, they cannot even breathe. As they process their pain, loss and grief, they regain a sense of worth, strength and courage.

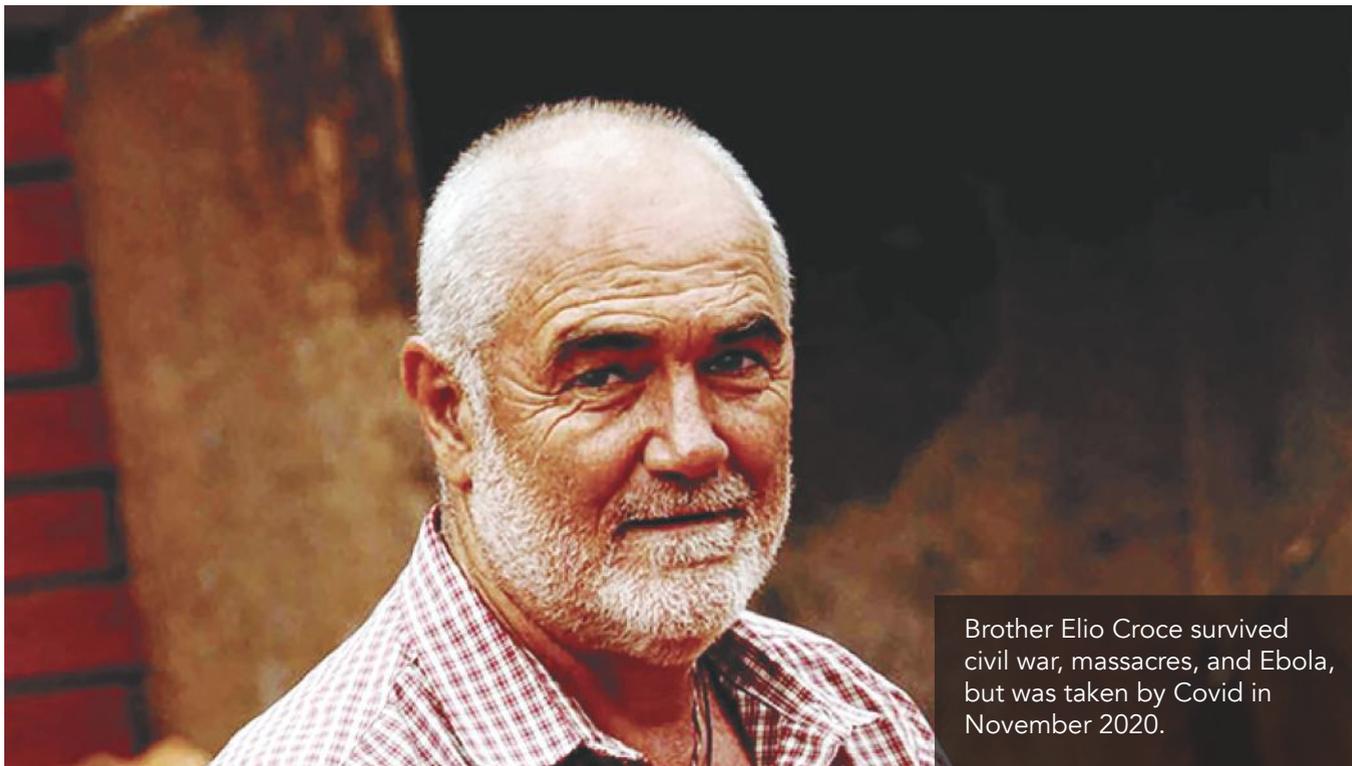
Some help other women who are at the first stages of the healing process. We have seen women assisting fellow travelers. Some of the women who have been in the center become healers themselves. Migrant women know the importance of healing at this stage as their journey is still long. Once healed, they hold on to their dreams, even though they lack the resources to carry them out.

Much work remains to be done in the Effatá Crisis Intervention Program at the Bethlehem Shelter in Tapachula. Yet, we Comboni Missionary Sisters know that we are not alone. The spirit of Jesus and the solidarity of the world community strengthen us for service. To you, migrant woman, we say with tenderness, open yourself with renewed hope for a more humane world — effatá. ■



POMPEA CORNACCHIA is an Italian Comboni Missionary Sister who has worked for more than 20 years in Latin America. Presently she is sharing life with migrant women as she serves on the border between Mexico and Guatemala.

Story reprinted with permission of *Global Sisters Report*.



Brother Elio Croce survived civil war, massacres, and Ebola, but was taken by Covid in November 2020.

# Counting the Cost of Covid-19

Sixty Comboni Missionaries have died due to the Coronavirus with around 350 infected. Many of them spent their whole lives in Africa or Latin America. We remember three of them: Brother Elio Croce, Father Carlos Bascáran, and Father Aranda Nava.

## **BROTHER ELIO CROCE**

The sun is setting at Lacor Hospital in Northern Uganda. Brother Elio makes his way home after a long day's work. He is worried about the dreadful news coming from Europe. A virus from China is infecting thousands of people and claiming hundreds of victims. The virus is spreading rapidly. Brother Elio still has vivid memories of what happened in 2000 when the Ebola virus struck Northern Uganda and caused hundreds of deaths.

Lacor hospital is hit hard. The doctors and nurses were among the first to die. Elio knows the new virus will soon appear in Africa. He wonders how he can prepare

for the virus, but details are still lacking. Going to his room, he turns on the old wireless that has been his companion for so many years.

Brother Elio Croce first arrived in Uganda in 1975. He has spent forty-five years in Africa, first as technical director of Kitgum Hospital and then, starting in 1985, of Lacor Hospital.

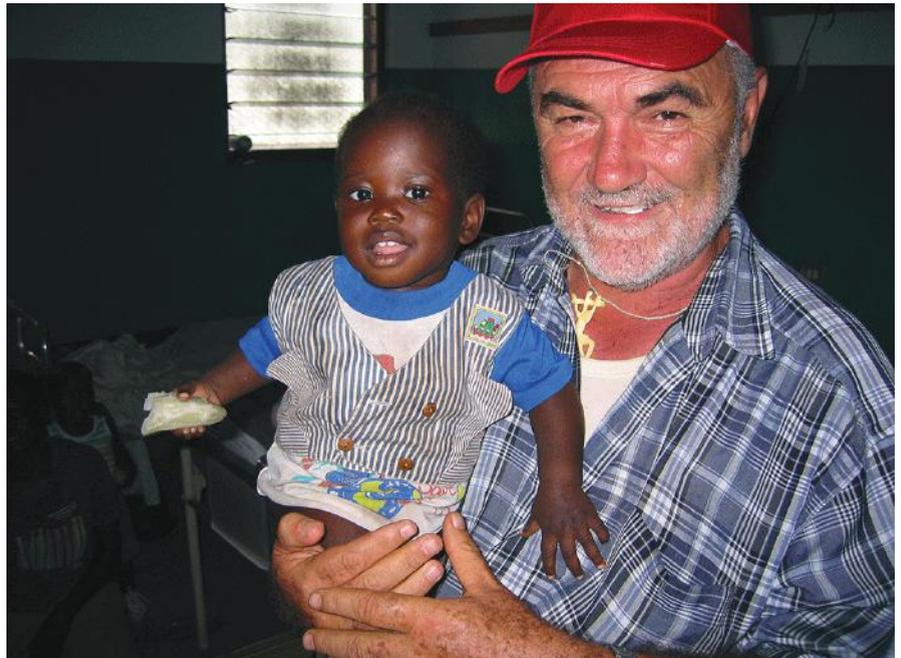
Elio has shared all the events that have affected the Acholi people in these. For them and with them, he built hospital buildings, dug wells, and established technical and agricultural projects. He shared with the Acholi people the terrible decades of the guerrilla war; he helped them bury their dead. He has lost count of how many miles he has traveled throughout in his old Toyota. The Toyota has lost count, too.

### TRIBUTES VIA TWITTER

“IT IS VERY SAD THAT WE LOST YOU, BROTHER ELIO. YOUR CHARISMA WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN... WE WILL FOREVER MISS YOU.”

“THOSE KIDS—WHO CAN HANDLE THEM THE WAY HE WAS DOING? SO SAD.”

“A MAN WHO SERVED ACHOLILAND WITH DEDICATION AND UNENDING AFFECTION FOR A PEOPLE WHO BECAME HIS OWN. RIP.”



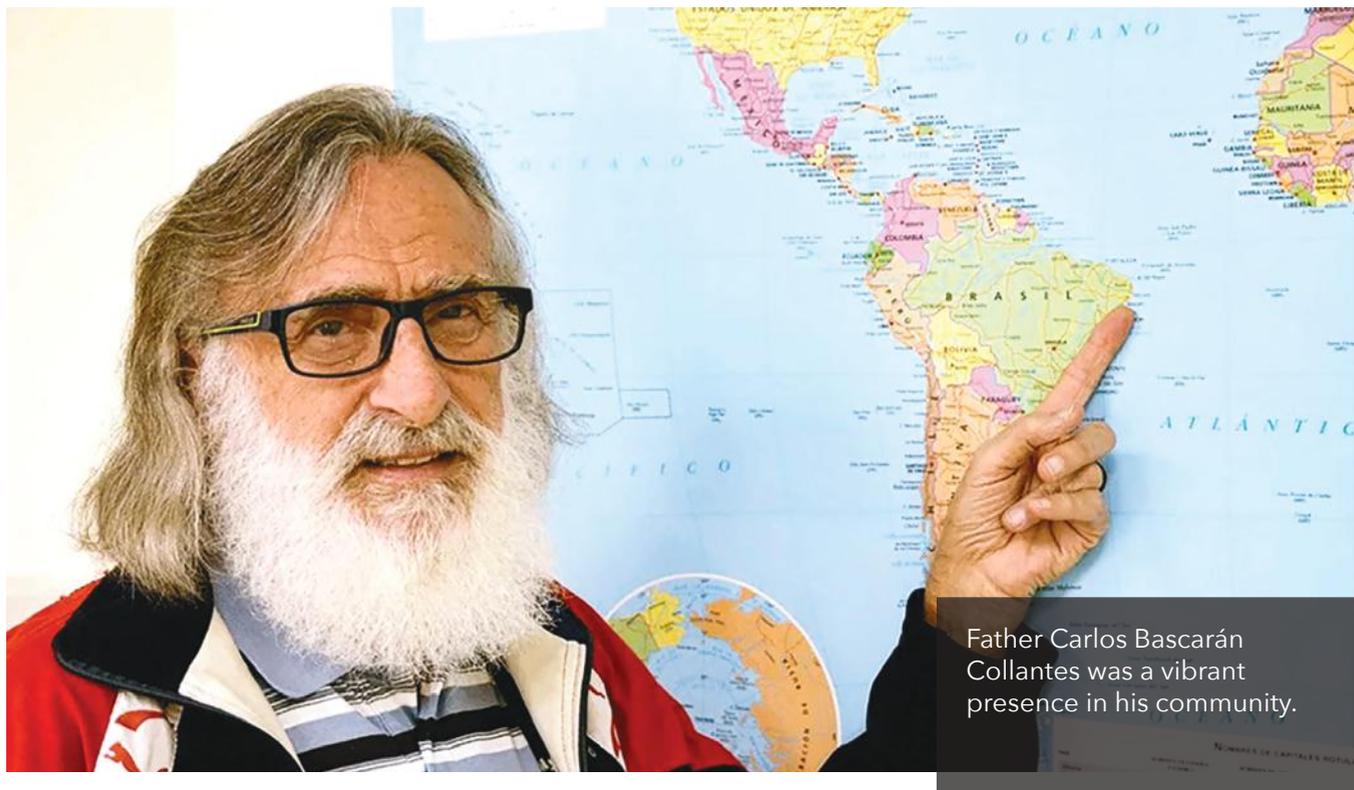
Brother Elio has always been attracted, moved, and upheld by his faith in Divine Providence. His firm, unflinching faith has been an inexhaustible source of nourishment for a life given totally for the African people. His is a world of building sites, carpentry workshops, mechanics' sheds, and all that comes with maintaining the medical equipment in his charge.

During the war years, when no supplies were available, everything had to be fabricated from what bits and pieces could be found locally. Brother Elio was very capable. He knew how to do things and how to teach others, but he insisted on having everything done properly. By so doing, he helped in the development of the local area. Many were trained at his school; there they learned a trade and also began to appreciate work as an art form. With his encouragement,

many small businesses and projects were fostered. His workers worked hard and well, and soon became independent.

The people knew they could count on Elio. Many pursued their studies thanks to him. His simple and direct manner was sometimes sweetly rough though totally honest. He was a man of no frills; the experience of a life dedicated to Africa covered him as completely as dust covered his sandals. He challenged and won over (often for life) anyone who approached him. He left no one indifferent; there was always an encounter with his choice of life and a feeling of being at one with him, even with those who disagreed with him.

Brother Elio, a survivor of massacres and Ebola, was finally felled by Covid-19 on November 11, 2020, at the age of 74 years. ■



Father Carlos Bascarán Collantes was a vibrant presence in his community.

## FATHER CARLOS BASCARÁN COLLANTES

He is known by everyone for his long hair and sandals as he walks the streets of Salvador de Bahia in Brazil.

Wearing the “shoes of the mission” for him means being on the side of the poor and humble people. It means keeping one’s feet firmly on the ground, in the dust of the roads. As he walks, he sees the small boys playing soccer. They see him and kick the ball to him. He controls it perfectly and skillfully passes it back. The sound of music is coming from one of the houses. He knows that tune; he has played it often.

His two great interests: football and music. As a young man, Spanish Father Carlos Bascarán Collantes was a professional footballer and fascinated spectators with his skills. Some believed he would have a wonderful

future playing for one of the teams in the La Liga Española.

### FR. CARLOS USED TO SAY:

**“THE MISSION IS LIKE A SYMPHONIC MUSIC CONCERT. THE MUSICAL SCORE IS PERFECT BUT THE PLAYERS ARE VERY LIMITED AND OUT OF TUNE.”**

His musical talents were also well known, and his guitar was always by his side. His presence was always a celebration. Cheerful and enthusiastic, he made friends easily, especially with the youth and especially through his music.

He would say to the young people: “You must always be in harmony and sing the right notes to be

together without being afraid of making mistakes. Music brings us together and makes us feel more like children of God and members of our communities. Music always carries with it love and liberation.”

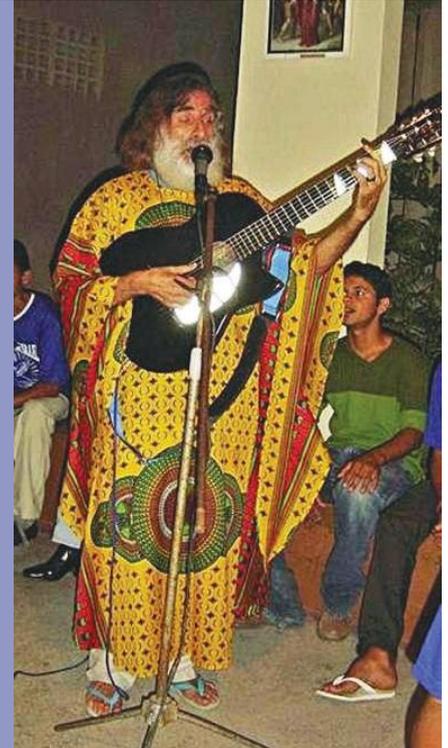
Father Carlos was a talented musician and, for while, a professional soccer player in La Liga.

**From his obituary:** Carlos was a “radical” missionary, with a charming sort of outlook. He was humble. Far from any exhibitionism, he always wore flip-flops that represented, for him, the footwear of a simple and poor person but above all of a disciple, of an itinerant and humble follower of the Master!

For him, the missionary had to be radical even in outward



appearance. Wearing flip-flops meant always being close to the poor and humiliated, rejecting a consumer mentality and always being alert, ready to leave for new places and to face unprecedented challenges without the shoes of pride, bags of material



goods, or the clothing of vanity, etc., but possessing only one’s own willingness to serve and welcome everyone.

For six years, he was the provincial superior of the Comboni Missionaries in Brazil. His colleagues remember him well: “Those were complicated and difficult times for him. His critical attitude towards the civil and religious authorities led to clashes, but he was always spontaneous and sincere.”

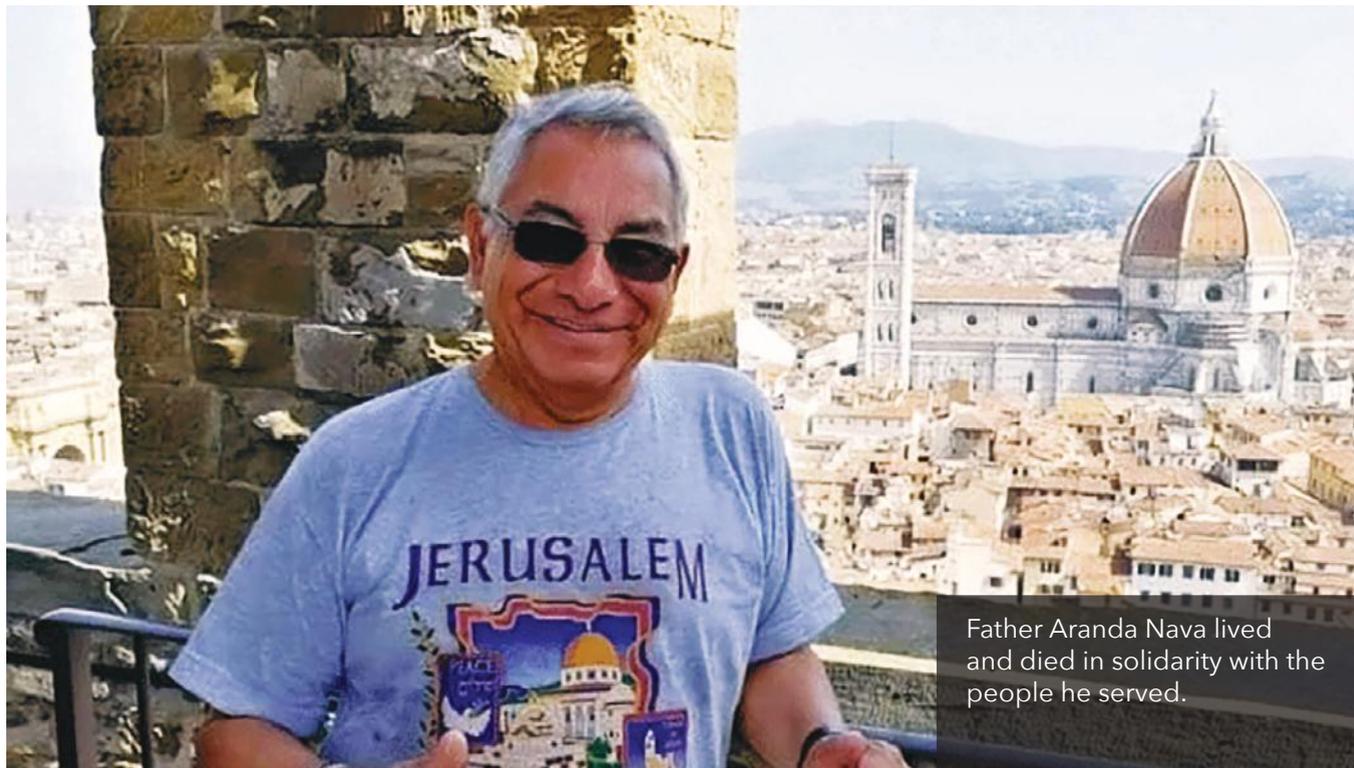
A man of great ideas, both during and after his mandate, he gave new vigor to the province both in the field of formation and missionary animation, while aware of the limits. He would say: “The

mission is like a performance of a symphony. The music is perfectly written but the musicians are limited and often out of tune. However, this does not mean we can’t try to play perfect music.”

The coronavirus tore through Brazil for months, reaping thousands of victims and infections. During all that time, Fr. Carlos refused to stay indoors; he went to visit the communities, offering advice and support. It was important, he felt, that people should see their priest among them in those difficult times.

He had been ill for several days, and was eventually taken to João Pessoa Hospital suffering from the virus. To date, over 600,000 have died from the virus in Brazil. Much of the blame has been laid at the feet of the political authorities for indifference and lack of immediate action to curb the pandemic.

Fr. Carlos died late in the afternoon on Tuesday, September 22, 2020. He was 77 years of age. He had spent forty of them walking the back streets of Brazil in his humble, dusty missionary sandals. ■



Father Aranda Nava lived and died in solidarity with the people he served.

## FATHER JOSÉ DE JESÚS ARANDA NAVA

The sound of gunfire is coming closer. Billowing smoke can be seen in the distance. The area has become a battlefield between the government forces and the rebels. The missionaries realize it is time to go.

They gather their few possessions and start walking toward the Ugandan border. Amid the many dangers and ever-present fears, Fr. Aranda writes: “After walking for days, we reached the Bidi Bidi refugee camp. Living like refugees is a new experience for us as a missionary community.

“We have left our mission of Kajo-Keji in South Sudan and now we are with our people who live in the refugee camps in the north of Uganda. Like them, we are homeless people and refugees.”

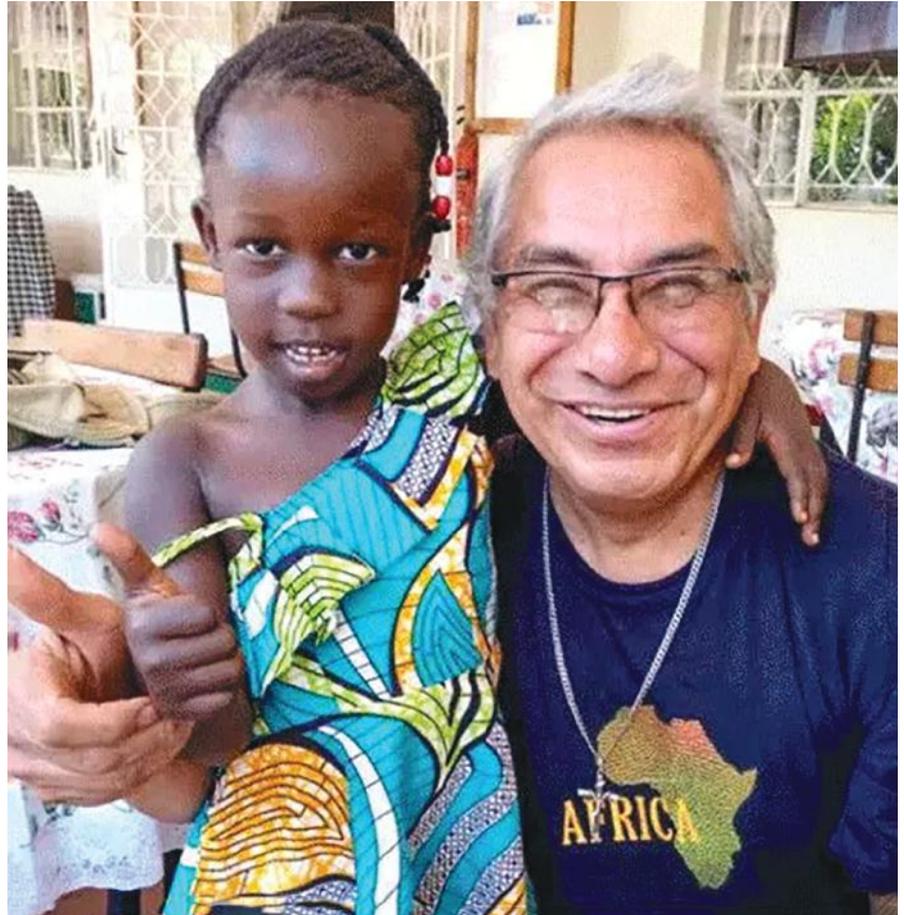
Mexican Father José de Jesús Aranda Nava first went to Sudan in 1984. His main apostolate was the training

of the Comboni postulants in Juba and Khartoum. In 1992, he was expelled with other Combonis by the Muslim government of Khartoum, in Sudan. Once back in Mexico, he worked in the formation of future missionaries as well as in missionary animation.

He is remembered as a man who was always smiling. He would always speak enthusiastically of his missionary work in Africa. In 1999, he returned to Africa and devoted himself to the formation of young missionaries first in Sudan and then in Kenya. Lastly, in 2007, he arrived in the parish of Kajo Keji, South Sudan. There he worked tirelessly training catechists and managing a number of schools for boys and girls.

On the feast of St. Daniel Comboni, he wrote on Facebook: “Comboni Day: 10 October 2020. The holiness of Comboni is lived out in communion with suffering humanity. St. Daniel lived his holiness in

José de Jesús Aranda Nava was known for his contagious smile and love for the people he served.



solidarity with the suffering and the ill-treated. In the course of our history, the sons and daughters of St. Daniel Comboni have sought to follow the path of holiness, sharing the daily life of their suffering brothers and sisters.

We have great people who are fine examples of making common cause with the people: Fr. Giuseppe Ambrosoli, Fr. Ezekiel Ramin, and many more.

Today, we are called to share in holiness, the life of so many people who are faced with the crisis of the coronavirus pandemic

and its consequences. We are in communion with the migrants and refugees, the populations in areas of conflict and war. Let us carry in our

**“WE HAVE LEFT OUR MISSION OF KAJO-KEJI IN SOUTH SUDAN AND NOW WE ARE WITH OUR PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN THE NORTH OF UGANDA. LIKE THEM, WE ARE HOMELESS PEOPLE AND REFUGEES.”**

hearts the burden of suffering of the Church and the sad situation of the

environment and all creation. Pray for peace and brotherhood between our people and South Sudan.”

He was urgently taken to Lacor Hospital in Gulu where he was admitted with the coronavirus infection. He died on November 4, 2020. He was 68 years of age.

His dream was to be a missionary in Africa. This dream of his came true and he not only lived as a missionary in Africa but also died and was buried in the land he loved. ■

Biographical information for these missionaries originally appeared in *World Mission*. Used by permission.



Marok Garang (left), a NAP beneficiary and John Balang, nutrition assistant at Mapuordit.

# The Story of Joseph Marok Garang

Br. Dr. Rosario Iannetti, mccj

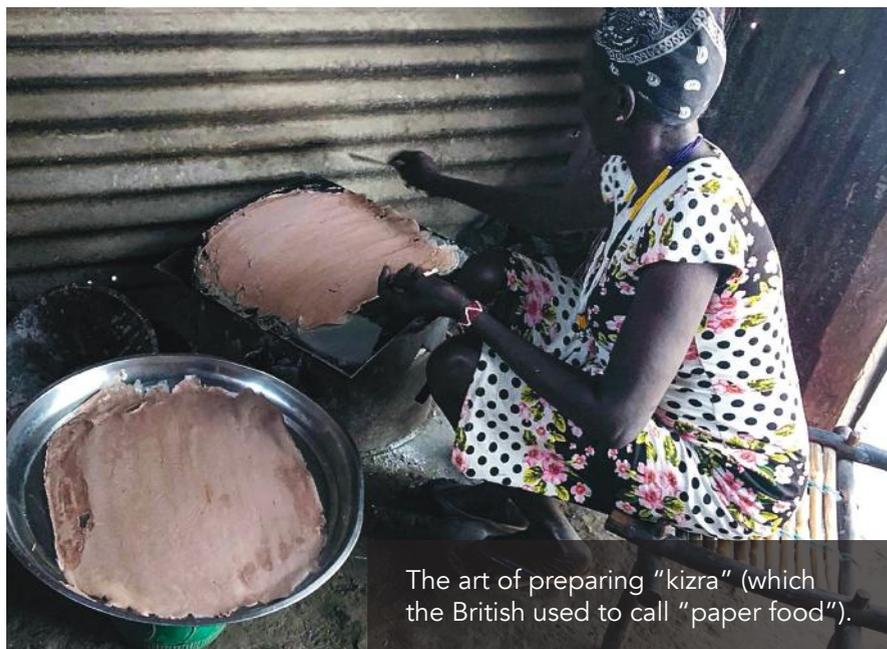
Marok, arrived in the hospital towards the end of October 2021 from Yirol which is two hours away if you go by motorcycle, the common mode of transport here. Marok says he begged someone to pay the motorcycle owner to bring him to Mary Immaculate Hospital (MIH) in South Sudan. I quote him here as he put it to me. “I said to the person whom I begged to pay the ride for me, why should I die and

Mapuordit Hospital is near?”

He arrived dirty, tired, and very sick from an infected foot where his toes have dropped off due to leprosy.

Marok, was diagnosed with leprosy several years ago here in MIH. He was started on leprosy treatment, which he was supposed to take for a period of one year. Unfortunately, he followed the treatment for only three months.

When he arrived in October 2021, he was admitted in the ward for a few days until the infected wound was under control. From the day he arrived, he was put on the North American Province (NAP) feeding program, since he had no relative to bring him food. [Editor’s Note: At Mapuordit Hospital, like many in the developing world, “extras,” such as food and blankets, are usually supplied by the patients or their families.] After being discharged from the ward, Marok



The art of preparing "kizra" (which the British used to call "paper food").

The NAP Feeding Program, which began in 2012, has made a tremendous difference in the community. The overall aim of the project always remains to provide nutritional support to vulnerable client groups.

"It is a proven fact that good nutrition plays an integral part in the whole treatment plan for these groups. Food support has a positive motivational impact on patients, many of whom come from communities experiencing hunger and hardship. On discharge, it is sometimes possible to offer a dry ration to clients suffering severe hardship, and or severe malnutrition," Bro. Rosario explained.

was to continue having his wound dressed twice a week as an outpatient, as well as continue with leprosy treatment which we restarted him on. Since he could not go back to his home in Yirol and still attend the hospital for treatment, Marok found a space for himself within the hospital grounds. Here he makes a home for himself with a mosquito net and blanket supplied by MIH.

Balang, our nutrition assistant, says he is very encouraged by the positive change he has seen in Marok, whom he fondly calls "my patient."

The NAP Project enables a daily meal (cooked) for lunch and a wholesome porridge for supper for the patients identified either by medical director, or the attending medical officer, as needing this support as part of their treatment. Once a patient is identified as in need of food support, which usually happens during the ward round, he or she is put on "NAP," as the project is known here in MIH. The ward in-charge then takes the patients details and informs the cook for inclusion in that day's meal. The nutrition assistant collects these details from the cook, collates all the names from the respective wards, and keeps a register. From this register, the number of meals is calculated and

payments are made weekly to the cooks. The hospital has made agreements with two cooks, one for the meal and one for the porridge.

Earlier in the program, the patients were issued with a card (meal ticket) to present to the cook, but this practice was abolished in August 2021 due to a lack of proper accountability. Feedback from the patient, the ward staff, the nutrition staff, and the cooks helps to improve the services.

Peaceful coexistence between the different tribes has been witnessed in the last half of 2021. This has brought about an increase in the number of patients seeking treatment at the hospital, many of whom come from very far — and are sometimes unaccompanied and with no means of support. Those unable to acquire food for themselves will continue to receive food from the hospital through NAP funds. We are truly grateful for your support. ■



BR. DR. ROSARIO IANETTI, MCCJ, is a Comboni Missionary Brother, surgeon, and founder of Mary Immaculate Hospital (MIH) in Mapuordit, South Sudan.

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# Some Gifts Last a Lifetime. Yours Can Last Even Longer.

Heather Kaufman

Spring is here in Cincinnati, the flowers are beginning to bloom, the days are growing longer and if you are like me, it is time to do some spring cleaning. Spring cleaning doesn't only have to mean alphabetizing your spice drawer and washing your windows. It can also mean taking a look at your personal papers, finances and estate plans—a good time to think about your legacy.

An up-to-date will that clearly lays out your wishes is a blessing to those you leave behind. It allows you to pass along special mementos, make meaningful bequests or to create trusts to manage assets for loved ones. Your estate is also an opportunity to continue to support the causes that mean the most to you while creating a legacy that will have lasting benefits.

We are grateful that our friends decided to include the Comboni Missionaries in their legacy plans. From fifty dollars to millions of dollars in planned gifts—each is appreciated and meaningful. This special group helped drill a borehole at the St. Teresa of the Child of Jesus Parish in Abeche, Chad, to ensure the parish community has water during the dry season. Their contributions assisted a program for the street children in Kinshasa, Central African Republic, to get these kids fed, clothed, school fees paid, and placed with host families.

These precious children are no longer fending for themselves on the streets because of our friends' generosity.

I could go on and on — discussing how this kindness assisted the Comboni Center in Guadalajara, Mexico which serves elderly and sick Comboni priests or the renovation of a preschool in the Kotido Diocese in Uganda—the list continues. Not to mention these contributions ensured in our

**“DO NOT WITHHOLD GOOD FROM THOSE TO WHOM IT IS DUE, WHEN IT IS IN YOUR POWER TO DO IT.”**

—PROVERBS 3:27

provincial offices that staff was compensated, bills paid and general administrative costs covered when the world

came to a stand still during the Covid-19 pandemic. Bequests became a lifeline to our ministries.

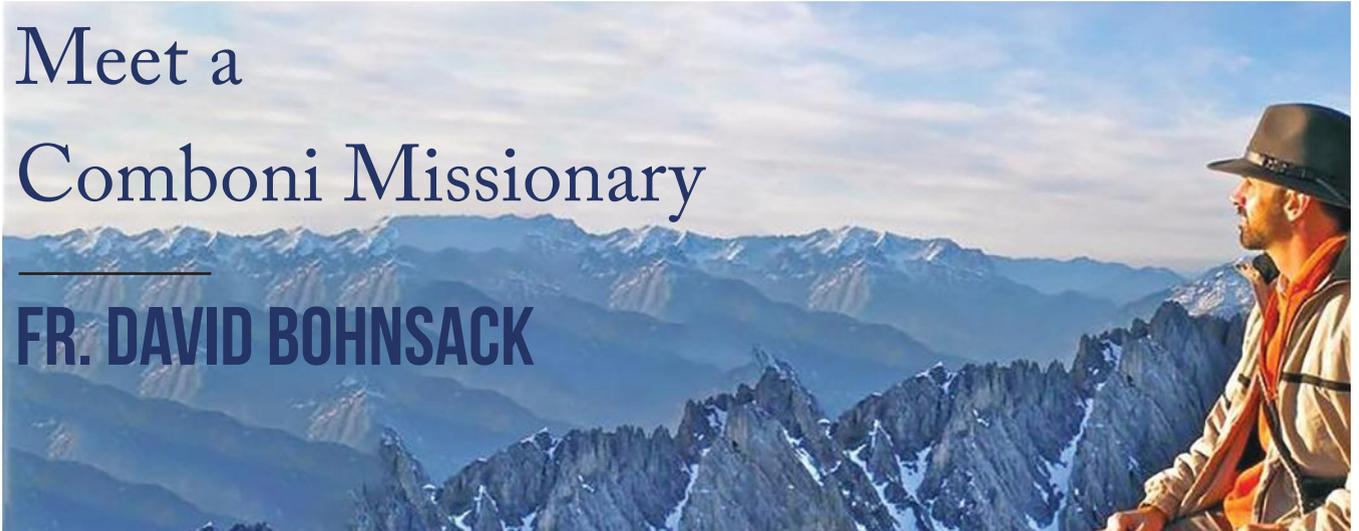
Thoughtful planning can provide an opportunity to invest in the mission of organizations, like the Comboni Missionaries, that are beneficial to society and will perpetuate your values for years to come. If you would like to discuss how you can include the Comboni Missionaries in your estate plans, I'd be happy to provide you with more information. Please feel free to call me at 513-474-4997 or email me at [kaufman@combonimissionaries.org](mailto:kaufman@combonimissionaries.org). Many blessings to you! ■

HEATHER KAUFMAN is director of development for the Comboni Missionaries, North American Province.

[www.combonimissionaries.org/give](http://www.combonimissionaries.org/give)

# Meet a Comboni Missionary

**FR. DAVID BOHNSACK**



I feel my missionary journey is something of God writing straight on crooked lines. I was born in Chicago and grew up in a small town in Wisconsin, Jefferson, the youngest of three; I have one brother and one sister. I was baptized in the Lutheran Church and it wasn't until in college, studying art and design, that I began to reflect more seriously about what I believe which ultimately led me to joining the Catholic Church.

I was always keen on following social issues of the day, something I learned from my parents, and it was during my first "real" job designing the landscaping for a complex of new condominiums that the situation of homelessness became prominent to me. I began volunteering at a homeless shelter and soup kitchen in downtown Chicago and that is where I met the Comboni Missionaries. There were students studying theology who occasionally came to help out at the shelter. There was also a

community of Comboni Sisters in that neighborhood who occasionally came to the shelter and were active in the nearby parish. We struck up a friendship and my interest in the Church's mission was kindled. This was also the moment of the untimely death of my mother, which made me contemplate deeply the meaning of my life. My thoughts of helping out the missions turned to the desire of becoming a missionary myself. In reflection, I feel it may have been my mother and her Catholic, Irish roots that gave me that final push. I entered the Comboni formation in the fall of 1986 and finished my studies in Rome.

I was ordained on August 6, the feast of the Transfiguration, in 1994 and I witnessed a transformation also in my family members, many who had not understood my decision to become a missionary priest, afterward becoming great supporters. In the first place was my father, who from the beginning

was not in full agreement. At the celebration after my ordination, someone came up to my dad and said, "You are very lucky, there are not many fathers who can say their son is a priest." His response, "Especially a staunch German Lutheran father"! I cherish that answer from him, who became my greatest advocate.

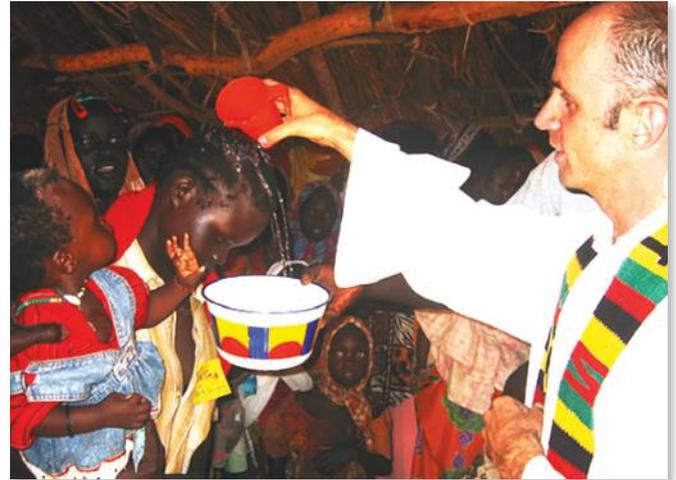
I was first sent to Egypt for two years studying Arabic, in view of working in Christian-Muslim relations. I then moved to the Sudan where I spent ten years in a parish of Darfur. The parish was huge, from my center in the town of Nyala, I would travel 300 miles to the north and another 300 miles to the south visiting 136 villages where Christian communities were forming. The humanitarian situation became increasingly worse, but it was countered by a great receptivity to the Gospel. There were Easter celebrations with no less than 2,000 adult baptisms in the parish some years!



As St. Daniel Comboni mentions, the first mission is like the first love and so much of what I experienced and lived of the faith I witnessed in the people there, is forever inscribed in my heart. I see that it was a time of providence. Those who had lived in very remote places, never having contact with the Church, escaping war in the south of the county, were coming to settle on the outskirts of villages in the west where we missionaries were visiting and, in a few cases, where we had not yet visited. One day a man came to the church compound in Nyala for example, he said he was a catechist who had prepared a group for baptism, could we please come. I had never heard of his village before and so, together with two other catechists of the parish, he showed us the way. We stayed with them two days, examining everyone in the community, nearly 300 adults, to see that they knew the basics of the faith, which they did. The surprise for me was on the day of baptism, when the catechist who had come to search

me out, was the first in line to be baptized, as he was not yet Christian. He was one of the few who could read, so when he came across a catechism written in his language of Dinka he learned it and had taught it to all the others!

From Sudan I took part in an organized sabbatical we call the “Comboni Year” in Mexico, followed by a five-year period of service in my home province of North America. In practical terms it was impossible for me to get a visa to return again to the Sudan and my sights turned to Latin America. In 2011, to mark my fiftieth year, I made the 500-mile pilgrimage to Santiago Compostela in Spain, after which I left for Ecuador — the town of St. Lorenzo along the northern border with Colombia. This area has a particularly interesting history, predominantly Afro-descendants who had escaped to the mainland from a shipwreck off the coast and so they were taken from their homeland but had



never been enslaved. It remains, however, a challenging and violent area, with illegal mining destroying the environment and constant homicides due to the cross-border trading of drugs and arms. Human trafficking, too, is prevalent. I never celebrated so many funeral masses; some months there were more than thirty!

My thoughts of Africa and a desire to return there never left me, and in 2014 I was assigned to Chad. I was once again in a parish covering a vast territory of almost a quarter-million square miles. My center was in the town of Abeche, in the northeast of the country; it actually extended to the border of Sudan, connecting to my former parish of Darfur! Many Muslims escaping the war in Darfur came to Chad around 2003 and still live in camps there today. I was invited to visit a camp one day and in asking how many people lived there, was told there were 90,000! And that was but one of the many refugee camps in Chad. There are an estimated 240,000 people who have not been able to return to their homeland in Darfur due to the continued unrest in the area.

In Abeche there is a youth center in the church compound set up with a library offering various activities, lectures, and classes open to both Christians

and Muslims. The Christians in this area of the country make up only 1 percent of the population! That actual dialogue exists with our Muslim brothers and sisters is debated and I've experienced the difficulty of trying to organize a meaningful day of "leaders" (priests, imams, and pastors) to come together for a moment of sharing. With Christian and Muslim youth, however (those in their teens and early twenties), we have been able to organize and encourage encounters where they share their hopes and dreams for a better future together with original poems and songs, as well as performing skits that can touch sensitive issues with humor. Despite the many difficulties in establishing a dialogue with Islam, there are small steps being taken in Chad, of sharing and of mutual respect. These may not be grand undertakings that "make the news" but, nonetheless, they have an effect and are important.

I am now entering another phase of my missionary journey arriving in the London Province, I come with enthusiasm to face new challenges, sharing my faith, as well as knowing something more of the lands of my ancestors. ■



FR. DAVID BOHNSACK, MCCJ, is a Comboni Missionary, currently serving in the parish of St. Joseph in Roehampton in the diocese of Southwark, United Kingdom.



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*“I have fought the good  
fight, I have finished the  
race, I have kept the faith.”  
—2 Timothy 4:7*

