

# COMBONI MISSION

*Autumn 2025*

**Mission Sunday October 19th  
pages 4-5**

**Youth Jubilee Pilgrimage  
pages 14-15**

# COMBONI MISSION

Autumn 2025

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From the Editor

## Caring for our Common Home

This summer has been hot, too hot for many! We thank God our Creator for such blessings. At the same time there are always the reminders of the threats of climate change and the harm that it brings to many people throughout the world. We have witnessed the devastating effects in Pakistan where hundreds have lost their lives and thousands injured from monsoon flooding. Pakistan is among the world's most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change and is increasingly facing extreme weather events. As Autumn approaches we pray for pleasant weather and to care increasingly for our 'Common Home.'

*In this context I invite you to read what Pope Francis wrote:*

*"Praise be to you, my Lord." In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".[1]*

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts,

wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.

This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are

dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air, and we receive life and refreshment from her waters." (*Encyclical of Pope Francis, 'Laudato Si'*)

The Comboni Missionaries are preparing to take part in the United Nations Climate Conference which will take place in Belem, Brazil, (10-21 November). It is a commitment we undertake in solidarity with the peoples we accompany on their journey of faith and who suffer from the impacts of climate change.

Join us in praying for its success!



Fr. John

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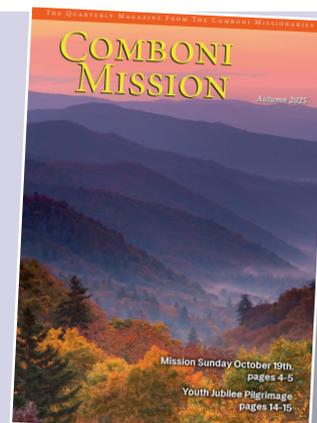
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# Missionaries of Hope: Pope Francis' Message for World Mission Sunday 2025



Portrait of the late Pope Francis on display at a memorial mass. Credit iStock - pruciatti

**Pope Francis has left for us this legacy to help us to  
celebrate our Mission Sunday.  
We cherish his gifts to us of Hope and Love and continue to  
pray for him. May he rest in peace!**

**In his message for World Mission Sunday 2025, to be celebrated on October 19, Pope Francis reminds us that hope is at the heart of the Christian mission, calling every baptized person to be “messengers and builders of hope.”**

As the Church prepares to celebrate World Mission Sunday 2025, on October 19, Pope Francis has given us a powerful theme that resonates deeply in this Jubilee Year: **“Missionaries of Hope Among All Peoples.”** In his message, released by the Vatican on February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Holy Father reminds us that hope is at the heart of the Christian

mission, calling every baptized person to be **“messengers and builders of hope”** in a world that often finds itself overshadowed by uncertainty and despair.

## **Following in the Footsteps of Christ, Our Hope**

Reflecting on the significance of this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis urges us to keep our gaze fixed on **Christ, the centre of history**, emphasizing that His mission continues today through the Church: *“Through his disciples, sent to all peoples and mystically accompanied by him, the Lord Jesus continues his ministry of hope for humanity. He still bends over all those*

*who are poor, afflicted, despairing and oppressed, and pours upon their wounds the balm of consolation and the wine of hope.”*

This mission is not an abstract idea; it is a living reality carried forward by thousands of missionaries across **1,124 mission territories** where the message of the Gospel has only recently been introduced, has already been forgotten, or is met with persecution. The Pope calls on the Church to persevere in its mission, despite difficulties and weaknesses, so that the love of Christ can reach the most vulnerable.

*“While facing persecutions, tribulations and difficulties, as well as her own imperfections and failures due to the weakness of her members, the Church is constantly impelled by the love of Christ to persevere, in union with him, on her missionary journey and to hear, like him and with him, the plea of suffering humanity and, indeed, the groaning of every creature that awaits definitive redemption. This is the Church that the Lord always and forever calls to follow in his footsteps: not a static Church, but a missionary Church that walks with her Lord through the streets of the world.”*

## **Christians: Bearers and Builders of Hope**

Pope Francis reminds us that evangelization is not merely about words, but about **sharing in the joys and sufferings of humanity**, walking alongside those in need: *“In following Christ the Lord, Christians are called to hand on the Good News by sharing the concrete life situations of those whom they meet, and thus to be bearers and builders of hope.”*

In a world marked by isolation and materialism, where **“proximity is**



Fr Vieira from Portugal celebrating in Ethiopia at an outdoor chapel.

Credit Comboni.org

**disappearing**”, the Pope warns against the dangers of self-centeredness and calls on Christians to **cultivate closeness, compassion, and tenderness**.

“Obsession with efficiency and an attachment to material things and ambitions are making us self-centered and incapable of altruism,” Pope Francis wrote. “The Gospel, experienced in the life of a community, can restore us to a whole, healthy, redeemed humanity.”

This is precisely why the work of **missionaries ad gentes**—those who leave their homelands to bring the Gospel to others—remains vital. Pope Francis expresses deep gratitude to these missionaries, men and women, religious and lay people alike, thanking them for their witness to the universal call to evangelization: “For this, I thank you most heartily! Your lives are a clear response to the command of the risen Christ, who sent his disciples to evangelize all peoples.”

### Renewing the Mission of Hope

Recognizing the challenges of today’s world, the Holy Father calls all the baptized to be “**artisans of hope**”, sustained by prayer and the power of the Eucharist.

“Missionaries of hope are men and women of prayer, for ‘the person who hopes is a person who prays’, in the words of Venerable Cardinal François-Xavier Van Thuan, who was himself sustained in hope throughout his lengthy imprisonment thanks to the strength he received from faithful prayer and the Eucharist,” Pope Francis wrote. “Let us not forget that prayer is the primary missionary activity and at the same time ‘the first strength of hope.’”

Vietnamese Venerable Van Thuan’s story is one of remarkable perseverance under severe anti-Christian repression. Ordained a bishop in 1967, he was arrested after the fall of Saigon in 1975, being imprisoned in a Communist re-education camp for thirteen years, nine of which were spent in solitary confinement.

In his message for World Mission Sunday 2025, Pope Francis insists on the importance of prayer, writing that “by praying, we keep alive the spark of hope lit by God within us, so that it can become a great fire, which enlightens and warms everyone around us, also by those concrete actions and gestures that prayer itself inspires.”

As we reflect on Pope Francis’ message, we are reminded that World Mission Sunday is not just a day of prayer—it is also an opportunity to **materially support** those who dedicate their lives to spreading the Gospel. The funds collected each year in [every single parish in the world](#), no matter how big or small, directly aid Catholic communities in mission territories, helping build churches, buy bibles, support seminarians and novices, sustain religious sisters and catechists, and provide for the pastoral and humanitarian needs of millions.

The Church still values and **needs missionaries today**—not just priests and religious, but all baptized Catholics who can be, in their own way, bearers of hope. Whether through prayer, financial contributions, or simply sharing the missionary spirit in daily life, every Catholic is called to take part in this mission.

As we approach **World Mission Sunday 2025**, let us respond to the Holy Father’s call and take part in this great mission of hope. Together, we can ensure that the light of the Gospel reaches the farthest corners of the earth, renewing hearts and restoring hope.

# UNMITIGATED SLAUGHTER IN GAZA

## Some day, everyone will be against this.

**A**fter so many years let us try to get a fuller picture of so much suffering and oppression happening in Gaza, Palestine. I am informed that there have been 900 U.N. General Assembly Resolutions related to the “question of Palestine” in the past 75 years: Resolutions regarding the questions of the status of refugees, self-determination, the right of return, condemnations, emergencies, peace negotiations and demands. Meanwhile, countless Palestinians are being killed and their lands being stolen. Atrocities abound such as bodies yet to be dug from under the rubble after relentless Israeli airstrikes. Innumerable people killed, maimed, and orphaned are left homeless, without hospital or medical treatment and without school whilst decaying dead bodies feast the voracious appetites of the dogs and vultures. Ironically, but tragically, newly born infants are left to starve.

The Israeli military has deliberately wiped-out Palestinian journalists who are the principal source of information about the unmitigated slaughter of Gaza. Up to the time of writing, 202 Palestinian journalists were killed during their reporting according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. These courageous men and women who do not let us forget about what is happening in Gaza never stop dying.

Time and time again Palestinian residents were told to go to into so-called “safety zones” and were blatantly killed therein by Israeli soldiers. It has been calculated that about 80,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the start of the war. I find it so distressing to watch on television and read in newspapers disgusting images of mutilated children, children suffering from malnutrition, parents col-



*A protester stands in front of Israeli soldiers with her placard.*

*Photo iStock: Joel Carillet*

lecting pieces of their children's bodies blown to bits. The mutilated, the starved, the dismembered. The multiple white body bags of those kids, old people and women are there to prove it. People's legs amputated without anaesthesia, surgery performed on top of a kitchen table, a child pulled out of the tents after firebombing. We are all witnessing such Israeli military murder sprees. Let's not forget the Israeli rejection for peace or a two-state solution or the occupation and terror suffered by the Palestinians have existed before the creation of Hamas.

Near the end of December 2023, it was the South African government who brought charges of genocide against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Israel has been accused of destroying hospitals, obstructing the arrival of medical and food supplies. The Israeli are out to destroy a whole people. The entire world can plainly see the senseless destruction of countless

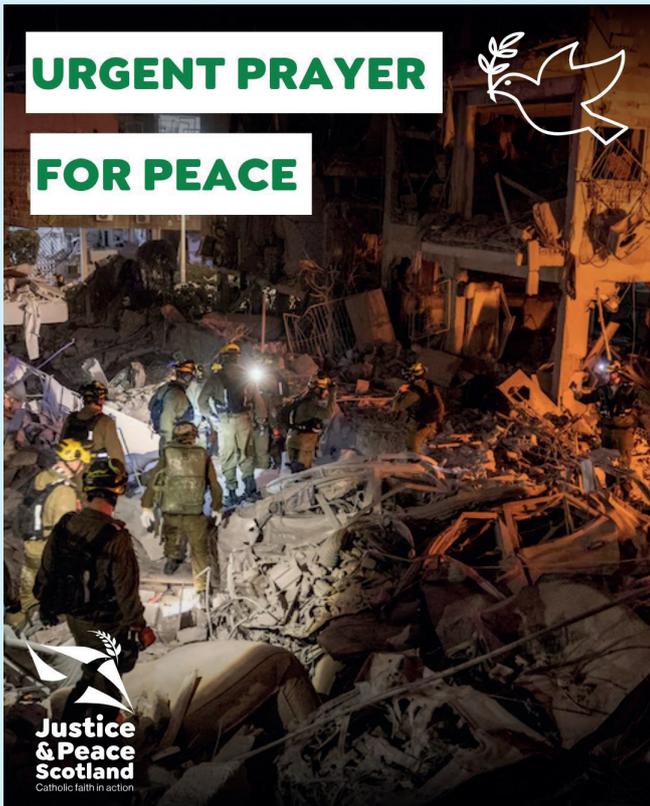
buildings.

The Israeli response to the Hamas massacre and capture of Israeli citizens has been condemned worldwide as disproportionate.

Pope Francis was very keen to advance the cause of peace between Israel and Palestine, to overcome injustice and stop violence. Even towards the end of his dying days he contacted and prayed at the mid-day Angelus in St. Peter's Square. Who is going to be accountable for such travesty of justice suffered by the Palestinians? Are the truth and reconciliation committees on their way?

On Sunday, February 25th, 2024, a man called Aaron Bushnell set himself on fire at the gates of the Israeli embassy in Washington. The final words that came from his lips in this life were 'Free Palestine'.

One day this wholesale slaughter of death and destruction has to end. I fear those most to blame will be gone.



We offer an urgent prayer for peace, asking Jesus to give us all, but most especially those who wield the power and make the decisions, the courage and the heart of a peacemaker:

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You are our peace.  
You calmed the storm, healed the wounded, and taught us to love our enemies.  
We come to You now, heartbroken by the violence tearing our world apart.

Jesus, Son of God,  
Turn the hearts of those who wage war to the path of dialogue and respect for human life. Help them to realise that war is a victory for no one.  
Convert the minds of leaders to seek the good of all, not the power of the few.  
Strengthen those who work for peace, often in silence and in dangerous situations.

Lord of Life,  
Comfort the wounded, console the mourning, shelter the displaced, feed the hungry, strengthen the weary.  
Give courage to all who dare to hope that another way is possible and who strive to make it a reality.

Teach us to live as the peacemakers you called us to be:  
To resist indifference, to speak truth with love, to seek justice for all, to defend human dignity,  
And to build a world where every life is protected and every nation chooses the way of peace.

We ask this in Your holy name,

Amen.

# The Great Life of a Humble Person



*Sister Angélique Namaika was named an Aurora Luminary for her work in health care and hunger prevention. An award from the Comboni Missionaries funded her paediatric health care centre.*

**S**ister Angélique Namaika is the co-founder of the Centre for Reintegration and Development and the St. Daniel Comboni Paediatric Clinic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Her centre has supported thousands of displaced women and children who fell victim to the civil war in the country.

Namaika's homeland, the DRC, is a large and beautiful country. Unfortunately, in the last few decades, this place has been nothing but unkind to its own people. Amidst violence and despair caused by armed conflicts, Angélique came to the rescue of thousands of Congolese women, most of them victims of the bloodthirsty militia from neighbouring Uganda called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Despite the terrible reality she had to face, Angélique Namaika never allowed

herself to give up. Humble and serene, she is made of the stuff of heroes and driven by a force stronger than anything.

Sister Angélique was born in Kembisa, DRC, on September 11, 1967. Her parents were coffee farmers, and their family was very religious. She remembers preparing her first meal for her dad made of cassava leaves — she was only seven at the time. After eating, he gave her his blessing. Even today, Sister Angélique enjoys cooking for others. Their silent gratitude comforts her in her daily service.

Her motivation to be at the service of the weakest and most vulnerable stems partly from her childhood and her parents, who first introduced her to the concept of community service by bringing water, food, and firewood to the poor living close to the family home. This motivation has been only reinforced by her life as

a nun, during which Sister Angélique never ceased to follow both her kind heart and the gospel that moves her. "God, who always takes into consideration our requests, has helped me become a nun and the founder of the St. Daniel Comboni Paediatric Clinic for orphaned and vulnerable children," explains Angélique.

In the part of the DRC where she lives, the LRA militia massacres men, recruits children, and kidnaps women and adolescent girls to make into sex slaves, often mutilating them.

Faced with this terror, Sister Angélique witnessed the daily struggle of the villagers, some of whom had taken refuge in the bush; like them, she was tormented by fear and hunger when she couldn't get enough to eat.

The turning point in Angélique's life happened in 2003 when she was in Dun-



*Sr Angelique with rescued children*

gu, in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she worked with novices. One day, while she was in the parish, she met a group of women in dire need. Saddened by their suffering, Angélique couldn't remain indifferent; she decided to help by teaching them various useful skills — sewing, cooking, reading, and writing. By 2008, Sister Angélique has made the protection of LRA victims her priority: those who fled when the torturers finally released them; those who came out of the bush with haggard eyes, their human dignity all but destroyed; those accompanied by children born of serial rapes. Angélique helped them all.

She worked tirelessly to bring those

women back to life and to restore their health, both physical and mental. But her responsibilities did not stop with health-care. These women needed to be reintegrated into their communities, had to learn to read and write. Some were born in other parts of the country and didn't speak the local language. And above all, each one of them needed a job. This is how the Centre for Reintegration and Development was born. In 2012, it opened its doors in Dungu. In 2014, Sister Angélique also founded an orphanage for children aged 6 months to 15 years. In the last decade, no less than 22,500 women were given support in the centre created by Sister Angélique.

For her service to the most vulnerable, she has received the Stop Hunger Award and the 2013 Nansen Prize, awarded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the remarkable people helping those who have been forced to flee their homes. The \$100,000 award allowed her to carry out new projects and expand her activities. Angélique Namaika has planted twenty hectares (about fifty acres) of rice, peanuts, and cassava, opened a bakery and a school (in 2015). Thanks to another award, the Mundo Negro Prize, given by the Comboni Missionaries for service to the children and vulnerable people, Sister Angélique was able to build a paediatric healthcare centre. Always the one to protect women, from 2005 to 2010 she headed the female branch of the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission. Today, Sister Angélique lives in the orphanage with the children, while still overseeing the daily work of CRAD.

Tireless and never content with the amount of good she has already managed to do, Sister Angélique travels the world to be the voice of the orphans, displaced women, and girls under her protection. When asked about the source of her inspiration, she likes to quote a passage from the Bible that has defined her life and continues to encourage her every day: *“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”* (Matthew 25:40). Words to live by, indeed.



*Refugee Camp, North Kivu, Congo*

*Photo iStock: Robert - Ford*

# Sacred Heart Church, Sunningdale, Annual Summer Garden Party



*Courtney with Uncle Augustine*

**W**e asked for good weather for our Summer Party, and oh, how abundantly the good Lord answered! On Sunday 29 June 2025, our Sacred Heart Church gathered under a radiant sky. The sunshine seemed to reflect the warmth of the friendships shared that day, as laughter, music, and the delicious aroma of food filled the air.

The generosity of our community shone as brightly as the sun. Tables overflowed with savoury and sweet dishes lovingly prepared not only with skill but with love. These flavours brought us together in fellowship, and it's no wonder that people are still asking for the recipes! Our deepest thanks go to every cook, every helping hand in serving, and those who quietly stayed behind to tidy up afterwards. In their service, we saw the Gospel lived out.

Every corner of the event was alive with activity. There was the joyful thwack of table tennis balls, the cheerful rallies of badminton, and the colourful wonder of Taryn's face painting, where children transformed into butterflies, tigers, and superheroes before our eyes. The arts and crafts table bustled with creativity, while Ed Wills' incredible caricature drawing

brought both laughter and awe. His gift of time and talent raised £144 for the church!

The raffle was a highlight, with a table full of prizes: a simulated flight voucher, a dinner vouchers at local restaurants, an electric scooter, a barbecue meat pack, and pampering hairdressing and manicure vouchers. The excitement built as tickets were drawn, and young Courtney, our charming and efficient raffle assistant, found the matching numbers in a flash and presenting each prize with a smile that was a prize in itself.

When the tally was done, we were filled with gratitude to learn that the raffle had raised £2,200 towards maintenance of our Church. What an incredible testament to the love and generosity within our Sacred Heart community.

This day was more than just an event, it was once again, a celebration of God's abundant provision and the joy of being His people together. Under the bright summer sky, we didn't just share food, games, and prizes, we shared life, love, and faith. Truly, the Lord has been good to us.

We were so happy that so many of our young people came to the party and took



an active part in the activities.

We were ably entertained by a lovely young lady on her guitar. She played and sang some beautiful songs to bring our 2025 Summer Party to a fitting end.

Thank you to all our teams who set up the chairs, tables, gazebos and bunting on the Saturday afternoon, and then stacked and folded them all away on Sunday afternoon. We could not hold this event without you. God bless you!



# Did you know Pope Leo XIV went to college with a martyr?

During Chicago's celebration of Pope Leo XIV, his former teacher, Sr. Dianne Bergant, pointed out that one of his classmates is Servant of God Ezechiele Ramin, a martyr with an open cause for canonization.

**O**n Saturday, June 15, the Archdiocese of Chicago celebrated Pope Leo XIV with a rally and Mass at Rate Field, home of the Chicago White Sox. As part of the celebration, several people reflected on the new pope and shared stories from his past.

Sr. Dianne Bergant, a member of the Sisters of St. Agnes of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, taught the future pope when he was a masters' student at the Chicago Theological Union. Pope Leo XIV enrolled at the school in 1978, a year after his graduation from Villanova University. But Pope Leo XIV was not the only notable student at the school at the time, said Sister Bergant. After she was asked if she had recognized the potential in the then-Robert Prevost, Sister Bergant brought up the story of another student: Ezechiele Ramin, a Comboni missionary



Fr. Ezechiele at work in his study

Photo: Comboni Missionaries

who graduated from Chicago Theological Union in 1979.

"There was another student at (Chicago Theological Union) at the same time,

because his picture is in the same book at the same time. He was a Comboni missionary. His name was Ezechiele Ramin," said Bergant. Ramin, explained the



Destruction of the Amazon forest by illegal loggers

Photo: iStock:RicAguiar



*A pilgrimage in memory of Fr Ezechiele*

*Photo: Combonianos.org*

teacher, was murdered in Brazil “because he was working to help the farmers to organize against landowners. And his cause for canonization has begun.”

So who was Servant of God Fr. Ezechiele Ramin, MCCJ? And why was the Italian-born priest studying in Chicago?

### **A missionary from Italy**

Ezechiele Ramin was born on February 9, 1953, in Padua, Italy. In 1974, when he was 21 years old, he entered the Comboni Missionaries.

The Comboni Missionaries are an “international Catholic organization dedicated to ministering to the world’s poorest and most abandoned people, often working in unstable political climates, in the midst of extreme poverty,” said the organization’s website.

Before long, Ramin would be working with people who fit all of those descriptors. But before he professed his final vows on May 15, 1980, and was ordained to the priesthood on Sept. 28, 1980, Ramin was a student at Chicago Theological Union – the same school as the future pope. Ramin graduated from Chi-

cago Theological Union in 1979 with an M.Div degree. Following his ordination to the priesthood, Ramin was assigned to minister in Naples, but was reassigned to another part of Italy following an earthquake.

On January 20, 1984, Ramin was sent to Cacoal, a municipality in the Brazilian state of Rondônia. He was immediately struck by the plight of the farmers in the area. He wrote a letter describing the situation, saying the “poor are humiliated” and the land of the native population was being invaded.

“I am on a journey with a faith that creates like the Winter creates Spring. Around me the people are dying while the landowners increase, the poor are humiliated, the police kill the peasants and all the reserves of the Indians are being invaded. Like the Winter, I create Spring. My eyes find it hard to see the history of God here on earth. The Cross is the solidarity of God which assumes the process and its pain, not to make it last forever but to end it. The way he wants to end it is not by force or domination but the way of love. Christ lived and

preached this new dimension. The fear of death did not make him desist from his project of love. Love is stronger than death.”

### **Martyrdom**

Barely a year and a half after his arrival in Brazil, Ramin would be dead.

On July 24, 1985, around noon, Ramin was killed in an ambush on a farm in Brazil. He was shot more than 50 times after previously defusing a standoff between landowners and farmers. Ramin was 32 years old.

“The instigators were wealthy landowners who opposed the peaceful movement for the liberation and reappropriation of lands by simple farmers and the Surui Indians of the Amazon in the state of Rondonia, promoted by the young missionary,” said the Diocese of Padua’s website.

Shortly after Ramin’s death, the then-Pope John Paul II declared him a “Martyr of Charity.”

His cause for canonization is ongoing. On March 25, 2017, the diocesan phase of his cause of beatification concluded.

By Fr Gordon Rees and youth pilgrims

# Comboni & World Youth Jubilee Pilgrimage 2025

From 23 July to 3 August 2025, nine young people [Allen, Kirsten, Rhea & Sean (British), Christy (Indian), Ella & Lucas (American), Karen & Luis (Mexican)] accompanied by Fr Melaku (Ethiopian) and Fr Gordon (South African), embarked on a profound journey of faith, fellowship, and discovery. The pilgrimage unfolded in two stages: first in Verona, Italy, with the Comboni Missionaries, and then in Rome, where we joined more than a million young people for the World Youth Jubilee.

## Stage One: Verona – Walking with St Daniel Comboni

From 23 to 28 July, we were based in Verona, a city deeply linked to the life and mission of St Daniel Comboni. Welcomed with extraordinary warmth by the Comboni community, we quickly felt at home. Their hospitality, patience, and joy reflected the missionary spirit and humble service of St Daniel himself.



Comboni Youth group at the foot of St Daniel Comboni's statue in Verona

We visited significant Comboni sites, learning about his tireless mission work and his unwavering commitment to the Church and to the poorest and most abandoned. Guided tours, talks, and personal encounters with Comboni priests, brothers, and sisters helped us see his charisma alive today — in the passion, joy, and sacrifice of those continuing his mission across the world. The bonds formed in Verona were not only cultural or



Happy Group in the gardens of the Verona House

social, but deeply spiritual, preparing our hearts for the larger gathering to come.

A central focus of our time in Verona was a series of thought-provoking sessions on truthful and life-giving communication. The Bishop of Verona, Comboni Missionaries, journalists, and other speakers challenged us to reflect on the power of our words, whether spoken in person or shared online. Bishop Domenico Pompili stressed that genuine dialogue requires purifying communication from hatred, prejudice, and aggression — that every word of kindness is a step towards peace, and that respect is never outdated but always essential for human fraternity. Dr Carlo Rovelli, a renowned physicist, offered a vision of humanity as one tribe, united by wonder and compassion, and urged us to make social media a bridge rather than a barricade between peoples.



Tor Vergata – A Sea of Youth and the Heart of the Jubilee

We also explored Comboni's own writings, learnt about the missionary press, and visited the African Museum, where the worldwide scope of the Comboni charism came vividly to life.

## Stage Two: Rome – World Youth Jubilee 2025

On 28 July, we travelled from Verona to Rome, arriving at the Comboni Generalate, where we were again received with generous hospitality. The community provided bed and breakfast, but also a spiritual home from which we set out each day into the intense programme of the World Youth Jubilee.

The Jubilee opened on 29 July with an unforgettable Mass in St Peter's Square. The vast square overflowed with pilgrims down to the end of Via della Conciliazione which became a river of flags, songs, and joy from every nation. Bishop Rino Fisichella reminded us of the grace and call to conversion that a Jubilee brings. Excitement peaked as Pope Leo XIV appeared in the popemobile at the end of the Eucharistic celebration, greeting pilgrims and offering his blessing.

During our days in Rome, our group also made a Jubilee pilgrimage through the Holy Doors of all four major basilicas — St Peter's, St John Lateran, St Paul Outside the Walls, and St Mary Major — a rare and extraordinary grace of the Holy Year. We also visited the place of St Paul's martyrdom, the Holy Steps (Scala Sancta), and other historic churches and shrines that deepened our connection to the heart of our faith and saw some historical sites too.

The high point came on the weekend of 2–3 August at Tor Vergata, a vast open-air venue capable of holding over a million people. Setting out early on Saturday, we travelled by metro and on foot, arriving under the intense heat but filled with anticipation.

The afternoon began with music, testimonies from young people across the continents, and an almost tangible sense of expectancy. The sound of helicopter blades announced Pope Leo XIV's arrival. As he entered in the popemobile, a wave of joy swept through the crowd.



*Pope Leo XIV arrives*

A powerful moment followed: the Pope carried the Jubilee Cross in procession, reminding us that every Christian journey is rooted in the Cross of Christ. He then held a moving question-and-answer session with young people, during which he said: "There is a burning question in our hearts, a need for truth that we cannot ignore, which leads us to ask ourselves: what is true happiness? What is the true meaning of life? What can free us from being trapped in meaninglessness, boredom and medi-



*Youth at the Vatican*

ocrity? ...the fullness of our existence does not depend on what we accumulate or possess, but rather on what we joyfully welcome and share." His words challenged us to seek the joy that comes from generosity and love, not from possessions or status.

That evening, over one million young people knelt in total silence for Eucharistic Adoration — an extraordinary stillness beneath the open sky.

Pope Leo told the Youth: "My young brothers and sisters, you are the sign that a different world is possible. A world of fraternity and friendship, where conflicts are not resolved with weapons, but with dialogue."

The next morning, Pope Leo XIV returned to warmly greet the immense crowds before presiding over the solemn Closing Mass of the Jubilee. In his homily, he urged us to live our faith with both courage and joy, following Christ as missionary disciples who never lose sight of Him. He reminded us that the grace of the Jubilee is not meant to be kept for ourselves, but to be carried home — to our families, parishes, and communities — and shared, especially with other young people, so that the joy we experienced in Rome might become a source of hope and inspiration for many.

## The Pilgrim Experience

The Jubilee tested our endurance with long queues, hours in the scorching sun, lengthy walks, and on some days, only one late meal. Yet these challenges became part of our spiritual offering — reminders that discipleship is often demanding but always rewarding. The hardships were far outweighed by the joy of being united with so many others who share the same faith and hope.

## Gratitude and Mission

We returned to the UK with deep gratitude — to the London Province for their sponsorship, to the Comboni Missionaries in Verona and Rome for their unfailing hospitality, and to the many volunteers and organisers who made the Jubilee possible.

We come back not merely with photographs and souvenirs, but with renewed faith, deeper friendships, and a clearer sense of mission. Like St Daniel Comboni, we are called to give our lives for the Gospel, to serve where we are most needed, and to keep alive the burning questions Pope Leo spoke of — letting them lead us always closer to Christ, the source of true happiness and meaning.

By Harvey Martin

# Dressed in Black

## Reflections at a Funeral Mass

Even in death I am at odds with John who wanted me to wear a bright colour at his funeral. I knew most of my family would be wearing black; and I knew the gossip would ensue if they saw me in colour; because that's what you do at funerals, you wear black. Colour was for weddings; black for funerals; paying last respects and all that. Now here we are in the front pews reserved especially for us. My niece Annie is giggling with Tom her fiancée; and Richard is texting his girlfriend, Rita. None of us are comfortable here; especially me, John's wife. Doubting Thomas, he used to call me as I humoured him whenever he talked about his faith. In fact, I didn't doubt at all, my atheism was rock solid, and I felt sorry for John living his delusion.

Of course, John insisted on having a Catholic funeral. He never missed Mass; but I never joined him. I said I would be a hypocrite if I joined him; and anyway, I always had other things to do. He was a patient and loving husband to me; but I put this down to his character rather than his religion. I did not understand why he went so often to confession; He was only ever impatient with my Mum; but then all of us carried that burden. It interests me now that John's family in the opposite pew are quietly reverent; and my lot are fidgety, talking aloud and have the look of people who cannot wait to leave. I know most of John's family are Catholic and regulars at the Mass. I am nervous about the service; not knowing when to stand or sit or kneel.

And I shall be silent not knowing what to say; but I shall watch John's sister Jenny as some kind of guide through the service. John's family have obviously adhered to his request; all dressed in every colour except black.

Fortunately, John's family have sorted the hymns and readings for the Mass.



Photo iStock: poco - bw.

We are now singing 'Abide With Me', my nephews know the hymn; they never miss a cup final where it is always sung. So, the Mass continued. I'd like to say I heard every word the priest uttered; but I drifted off at times; wondering what life will be like without John. Oh, Jenny is kneeling now; there's a quietness and I guess a kind of reverence and the priest is holding up the circle of bread; I notice Richard is again on his phone; besotted with his girlfriend. My eyes are on Jenny; she seems to be in a world of her own. She is staring at the bread in the hands of the priest. But I cannot take my eyes from her. Is it possible for someone to mourn and celebrate at the same time? A tear falls slowly down Jenny's cheek and yet a smile is on her lips. She believes that her brother is in Heaven; but she must miss him on Earth. I recall how lovely she has always been to me; especially when John was suffering so much with the cancer that had invaded his body.

Richard was still on the phone and two of my nieces were laughing at something. I looked around at my family dressed in black and John's family in bright colours.

Were we in the darkness and they in the light? Did they know something we did not know? Was my staunch atheism merely a cover to stop me seeking any kind of spirituality. I had always been forthright in my own opinions and would argue a point so much until I strangled anything the other person was saying, and they would often concede defeat and leave me alone with my prize of having had the last word.

Jenny was kneeling now after receiving the bread and I was recalling the words she had uttered "Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof; but only say the word and I will be healed."

I started to repeat these words, all the while gazing at Jenny. I have always been a practical, down-to-earth person and never taken anyone's spiritual experience seriously; but I could not stop saying, "Lord only say the word and I will be healed."

Healed of what? my pride in always thinking I'm right, my refusal to even consider another person's point of view?

I did not fully understand what was happening in me; but as I looked across at Jenny, I knew I wanted that which she had.



Children in Malawi draw water from a well in time of drought

Photo iStock: africa924

# Hope and inspiration sparked by a One World Group

SCIAF (Scottish catholic Aid Fund) Community Engagement Officer Michael Hamilton reflects on the inspirational work of the parishioners at St Columba's.

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting the St Columba's One World Group who have been organising fundraising for the parish in Viewpark, Lanarkshire, to change lives through SCIAF.

In the past year, the group have taken steps to inform the wider parish of the work SCIAF does, the Water for a Village Real Gift and how great an impact this can have for our sisters and brothers across the world.

My takeaway from the time I spent with the group and Fr Bogan, Parish Priest at St Columba's, was one of inspiration. I spend time with parish communities across the country and never cease to be amazed by the efforts of individuals who want to make a change in the world. SCIAF, is not just a charity, it is a way for our community to reach out and help those in some of the most difficult places.

There was that recognition from the group too: "SCIAF is ours – it's us".

I can't agree more. We exist to serve the world's poorest and most vulnerable. But this can only be achieved thanks to the efforts of thousands of individuals across



St Columba's One World group together with parish priest, Fr Bogan

Scotland and groups like this who put their faith into action by organising and making change happen.

Thank you to all at St Columba's for their time, effort and faith in raising the funds for these donations to provide water, which will change lives. Thank you also for continuing

to raise awareness of the issues facing people across the world – that clean and safe water is a basic necessity which we all should have, yet millions don't. Your kindness generosity are a beacon of hope, and your charity has a great impact on people you may never meet. Thank you.

# “Life After the Jubilee Year 2025: Continuing the Journey of Faith”

This is a short reflection on the Jubilee Year 2025 which is coming to a close, it marks not the end, but a new beginning for millions of Catholics around the world. The Jubilee has been a sacred time of spiritual renewal, mercy, and pilgrimage, a time to rediscover God’s boundless grace. But the graces received in this holy year are not meant to be left behind. Rather, they are seeds meant to be nurtured in the everyday lives of the faithful.

So, we are call now to sustain and deepen the spiritual practices and insights gained during this extraordinary year. This involves ongoing prayer, acts of mercy, and a renewed commitment to living out the Gospel in daily life.

## 1. Maintaining Spiritual Growth Continue Regular Prayer

The Jubilee Year often inspires to reinvigorate our personal and communal prayer. As this holy season ends, it’s crucial to maintain a consistent and meaningful prayer life. Whether it’s daily Mass, the Rosary, the Liturgy of the Hours, or personal moments of quiet reflection, regular prayer remains the foundation of a living faith. Consider continuing any new devotions or prayer habits you adopted during the Jubilee.

## Deepen Your Relationship with God

Spiritual renewal is an ongoing journey.



Continue to cultivate your relationship with God through Scripture reading, meditation, Eucharistic Adoration, and other forms of contemplative prayer. Make time to listen to God’s voice and remain open to His will in your life. Spiritual direction can also be a valuable resource for ongoing growth.

## Practice Forgiveness and Reconciliation

One of the most powerful aspects of the Jubilee Year is the emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation. This spirit should not fade with the closing of the Holy Doors. Make a habit of frequent confession, and strive to extend mercy to others—family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers. Forgiveness heals relationships and reflects the heart of Christ. Do not close the door of your heart, the door of forgiveness

to others, “for what you do to other you do it to me”, says the Lord (Mt. 25:40). Remember that the doors of God’s grace remain always opened.

## Engage in Works of Mercy

Acts of mercy are not limited to a liturgical calendar. The call to serve the poor, feed the hungry, visit the sick, and comfort the lonely continues. Let the compassion fostered during the Jubilee become a lifestyle. Volunteer regularly, support charitable organizations, and look for Christ in those who suffer. Remember that every act of love, no matter how small, carries eternal significance.

## 2. Reflecting on the Jubilee Experience The Graces Received

Each Jubilee pilgrimage, confession, prayer, and charitable act was an opportunity to encounter God’s grace. Now is a time to pause and reflect: What changed in your heart during the Jubilee? What moments have impacted you? Sharing your experiences with others can help internalize these graces and guide future spiritual growth.

## Revisit Pilgrimage Sites or Plan New Journeys

If you made a pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year, consider how that journey affected your faith. Some may feel called to return to those holy places as a way of re-centring their spiritual lives. Others may seek new destinations to deepen their connection with the universal Church. Pilgrimage, even on a small scale, remains a powerful way to encounter God and other fellow Christians.

## In Conclusion: A Life Transformed

The Jubilee Year 2025 has been a moment of grace, but its deepest purpose has been a transformation/conversion. As the Holy Doors close, let hearts remain open. Carry the spirit of the Jubilee forward in prayer, in mercy, and in mission. Let it shape how you live, how you love, and how you witness to Christ in your family life, in your Church community, at work, etc.

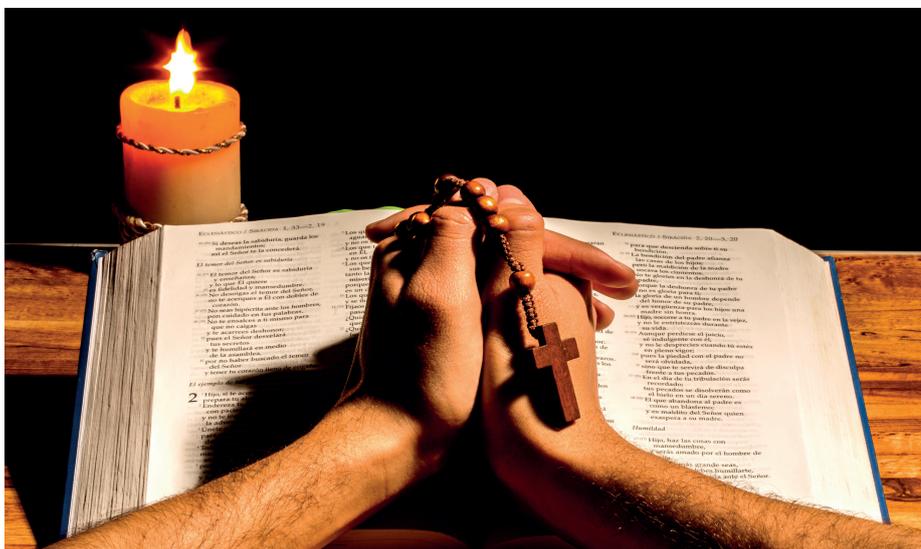


Photo iStock: camaralenta

By Kathleen M. Carroll, Comboni Mission

# Comboni Sister Fernanda Cristinelli: “Building a better world”

*Comboni Missionary Sister Fernanda Cristinelli talks about her work with women in Karamoja. We, the Comboni Missionaries, work with them through initiatives such as the Diocesan Office for the Promotion of Women, where we encourage awareness programmes on their dignity and rights.*



Photo: Comboni.org

Moroto is a very poor and marginalised district of Uganda, in the Karamoja sub-region, in the northeast of the country. More than 80% of the population is illiterate, and women are severely discriminated against, even though everything rests on their shoulders. We, the Comboni Missionaries, work with them through initiatives such as the Diocesan Office for the Promotion of Women, where we encourage awareness programmes on their dignity and rights.

In addition to this presence in Moroto, we have started training activities in rural areas. For one week each month, we visit parishes and offer accompaniment on the journey of faith, literacy, courses in agriculture, home economics, human rights and hygiene. Finally, we invite women to participate in microcredit projects promoted by the Diocesan Office, the Congregation and the regional authorities. In this way, girls can start activities related to trade, crafts or livestock, with which they can acquire economic stability and self-confidence.

From the Diocesan Office, in collaboration with other religious orders, local authorities and the police, we have started an intervention programme to help victims of violence, sexual abuse and forced marriages. Teams of volunteers have been created

in various parts of the diocese, a reception centre has been opened, and an awareness campaign has been launched through radio broadcasts and meetings in the villages. Violence against women is a widespread and accepted phenomenon, and changing this mentality is not easy.

For some years, we have been fighting against the trafficking of children used for begging in Kampala, the capital. Many of

these children come from Karamoja. Sometimes they are brought to the city by relatives, but other times relatives and friends deceive the parents, who do not know that their children are forced to beg on the streets of the capital.

With the support of the diocese of Moroto, we opened a small nursery in Kampala to welcome children, at least for a few hours a day. They are looked after by a team of Sisters and lay people. We do everything we can to help them live like children; we try to send them to school and, when possible, we return them to their families or place them in a foster care programme. The main problem is convincing the adults of Karamoja to stop this exploitation. Some, after a long period of persuasion, stop using children as a source of income and entrust them to us. Others, however, continue to carry out this activity.

Our charism urges us to commit ourselves to these realities, while at the same time we see every day the beauty of this country, the generosity of its people and the commitment of so many people who believe and work for a better world.



Sr. Fernanda with school children.

Photo: Comboni.org

# Gospel in Art:

## It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle

### Matthew 19:23-30

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.'

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'

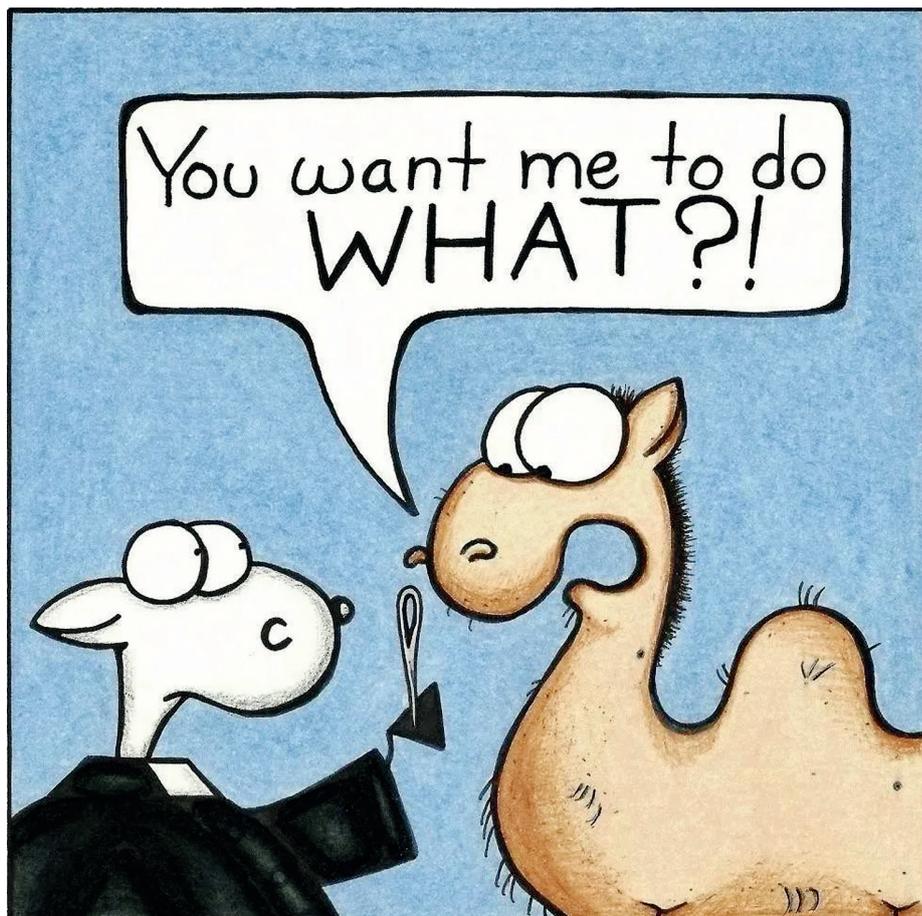
But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

Then Peter said in reply, 'See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?'

Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses, or brothers or sisters, or father or mother, or children or lands for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'

### Reflection on the Cartoon Drawing

Just like religion, humour is a vital part of what makes us human. Both are liberating, life-giving, and deeply healthy. That's why, when we look at humorous cartoons, we should approach them with the same respect we give to any other art form, because they speak to truth in a way that is sharp, insightful, and often unforgettable. After all, Jesus drew crowds wherever He went, and He must have had a personality that was charismatic, disarming, and utterly compelling. It is not hard to imagine

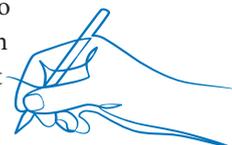


You want me to do What? Part of the Pastor Shep Series © Pastor Shep by Susan Mattinson Source: Christian Art

that He used humour, not to mock, but to connect, to challenge, and to bring the truth of God's Word to life. He didn't simply teach, He captivated!

Take, for instance, the Gospel reflection following the story of the rich young man who wanted to follow Jesus but, in the end, couldn't give up his riches to answer the call. Jesus, continuing the conversation in today's Gospel reading, says, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." The image is startling, absurd even - and that's exactly the point. Like a cartoonist with a bold stroke, Jesus exaggerates to illuminate.

The rich man in the Gospel was sincere, even admirable. He longed for salvation, but saw it as something to be acquired, something 'he could do' to earn. But Jesus shifts the focus. Salvation isn't just in the doing, it's mainly 'in the being': in allowing ourselves to be transformed, made more Christ-like. Just as a cartoon hammers home its message with visual overstatement, Jesus uses unforgettable metaphors (camels, needles, planks in eyes...) to shake us up and awaken us. And all these images lead to one truth: salvation isn't earned by effort alone; it is received as a gift of grace.



# Gospel in Art: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

## Matthew 18:21-19:1

**A**t that time: Peter came up and said to Jesus, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

'Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything."

And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, "Pay what you owe." So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.'

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and en-



*The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, by Claude Vignon. © Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours, France Source: Christian Art*

tered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.

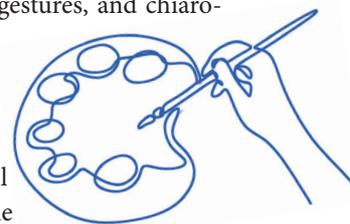
### Reflection on the painting

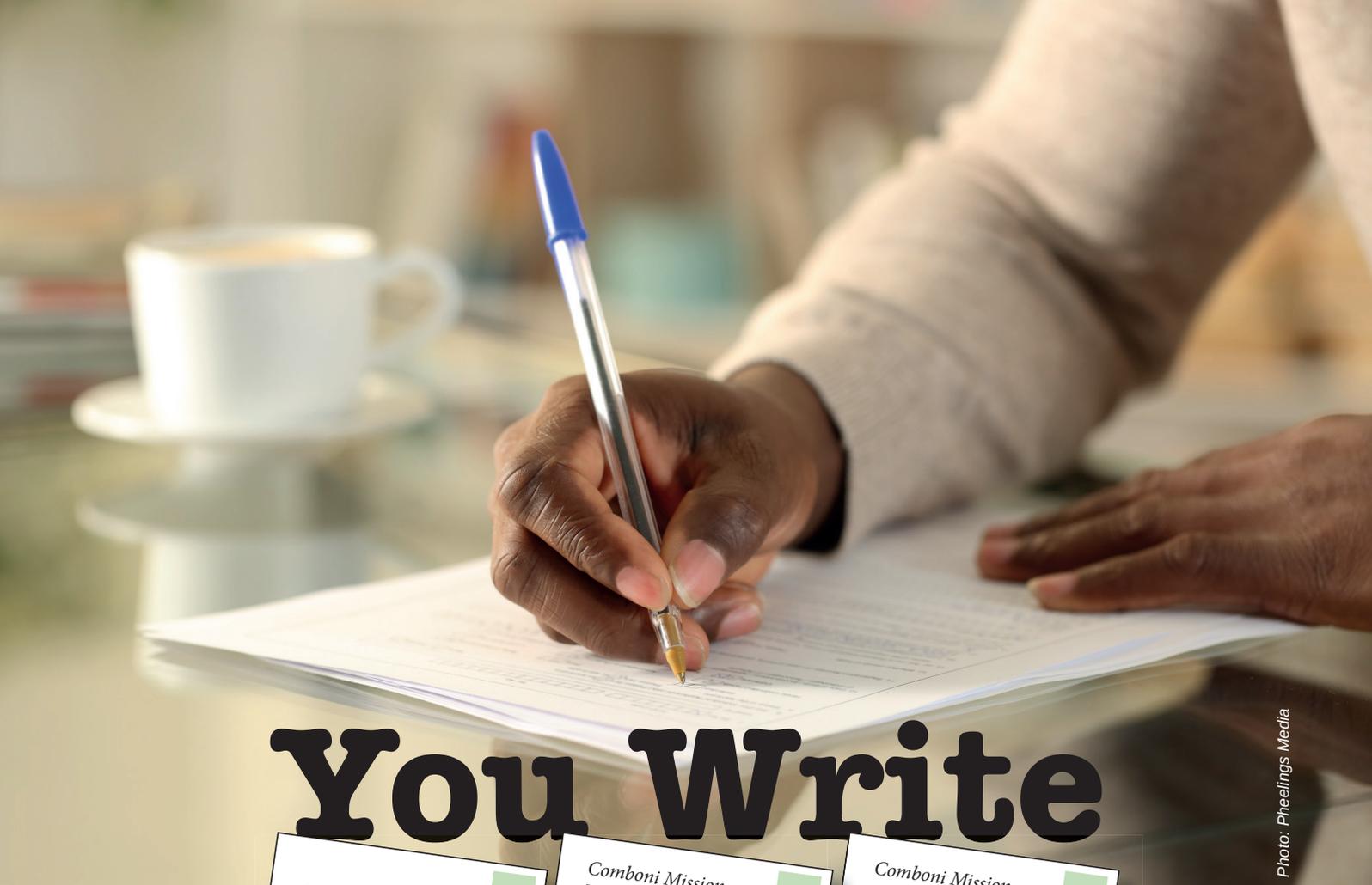
In this Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a servant who is generously forgiven a great debt by his master, yet refuses to offer the same forgiveness to a fellow servant who owes him far less. The story is both a powerful reminder of God's abundant mercy and a clear challenge to reflect that mercy in how we treat one another. Jesus teaches that the forgiveness we receive from God carries with it a responsibility: to extend that same grace to others when they seek it from us.

In the biblical world, the number seven symbolises completeness or wholeness. To forgive someone seven times would have been seen as offering full and sufficient forgiveness (more than reasonable by human standards). Yet Jesus goes far beyond that expectation, calling His followers to forgive not just seven times, but seven-

ty-seven times. In other words, our readiness to forgive should know no bounds.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, painted by Claude Vignon in 1629, vividly illustrates the dramatic moment when the servant falls on his knees, imploring the king, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." We can see his gaze towards the King, as supplicating and being desperate. The King is painted with kindness in his eyes, at the moment of being ready to forgive the debt. Accounting books surround the King alongside some coins, probably from other debtors who came to fulfil their duty and paid off their debt to the King. Vignon's use of rich fabrics, dramatic gestures, and chiaroscuro lighting reflects the Baroque style, heightening the emotional impact of the scene.





# You Write

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Photo: Pheelings Media

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

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

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

Dear Fr John,  
Many thanks for your wonderful and interesting magazine which I have been receiving for many years! I look back with fondness to the canonization Of Daniel Comboni and our visit to Rome for the wonderful occasion. When the Comboni Missionaries had a house in Elstree, we enjoyed great Open Days with the students and priests accompanied with barbecues and good music. It was a joyful day with Frs Lorenzo, Carlos and Tiziano; all great formators. May I take this opportunity to wish every success to Fr Luigi Codianni on his appointment as Superior General in this Jubilee Year and reminding us of the wonderful call to be Pilgrims of Hope!

*Maria Rossi,  
Barnet, London*



*Fr General, Fr Luigi Codianni*

Dear Fr. John,  
 Many thanks for your letter – yes, I am pleased with the Comboni magazine and praying for the canonization of Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli!

I love the magazine and keep them all! I enclose something to help maintain its publication. Thank you for your prayers. God Bless

Yours in the love of Jesus and Mary

*Anee Marie Allen,  
 Cheltenham*



*Blessed Joseph Ambrosoli*

Dear Fr John,  
 Thank you for the Comboni magazine and newsletter. I always enjoy the interesting articles and letter from the editor “Always moving forward with Hope!” My daughter Sarah and I are preparing for a Parish pilgrimage to Medjugorje. I have started to say the prayers from the Sacred Heart Novena and will take the magazine with me when I travel.

*Kind regards,  
 Josephine Caldwell (83)*



*Medjugorje*

*iStock Credit: Ponta shots*

Dear Fr John,  
 My thanks again to you, Kitty and Anthony, for finding and sending the two articles relating to the Camino de Santiago. I am now planning my first visit to complete one

of the stages. Please find a small donation for your wonderful magazine.

*Maureen McGeough,  
 Lennoxton, Glasgow*



*Camino de Santiago*

*iStock Credit: Solavyova*

Dear Fr John,  
 Greeting to all your community.

Last year I read pope Francis’ amazing Encyclical letter – Dilexit Nos and sent a copy to a close friend of mine who lives in Hertfordshire. When I saw the Sacred Heart Novena in the summer edition of the magazine I suggested to her that we should pray it together. Each evening, I typed up the next day and forwarded it to her. This was her response after having completed the Novena.

“Thank you for sharing the Sacred Heart Novena with me. I found it very helpful at slowing me down...the repetition of the initial prayer over the nine days is very effective and really deepens the words, and the short passages and prompts for reflection, have been direct and uncomplicated...always a better way into prayer, to my mind ! “

With best wishes,

*Nicholas Adersoon.*



*Sacred Heart Novena*

*iStock credit: Jorisvo*



*Don't Forget your Deceased Loved Ones  
in this Year's November Masses.*

*Why not have them remembered the whole year round, too!*

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