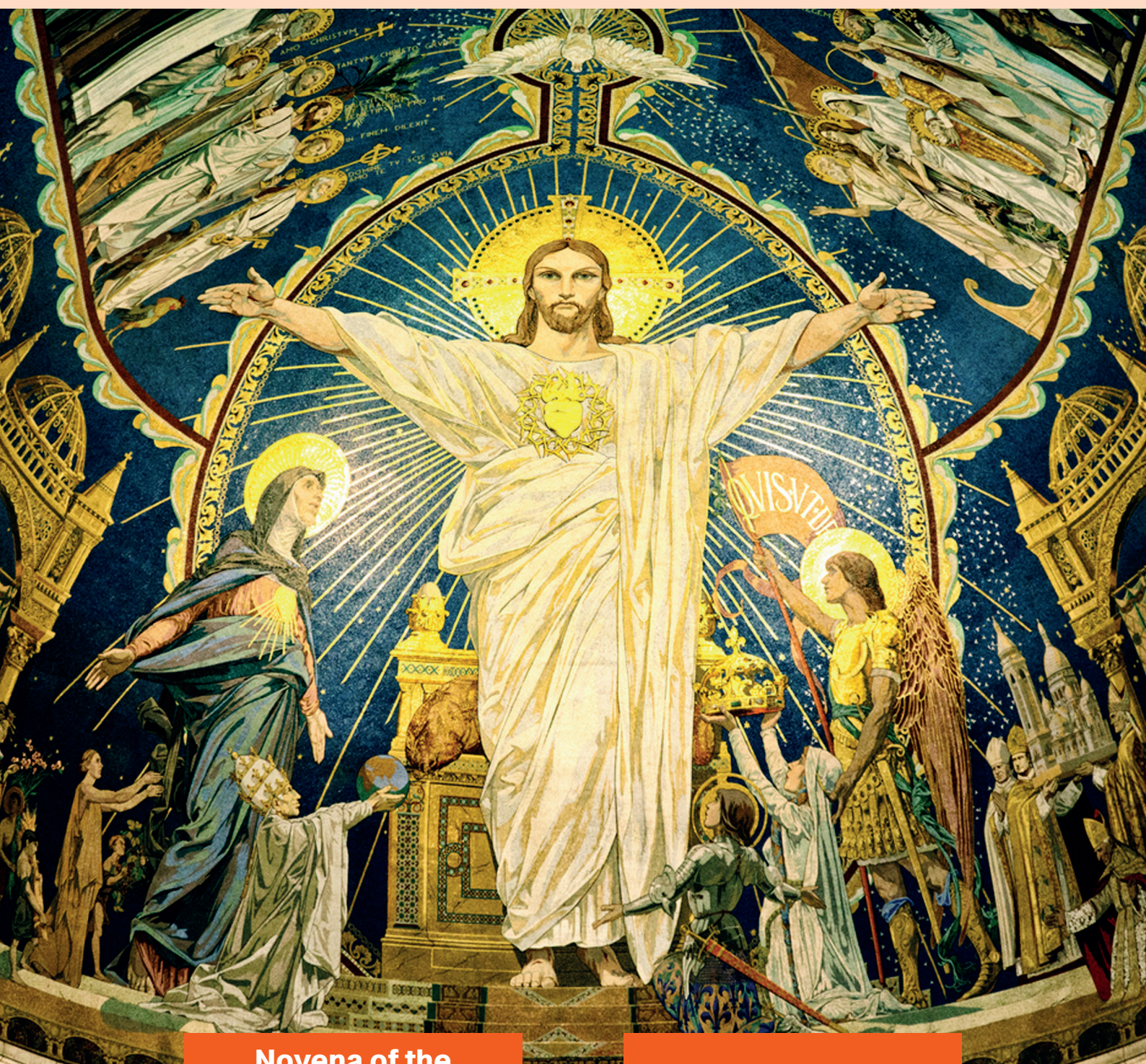


COMBONI MISSION

Summer 2026



**Novena of the
Sacred Heart
pages 8-10**

**St. Oliver Plunkett
pages 6-7**

COMBONI MISSION

Summer 2026

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From the Editor

Editorial

Dear Friends in Mission,

Our Provincial Superior, Fr Ruben wishes, on this feast of the Sacred Heart, to extend prayers and all good wishes and sincere thanks to all our Benefactors and Friends.

“May the Sacred Heart fill you with peace and joy renewing your faith, and continuing to inspire your generosity in this our common mission.”



Sacred Heart Basilica, Montmartre, Paris.
iStock: wjareck

On the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we are drawn to contemplate a love that is deeply personal, a love that knows each of us by name and never grows weary. The Heart of Christ beats with compassion for the world, especially for those who are suffering, forgotten, or in need of hope. As Pope Francis reminds us in his encyclical ‘Dilexit Nos,’ this is a love that has “loved us first,” a love that reaches out and never lets go. Today, we want to thank you because that love is made visible through you.

Through your generosity, someone hears the Gospel for the first time. Through your

kindness, a struggling family finds hope again. Through your faith, a missionary can continue their work, even in the most challenging and hidden places. These are not just acts of charity—they are moments where the Sacred Heart of Jesus touches the lives of others.

It is easy to wonder if small acts really are effective. Yet, in God’s plan, no gift is ever too small, no prayer ever unheard. As the encyclical reminds us, “every act of love becomes part of something far greater than we can see.” Because of you, love is reaching places you may never visit, and healing hearts you may never meet.

Please never underestimate the power of what you are doing. You are not just supporting mission—you are carrying the love of Christ into the world. You are part of a story of grace, compassion, and transformation that continues to unfold every day.

On this special feast, take heart and be encouraged. You are not just supporting mission—you are part of it. You are helping to reveal the compassionate Heart of Jesus to the world.

May the Sacred Heart fill you with peace and joy, renew your faith, and continue to inspire your generosity. Together, let us keep sharing this love that changes lives.

With heartfelt gratitude and prayers,
Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us!



Fr Ruben Padilla mccc
Provincial Superior

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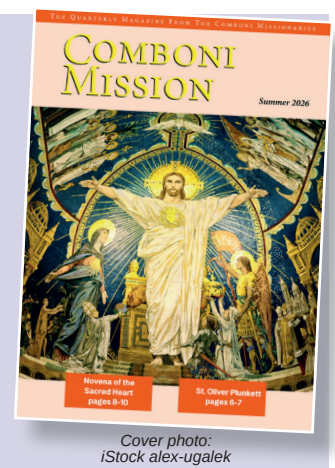
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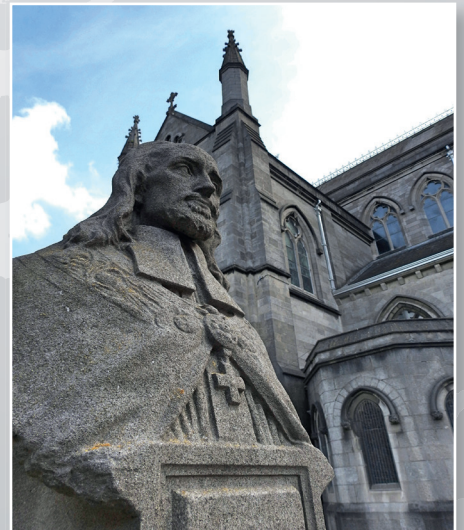
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Getting to know the *Comboni* *Missionaries*



Bro. Lwanga:

***“As a Comboni missionary brother journalist,
I am happy with my mission”***

Bro. Lwanga Kakule Silusawa is a Comboni missionary brother working in our magazine *Afriquespoir* in Kinshasa, DR Congo. Bro Lwanga has embraced journalism as a tool for spreading the gospel and transforming society. This is his testimony.



In September of this year, I will be forty years old; twelve of my years have been religious consecration. I was born in Butembo, Democratic Republic of Congo, in a Catholic family. In 2009, I joined the postulancy in Kisangani where I continued to discern

my vocation, after which I was admitted into the novitiate. I did two years of novitiate in Benin and Togo. Thereafter, three years of theological studies in Colombia.

In 2014, I started studying journalism in Madrid, Spain. A year later, I joined the editorial team of the monthly *Comboni*

magazine *Mundo Negro*. I worked there for four years. I corrected texts sent to me by missionaries from all over the world, specifically from Africa and Latin America, and presented them to the editor for publication.

These were experiences missionaries had in their missions that they wanted to share with our readers. They recounted their daily experiences on missions that interested our readers. Apart from the preparation of these missionary testimonies, I did interviews, shot photos; wrote a column, news and reports as the editor requested.

Combining theory received in college with the practice of writing for the magazine was a luxury that none of my college classmates had. In the newsroom with more than five well-trained journalists, I would stay for several hours to search for information on the Internet or talk to people who could provide information on various African news topics. I took a lot of time to read and check the information received and to weave the texts so as to meet our audience's needs. This required a lot of effort because, in addition, I had to fulfil my academic duties and honour my commitments to my religious community.

Six years later, I came back to my land. I



Poor roads and transport make life difficult

iStock: guenterguni

arrived in Kinshasa, on 15th January 2020, shortly before the Covid pandemic. The editorial team of *Afriquespoir* was waiting for me. I took a few weeks to know the reality and to immerse myself in the editorial line of this quarterly magazine.

Here, it is no longer a question of telling Africa to Europeans, as I did in Spain, but of elucidating the challenges of the African continent to an African audience. The difficulties we face are due to the socio-political reality of the countries where our journal is published. There are few readers because of illiteracy and poverty.

In fact, no one can buy a magazine or a book if they have nothing to eat. I confess that I would not either. In addition, on this continent where, due to a lack of infrastructure, most post offices do not work, sending magazines to subscribers is very expensive. Subscribers receive the magazines after several weeks and, sometimes, damaged.

Parishes are our main source of subscriptions. During the three years of my service at *Afriquespoir*, I have already visited more than fifty parishes out of more than 180 that currently make up the Archdiocese of Kinshasa. We go to people every Sunday for missionary animation,

to convey a message of hope and promote our magazine and the books we publish (currently nearly forty titles). They are useful for human, intellectual, spiritual and missionary formation.

In our African countries, few people are lucky enough to buy a book. Part of our mission is to make books and journals accessible by offering them at a very affordable price in order to reach the poorest. Many pupils, students, teachers, catechists, priests, etc. testify that these materials are useful for their academic, professional, spiritual and pastoral formation.

We take advantage of our presence in the parishes to get in touch with people and share time with them. Some share their personal experiences with us and ask for guidance in different areas. It is also an opportunity to guide young people who have vocational concerns.

As journalists, our work requires a lot of time to read and get in touch with reality. So, it is hard to talk about things you have not seen, touched, or felt. We see this reality on a daily basis and touch it through our contact with people. That is why we go out, even outside our borders, to ask people about their experiences. We visit them in parishes, hospitals, schools,

public offices, centres, etc. They have stories to tell and experiences to share. In turn, we have the mission to make this known to the readers.

The use of the means of communication is a constituent element of evangelization as enshrined in the Comboni missionary strategy. Through the magazine and books published by *Afriquespoir*, we transmit the Good News and we contribute to the intellectual, spiritual and missionary formation of the People of God.

This requires of us an attitude of listening. Listen with the heart in order to speak with the heart, as Pope Francis encourages. It is listening to the reality that surrounds us, the people I meet in the streets or in the parishes, those I interview or photograph, listening and treating with respect the people who share with me their stories so that I can tell them to the readers.

As a Comboni missionary brother journalist, I am happy with my mission. I proclaim the gospel through magazines, books, radio and television shows, social networks and web pages. I feel invited, as a journalist, to be faithful to the Gospel and improve the quality of my service; to be a good journalist and a good missionary.

How a lie *killed a saint*

In 1681, St Oliver Plunkett was executed in England after a devious priest spread a vicious lie. On the 400th anniversary of the saint's birth, Jason Scott looks at the life and death of the holy archbishop, and what lessons he teaches us today.

One of the catholic Church's great bishops and martyrs was born 400 years ago this month. St Oliver Plunkett was found guilty of "high treason" in 1681 - "for promoting the Roman faith" - during an English persecution, condemned to death in a kangaroo court, and

executed. Born into a wealthy family in the Irish town of Loughcrew, County Meath, on 1st November 1625, Oliver Plunkett decided to become a priest just as the Irish Confederate Wars between Irish Catholics, Anglicans and Nonconformists were raging.

Sent to Rome in 1647 for education at the Irish College, he absorbed the theological precision and pastoral methodology of the reforms mandated by the Council of Trent, which was called in response to the Reformation. Plunkett's ordination in 1654 coincided with his appointment as professor of theology. For 12 years, Plunkett remained in Rome, developing relationships with curial officials and mastering the diplomatic arts essential for effective Church leadership. His correspondence from this period demonstrates remarkable theological sophistication combined with practical wisdom about Church governance.

Return to Ireland

In 1669, Plunkett was appointed archbishop of Armagh. Returning to Ireland, he found that the Catholic infrastructure had been systematically dismantled. He immediately began the patient work of ecclesial reconstruction. His confirmation tours across Ulster required extraordinary courage. Travelling in secret often in disguise, Bishop Plunkett brought the fullness of Catholic sacramental life to communities that had been deprived of episcopal ministry for decades. His surviving records indicate that he confirmed over 10,000 people during his 12-year tenure - a remarkable achievement under conditions of legal prohibition.

Education remained central to his episcopal vision. Plunkett established schools, recruited teachers, and ensured that Catholic doctrine was transmitted accurately to new generations. The crisis that ultimately claimed Plunkett's life emerged from English political paranoia rather than Irish Catholic activity. In 1678, the devious and degenerate priest Titus Oates appeared



Statue of St. Oliver Plunkett at St Peter's Church, Drogheda.

Photo: Derick Hudson



Titus Oates in the Pillory

Duncan 1890

before King Charles II claiming knowledge of a Catholic conspiracy to assassinate the king and restore papal supremacy in England.

The “Popish Plot”, as Titus Oates’ allegation became known, was entirely fabricated. Oates had constructed an elaborate conspiracy theory involving supposed Jesuit meetings, forged correspondence and imaginary plots. Modern historical research has proved conclusively that no such plot existed - Oates had simply created a narrative that confirmed existing English suspicions about Catholic loyalty.

Victim of a show trial

Plunkett’s arrest on December 6, 1679, followed the Plot’s established pattern. Informants claimed he had raised money for foreign armies and coordinated with continental conspirators. The charges bore no relationship to his actual activities, but accuracy was irrelevant in the paranoid atmosphere of predetermined guilt.

Plunkett’s first trial in Ireland collapsed when local witnesses refused to support the prosecution’s fabricated charges. Even in Ireland, where anti-Catholic sentiment was strong, Plunkett’s actual reputation made the accusations impossible to sus-

tain. His known activities - pastoral visits, ecclesiastical administration, scholarly correspondence - contradicted the revolutionary conspiracy his accusers described. The English regime therefore moved his trial to London, where local knowledge could not interfere with judicial proceedings.

Before English judges and Protestant juries, with testimony from paid informants, Plunkett faced charges that had already been discredited in Ireland. His response during these proceedings reveals the character that made him a saint. Rather than mounting a desperate defence or making a political compromise, Plunkett maintained both his innocence and his Catholic identity. His patient endurance of judicial hostility and his clear articulation of Catholic teaching was a masterclass in dignified witness under extreme pressure.

In what was a show trial orchestrated by Chief Justice Francis Pemberton - Plunkett was not even permitted a lawyer - the jury returned within 15 minutes with a guilty verdict. Plunkett simply replied: “*Deo Gratias*” (“Thanks be to God”). On July 1, 1681, he was hanged, drawn and quartered - the last Catholic to suffer this fate on English soil - at Tyburn, the notori-

ous execution site. Plunkett’s death sentence was immediately seen by many as a gross miscarriage of justice, and it marked the end of anti-Catholic execution in England. The liar Oates would soon be found guilty of perjury and suffered disgrace and public humiliations.

Plunkett was canonised in 1975 by Pope Paul VI, who recognised not merely individual sanctity but the vindication of principled Catholic resistance to religious oppression.

When offered life in exchange for doctrinal compromise - the denial of his Catholic faith - Plunkett’s refusal demonstrated that some truths transcend political expediency. His willingness to die rather than deny fundamental Catholic teaching challenged both his accusers and subsequent generations of Catholics facing similar pressures.

As we commemorate St Oliver Plunkett’s birth, we may reflect on his example of scholarly pastoral leadership sustained by inordinate courage. In our own cultural challenges, we may find in him both inspiration and intercession - a reminder that authentic Catholic witness transforms even hostile circumstances into opportunities for grace.

the
SACRED HEART
Novena 4-12 June 2026

Novena Texts by Enda O'Callaghan SJ; Meditations by Brendan Comerford SJ



*Credit:
Nicolas McComber*

INTRODUCTION

A novena prepares us over nine days to receive the graces of God special to a feast. In this Sacred Heart novena, contributed to us by Enda O'Callaghan SJ, the grace we ask is to know personally the love of God in the heart of Christ.

The Novena to the Sacred Heart takes place from 15-23 June 2017. Many churches celebrate this novena or at least pray the novena prayer. During the nine days we renew our love of the heart of Jesus, who loved us first. This novena presents a short piece of scripture followed by a meditation, a reflection and a prayer.

HOW TO PRAY THE NOVENA

Give yourself about ten minutes to slowly read the content of each day. Repeat the scripture to yourself a few times and allow it to centre you on the love of God. Mull over the meditation, ending with the short prayer. In the novena prayer, there is the opportunity to pray for the grace of God's love in your life and mention any special concern or intention you are bringing to the novena. Feel free to do so. The theme this year is the call and invitation of Jesus to come to know, love and follow him in our Christian lives. Real prayer is always to be understood as a personal meeting with our risen Lord, who invites us to enter into a loving relationship with him. In our own words we speak to him from our hearts, communicating whatever thoughts come to mind from the gospel quotations and reflections.

NOVENA PRAYER EACH DAY

Lord Jesus, your Sacred Heart is always open in love to each of us, especially when we are suffering. To all who come to you seeking your help, you show your compassion and healing power. You care for us when we are lost, sympathise with us in loneliness and comfort us in mourning; you are closest to us when we are weakest. You reach out your hand to us when we stumble and have most need of your help. I ask you to listen to my prayer during this novena, and grant what I ask. If what I ask is not for my own or others' good, grant me always what is best, that I may build your kingdom of love in our world. Amen

NOVENA TO THE SACRED HEART

Day One: Thursday 4 June

Jesus the patient friend

SCRIPTURE: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to them and eat with them, and they with me' (Rev.3:20).

MEDITATION: Jesus takes the initiative and asks that we open the door to him. He wants to hear our answer, your request during these days.

PRAYER: Lord, we do not understand why you love us so much and why you are so patient with us. It can only be because you are love itself. Help us to hear that persistent knocking and to open ourselves to you.

Day Two: Friday 5 June

A day with Jesus of Nazareth

SCRIPTURE: The two disciples said to Jesus, 'Master, where do you live?' Jesus said, 'Come and see' and they stayed with him that day (Jn.1:38).

MEDITATION: Perhaps the lesson here is to be open to the God of surprises. Sometimes we recognise that the Lord answered our requests in a manner we least expected.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are telling each of us to come and see, help us to truly meet you in prayer and to discover the joy of coming to know and love you, The Sacred Heart.

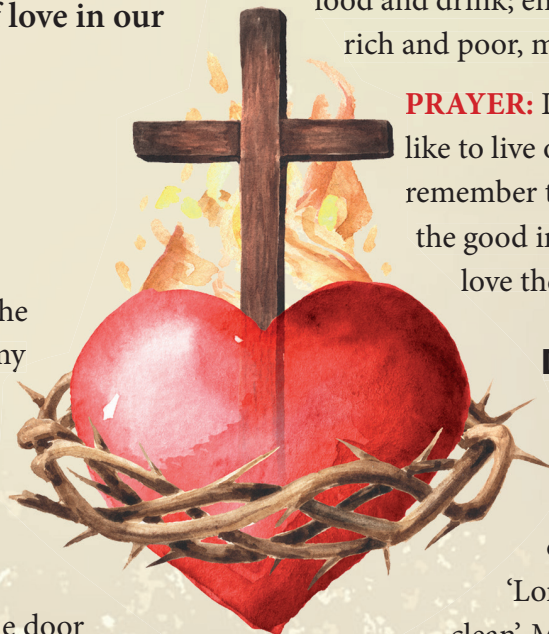
Day Three: Saturday 6 June

The humble Jesus

SCRIPTURE: 'Come to me all you who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest ... learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart' (Mt.11:28).

MEDITATION: The only God I know is the God of Jesus Christ who went to weddings, relished his food and drink; enjoyed intimate friendship with rich and poor, men and women.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you know what it is like to live our human life. Help us to remember that you love everyone and see the good in each person and help us to love them as sisters and brothers.



Daria Ustiugova

Day Four: Sunday 7 June

Jesus the compassionate friend

SCRIPTURE: And a leper came to him, beseeching him, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying, 'I will, be clean' (Mk.1:40-42). And immediately the leprosy left him.

MEDITATION: St Catherine of Siena says: 'We look at people's faults, but God looks at their struggles and desire for good.'

PRAYER: Lord, you always looked on everyone with deep compassion, and just being in your presence brings a healing of body and mind. Help us in our day to be your eyes, which look with compassion on others.

Day Five: Monday 8 June

The call to follow Jesus as Christians

SCRIPTURE: 'My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me' (Jn.10:27).

MEDITATION: Genuine love always gives you the feeling that you are good. Surely the open hands of the Sacred Heart invites us to this truth.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, help us to hear your call in all the different experiences of our human lives. Give us the grace to respond with generosity and fidelity, knowing that you are always walking with us.

Day Six: Tuesday 9 June

The call to trust

SCRIPTURE: ‘When Peter saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me”. Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?”’ (Mt.14:29-31).

MEDITATION: Our relationship with God matures when we spend time away from the crowds, it creates a bond of intimacy, being present solely for the other.

PRAYER: Lord, give us the courage and faith to carry on, knowing that you never stop loving us. Help us to see that with you, we can do everything that your call asks of us.

Day Seven: Wednesday 10 June

The God who lives within us

SCRIPTURE: ‘If anyone loves me, he/ she will keep my word, and my father will love them, and we will come to them, and make our home with them’ (Jn.14:23).

MEDITATION: Our model of prayer is speaking to your best friend. You will not fear to express truth, and the best friend will be truthful with you in love.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, help us to truly believe in your words. Show us in prayer how to recognise your presence within us and how to let our prayer influence our daily lives.

Day Eight: Thursday 11 June

Loved as we really Are.

SCRIPTURE: Then he said to all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after me, they must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow me’ (Lk.9:23).

MEDITATION: in prayer we disclosed who we really are and what it means to be human, created by Love, created to love.

PRAYER: Lord, you are especially close to us when we suffer. Help us to unite our sufferings with yours for the salvation of the world. And help us to pray often on your passion and death.

Day Nine: Friday 12 June

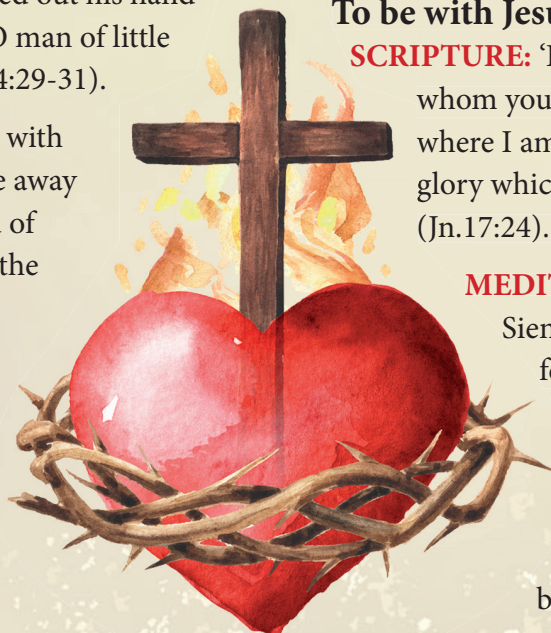
To be with Jesus when he calls

SCRIPTURE: ‘Father, I want those also

whom you have given me, to be with me where I am, so that they may see the glory which you have given me’ (Jn.17:24).

MEDITATION: St Catherine of Siena wrote what matters is not feeling during but loving after prayer. Prayer is rising to the reality of loving like Christ.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, give us the grace never to turn back from our decision to answer your call to follow you faithfully. You went the whole way in giving your life for us. Help us to be faithful to you all the days of our life.



Daria Ustiugova

SACRED HEART PRAYER OF POPE FRANCIS

“In the presence of the heart of Christ, I once more ask the Lord to have mercy on this suffering world in which he chose to dwell as one of us. May he pour out the treasures of his light and love, so that our world, which presses forward despite wars, socioeconomic inequalities, and uses of technology that threaten our humanity, may regain the most important and necessary thing of all: its heart.”

Dilexit Nos, 2024.

Comboni Sisters to leave Chiswick after 75 Years

Missionary order relocating to the north of England

The Comboni Missionary Sisters are preparing to leave Chiswick after more than seventy five years of service, ending their presence in the parish of Our Lady of Grace and St Edward.

Their imminent departure follows a wider restructuring of the order's communities in England, which will see the Sisters relocate to a new base in Birmingham. The move marks a significant moment for parishioners, many of whom have known the Sisters for decades and have taken part in the spiritual, pastoral and community activities they have led.

The Sisters first arrived in Chiswick in the years following the Second World War and quickly became an integral part of parish life. Their centre on Chiswick Lane served not only as their home but as a centre of prayer, formation and missionary outreach. Over the years, the Sisters supported generations of families, young people and catechists, offering a steady and welcoming presence in the community.

They hosted weekly evening prayer sessions, which brought parishioners together for reflection, music and fellowship. Their Cenacle of Missionary Prayer, held every Thursday, supported both the



The Comboni Centre at 2 Chiswick Lane, March 3, 2026

parish and the wider Comboni mission around the world. The convent also provided quiet spaces for meditation and personal spiritual time, which many parishioners valued as a place of calm and renewal.

The Sisters played a central role in the formation of young people in the parish. They organised day retreats for confirmation groups, catechists, parish volunteers and local school communities. They also offered weekend community

experiences for girls from nearby schools, giving them opportunities to explore faith, confidence and community life in a supportive environment.

Parents of young people were invited to regular meetings, where the Sisters offered guidance, pastoral support and a listening ear. Monthly youth gatherings brought together teenagers for discussions, talks and social activities, helping to build a sense of belonging and purpose among younger parishioners.

The parish has described the sisters' departure as a major moment of transition. A Thanksgiving Mass has been arranged to mark their contribution to the community. Their final Wednesday evening convent Masses will take place in the coming weeks, offering parishioners a chance to say goodbye.

The Sisters have since moved and are beginning to plan their presence in Birmingham.

On behalf of our readers, we extend our best wishes and prayers for their future mission.

More news should appear in our next edition of Comboni Mission. (Ed.)



Remembering the Comboni Sisters Community at Chiswick.

Photo: Comboni.org

Growing Old

“FATHER JOHN, YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR WALKING STICK IN THE SACRISTY”.

As a White Father priest of the Missionaries of Africa once wrote:
“OLD AGE LASTS TOO LONG FOR THOSE WHO ARE SAD;
GOES TOO SLOW FOR THOSE WHO WAIT;
IS SHORT FOR THOSE WHO ARE HAPPY;
BUT IS ETERNAL LIFE FOR THOSE WHO LOVE AND ARE LOVED”
(Fr.L.E.Missinne,WF.)

I equally recall the following quote :
I WILL NOT DIE UNTIL I HAVE SEEN GOD,
AND WHEN I HAVE SEEN HIM, I WILL NEVER DIE.
(J.Donne)

So much for the poignant words of these two quotations, but what about the sometimes almost cruel realities of growing old and ageing fast? There are many dimensions to such phenomena. Oh how the body does not simply function as it usually did once upon a time! Keeping one's balance too can be such a risky business at times which came home to me when I fell in my very bedroom and dislocated my right shoulder the other month. You must never be guilty of a fall to the ground when you are almost eighty like me. If you break any bones, oh boy, you'll be in for very serious trouble. Our energy levels are not what they just used to be. Also, the hilly road to the local convenience shop to buy some vital necessities - even if you walk slowly to it in any short distance, can leave you panting like an old cart horse. The curse of forgetfulness as we try hard to remember the names and dates of important events. How embarrassing one can feel! The dreaded big-C of Cancer and the big -A of Alzheimer's diseases.

Deliver us from such evils Lord! Then there are foibles, idiosyncrasies, eccentricities, what old human being is without? One can do strange things that totally surprise others. When someone does something really daft there can be even a feeling of “Well we know where that comes from. His Uncle Freddie” You discover you no longer today do the many simple things you used to do yesterday. That's what matters. In such circumstances one can become crabby and grumble a lot and be left with fewer friends.

Time just flies by like anything. The problem with life is that it never stays still. It flows; at times it runs and never stops in its ebbs,



Fr. John preaching at Mass

fluxes and changes. The truth of the matter is life is like the grain of sand in the egg-timer in the kitchen when it's running. Once run, it's gone forever. The egg's cooked, isn't it?

To live life calls for stamina. Whatever life's ups and downs, our life happens in us, happens on us, happens despite us and it happens because of us. Life's a growing thing going forwards and backwards towards its purpose, the shaping of our lives whereas believers we become followers of Jesus. One of the hardest aspects of growing old is when our root-convictions about religion, the Church, faith, God and our religious commitment can simply evaporate and leave one less believing and less full.

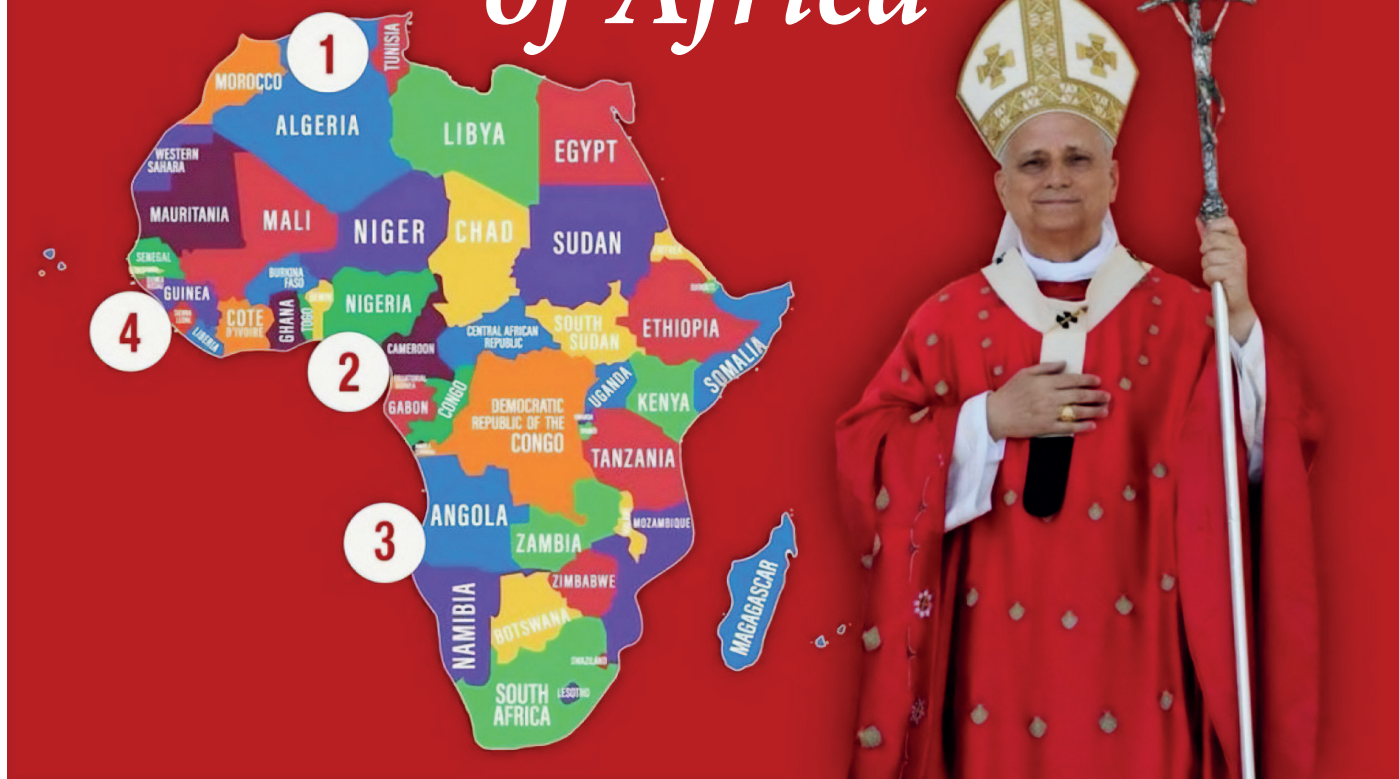
At another level, we try to accept our old age lovingly as from the hands of God. We do our best to adjust without being a fusspot. In these minor experiences, Our Lord offers a lesson which we need to be humble spirited to learn. Others may find us less attractive. The lesson to be learnt here is not

to despair and make sure your look after your appearances and their impact on others. I think most of us by now accept our youthfulness has long gone and will never be brought back. Each morning, we get out of our beds to realise that we have only the life we have.

To sum it all up, in the words of St. Paul:

“when you were young, you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and someone and take you where you would rather not go.”
JN 21.18.

Pope Leo XIV's embrace of Africa



At the time of going to print Pope Leo XIV is about to visit four countries in Africa. We hope to bring you in our next edition, a complete report of this historic papal visit.

Pope Leo XIV is preparing for a trip in this Easter season, from April 13 to 23, which promises to be historic: he will visit four African countries [Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea] with a complex mosaic, where politics, religion, economy and local cultures intertwine in surprising and often dramatic ways.

The first stop is Algeria, in a choice that also appears to be a tribute by the Augustinian Robert Francis Prevost, today Pontiff of the universal Church, to the land of Augustine of Hippo, the African saint in whose teachings he formed his life as a priest, missionary and bishop. Moreover, this is testified to by his words already at the time of his election as Pope — “I am a son of Saint Augustine” — and the symbols of this identity, from the motto — *In Illo uno unum* (In him who is one, we are one) taken from Saint Augustine’s exposition on Psalm 127 which recalls his charisma of unity and communion — to the relics of the saint of Hippo, of his mother St. Monica and of other Augustin-

ian saints and blessed whom he wanted in his pectoral cross.

Algeria, with its imposing cities and the desert that laps daily life, remains a country governed by a strong and centralized authority. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, in power since 2019 after the large demonstrations of the Hirak movement, leads a system where the influence of military elites continues to weigh heavily. There is limited space for the expression of dissent and young people experience a growing sense of frustration: youth unemployment, the crony economy and dependence on oil and gas prevent the emergence of concrete social mobility.

Among the symbolic architectures of the Catholic presence, the basilica of Notre-Dame d’Afrique in Algiers dominates the port, and the basilica of Sant’Agostino in Annaba preserves centuries-old memories of faith and social commitment. The Algerian Catholic community is reduced to a few thousand people, often foreigners, diplomats, or students, yet its cultural and social influence goes beyond the

mere numerical presence thanks to schools, hospitals, charitable activities, and interreligious dialogue that for decades have represented a bridge between communities. Benedict XVI has maintained close contact with the small Catholic community during his pontificate, emphasizing the role of the Church as a cultural and moral mediator in a complex context.

In the last twenty years, China has burst into the Algerian economic landscape: hundreds of Chinese companies operate in construction, transport, and energy, with tens of thousands of imported workers. This presence has led to urban tensions in the past, such as the attacks on Chinese traders in 2009 in the Bab Ezzouar district of Algiers that highlighted social discontent linked to perceptions of privilege and economic competition, marking the daily lives of many citizens.

Equatorial Guinea, a small state with extraordinary oil wealth but marked social inequality, has been led by Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo since 1979.

Here, power is concentrated around the presidential family and the political elite. Oil has generated enormous wealth for a few, while infrastructure and public services remain insufficient for much of the population. In this context, the Catholic Church is in the majority, with percentages of more than 80 percent, and constitutes a fundamental social pillar: the Archdiocese of Malabo and the Dioceses of Bata, Ebebiyin, Evinayong and Mongomo guide the spiritual life of hundreds of thousands of faithful, managing schools, hospitals and social works. Missionaries such as the Claretians and the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate have established a stable and active presence for decades. China, here, acts as a strategic partner of the government, supporting the construction of the new administrative capital Djibloho and energy projects, with loans and contracts consolidating the political and economic relationship between Beijing and Malabo. But the population does not perceive a real widespread benefit, and this can increase resentment and mistrust.

Pope John Paul II visited Equatorial Guinea in 1982, an event that represented a moment of great visibility for the Church and a symbolic opportunity for moral legitimacy for the local Catholic community, strengthening the social role of religion in a politically rigid context.

Cameroon, with its rainforests and northern savannahs, offers a picture of apparent governmental stability but internally marks strong fractures. President Paul Biya has been in power since 1982. The crisis in the English-speaking regions of the North-West and South-West, ongoing since 2017, has caused thousands of deaths, displaced persons and a humanitarian crisis that has been little paid attention to by international public opinion. To the north, the threat of Boko Haram adds an extra layer of insecurity. The Catholic Church, estimated at 30-35 percent of the population, is spread throughout the territory and plays a fundamental role in education, health, and local mediation. Claret, PIME and Xaverian missionaries work among the most affected communities, and the visits of John Paul II in 1985 and 1995 and that of Benedict XVI in 2009 represented decisive steps in strengthening the public role of the Church.

Cameroon is also home to a dense network of independent Churches: the gov-



Angolan Christians are preparing for the visit of Pope Leo XIV [18-21 April] already in the colours of the Vatican flag.

ernment officially recognizes a few dozen Christian communities, while hundreds of others operate without formal registration, often evangelical, Pentecostal or revivalist, giving rise to a dense network of local religious groups.

The Chinese presence here is very visible in infrastructure construction sites: roads, bridges, dams, and hydroelectric plants are often built by Chinese companies employing local and skilled labour. There is no shortage of tensions: strikes by local workers and protests Chinese traders, accused of dumping, mark the main cities and highlight daily economic and social frictions. The lives of citizens move between trust in the Church, economic hopes and fears of instability and violence.

Angola, with its vast territory and history marked by a long civil war, is a country of deep contrasts. The MPLA has held power since independence and President João Lourenço, in office since 2017, has promoted anti-corruption reforms but the economic and political networks of the elites remain dominant. The economy is heavily dependent on oil and diamonds, and while there are signs of growth, social inequalities and youth unemployment continue to be crucial issues.

The Catholic Church is one of the largest on the continent, present in both cities and rural areas with dozens of dioceses, thousands of parishes, pastoral centres and a crucial role in education and health. Salesians and Capuchins lead many of the educational and social programs, and the Church has played a significant role in post-war reconciliation. Benedict XVI visited Angola in 2009, preceded by John Paul II, while Francis has maintained con-

tacts and encouraged the local Church in building peace and social development.

China is the protagonist here with the so-called “Angola-mode”: infrastructure and loans in exchange for oil, creating rapid modernization, but perceived as not very redistributive. Popular protests and labour tensions have marked Luanda and other cities, with conflicts between local workers and Chinese workers, strikes, and demonstrations against perceived economic injustice. There are numerous independent churches in Angola: over eighty officially registered but hundreds of evangelical, Pentecostal, and prophetic communities operate without state recognition, creating a varied religious landscape, often invisible to official statistics.

Crossing these four countries, a clear picture emerges: the Catholic Church remains a moral and cultural beacon, the Chinese presence an important economic and infrastructural player, but not always well integrated, and the daily life of citizens is marked by contrasts between modernization, poverty, inequality, and political tensions. Pope Leo XIV’s visit is part of this complex plot, promising symbolic meetings with Catholic communities, interreligious dialogue, and attention to social and economic challenges, to weave bridges between faith, politics, and society in a continent full of contradictions, personal stories and hopes for change. To this end, in a continent marked by violence and wars that have often lasted decades, there will be a reaffirmation of the supreme value of “unarmed and disarming” peace that restores meaning to humanity devastated by the interests of the few and the oppression of the many, in Africa as in the world.

THE LAWLESS ONE

(Based on 2 Thessalonians Ch 2)

A message of Hope for our troubled times

Rebellion comes with the lawless one.
for this man spits venom from his deceitful tongue.
his lying voice echoes across the oceans
and into the Holy Place.

He stands in the temple of God.
revealed with an unmasked face.

The new man ruling the World from a highly.
exalted place, believes he knows all.
and yet he knows nothing.
for even while he gives instruction.
this man is destined for destruction.
And only God knows this day and hour.
while the man sits feasting in his ivory tower.

New lamps for old the false prophet cries.
comforting words wrapped up in lies.
out into the solemn streets, where goodness.
is trampled by soldiers' feet.

The wrecked and wretched ruins from
man's obsession with deadly fire.
triumphant now in his heart's desire.

But the Lord himself will fulfil his plan.
despite the horrors caused by man.
Behold I make all things new.
his powerful Word goes forth.
heard in the east and west, the south and north.
The Lord shall descend with trumpet blast.
and the lawless one, the man of sin
will be conquered by the King of kings.

Pope's Vocations Day Message: *'The Interior Discovery of God's Gift'*



Pope Leo XIV

(ANSA)

Pope Leo XIV releases his message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, observed this year on Sunday, April 26, and reiterates that *“every vocation is an immeasurable gift for the Church and for those who receive it with joy.”*

Pope Leo XIV has released his message for the 63rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which falls this year on April 26, the fourth Sunday of Easter, also called “Good Shepherd Sunday.”

The Pope called the day “an occasion of grace in which we share some reflections on the interior dimension of vocation, understood as the discovery of God’s free gift that blossoms in the depths of our hearts.” He also called it

an opportunity to “explore together the truly beautiful path of life along which the Shepherd guides us.”

His beauty makes us beautiful.

Recalling that in the Gospel of John, Jesus describes Himself as the “Good Shepherd,” ready to give His life for His sheep, thus revealing God’s love, Pope Leo emphasized, “He is the Shepherd who draws us to Himself, whose gaze reveals that life is truly beautiful when

one follows Him.”

The Pope noted that contemplation and interiority are required to recognize this beauty, observing that only the one who pauses, listens, prays, and welcomes the Shepherd’s gaze can say with confidence, “I trust Him; life with Him can truly be beautiful.”

“What is most extraordinary,” Pope Leo observed, “is that, in becoming His disciple, one truly becomes ‘beautiful’; His beauty transforms us.”

He recalled that St. Augustine had this experience of life, faith, and meaning. Acknowledging the sins and errors of his youth, Augustine discovered the beauty of the divine light that guides him in the darkness.

Such a relationship based on prayer and silence, Pope Leo said, when cultivated, opens us to receive and actively respond to the gift of vocation.

An adventure of love and happiness

The Pope said it is never “an imposition or a one-size-fits-all model to which one merely conforms” but “an adventure of love and happiness.”

“Thus, on the basis of caring for the interior life,” he said, “we must urgently recommence our vocational ministry and renew our commitment to evangelization.”

In light of this, the Pope invited everyone, “families, parishes, and religious communities, as well as bishops, priests, deacons, catechists, educators, and all the faithful,” to commit themselves more fully to creating conditions that allow this gift to be embraced, nourished, protected, and accompanied so that it may bear abundant fruit.

“Only when our surroundings are illuminated by living faith, sustained by constant prayer and enriched by fraternal accompaniment,” he said, “can God’s call blossom and mature.”

His loving gaze enlightens our hearts.

The Lord, Pope Leo said, knows us and enlightens our hearts with His loving gaze. In fact, he highlighted, every vocation begins with the awareness and experience of a God who is love.

“The Lord knows us profoundly, has counted the hairs of our head, and has envisaged for each person a unique path of holiness and service,” the Holy Father said.

Yet this awareness, he underscored, must always be reciprocal, for “we are invited to know God through prayer, listening to the Word, the Sacraments,

the life of the Church and works of charity for our brothers and sisters.”

‘Every vocation is an immeasurable gift for the Church.’

The Pope called on young people to listen to the voice of the Lord, who invites them “to a full and fruitful life,” calling on them to put their talents to use and to unite their limitations and weaknesses with the glorious Cross of Christ.

For young people to come to know the Lord, he urged them to make time for Eucharistic adoration; to meditate faithfully on the Word of God, so that they may put it into practice each day; and to participate actively and fully in the sacramental and ecclesial life of the Church.

Through the intimacy of friendship with Jesus, the Pope said, they will discover how to give of themselves, whether through marriage, the priesthood, the permanent diaconate, or consecrated life.

“Every vocation,” he said, “is an immeasurable gift for the Church and for those who receive it with joy.”

St. Joseph trusted even when all seemed shrouded in uncertainty.

Pope Leo noted that to know the Lord means learning to entrust oneself to Him and to His providence and observed that life reveals itself as a continual act of trusting in the Lord and abandoning ourselves to Him, “even when His plans unsettle our own.”

In a special way, he cited St. Joseph, who, despite the mysterious and unexpected pregnancy of the Virgin, trusted the divine message revealed in a dream and welcomed Mary and her child with an obedient heart.

“Joseph of Nazareth,” he said, “is an example of complete trust in God’s designs. He trusted even when everything around him seemed shrouded in darkness and uncertainty, when events appeared to diverge from his own plans. He trusted and abandoned himself to God.”

Pope Leo recalled that the Lord does not abandon us in our darkest hours but comes to dispel every shadow with His light.

“Through the light and strength of his Spirit, even amid trials and crises,” Pope Leo said, “we can see our vocation grow and mature, reflecting ever more fully the beauty of the One who has called us—a beauty shaped by fidelity and trust, despite our wounds and failures.”

We are to be with Jesus in every circumstance of life.

The Pope said that a vocation is not a fixed point, but a dynamic process of maturation sustained by intimacy with our Lord. We are to be with Jesus, the Pope said, allowing the Holy Spirit to act in our hearts and in the circumstances of life, and reinterpreting everything considering this gift.

“Like the vine and the branches,” the Pope said, “our whole lives must be rooted in a strong and vital bond with the Lord, so that we may more wholeheartedly respond to his call through our trials and necessary ‘pruning.’”

Nourished by a daily relationship with Him.

A vocation, therefore, he explained, is not “an immediate possession—something ‘given’ once and for all,” but a path that unfolds much like life itself. “The gift we have received must not only be protected but also nourished by a daily relationship with God in order to grow and bear fruit.”

Thus, the Pope called for everyone to cultivate their personal relationship with God through daily prayer and meditation on the Word.

“Pause, listen, and entrust yourselves,” he said. “In this way, the gift of your vocation will mature, bringing you happiness and yielding abundant fruit for the Church and the world.”

Finally, Pope Leo implored the Virgin Mary, model of the interior acceptance of divine gifts and expert in prayerful listening, to “always accompany you on this journey!”



Peace-making, Dorothy Day, and Brian Quail – Responding to Our Own Challenge, Responding in Our Own Times

We live in a tense time with multiple wars raging, and corrupt governments treating the poor and the refugees as criminals. Everything feels as if the end is near – maybe some of those Evangelical Americans and the handful of 20th century Catholic Mystics are not wrong about the imminent ‘end times’. And yet – one could argue that all eras have been fraught with danger, fear, violence, war, and global threat.

A wise woman (my grandmother) once said to me when I lamented at the state of the world during the first Gulf War: ‘Oh, we always thought the world was at its worst. I was a little girl during World War 1; a young adult in the Depression; a mother during World War 2 and the Cold War; a grandmother by the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War and the Nuclear Arms Race - there’s hardly been of era of my life when people haven’t said ‘this is it’.

Those words from grandmother

were strangely comforting – and yet, they were also sad and harrowing. Have we always been intent on destroying each other and our planet?

A number of years ago I read a book about Catherine of Siena – one of Dorothy Day’s favourite saints. I remember having the distinct feeling that I was



Dorothy Day.

Photo: Catholic Worker.org

reading about our current era – as Catherine battled greedy bankers, corrupt church men, and insincere politicians; while she tried to make peace between warring family factions, and she tried to tell rich families with exceptionally decadent lifestyles that their souls were at risk; as she took care of those dying of the plague on the streets of Siena – I thought ‘Well – look at this – nothing has changed in 700 plus years’. The Epstein Files rightfully shock and appal us all – yet, after reading that book, I came away with the sad knowledge that we have always had this level of cruelty to children and the vulnerable in our midst.

What do we do with this? How do we, as Catholics, respond to the dismal truth that we have always been fallen – that we have always been at war – and that we have always let the poor die in the streets?

Dorothy Day’s Answer (And Peter Maurin’s too)

I think Dorothy Day gives us a clear model in how to be in a world where we want change, but where we also have a suspicion that war and sin will always exist, until the second coming. I think this model might be called ‘enthusiastically responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our own particular time, trusting in eternity.’

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were the co-founders of the Catholic Workers. During the Great Depression (and beyond) they opened soup kitchens, ran a newspaper, and regularly advocated for peace. They were pacifists who eschewed violence. Dorothy remained a woman of protest her whole life while also taking care of the poor, the ill, and the distraught, even to the point of living in Houses of Hospitality with the poor. Her life was a witness to the Gospel, every single day.

Dorothy Day, by her example, reinforces for us the importance of the Communion of the Saints. Her witness helps us believe that the small changes we make, in our time, will have impact in eternity – every small gesture of



Peter Maurin.

Photo: Catholic Worker.org

peace and love and care for the poor will have consequences long after we are gone, and every prayer will be used by God to further His ultimate plan of peace. There is thus no excuse for us to become discouraged and ‘do nothing’ – because although we might only help 1 out of every hundred homeless – although our letters to the editor might not stop the current war in Iran – we still need to do these things and do them with joy and confidence when we can, and with lament when we must. The one homeless man or woman we do help is God’s precious child, and that one letter to the editor might change one heart – and God can take every effort of ours and use it in furthering his Kingdom Come.

Dorothy Day, while certainly looking to eternity, also held the Catholic virtue of Hope, and would not give up on the possibility of making changes in the here and now. To quote Dorothy in 1940:

‘We still hold that nonviolent resistance is the only sane solution, and that we must continue to make our voice heard until we are finally silenced – and even then, in jail or a concentration camp, still to express ourselves. I do not see why we must accept the inevitability of war. It was only in the last century that slavery was done away with here in this country, and I suppose that everybody thought it was inevitable, something to be accepted before that time. If we are working towards peace, we must look with hope that future generations will do away with war.’

Dorothy also said ‘We are still pacifists. Our Manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount, which means we will try to be peacemakers.’

There is no question that Dorothy Day had her moments of anguish, and her moments of near despair – but she always, always came back to the con-



Brian Quail.

Photo: Catholic Worker.org

viction that doing right matters – in all eras and all situations.

Our Brian:

Dorothy was a role model, a voice crying in the wilderness – and so was our very own Brian Quail. Since Brian died last month, the tributes have poured in fast and furiously, in Glasgow, in Scotland, and around the world. So much has already been said about this magnificent man, it is hard to follow with another tribute – but I think it's truly the case that we can't ever say too much – that Brian, as a spiritual child of Dorothy Day, needs his voice of peace heralded every day.

Brian spent a great deal of his adult life lamenting nuclear weapons. He prayed for peace, took part in non-violent action, was arrested, went to jail, and lectured politicians, judges, police, and military personnel about the evils of nuclear weapons. Every day, every prayer, every letter to the editor – Brian made his voice heard. Around a year before he died, he said to me, in a pen- sive and sad mood:

It breaks my heart, Tamara, that I

will go to my grave and these nukes will still be here?

I said to him:

'But Brian – you did the work – you set the foundations – you gave God every ounce of your being – and someday when these nukes are gone, you will celebrate in Heaven and know that you were used by God to further a peaceful world'.

Brian said

'Yes – I need to believe that I need to.'

And ever active, right up until his last day on earth, showed that Brian, in his heart, believed that. Like Dorothy Day he had his moments of sadness – but also like Dorothy Day, he had a true conviction that every good, true, and beautiful action, every thought and prayer, every work of mercy could never be lost.

Following the Promptings of the Holy Spirit

So – what do we do, as Catholics, in this current climate? We are watching

people die daily, in Iran and Lebanon, in Israel and Palestine, in the Ukraine and Syria. We are watching the American government teetering on the edge of sanity (there is a convincing argument that it has fallen into insanity already). For me – an American citizen, a child of New York City, and the child of an immigrant who taught me to love America – I am lamenting my home country. I am watching freedoms disappear and our most vulnerable arrested because of their wish for a new life in a new country. What do I - and others - do? We, all of us, who cannot bear the world in front of us?

Like Brian – like Dorothy – we keep going. We follow the Holy Spirit, asking the Spirit to show us our own unique path (Dorothy herself held a deep devotion to the Holy Spirit). We respond to the challenges of our time by praying for peace, every day. We go to Faslane and witness against nuclear weapons. We write letters to the editor (someone needs to take over this job that Brian did so well!) And we feed the poor, we sacrifice, and we live with certainty that God cannot be defeated. Love cannot lose.

And if we do not see peace in our lifetime – please God let us someday join Brian and Dorothy in Heaven, watching God take every one of our efforts and using them to make His beautiful *'Kingdom come on Earth as it is in Heaven.'* We keep the conviction that *'All Manner of Things Shall Be Well'* (Julian of Norwich) and that *'No Prayer is lost in Eternity'* (Don Dolindo).

And we invoke the Saints –

Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, Brian Quail, Pray for Us.

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Sister Lourdes García: “At the Service of the Bedouin Communities”

Sister Lourdes García, a Mexican Comboni missionary, works in the Bedouin communities of Jahalin. “For twelve years the Comboni Missionary Sisters have been working in the Bedouin communities of Jahalin, located in the Judean desert. We started in the field of health, then in the field of education, with the creation of kindergartens, and finally in every community with training activities for women.” This is her testimony.

Assalamu Alaikum (‘Peace be upon you’) is the greeting with which we are greeted every time we visit the Bedouin communities in Palestine. Although the word ‘peace’ is part of the daily encounter, its experience remains a longing that rests in the hearts of many Bedouins. The constant threat of forced displacement by the Israeli government, as well as non-recognition by Palestine, leave these Bedouin communities in a situation of exclusion, precariousness, and extreme poverty.

For twelve years the Comboni Missionary Sisters have been working in the Bedouin communities of Jahalin, located in the Judean desert. We started in the field of health, then in the field of education, with the creation of kindergartens, and finally in every community with training activities for women.

The objective is to improve the education of children so that they can continue their studies, and to promote the integration of women in order to improve the quality of life in the different communities. All this with the help of different organizations that have supported various projects. A small interreligious network is being created to reach the most vulnerable. My hope is that we can live and work together for the common good, with each one using the strengths of their own faith, whether they are Jews, Muslims, or Christians.

Our faith is proclaimed through daily gestures and actions, putting to the test the evangelical values of welcome, respect, encounter, and generosity, which thus become reality. Bonds of closeness, dialogue, fraternity, and



Comboni Sisters walking in hope with Bedouin tribe West Bank.

Photo - Comboni.org

affection have been created with our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Living together during the significant moments of their lives, I was able to know, in addition to their culture and their traditions, the intimate reality of these communities. The welcome they give us with their joy, generosity and simplicity made us feel at home from the first moment.

We communicate in Arabic, which we learn to be able to express ourselves. Personally, my communication is still limited, but I am very happy to share life with them and to learn from their simplicity and generosity. Every time I understand them a little more and realize that they too have managed to understand me, I see the grace of God that accompanies me and

encourages me to be patient and persevering, because I know that through the language, I will get to know them better.

We visit communities and families to learn more about their needs, which is a big challenge. During these visits, we have observed various realities, for example, that women get married very young and no longer continue their studies or training.

Apparently, families prioritise boys; however, many boys do not continue their studies for various reasons, such as lack of means of transport, economic precariousness or simply because they devote themselves to herding sheep. Furthermore, the vast majority do not know English or Hebrew, which is why they have no opportunities to work outside their environment.

The missionary commitment also continues with the small Christian community of El-Azariyeh, in the city of Lazarus. It is a small Christian community of about ten families. We meet every week to pray the rosary with the women, organise moments of prayer, and visit the sick.

It is a complex reality that we still have much to learn about and understand, but we are encouraged by a strong desire to continue the mission that the Comboni Sisters started more than a decade ago. Continuity with human promotion, through training courses for women and young people, is a concrete way to make them protagonists of their own lives.



Sr. Garcia in conversation with a Bedouin

Photo - Comboni.org

Pope assures Archbishop of Canterbury of dialogue ‘in truth and love’

Pope Leo XIV sends a message to Archbishop Sarah Mullally on her installation, recalling the progress and challenges in Catholic–Anglican relations. The archbishop’s installation ceremony in Canterbury Cathedral took place on 25 March.



The common prayer service in the Chapel of our Lady of Martyrdom with Cardinal Koch.

Pope Leo XIV has sent a message to Sarah Mullally on the occasion of her installation as Archbishop of Canterbury, assuring her of his prayers and invoking “grace, mercy, and peace... in truth and love”.

The installation service, historically known as an enthronement, took place in Canterbury Cathedral on 25 March. In the presence of some 2,000 guests, including the Prince and Princess of Wales, it marks the symbolic start of Dame Sarah’s public ministry as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In his message, the Pope notes that the office entrusted to the new Primate of the Anglican Communion carries significant responsibilities, not only within the Diocese of Canterbury but also across the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion. He observes that she begins her ministry “at a challenging moment in the history of the Anglican family,” and prays that she may be strengthened with wisdom and guided by the Holy Spirit, drawing inspiration from Mary, the mother of God.

Recalling the 1966 encounter

The message recalls the historic meeting in 1966 between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey, when Catholics and Anglicans committed themselves to “a new stage in the development of fraternal relations, based upon Christian charity.” This commitment, he highlights, has borne fruit over the past sixty years.

In his message, the Pope refers to the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), established following that encounter, stating that it has contributed to greater mutual understanding and has supported a more effective common witness, particularly in the face of contemporary global challenges.

At the same time, he acknowledges that the ecumenical journey has encountered difficulties. He recalls the 2016 Joint Declaration signed by Pope Francis and Justin Welby, which noted that “new circumstances have presented new disagreements.”

These differences, he adds, do not prevent Christians from recognising one another as brothers and sisters in Christ by virtue of their common baptism.

Thus, the Pope expresses his belief that dialogue should continue “in truth and love,” so that Christians may come to know together the grace, mercy and peace of God and offer these to the world.

Unity and common witness

Pope Leo XIV writes that the unity sought by Christians is directed toward the proclamation of Christ, recalling the prayer of Jesus, “that the world may believe.” He also cites an address of Pope Francis to Anglican Primates in 2024, which stated that divisions among Christians’s risk hindering their common vocation to make Christ known.

The witness of a reconciled and united Christian community, he affirms, contributes to the clarity of the proclamation of the Gospel.



Cardinal Koch kneeling on the kneeler used by Pope John Paul II and Dame Sarah Mullally

The liturgy in Canterbury

The Pope’s message was delivered on Thursday, 26 March in Canterbury Cathedral at the conclusion of a common prayer service presided over by Archbishop Mullally and the Pope’s envoy, Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity.

The liturgy marks the 60th anniversary of the 1966 meeting between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey. During the celebration, the same kneeler used in the 1982 encounter between Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie was used.

The 2026 Catholic delegation included Archbishop Flavio Pace, Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and Father Martin Browne, an official of the Dicastery; Cardinals Vincent Nichols and Timothy Radcliffe; Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham, co-chair of ARCIC; Archbishop Richard Moth of Westminster; Archbishop John Wilson of Southwark; Archbishop Leo William Cushley of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh; Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the United Kingdom and the chargé d’affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in London, Ante Vidović.



Cardinal Koch and Archbishop Mullally during the service

You Write

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

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

Editor, Verona Fathers - Email: jdcomboni@gmail.com London Road, Sunningdale SL5 OJY#, Berks, England

Dear Fr John and community

Thank you for the magazine and newsletters (from Leeds). I always enjoy reading them.

Jesus said to her: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

John 11.25

Josephine Caldwell.



Recently Fr. John Clark retired to a Care home in Newcastle (Read Spring edition page 21). A kind lady thinking that it was me (Fr John, Editor) wrote this very kind letter wishing me a happy retirement! Some people think I should retire but I am sure this was not her intention! Althea, thank you for your much appreciated message to the real Fr. John! I pass on part of her message of good wishes.

Dear Fr John

I hope your stay in the care home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor will be lovely and peaceful.

Dr. Althea Tyndale, Aberystwyth



*Sr. Jeanne Jugan Founder of the Little Sisters of the Poor.
Photo - Little Sisters of the poor*

Month of the Sacred Heart

30 MASSES

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

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

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

For sick and terminally ill among your relations and friends



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

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

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

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

By Fr David Bohnsack mccj

WRITE YOUR INTENTIONS FOR THE SACRED HEART MASSES ON THE LEAFLET PROVIDED AND RETURN TO YOUR NEAREST MISSION OFFICE.



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