

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FROM THE COMBONI MISSIONARIES

# COMBONI MISSION

*Winter 2024*

**Christmas Novena**  
**pages 4-5-6**

**Jubilee Year 2025**  
**pages 7-8**



# COMBONI MISSION

Winter 2024

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## From the Editor

# "Glory to God in the highest and peace to people of good will"



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It is with this hymn of the angels that we wish to celebrate our Christmas event and the start of a New Year 2025. At the moment I'm reading a book recounting the events of World War 2, and what a read it is! recording the horrific events of that war. So many deaths on all fronts of so many people from so many different nations, A sad and tragic history. Yet here we are in our present time experiencing history repeating itself! Yet Christmastide is the occasion to celebrate: "for to us a Saviour is born". The Saviour of peace and joy! This is the Good News we wish to share. So, let's work at this harrowing time for millions to bring peace and joy to all as the angels sang.

Preparing for Christmas is much more than decorations and bright lights, though this is necessary and good to cheer us up. It is good to remember the reason for our celebration is that Christ is born and radiates peace and joy. To help to live this spirit it is important to remember to pray, and to inspire us, we present for the first time in our magazine, a Christmas Novena of prayer. It just needs 10 minutes a day to give ourselves over to silent prayer. Praying and waiting to celebrate the birth of the Child Jesus. Pages 4-5-6 offer a prayerful journey towards this great Feast. Enjoy your Novena!

Added to this we prepare to celebrate the Jubilee Year 2025. Pope Francis has continued the tradition of granting indulgences, calling for reconciliation and inviting pilgrims to Rome to enter by the Holy Doors. Reflect on the meaning of this great event reading pages 7 – 8! You can pray the Jubilee Prayer on page 17.

At the closing of this year, it falls to me to thank all our readers for their support through prayer, donations and wonderful, grateful, letters for our YOU WRITE feature. They are always a delight and appreciation of our magazine and mission work. And not to forget our poets, journalists and contributors for their steadfast contributions.

May Christ our Saviour be with you and yours at this joyful time and throughout the coming year 2025.



Fr. John

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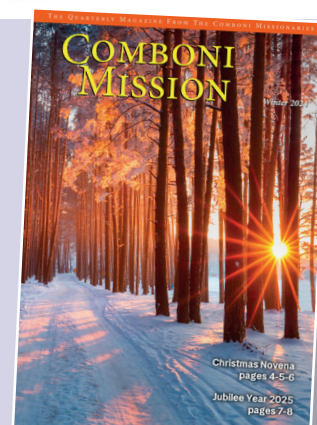
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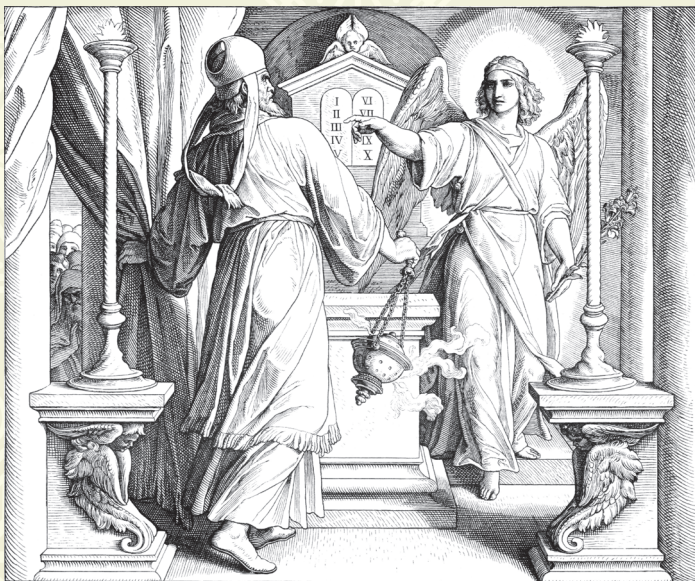


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# Novena for Christmas

December 16 - 24



iStock credit: Ivan-96

## How to pray this, Novena

Set aside about ten minutes each day. Take your time over the words you read. Linger over a word or a phrase. Repeat it aloud or in silence. Let it rest in your mind and heart. Think about its meaning. Share your feelings with God, who is Father and Mother to us, to Jesus or to Mary, and wait quietly to notice what comes into your mind and heart. Don't worry if nothing seems to be happening. People who know each other well don't need many words. God has our best interests at heart.

The prayer of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is a joyful prayer of waiting for God, is an ideal preparation for Christmas, and is prayed each morning at Morning Prayer. The novena takes a line of his prayer for each day.

## Canticle of Zechariah

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;  
for he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty saviour,  
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old  
that he would save us from our enemies,  
and from the hands of all who hate us.

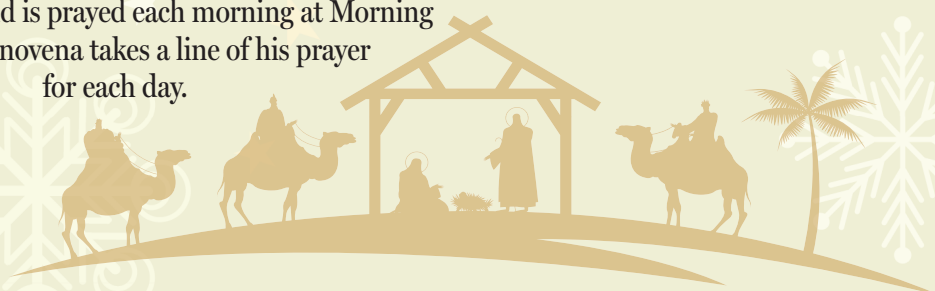
He promised to show mercy to our fathers  
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hand of our enemies, free to  
worship him without fear,  
holy and righteous in his sight  
all the days of our life.

You, child, shall be called prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,  
to give his people knowledge of salvation  
by forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God,  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the  
shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

(Luke 1:68-79)







# Novena

**December 16:**

## Scripture

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; He has come to his people and set them free.

## Reflection

Zechariah was a man already quite a mixture. He had not yet fathered a child and both he and his wife would have suffered some mockery. He was chuffed he had been chosen to go into the holy of holies, in our terms a sort of principal celebrant at a big liturgy, or the head sacristan! The terror took over. He heard the angel's words to him, and then prayed his Benedictus, in thanks for his child.

## Prayer

I thank you Lord for your goodness and care for me, especially for..... (Mention here something you are grateful for).



*John the Baptist prepares the way of the Lord*  
iStock credit: bpperly

**December 17**

## Scripture

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest.

This was Zechariah's good news for his listeners about the child John – proclaiming John's future mission. Pope Francis: "Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties." (August 2011).

## Prayer

Pray for the children you live with, teach and in many ways who are part of your life.

**December 18:**

## Scripture

For you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

John is a big figure of Advent, the one who called his people to change their way of life so as to be able to receive the Messiah. John knew that his baptism came from God and that many would refuse it. This would be the same for Jesus in his life: as John's Gospel said later, 'He came among his own people and his own people did not welcome him.' We make sure that in all the celebrations before Christmas – secular and religious – we remember the one who is to come. He will come not only at Christmas, but all during the year.

## Prayer

I thank you Lord for the goodness and love of many others; I thank you for the faith many have shared with me.

**December 19:**

## Scripture

To give his people knowledge of salvation

Pope Francis remarks: "Nothing strengthens our faith more than being cleansed of our sins." Like any relationship is transformed by forgiveness of each other, our relationship with God is a forgiving friendship. The nature of God is to forgive. Jesus says that there is no greater joy than in forgiving. To



accept forgiveness is a humble moment. Take some time to be in touch with your history of forgiveness and pray in thanks to the God of mercy. This is the salvation God offers.

## Prayer

Save us, Saviour of the world for in your coming among us you set us free..

**December 20:**

## Scripture

By the forgiveness of their sins in the tender compassion of our God

Often our 'second name' or middle name says something about our family. The name may be of someone we are called after like a grandparent or relative, or a saint. Pope Francis says that 'God's middle name is mercy'. He says: "Nothing unites us to God more than an act of mercy, for it is by mercy that the Lord forgives our sins and gives us the grace to practice acts of mercy in his name."

## Prayer

Help me O Lord to trust in your care for me; this will be my strength. My it gives me courage and hope in life. Hail Mary...

**December 21**

## Scripture

The dawn from on high shall break upon us.

Early morning is dawn time, and all time of God is in a way dawn time. The dawn is said to break – it breaks gently, with the light gradually filling the sky. God 'breaks' on us like that. his mercy is gentle and his love consistent, breaking easily into our lives. May each dawn make us grateful for the 'breaking in' of God on our lives.

## Prayer

May the prayers of Mary, o Lord, bring me closer into your love. Hail Mary....

**December 22**

## Scripture

Tto shine on those who dwell in darkness.

This light shines for us in all the difficult times of life. We ask God's help in times like illness, bereavement, anxiety about our family, fears of failure, and death, poverty, exclusion and feelings of depression and loss. The light of God shines in lives at those times through the care, compassion and love of others. may each of us be the shining light of God.

## Prayer

Open my heart, O Lord, to notice the needs of so many around me, and respond as best I can. Hail Mary....



*Mary and the Shepherds rejoice at the birth of Jesus*  
iStock credit: Andrew-Howe

**December 23**

## Scripture

and the shadow of death,

The shadow of death is a large shadow for many who are ageing, seriously ill, in dangers of war or local violence. We pray each day for Mary's help 'at the hour of death', as we have a natural fear of death and an unwillingness to face it, or to accompany others in their times near death. shadows 'hide' the light but without light there would be no shadow. In the shadows of our lives the light of God is always nearby.

## Prayer

May we remember each other, O Lord, in all our needs and the needs of each other. Hail Mary....

**December 24th**

## Scripture

and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

We think of peace and pray for peace much at Christmas. In wartimes there was a Christmas ceasefire and hostile soldiers made peace for the day. We know that a great gift for us in life is peace of mind and heart. We believe that God wants world peace – in the Mass we pray for peace 'according to your will'. I may think of making peace with someone at this time of the year and this is a good thought! May the peace of Christ reign in the hearts of all we meet and greet this day.

## Prayer

May I bring your kindness o Lord; into all I do and say today? Hail Mary....







**Pope Francis has given the 2025 Jubilee Year the theme of 'Pilgrims of Hope'.  
Find out more about what a Jubilee Year is and how you can take part.**

### **What is a Jubilee Year?**

In the Catholic Church, a Jubilee or Holy Year is a special year of forgiveness and reconciliation, in which people are invited to come back into right relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation.

### **How often is a Jubilee Year?**

A Jubilee Year is celebrated by the Church every 25 years. This has been the case since 1470, when Pope Paul II changed it from every 50 years.

A Pope can also proclaim an Extraordinary Jubilee, like the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy which Pope Francis inaugurated in 2015.

### **What is the theme of the Jubilee Year in 2025?**

The theme is Pilgrims of Hope. Pope Francis has invited Catholics to renew our hope and discover a vision that can “restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone”. We are also invited to rediscover a spirituality of God’s creation in which we under-

stand ourselves as “pilgrims on the earth” rather than masters of the world.

### **When does the Jubilee Year start and finish?**

- The 2025 Jubilee Year begins on Christmas Eve 2024 and concludes on
- 6 January 2026.

### **What is the Biblical background for the Jubilee Year?**

The word Jubilee comes from the Hebrew word yobel, which is a ram’s horn. This wind instrument is blown to mark the start of a Jubilee Year in the Bible (Leviticus 25:9).

In the Bible the Jubilee Year occurred every 50 years and involved the cancelling of debts, a period of rest for people and the earth, and land being restored to the landless.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus makes clear his own mission is to bring Jubilee. In the synagogue at Nazareth, he reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favour:



*Pilgrims at the Vatican iStock credit: titoslack*





God created for everyone iStock credit: gldburger

*“The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.” (Luke 4:18-19)*

After reading, Jesus announces: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Jesus shows us what God’s Kingdom of justice, compassion and freedom looks like. He invites us join him in making it a reality.

### What is the Papal Bull of Indiction?

The term ‘bull’ originates from the lead seal, known as bulla in Latin. It refers to a Papal decree which outlines the purpose and spirit of the Holy Year.

### What does the Papal Bull for the 2025 Jubilee Year tell us?

The Bull is titled “Spes non confundit” (Hope does not disappoint) and urges us to look for signs of hope in the world around us and work for peace and justice. In the document Pope Francis writes:

*“If we really wish to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry.” (#16)*

### What is a Holy Door?

A Holy Door is one of the usually sealed entrances that lead into the major basilicas of Rome. The beginning of the Jubilee Year is marked by the opening of the Holy Door of St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. It is only during a Jubilee Year that these doors are opened.

### What do Catholics do during a Jubilee Year?

The Jubilee Year is an opportunity to respond to God’s call to turn to him and to pursue justice. In the Jubilee Year of 2000 many Christians joined together to call for cancellation of debt owed by the world’s poorest countries.

Often people will go on pilgrimage during a Jubilee year, to Rome or another holy site. Pope Francis writes:

*“Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life. A pilgrimage on foot is a great aid for rediscovering the value of silence, effort and simplicity of life.”*

(Spes non confundit #5)



Crowds waiting to enter by the Holy Door iStock credit: stigalenas



# Getting to know the *Comboni* *Missionaries*



A biblical quote that continues to guide me: “But at your word I will let down the nets” ( Lk 5.5 ). Sister Lucrecia talks about her vocation and her missionary journey.



**M**y name is Lucrecia Iracema Tigüilá Martínez, a Comboni Missionary Sister from San Cristóbal Totonicapán, Guatemala, Central America. I am the second-born in a family of four: three women and a man.

I attended María Auxiliadora School, managed by the Salesian sisters, for both my primary and secondary education. As a Catholic school, learning extended beyond the classroom walls. We engaged in extracurricular activities that allowed us to nurture our faith and develop a special connection with Mary, the mother of God. During this time, I became familiar with the spirituality of Don Bosco, an example to follow on my path to holiness.

My vocation traces back to my experiences during school days. One pivotal

moment occurred during a drama presentation. As we prepared for the play, I was chosen to portray a religious sister. However, during rehearsals, a profound silence and uncertainty enveloped me, and within moments, the possibility of being a sister emerged. This unexpected revelation seemed to have sealed off other paths for me, leading me toward the consecrated life.

In high school, I attended a Jesuit school where my focus shifted to studies, sports, and friendships. Church attendance took a backseat during this time. Yet, God worked through my younger sister, Isabel, and my father's car. Isabel invited me to participate in a youth group, and my father offered his car as an incentive. I eagerly joined the Church youth group.

During university, I continued my involvement in the youth group. It was during one of our meetings that I encountered a Comboni Missionary. He celebrated the Eucharist with us, introducing me to Saint Daniel Comboni. Despite having no intention of becoming a missionary at that time, he gave me a brochure about the mission and vocational meetings. I kept it in my Bible, where it remained for a long time.

Opportunities unfolded during my time at university, work, with friends, and through travel. The prospect of starting a family was also on the horizon. Yet, despite these expected and planned experiences, I felt an inner emptiness—a yearning for something more profound. I sought meaning and a passion that would





A village scene in West Pokot, Kenya iStock credit: andydidy

ignite my soul.

As a member of the youth group, I participated in various gatherings and youth days. Through these encounters, I began to discover more the richness of the Catholic Church – the diverse members, their unique charisms, and the universal beauty found in the Eucharist. Attending Church once a week was no longer enough; I craved a deeper connection with the Lord.

Hence, my journey toward listening to God's voice intensified. I started attending daily Mass. It was during these moments that I realized it was not solely my pursuit—it was God seeking me, patiently and creatively. I asked Him what He wanted from me, opening my heart to the possibility of religious life as His call. Despite the challenges—leaving behind family and sacrificing comforts—I found peace and purpose in this pursuit.

Seeking more information about religious life, I recalled a pamphlet given to me years earlier by a Missionary. Through him, I connected with the Comboni Missionary Sisters. Their commitment to the mission resonated with me deeply. The vocational process led me to the postulancy in Guadalajara, Mexico, followed by the novitiate in Quito, Ecuador, and finally to Kenya, where I am serving at Amakuriat mission, West Pokot. Despite being far from my home country, the Eucharist, community, and the people sustain me. I have found joy and purpose, knowing that wherever I am, I have a fam-

ily and a home.

On September 14th this year, I celebrated 12 years of religious life. I am profoundly grateful to the Lord of my life for his promise to be with me every day. His sustaining hand has allowed me to live alongside my sisters and the people I have encountered. Although being far from my home country has presented challenges—socially, culturally, and ecclesiastically—I find solace in the Eucharist, community, and the people around me. They bring me

peace and joy.

One biblical quote that continues to guide me is from the Gospel of Luke 5:5 “But at your word I will let down the nets.” Through his Word, I discover my path each day, finding confidence in his guidance and sustenance. I encourage everyone—whether young or old, married or single—to seek a personal relationship with our Creator. May our faith come alive through the Eucharist and communion with others.



Finding peace and joy in Kenya iStock credit: EyeEm Mobile GmbH



## A LETTER TO THE EARLY CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

### *Melchior, one of the Three Wise Men, reminisces on his visit to Bethlehem together with Caspar and Balthazar*

**M**y name is Melchior. I am an old man now. I am writing because now I am unable to journey as I once did. Over thirty years have passed since the epic journey I made with my two friends Caspar and Balthazar. We travelled from Persia to Bethlehem in Judea. No doubt you are well aware of the birth-place of Jesus, and Mary and Joseph would have informed you of our visit. We followed that wonderful Star and despite the shenanigans of Herod our journey was fulfilled. We heard from Mary about the visitation of Angels that the shepherds had. It seemed something very special was about to break out upon us.

We had heard of the prophecies of the coming King and were led to proceed

forth and bring gifts in homage of that King. What did we hope to find? Our ancestors had also visited the great King Solomon; a part of our history, a legend passed down throughout the centuries; but the experience we had and we all agreed was something more than a King. We came to do homage, but we bowed the knee and worshipped; for wasn't there something greater than Solomon here?

We had come from a place of many gods whose statues appeared everywhere, in all the temples and even in the streets and our houses. Indeed, we prayed to the god of travel to bring us safely to Bethlehem; but was it not the God who created the heavens and the earth who had guided us along the way?

He who warned us in a dream to go back by another way to avoid the evil of Herod.

There was a deep sense in us however that our hearts were undertaking a new journey to a new place; a spiritual place. We were in no hurry to arrive home. We travelled at a leisurely pace reflecting each night by the camp fire; trying to grasp more fully that which had changed us. We sat in silence for much of the time; for what we had experienced caused a deep stirring at the very core of our being. We had doubts as all men do. The history of our lives still held us in its grip. For weren't there many gods? And wasn't this just another one? But we were different to the men who had started the journey; that's for sure. Balthazar, usually so



The Three Wise Men follow the star iStock credit: Zu-09





*Offering gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the Eternal king* iStock credit: sedmak

impatient in his youthfulness; always ready to argue a point was so still and quiet we thought he may be sick in some way. As for Caspar he spoke wisely and reflected beautifully on many subjects; he would spend much of the nights gazing into the Heavens, long after the fire had died out; for he seemed to have a fire burning in his heart as he gazed in awe at the stars in the Universe. Yet still the history of our lives caused us to doubt as we awoke in the mornings and set out on our journey home. Our reasoning minds were in conflict with our spirits.

We had bowed the knee and worshipped a tiny baby; unable to speak and at times crying out for his mother's breast. My two friends returned to Arabia and India soon after we arrived in Persia; and the journey had worn us and they both still seemed to question as we looked around at the many gods, we thought we had done with; it was as if we had experienced some kind of dream and imagined it all. Time can do that unfortunately. As for me I was no longer comfortable with the many gods; which caused many disputes in the family who knew no other way; thanking the temple

gods for our safe return; despite the sharing of my experience.

There are many that have journeyed from here to Judea over the years; and likewise Israeli caravans bringing a variety of goods. They also bring many stories of what has been happening in Judea. I've heard them gossiping in the bars, on the streets and even in the temples. It seemed the babe we saw never became their King. He seemed destined to follow a different path than the riches and power of an earthly King. I've heard he wandered the villages announcing a new kingdom. One that was not of this world. Is it an exaggeration? tales becoming more outrageous the more they are told, or the consumption of wine embellishing such stories. In my heart I know something special had happened as the child grew and became a man; but my logical mind and my wife's arguments cause me to doubt. I have heard over the years that this boy grew to become a great healer and teacher; even raising the dead; although the man that shared this with me earned money from his telling of tales and many said he was unreliable. My mind often takes me back to those early

days in Bethlehem; and I will never forget what happened to us.

I no longer pray to the myriads of gods here; but quietly on my own, away from the family I call upon YAHWEH the Hebrew God. The latest news that came was that the babe from Bethlehem had been crucified by the Romans at the request of Jewish authorities, apparently for blasphemy; calling himself the Son of God.

Then most astonishingly he was raised from the dead and appeared to his disciples. All those years ago we came to pay homage to the new King of the Jews; but somehow found ourselves bowing to worship a heavenly King.

We had brought gifts for an earthly king; myrrh for anointing oil, gold as something valuable, fit for a king and frankincense as a costly perfume, the scent of royalty; but I wonder, perhaps the gold was for an Eternal King, and frankincense as for a God, and myrrh an embalming oil as a symbol of death, like a crucifixion. The journey to Bethlehem is long past; but the journey of my heart continues.

*Yours, Melchior, a hidden servant of the Living God and Jesus Christ his Son.*



# The 2024 Christmas Story



Flight into Egypt iStock credit: gldburger

In a world always on the move, refugees the world over are never out of the news headlines. It is a global problem growing at unprecedented levels. What shall we do with so many refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, internally displaced and stateless persons? I obviously refer to the countless millions that are roaming the world. How many have tragically lost their lives while leaving their home lands on their way to the promised land flowing with milk and honey.

## He Pitched His Tent Among Us

Christmas 2024 can remind us that God has pitched his tent among us. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary and pitched his tent in her, Luke 1: 35. God deigned to become truly man, one of us in the flesh, born without sin. God only knows what happened to Jesus, Mary and Joseph during the early days of the first ever Christmas. One thing is definitely sure. Being forced to flee the cruel King Herod and

speed into Egypt, like most refugees they entrusted their lives and future into the providential hands of God.

## The Founder of Christianity was a Refugee Fleeing Persecution

Mary and Joseph were longing to find a place of safety and refuge where they could bring Mary and the newly born Infant Child to a safe confinement. There are countless pregnant refugee mothers try-





Searching for a better life iStock credit: vector photo gallery

ing to do the same this Christmas.

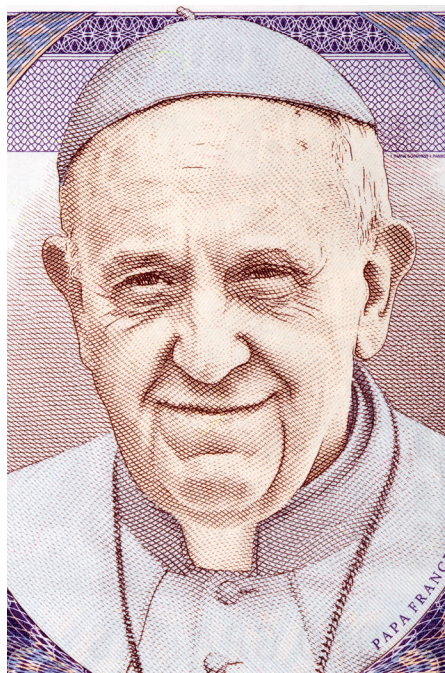
Having worked directly with refugees in London and Leeds/Sheffield localities for some years, they taught me what it means to have a heart and to be human. I learnt a lot about what it means to be a refugee and their upheaval struggles to survive.

I ask myself: Why would someone choose to abandon his/her home, livelihood, and social ties in favour of an uncertain future elsewhere? Surely this is not a decision people/refugees make lightly, nor is it one devoid of complexity? Significant factors generate voluntary/compulsory migration like political repression, social conflict, climatic and ecological crises and nuclear slippages. Displaced people are those forced to sacrifice all their resources of livelihood, material possessions, access to land, kinship and community relationships, language, traditions and institutions. The quality of marginalized life they experience is so often very gruesome.

As refugees move in search of a better life, being a stranger can be most baffling for them. There is the struggle to preserve one's language, history and culture. Frustration and anger, grief, a sense of powerlessness, vulnerability, deprivation and dispossession is violently paralysing for them. Their identity becomes fragmented like a "a broken mirror" shattered to pieces.

Refugees are often referred to in a pejorative and disrespectful manner by using very insulting names. Refugees have been denominated as 'rejects', 'refuse', 'sheer waste' as though they can easily be disposed of like any empty plastic bottle.

The fact is that images and ideas which scientists present about other peoples and their cultures had and still very often have a great influence on the history of humankind in its treatment of people. On the



Pope Francis, son of refugees iStock credit: johan 10

one hand, some images and concepts reach the very depths of human sentiment, thereby stimulating people to stand up for the international rights of all. On the other hand, some images and ideologies have been used to feed and promote bigotry, prejudice, discrimination and bitter persecution.

These once in the hands of unscrupulous politicians have become and can still be used to eliminate people from the face of the earth.

Pope Francis, himself the son of refugee parents and no stranger to suffering and hardship, has prioritized during his pontificate, the plight of this marginalised section of human kind. He heartily laments our indifference to their cause and crass sufferings of injustice. From the beginning, the Church has been a mother with a heart open to the world, and been without borders. This mission has continued for two thousand years. Jesus Christ is always waiting to be recognised in migrants and refugees, in displaced persons and exiles, and with them he calls us to share our resources. . No country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon which affects every continent.

The formidable task of trying to create a new mind-set of recognition, tolerance, understanding and acceptance of culture.



# Comboni communities celebrate the Feast of St Daniel Comboni

On October 10, the three Comboni communities: the sisters from Chiswick together with our priests from Sunningdale, Dawson Place and Roehampton and Deacon William-Lo, gathered to honour St Daniel Comboni. A concelebrated Mass, began the day, followed by a splendid lunch marking a most joyful celebration. Fr Gordon Rees, from our Roehampton parish, presided at the Mass and gave an inspiring homily which we are glad to offer to our readers.

*“Living as a Missionary Disciple in the spirit of St. Daniel Comboni”*

Dear brothers and sisters,  
Today's readings bring us into the heart of our Christian mission: the call to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples. This is the mission that St. Daniel Comboni embraced with his entire life, dedicating himself to the service of Christ in the most challenging of circumstances as a missionary disciple. Let us reflect on how the scriptures guide us to live as missionary disciples today, with a passion for the Mission and the joy of proclaiming the Good News, as

St. Daniel Comboni exemplified in his life.  
*Isaiah 61:1-3a – The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me*

In Isaiah, we hear these profound words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the oppressed.” This passage is the essence of our missionary identity: we are anointed by the Spirit, sent forth to proclaim the Good News to all, especially the poor and broken-hearted.



Fr Gordon



Comboni Missionaries (Italian, Ethiopian, South African, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Irish, Scottish, American) together after Mass





*Sr Katherine reading the 1st Reading*

St. Daniel Comboni lived out this anointing with passion. His heart was on fire for the people of Africa, particularly in Sudan, where he ministered to those oppressed by poverty, slavery, and colonization. He saw himself as God's instrument in bringing hope and liberation to the most marginalized, living the Gospel not just in words but in solidarity with the people. His deep passion for the mission and joy in the Good News are seen in his life's motto: "Save Africa through Africa." He tirelessly uplifted the African people, knowing that the Gospel must transform both the soul and society.

### ***Galatians 6:14-18 – Glory in the Cross of Christ***

St. Paul's words remind us of the sacrificial nature of Mission: "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The life of a missionary disciple is about laying down our lives for the Gospel, as Jesus did. The joy comes from knowing that the Cross is at the heart of the Mission.

St. Daniel Comboni embraced the cross fully in his mission, facing illness, persecution, and great loss, including the deaths of many missionary companions. But what set him apart was his unwavering joy and passion despite these hardships. His boast was in Christ crucified,

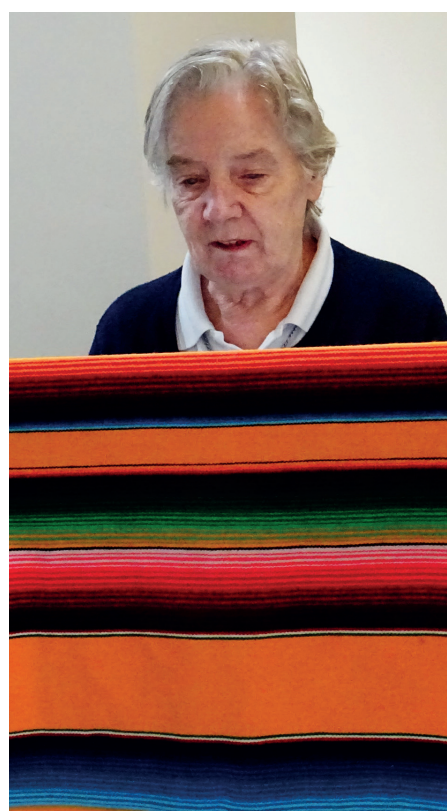
and his joy came from knowing that he was participating in the redemptive work of Christ. This is the essence of missionary joy—that in our sacrifices and crosses, we are bearing the wounds of love for the sake of others.

### ***John 10:11-16 – The Good Shepherd***

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, shows us the model of missionary discipleship: a shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, committed to the flock even in times of danger. St. Daniel Comboni lived out this call to be a Good Shepherd for the people of Africa. His passion for their well-being was unshakable; he stayed with them through sickness and persecution, always driven by a deep joy to serve Christ in the people he loved.

He didn't just proclaim the Good News; he built schools, hospitals, and churches—transforming communities and empowering the local people to take ownership of their faith. Comboni's passion for the Mission flowed from a deep well of joy in knowing that he was gathering God's people to Christ, just as the Good Shepherd gathers His flock.

### ***Proclaiming the Wonders of the Lord Among All Peoples***



*Sr Magdalen reads the 2nd Reading*

The psalm today calls us to "Proclaim the wonders of the Lord among all the peoples." This is our missionary call—to joyfully proclaim the wonders of the Lord to all, especially to those who have never encountered the Good News.

St. Daniel Comboni embodied this call to universal mission. His joy in proclaiming the Gospel was palpable. He believed that the message of Christ wasn't only to be preached but also to be lived in a way that transforms societies. His passion for Mission was rooted in his burning desire to bring the joy of Christ to the hearts of those who had not yet heard it.

### ***Our Call to Be Missionary Disciples***

As we reflect on the life and legacy of St. Daniel Comboni, we are reminded that we too are called to live as missionary disciples, full of joy and passion. While we may not all be called to foreign lands, the mission field is all around us: in our families, workplaces, communities, and parishes. We are called to be bearers of joy, to proclaim the wonders of the Lord through our actions and words.

To live as a missionary disciple, like St. Daniel Comboni, means:

1. Allowing the Spirit of God to anoint us for Mission, as Isaiah describes.
2. Proclaiming the wonders of the Lord not just with words but through actions that transform lives and communities.
3. Boasting only in the cross of Christ, knowing that suffering is part of the journey and joy is found in that sacrifice.
4. Following the example of the Good Shepherd, staying with our flock, caring for them with love, and laying down our lives for them.

Let us, inspired by the example of St. Daniel Comboni, embrace our missionary call with courage, passion, and joy. May we be Good Shepherds to those around us, bringing the love of Christ to the oppressed, the broken-hearted, and the lost. And may we, like our Founder, Daniel Comboni, always trust that the Holy Spirit will guide and empower us to carry the Good News to the ends of the earth, proclaiming the wonders of the Lord among all peoples. Amen.



# THE JUBILEE PRAYER 2025

*Father in heaven,  
may the faith you have given us  
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,  
and the flame of charity enkindled  
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
reawaken in us the blessed hope  
for the coming of your Kingdom.  
May your grace transform us  
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.  
May those seeds transform from within both  
humanity and the whole cosmos  
in the sure expectation  
of a new heaven and a new earth,  
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,  
your glory will shine eternally.*

*May the grace of the Jubilee  
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,  
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.  
May that same grace spread  
the joy and peace of our Redeemer  
throughout the earth.  
To you our God, eternally blessed,  
be glory and praise for ever.  
Amen.*

*Pope Francis*





# Bishops appeal for peace as Sudan's conflict escalates

**In our last edition we reported on the movement of Comboni missionaries from war-torn areas to safer places. We continue to keep you informed of what is known as 'a forgotten war' and the subsequent suffering of the Sudanese people. Let us continue to pray for them. Sudan's bishops call for peace amidst escalating conflict and humanitarian crises, while the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces vows no negotiations until victory.**

**T**he Catholic Bishops of Sudan and South Sudan (SCBC) are pleading for an end to the horrific war tearing apart Sudan.

"The fabric of Sudanese society has been torn apart, with people shocked, traumatised, and disbelieving about the level of violence and hatred."

Yet, there appears to be no end in sight of the escalating conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

## No end in sight

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese Armed Forces, has resolutely closed the door to dialogue to end the civil war.

"We are continuing in this battle until victory, and I repeat once again that we will not negotiate with an enemy who attacks us and occupies our lands," said General Al-Burhan as he visited his troops in areas surrounding the capital Khartoum that his army has seized.

The Sudanese capital has been the epicen-

tre of fierce fighting between the SAF and the RSF for over a year.

Al-Burhan has often reiterated his refusal to bow to international pressure and sit at a negotiation table in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

According to Fides News Agency, he claims that "we will not go to a negotiating table where they (the mediators) want to drag us by our ears, and we will not go to negotiations while the enemy still occupies our homes and plunders our wealth. We will not go to negotiations before the enemy leaves, and they (the mediators) must force them to do so if they want us to negotiate with them."

## Humanitarian toll

The humanitarian toll of the conflict is staggering. The RSF's new territorial sieges have forced at least 55,000 people to flee Sinja, the capital of Sennar.

According to the United Nations, at least 10 million Sudanese have been displaced since the war began in April 2023 and they often find themselves trapped in areas that the two groups are fighting over.

This includes approximately 80 people who have sought refuge in the Catholic mission of Dar Mariam in the Khartoumian district of al-Shajara.

This area, located near an armed forces base, has been at the heart of intense fighting and the refugees taking shelter there are suffering dire conditions without sufficient access to clean water and food. Attempts to free them have been unsuccessful.

## Selfish nature of war

Sudan's bishops denounced the selfish interests driving the conflict at the conclusion of their meeting in June.

"This is not simply a war between two generals, as the military has inextricably embedded itself in the economic life of the country. Both SAF and RSF have networks of wealthy elite Sudanese and international individuals and cartels who benefit from their control of various economic sectors and are linked to external sponsors who continue to provide them with increasingly sophisticated weapons, such as drones."



Displaced Sudanese line up for food aid in Agari, North Kordofan (AFP or licensors)





*A Sudanese woman who fled conflict in Darfur, where the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has been carrying out mass atrocities, crosses to neighbouring Chad. © Reuters*

# “the largest humanitarian crisis in the world for children”

**The humanitarian crisis in Sudan for children is, in terms of numbers, the largest in the world. It is also a crisis of negligence. Many of the countless atrocities committed against children in Sudan have not been reported, often due to very limited access.**

“Thousands of children have been killed or injured in the war in Sudan. Sexual violence and recruitment are on the rise. And the situation is even more serious where humanitarian presence continues to be denied”. This was stated by James Elder, spokesperson for UNICEF, underlining that “five million children have been forced to flee their homes – a shocking average of 10,000 girls and boys displaced every day – making Sudan the largest child displacement crisis in the world. Many of them have had to do so multiple times.”

“On Saturday morning,” Elder continued, “a local boys’ soccer team was playing in a UNICEF child-friendly space in Khartoum State when a shell hit the soccer field. Two boys were killed and nearly the entire team was injured. I have met these children, both in the hospital and in the UNICEF child-friendly space. They are shocked,” the spokesperson said. “Yesterday I spoke to a senior health worker who told me about the scale of sexual vio-

lence during this war. She explained that she has had direct contact with hundreds of women and girls, some as young as 8, who have been raped. Many have been held captive for weeks on end. She also spoke of the distressing number of children, born after rape, who are abandoned.”

“For more than a year we have been saying that the children of Sudan cannot wait. Well, now they are dying,” Elder added, noting that “the famine in Zamzam camp is the first famine assessment by the Famine Review Committee in more than seven years and only the third time a famine assessment has been made since the monitoring system was established 20 years ago.”

“We must be very clear: without safe and unobstructed access, and without the removal of obstacles – particularly cross-border and on-site ones – this month’s famine assessment in part of Sudan risks spreading and leading to a catastrophic loss of life,” the UNICEF spokesperson continued, warning. “Without action, tens of thousands of Sudanese

children could die in the coming months. Tens of thousands. And this is by no means the worst-case scenario. Any illness outbreak will send mortality skyrocketing. Disease is our great fear. If an outbreak of measles, diarrhoea or respiratory infections occurs – and remember that in current living conditions, and with heavy rains and floods, these diseases spread like wildfire – the terrifying prospects for Sudan’s children worsen dramatically.” In addition to calling for “safe and unimpeded humanitarian access through all routes, across conflict lines (particularly Darfur, Khartoum and Kordofan) and across Sudan’s borders,” “a massive increase in donor funding to prevent the collapse of essential systems, paying frontline workers, providing life-saving supplies and maintaining critical infrastructure an immediate ceasefire” is needed. Elder concludes that “by turning a blind eye to Sudan and ignoring the immense suffering, the warring parties and the international community continue to set a dangerous precedent of global apathy towards children.”





*Fr Melaku at the entrance to the school*

# Latest News on the Nekemte School Project

**F**or over a year Fr Melaku, our Ethiopian Comboni missionary, based at the Leeds community, has been incentivising and appealing for support to build a school for primary and secondary school education in his native Nekemte, Ethiopia. In our last summer edition, he gave an update on progress and now invites us to read about the latest developments! The Nekemte region is a

deprived area of Ethiopia and he believes that a good education can help many people to rise from poverty and build their own future.

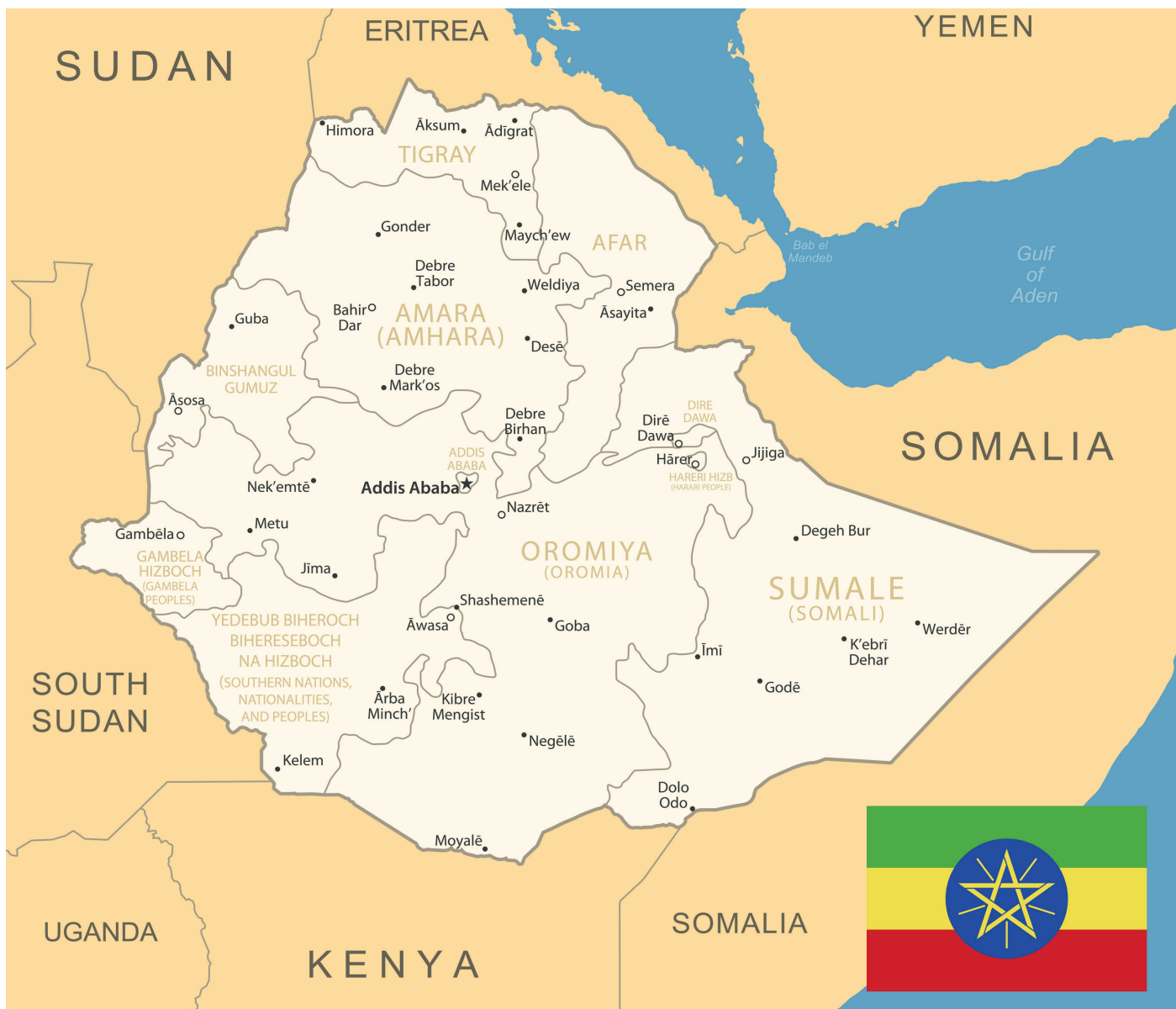
The second phase of construction is scheduled for completion in December 2025. When it is completed, the primary school will accommodate over 700 children. With this mind he has gained the support of many parishes and readers of our

Comboni Mission magazine. Our grateful thanks.

Fr Melaku recently paid a visit to the building project still in progress, and was able to send some wonderful photos of happy pupils setting out on their first classes. We pray that this endeavour will be blessed and continue to flourish.

You can contact Fr Melaku at: [melakutafessea@yahoo.com](mailto:melakutafessea@yahoo.com)





Map of Ethiopia showing Nekemte west of the capital Addis Abbaba. iStock credit: Gt29



Fr Melaku being greeted by grateful pupils



# 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](mailto:jdcomboni@gmail.com)  
London Road, Sunningdale SL5 0JY#, Berks, England**

Hello Fr John

I really like all the articles in the Comboni Mission Autumn version 2024. The piece on Fr Manuel Joao Pereira was very moving, as was Sister Mary Lonergan. May she rest in peace. Hopefully Pope Francis will have a fruitful Synod and hopefully the people of Mozambique, Sudan and Gaza will someday be able to return to their home countries. Terrible events!

*Gordon Downie  
Dunoon, Scotland*

Dear Fr Clark,

I trust you are in good spirits and I remember when you came to our church of St Sylvester here in Elgin. I have been supporting the Verona Fathers for a very long time and the you do so much for people all over the world. We should hope and pray for peace.

I love getting the Quarterly magazine and I have just received the autumn edition and the lovely calendar for 2025.

May you have a very peaceful Christmas and a peaceful 2025. God Bless.

*Mary Craig, Elgin, Scotland*



No! to genocide. iStock credit: DnHolm



Dear Fr John

There are some wonderful articles in the "Comboni Mission" magazine and "Getting to know the Comboni Missionaries" invariably leaves me joyful in the amazing work done by all the remarkable Comboni Missionaries, mostly in difficult parts of the world.

I have just read about Father Manuel Correia in the Autumn magazine. What an incredible interview with this outstanding man. His courage and strength in the face of a terrible illness, and his love of life and sheer joy is a most wonderful example. He is an outstanding witness, so open to God's will for him. How beautiful to say that he is on the sea, seeing two shores, with one this life and the other what awaits us due to our faith and hope. He has been dealt such bitter blows that he sees as opportunities for a new vision of life. He is absolutely inspiring, a shining example to all in his witness to God. His story is so moving and yet so uplifting in its hope and acceptance, indeed more than acceptance as he sees his illness in such a remarkably positive way.



*Fr Manuel prays in the chapel of Castel'Dazzano*

Thank you for such heartwarming articles to help and guide in our earthly journey. And every blessing to the incredible Father Correia for his great generosity of spirit in sharing his powerful story of hope.

**Adrian Finn,**  
*Halifax, West Yorkshire*

## Nekemte School in Progress Fr Melaku writes from Ethiopia

The long-awaited Abba Gebremariam Amanet's Memorial Catholic Eco- School commenced teaching 35 children on the 16 of September 2024. It is a remarkable day for the parents because they were longing to send their children to this new school. When they brought their children for registration, they had an opportunity to visit the classrooms, administration block and toilet facilities. They are so pleased to see good furniture, spotless classrooms and well-prepared teachers with rich experiences.



Furthermore, the neighbouring people are so delighted to have such a fine school near them because it brings development, job opportunities and quality of education. The Catholic Church of Nekemte Vicariate employed three teachers, one secretary, one cleaner and two watchmen. All of them are eager to do their best in order to provide an excellent education.

The newly consecrated Bishop of Nekemte, hosted a meeting with the parents and with the Bishop Mikias Getahun Fanta assured the parents of providing an excellent

education as well as thanked them for bringing their children to this new school.

This school mostly benefits disadvantaged children and these children will certainly have a very bright future. The Apostolic Vicariate of Nekemte and the parents of the children are so grateful to all the support and donors.

Every year we need more classrooms and at the same time we will take more students. Currently the second phase of the construction project is in progress. Therefore, we need your support in order to accomplish full primary school education from age 6 to age 14. Once the second phase will be completed, we will have a full primary school.

Once again, I am so grateful to you all.

God Bless you

Fr. Melaku

*(See pages 20-21 Latest News on the Nekemte Project progresses)*

Dear Fr John

Thank you for the latest Comboni Mission magazine. I haven't read it all yet but I liked the uplifting interview with Fr Manuel João Pereira Correia on his debilitating illness. He radiates such a positive outlook on life with love and acceptance of his cross. He is a wonderful example for us all.

God bless your work

Yours sincerely

**Ian Johnston**  
*Tooting, London*





When Word took flesh one silent night  
Surprise with wonder multiplied  
Great Joy the meek beatified  
In humble corner touched by light

And Hope went forth with gentle might  
To all the world spread far and wide  
When Word took flesh one silent night  
Surprise with wonder multiplied

To our divisions came new sight  
Disunity conflict hearts of pride  
Refusal to stand side by side  
Peace dawned upon this ancient plight  
When Word took flesh one silent night

iStock credit: roshi 11



## COMBONI MISSIONARIES

Visit our websites:  
[www.comboni.org.uk](http://www.comboni.org.uk)  
[www.combonimissionaries.co.uk](http://www.combonimissionaries.co.uk)  
[www.combonimissionaries.ie](http://www.combonimissionaries.ie)  
[www.southworld.net](http://www.southworld.net)

