

COMBONI MARTYRS

COMBONI MISSIONARIES KILLED FOR THE GOSPEL

by

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INTRODUCTION

It sounds unreal - missionary-martyr.

A young boy of 12 leaves his home and what is most dear to him.

At age 19 he gives up everything for the sake of the Gospel: his body, his money, his will.

At 25 he is raring to share the riches of his priesthood with the most poor and abandoned.

He cannot wait to realize his dream and, wings on his feet, rushes to the most poor areas of the world, like Central Africa. He enjoys it in sickness and in health. Especially in sickness: malaria, dysentery, black-water fever, lack of proper diet (read: malnutrition or plain hunger). He grapples with a new impossible language, people totally strange to his culture. But he still goes on; he talks to them about the Father in heaven, and the Savior Jesus. These people have actually been waiting for him, and for his message. They drink his words. They call him "the man of the word of God."

Who wants to be a martyr after all this? Yes, like Jesus, to the very end, to the total shedding of the blood.

By the end of 1962, 127 missionaries had been expelled from the Sudan under the new Islamization law enacted on May 15, 1962; among them there were seven of the nineteen described in this booklet. This law of the Arab-Moslem Government of Khartoum was called the Missionary Society Act. Among other things it enjoined "No missionary society nor any member thereof shall do any missionary work in the Sudan without a license granted by the Council of Ministers." The new law also banned any social activity by missionaries or Christians except within the limits laid down from time to time by regulations under Section 10 of the Act: "No missionary society shall adopt, protect or maintain an abandoned child without the consent of the Province authority..." It was a law that was designed not only to islamize the country, but to wipe out Christianity which was predominant in the South, under penalty of expulsion, tortures and persecutions, followed by a series of horror stories. This law was called immediately the "halter law."

To be expelled for preaching the Gospel! Is there any more bitter pain for a missionary? Seven of the missionaries expelled from the Sudan asked to go back to another mission area. Four went to the Congo, the

Fathers Armani, Migotti, Zuccali and Piazza. The Congo seemed to be a rather peaceful place from the time of the declaration of independence, June 30, 1960, until 1964, when a Popular Army was created by rebels, who, with weapons provided mostly by the Sudan, started hunting the whites and particularly the missionaries. It was an "army" of very young men, many of them in their early teens, who called themselves "simbas", which means lions, and were under the influence of a drug called "dwa" which they said would immunize them against bullets. To make an airplane fall-they were made to believe-it was enough to drive a knife into the ground.

Two of the missionaries expelled from the Sudan, the Fathers Dal Maso and Fiorante, went to Uganda, and in 1979 were the victims of the last days of Amin's regime of terror.

All of them went back to the missions to be shot and killed, in hatred of our faith, within a very few years.

One, Vedovato, went to Brazil. The struggle against the land monopoly of the aristocracy in Brazil and the mistreatment of the peasants put Fr. Vedovato in the limelight. People loved him and followed him. But he was a target of greedy and licentious people of his area.

Two of the Comboni missionaries killed were native Africans: a Dinkan from So. Sudan (Barnabas Deng), and a native of West Nile (Uganda) (William Nyadru).

Three of them were victims of their zeal. Trying to stop sin, they met a vindictive death. Their model might well be S. John the Baptist, (Arpe, Corsini, De Lai).

Six more were killed on missions of mercy (Biscaro, Fiorini, Serri), or preaching the Gospel of love and justice (Ramin, Bilbao), or on their way to administer the Sacraments (Ferracin and also Nyadru, already mentioned).

Their average age was under 45.

Really, no greater love is there than to lay down one's own life for his friends--for the sake of the Gospel.

COMBONI MISSIONARIES KILLED FOR THE GOSPEL

FR. ALFREDO DE LAI

Ordained Jul y10, 1937

Went to Gondar-Socota' Jan 3, 1939

Hardship and joyful acceptance of the war conditions, which he freely shared with the Italian soldiers.

After two years, on Apr. 26, 1941, he was killed "for the love of God... for the love of Mary..."

FR. ANGELO ARPE

From 1912 to 1925 , Kayango-Mboro

1925-46 Regional Superior of Bahr El Ghazal Missions-Mboro , etc.

He voluntarily accepted the hardships of two world wars in one of the most difficult missions of Africa.

He was killed like John the Baptist on Nov. 1, 1946

FR. LUIGI CORSINI

Ordained May 1953

Went to Mexico (Tepepam) in 1961

In 1962 he was sent to Todos Santos (BC)

On May 7, 1963 , he was killed and thrown into the sea.

Another John the Baptist .

FR. MARCO VEDOVATO

Ordained in 1957

He was in So Sudan from 1958 to 1964, and then he was expelled.

In 1966 he went to Brazil , where he was killed in 1968

FR. REMO ARMANI

Entered the Society as a priest in 1948

In 1950 he was sent to Juba (So Sudan) , from where he was expelled 1n 1962

In February 1964 he went to the Congo , where he was killed in Nov 1964

FR. EVARISTO MIGOTTI

Ordained in 1948. The same year, he left for Asmara, where he taught for 5 years in the Comboni College.

In 1953 he was in Mupoi (So Sudan), from where he was expelled for constructing chapels in mud and straw without Government permission, at the end of 1962.

Back in Italy, he left for the Congo, Feb. 1964, where he was killed on Dec. 1, 1964

FR. LORENZO PIAZZA

Ordained June 9, 1940

He earned a doctor's degree at Cath. Univ. Milano on "Azande Art"

In October 1954 he went to Mupoi (So. Sudan).

In 1963 he was expelled from the Sudan

Dec. 8, 1963, he departed for Rungu (Congo)

Less than one year afterwards he was killed on Dec. 1, 1964.

FR. ANTONIO ZUCCALI

Ordained May 31, 1947

Left for Juba (So. Sudan), 1951

He was expelled from the Sudan 1962

Dec. 8, 1963, he left for the Congo, where he was killed in Rungu (Zaire) Dec.2, 1964.

FR. BARNABAS DENG,

From the Dinka Tribe. Born in Kwajok, So. Sudan.

In 1957 he entered the Society from Diocesan Seminary

In 1962 he was ordained in Milan by Cardinal Montini.

In 1963 he was assigned to Gordhiim (So. Sudan).

"When he saw his confreres expelled from Sudan and boarding the cars Fr. Deng told one of them ' Father, pray for us; we will see each other only in Heaven!'" May 3, 1964

He was killed in Wau, August 2, 1965

FR. GIUSEPPE SANTI

Ordained June 29, 1945

("Great vocation promoter"-90 in Crema, 82 in Brescia)

Sep 1951 in Gulu, and from 1964 to 1979 in Lira.

During Amin's reign of terror, he helped two young men to flee from Aloi to Lira, and was killed on the way, on Holy Saturday, April 14, 1979

FR. ANTONIO FIORANTE

Ordained June 3, 1950

In 1954 he was in Kayango (So. Sudan).

In November 1962 he was expelled

In 1963 he went to Uganda from Arua to Parombo, to Pakwach (1976)

He was killed by Amin's soldiers on May 3, 1979.

FR. SILVIO DAL MASO

Ordained April 16, 1939

From 1947 to 1963 he worked among the Dinkas (Bahr El Ghazal)

He was expelled from So. Sudan in 1964

In 1965 he was in Arua, and in 1972 in Pakwach

On May 3, 1979, he was killed, with Fiorante, by Amin's soldiers.

FR. SILVIO SERRI

Ordained May 31, 1958

He arrived in Arua, Uganda, in 1962

Killed by Amin's soldiers in retreat, Sep 11, 1979

FR. OSMUNDO BILBAO

Ordained April 6, 1969

He left for Uganda, 1971

Killed by guerrillas (Amin's ex-soldiers) on April 18, 1982

FR. EZECHIELE RAMIN

Ordained Sep. 29, 1980

Sep 14, 1983, left for Brazil

Killed July 24, 1985, at Cacoal (Brazil) by a landlord's henchmen, for protecting the rights of the "campesinos" (small farmers).

FR. EGIDIO FERRACIN

Ordained June 28, 1964

August 1965, he was in Uganda

He was killed by a band of thieves who wanted to violate three girls. Ferracin resisted and offered himself so that the girls could go free. He was tortured and then shot. August 4, 1987

FR. EGIDIO BISCARO

Ordained in 1974 at the age of 46.

Previously, as a professed Brother, he went to Uganda at the age of 22.

A band of rebels killed him Jan. 29, 1990, on the road from Pajule to Kitgum, where he was taking a sick lady to the hospital, accompanied by Fr. Aldo Pieragostini

FR. WILLIAM NYADRU

native of Pakele (West Nile).

Ordained Aug 20, 1988

He was killed on Oct. 25, 1991, at Morulem by some thieves or cattle rustlers.

He was on his way to a mission station to celebrate Mass.

Brother Doctor ALFREDO FIORINI

After a full course of Theology, he chose to remain Brother to better serve the sick

He went to Mozambique to exercise his profession as a missionary doctor.

On Aug 24, 1992, driving from Nacal to Carapira, his car was hit by 27 bullets, which struck him in the head, chest and wrist, killing him.

Father ALFREDO DE LAI

Socota' (Ethiopia) 26 April, 1941

"For the love of God... for the love of Mary... We never did anything but good to you...."

Three shots and a scream were heard, while Fr. De Lai fell on his back, sealing with his blood his evangelical love.

"Three missionaries formed the small community at Socota': the fathers Ceccarini and De Lai, and Brother Agostini. During the war they left their residence' which was between the front lines of the insurgents and the Italian soldiers. The Italians were in a small fort nearby. Our missionaries thought it would be good to join them and to share with them hopes and fears. On April 26, 1946, a disorderly mass of the enemy advanced, shouting savagely, and besieged the little fort. Many Italians fell one after another. The remaining ones raised a white flag to spare further useless bloodshed. Maybe the warriors did not notice the white flag and the hordes of rebels jumped over the wall and faced the helpless victims" (Fr. Nannetti).

And Brother Agostini related: "As I saw our end approaching, I took my crucifix and gave it to Fr. De Lai to show it to the soldier who was shooting through the window. Father De Lai raised the crucifix, but the soldier pointed his gun at him and shouted: 'Give it to me, or I shoot.'. The father gave it to him. As soon as the soldier took the crucifix, he ordered the father to come out, and delivered three shots point blank on his back. The father fell screaming.

Suddenly, another soldier came in with a rifle. I could have disarmed him with a punch and I could have grabbed his weapon, but then thinking that I was a missionary and had come here to save those people, I prayed: 'Lord, I offer my life for the conversion of these people.' Then one soldier shot at me, but I was fast enough to grab the barrel of his gun and deflect the shot. However, the bullet struck me in the groin. Much blood came out. I threw myself on the ground, playing possum. They shot at my head, but they missed it. They shot me at my stomach, but they hit only one finger of my hand. The other soldiers came in and wondered whether I was dead or alive, poking me with their bayonets. And I, with the greatest calm, offered my life for them. I felt alone with God. Finally one of them said: 'He is dead.' And they went away" (Brother Agostini).

Fr. Ceccarini was wounded in one of his knees during the fight, and made it in time to hide among the dead. And so they thought he was dead too.

The Socota' Comboni family looked like the ideal community-Br. Agostini, the strong, fearless and resourceful one who by sheer courage survived the slaughter, and helped the rest; Fr. Ceccarini, the kind father, superior of the community, the serene, intelligent, respectful friend endowed with deep spirituality.

Fr. De Lai, 27 years of age, enriched the community with his childlike simplicity and terse, gospel-like, youthful enthusiasm. Of the three who had no other purpose than to love God and make Him loved, he received the palm of martyrdom, reserved to the chosen little ones.

Father ANGELO ARPE

Mboro (Sudan), 1 November 1946

His eyes remained sweet, his appearance unchanged. The expression on his face seemed to say: "They have done also this to me. Patience! Lord, forgive!"

Fr. Arpe was hit by the lance of Raffaele Madangere in a frenzy of uncontrolled fury, in Mboro, Bahr El Ghazal, on November 1, 1946. Raffaele was upset about some of the moral counselling of Fr. Arpe, and he let himself be overcome by hatred.

Witness of Fr. G. Briani:

"It is my conviction that Fr. Arpe was the victim of his duty and of his love for the Ndogo.

Why was Raffaele overcome by this homicide frenzy?

The day of All Saints, coming from his field around noon, he stopped at the mission to talk to Fr. Arpe. He was seen coming out of the encounter angry and making gestures. He had an uncontrollable jealousy and hatred against the chief catechist Leone, and maybe Fr. Arpe reminded him of his duty as a Christian. Perhaps Fr. Arpe reproached Raffaele for his bad conduct?

The same evening Raffaele approached Leone's hut and jumped on him, wounding him fatally with a knife. A boy ran to the mission for help. Fr. Arpe sent some sisters to get medicines, and was about to go, when he heard knocks at the door. He went out to see, but one of Raffaele's lances hit him under the breastbone."

What followed was a hard struggle by Brother Guadagnini trying to subdue Raffaele, and Raffaele throwing a lance in direction of the Fr. Bono, who fortunately ducked in time to avoid it. Meanwhile Placido, a teacher, attracted by the noise, came with lances. Raffaele jumped on him, but Placido fought back and wounded Raffaele leaving him in a pool of blood. Placido thought Raffaele was unconscious, and ran to help the fathers. But Raffaele got up, picked up a lance, followed Placido into the living room and threw himself on Fr. Arpe driving a lance into his heart. After ten minutes Fr. Arpe's heart ceased beating.

One of the pioneers of the Comboni Mission Family, Angelo Arpe was born at La Spezia in 1886, and joined the Society in 1905. He spent most of his missionary life (over 30 years) in Southern Sudan.

Father Arpe was in Kayango, Bahr El Ghazal, for a few years, and then he founded the mission of Mboro, which at the time of his death had some 5,500 Catholics.

Four days before he was killed, Fr. Arpe experienced the immense joy of seeing one of his neophytes reach the priesthood, in his own church of Mboro, on October 27, 1946.

Fr. Arpe was considered by the Africans as their "patriarch," and it was due to the great esteem in which the famous chief Mboro held him that Mboro asked for Baptism when he was dying in 1943.

Father LUIGI CORSINI

Todos Santos (BC Mexico) 7 May 1963

Fr. Luigi's body was found at 8:15 pm May 7, 1963, under a rock, about twelve feet into the sea, on the beach of Todos Santos, B.C., Mexico.

Rumor went around that there must have been a crime involved, and the Governor ordered the body to be exhumed and an autopsy made. The autopsy revealed a wound in the neck. Fr. Corsini had been killed and subsequently thrown into the sea.

From an anonymous letter sent a few days before the crime to different parishes, we think that the enemies of the Church were involved.

The funeral was a universal manifestation of love ; and several women cried at the funeral in place of his absent mother.

The people wanted to pay for the coffin, and for the cemetery plot, etc. However, he was taken later to the little church for which he had already collected the material to build.

One month before, he was killed, in April, while making mission appeals in Los Angeles, Fr. Luigi Corsini said there was strong opposition to his ministry in Todos Santos, because he had tried to stop dances and sin. But he said that "he offered his life for his people."

Fr. Luigi had written a few lines in March 1963, two months before his sacrifice. They were found in his breviary:

"Lord, I can't stand it any more. Help me not to be disheartened. I can't do any good. If I am an obstacle, take me with you, O Lord, in whatever moment, and in whatever manner which suits you best. If a victim is necessary to convert these people, here I am, O Lord. Take me with you . I am no good for anything else."

The Lord took him on the 7th of May, the feast of the great Polish bishop and martyr, S. Stanislaus. The Lord had accepted his offer. He was only 34 years of age.

Father MARCO VEDOVATO

Mirador (Brazil) 19 October 1968

On the night of Saturday, October 19, 1968, Fr. Marco had come back tired from a chapel and wanted to rest in Mirador (Brazil Norte). In a house nearby a dancing party was stretching out into the night. Fr. Marco, unable to close an eye, and tormented by the thought that those prolonged dances were conducive to immorality and would end up with violence, got up and asked the people to stop the dance. It seemed for a while that everything ended there, as the people stopped the dance, and Fr. Marco turned around to go out. At that moment an accordion player, a twenty-year-old youth, discharged a pistol shot into his kidneys.

There was no priest in that desert locality, so Fr. Vedovato was taken into a pharmacy, and, before he lost consciousness, he gave witness of faith and love, praying and asking the Lord's forgiveness for his killer.

On that same Sunday Bishop Carlesi hurried to Mirador immediately. He saw the body laid out in the chapel of Sucupan where he was taken on a pick-up truck in procession at 5:30 pm, and then, also in solemn procession, was taken to Balsas.

"It was an impressive sight," bishop Carlesi wrote, "Everybody was in the church plaza to give their last farewell to the Father."

Bishop Carlesi said Mass after midnight, and around 2 am the body was taken to the cemetery. "In total darkness a multitude of people accompanied Fr. Vedovato, in prayer and sorrow; many were crying."

Father Marco had been ordained a priest on June 15, 1957.

In November 1958, he was in Juba, Southern Sudan. He started his apostolic activity in Kworijik, Lyria and Lafon; and he also spent three years at Tali. In February 1963, following the first expulsion of the missionaries, he went back to Lyria as a superior. He had to leave Lyria at the end of 1964 together with other confreres expelled from Southern Sudan.

In 1966 he was assigned to Balsas, Brazil. He arrived there on January 13, 1966. In his last years he was an associate at Pastos Bons.

Fr. Marco identified himself with his apostolic work. People loved him and followed him. The forgiveness he gave to his killer was a great sermon on Christian forgiveness of offenses.

He was a young 38-year-old missionary.

FROM THE SUDAN TO MARTYRDOM IN THE CONGO

REMO ARMANI - EVARISTO MIGOTTI - LORENZO PIAZZA - ANTONIO ZUCCALI

"All of us went to confession with serenity, thinking of the glorious sacrifice that the Lord was requesting from us for the good of the souls entrusted to our care and for the whole Congo." Thus stated Br. Mosca after one week of running hard through the forest.

Then they came out of their hiding places to meet the "simbas" (lions) instead of the promised liberators.

Father REMO ARMANI

Isiro (Zaire), 24 November 1964

Fr. Armani was killed at Isiro (Zaire) on November 24, 1964. On that day the parachutists dropped in Stanleyville. The rebels started the executions before the arrival of the parachutists. In the evening of Monday, November 23, the "simbas" ordered the prisoners to come out. They made them kneel, and beat them. Immediately a "simba" shot Fr. Armani in the head.

Fr. Armani entered the Society as a priest from the Diocese of Trent where he served from the day of his ordination, June 29, 1941, until 1946.

He entered the novitiate of Gozzano in 1948, made his first profession of the Vows on June 4, 1950; and in November of the same year he was already in the Mission of Juba, among the Azande, and then superior at Rimenze. He was always joyful and brought his cheerfulness into all the groups he was working with. In 1956 he was superior in the Mupoï area. In 1959 he was in Italy for vacation and in England for studies, after which he went to Yambio in 1960, where in 1961 he broke his right arm in a fall. In Yambio he was put in jail for baptizing some minors (and thereby contravening the new Government laws), and eventually he was expelled from the Sudan at the end of 1962. He was in Trent for one year, and on February 13, 1964, he went to the Congo as the superior of the new mission, and there he met martyrdom.

The confreres give this witness about him: "He was a true missionary. I always saw him giving himself with youthful enthusiasm without sparing himself, for the good of the Azandes. He did not mind sacrifices when it was question of helping confreres and people. I never saw him turn his back on any difficulty, and his generous example was extremely moving."

Fr. Armani was a young missionary, 47 years of age.

Father EVARISTO MIGOTTI

Rungu (Zaire), 1 December 1964,

According to Br. Mosca, the survivor of the massacre, Fr. Migotti and Fr. Piazza came out of their hiding places on November 30, 1964, to meet the "simbas" instead of the promised liberators. "Know that your last hour has come," said the major in charge of the company. It must have been 10 PM. It was pitch dark. We were tranquil and serene... The grace of God was strengthening us... I turned toward the wood and a gun shot thundered. I felt a blow on my left shoulder, near my neck, and my arm remained paralyzed... With full consciousness I let myself fall on my right side as if dead.

After me the three Dominicans were ordered to step down (from the truck) and they were killed one at a time, all at my right side... Fr. Piazza sat at my left. A point blank shot hit him on the head, and he fell face down without giving any sign of pain.

The last one to be shot was Fr. Migotti. Seeing the bodies of the three Dominicans lying on the roadside by the bridge when he got down from the truck, Fr. Migotti asked with his habitual simplicity: "Wapi?" (where?) as if to say: "What position should I take?" They immediately ordered him to sit down in a small place still clear by the bridge, and he closed with his sacrifice the list of those murdered on that tragic night.

Four young men dragged the bodies to the middle of the bridge one by one, pushing them over the rail into the water below. The bridge was about 30 feet above the river, but the water was no deeper than nine feet. I was the last but one to be thrown into the river. The last one was Fr. Piazza. As I hit the water with my back, I touched bottom and dug my feet into the river bed. I could hang on to a bridge pylon... and later I went hand over hand from one pylon to another until I reached the opposite bank. The "simbas" were looking mainly for Belgians, but they got furious at all white people."

Fr. Migotti had been jailed in the Mupoi area of Southern Sudan, in 1962, for building two chapels in straw and mud. Before his trial came up a decree of expulsion was issued for him, Fr. Piazza and others. From Italy he left for the Congo in February 1964. When his mother embraced him for the last time, she told him: "Fr. Evaristo, you barely escaped the danger of being killed in the Sudan. Why do you want to go to the Congo, where they keep killing the Whites?", "Mother" answered her son, "I think that if the Lord were to ask me to die a martyr, I would not be worthy of such great grace."

In his application for Perpetual Profession, Fr. Evaristo had written to the Superior General:

"Freely, with full knowledge I give myself to you and to your successors so that they would dispose of me for whatever office they see me fit, entrusting to me even those which could require an heroic act."

The Lord requested the 'heroic act' of him on December 1, 1964, and he did not hesitate to consummate it.

Fr. Evaristo was only 42 years old.

Father LORENZO PIAZZA

Rungu (Zaire), 1 December 1964

Fr. Lorenzo Piazza was one of the same group of victims as Fr. Evaristo Migotti.

On November 30, 1964, Brother Mosca and Fathers Migotti and Piazza came out of their hiding places to meet the "simbas" instead of the promised liberators. "Know that your last hour has come," said the major in charge of the company. It must have been 10 PM. We were tranquil and serene... The grace of God was strengthening us. Frs. Piazza and Migotti were ordered to sit down by the bridge facing Rungu, they were shot.. and their bodies thrown into the river." Brother Mosca continues: "I was the last one to be thrown into the river... but miraculously I could swim away." The "simbas" were looking mainly for Belgians, but they got furious at all white people.

Lorenzo declared that his first idea of the missions came to him when he was eleven years old and was inspired by the recitation of the poem: "The Little Missionary to his Mother." And his mother couldn't help remembering the last lines of that poem when she heard of his death:

"Don't cry if one day you see a bloodstained crown.

The Lord will have made you the happy mother of a martyr."

Father Lorenzo Piazza was ordained in 1940, but he couldn't leave for the missions on account of the war. Meanwhile he earned a doctor's degree in magisterium at the Catholic University of Milan with a dissertation on the Art of the Azande. He left for the Azande (Mupoi) at the beginning on January 1955. Although he had fairly serious health problems, he worked in Mupoi, Rimenze and Yambio.

In 1963 he was expelled from the Sudan, went back to Italy, and, on December 8 of the same year, he departed from Rome as the superior of the Rungu mission.

At Rungu he found the Christianity he wanted; and God did not allow him to be sent away from there. Rather, in order to save his flock, Fr Piazza offered his life spontaneously, along with his confreres. He was only 49 years of age.

Father ANTONIO ZUCCALI

Rungu (Zaire), 2 December 1964

Fr. Zuccali had remained in the woods together with Paul Lepeche, hoping the National Liberation Army would arrive. On the morning of December 2, 1964, one of the natives made them and others come out of their hiding, "because," he said, "the rebels were not only killing those who covered up for the whites, but also those who had merely seen any whites recently."

The two walked toward the mission. A teacher's wife, a holy woman, as soon as she saw the two betrayed by that man, tried to assume full responsibility for their lives. The traitor was almost convinced by her words, when suddenly a truckful of "Simbas" appeared. They killed Father Antonio and the young Belgian, near the electric generator of Rungu.

The father was in time to give absolution to his companion and to bless the woman who had risked her life to save them. Their bodies were thrown into the River Rungu, which is an tributary of the River Bomokandi, and were carried down by the current. In vain the teachers searched for them for a long time.

After his ordination, May 31, 1947, Fr. Zuccali was in Verona for three years helping in the General Administration, and in 1951 he left for Juba, Southern Sudan.

He was assigned to Isoke until 1959, a mission that was growing at the rate of 1,500 Christians a year. Fr. Zuccali also built some 30 brick chapels.

Indefatigable, he succeeded in making more than three consecutive one-month safaris. But in 1955 he begged for one more confrere: "To tell you the truth we feel physically tired ... We are already machines running out of fuel, and woe to us if we get sick."

When in 1962 the so-called "halter law" was enacted, the pagans came en masse toward the church, and in a few months Fr. Zuzccali administered several thousand baptisms.

When he was expelled from the Sudan, he always kept in his heart his Sudanese Christians.

He spent twelve months in Europe, and he couldn't stand still. In Italy he gave more than four hundred lectures in schools.

On December 8, 1963, he left for the Congo. In Rungu, he resumed the same rhythm of apostolate work. He wrote to his family: "I am always traveling, and this brings me some tribulations, but the good performed is great. My health is good. The continuous movement accompanied by some forced abstinence from food does me good..."

On May 29, he wrote to some good people: "I had asked the Lord to enable me to give at least 100,000 Baptisms before I die, but I believe I asked for little, because the pagans are so numerous and well disposed... and you want to convert and save very many with your prayers and sacrifices."

And he added in a postscript: "In Congo there are still martyrs. But it happens 800 kilometers away. Here there is calm..."

Only the Lord knew that six months later there would be martyrs also elsewhere, and that Fr. Zuccali would be the last missionary to fall in Rungu.

Father BARNABAS DENG

Wau (So. Sudan) 2 August 1965

When he was a little boy, Barnabas Deng of the Dinka tribe, was tending his goats near his village, in the area of Kwajok, in the Southern Sudan swamps, when a missionary came by, and told him to come to the Mission school. He became a Comboni Missionary and was ordained by Cardinal Montini, the future pope Paul VI, in Milan, in 1962.

When Fr. Barnabas went back to his native Sudan he met his martyrdom on August 2, 1965.

After the order expelling missionaries from the Sudan was issued, all the missionaries of Nyamlel, Gordhiim and Aweil got together on March 1, 1964, in order to reach Wau. Fr. Barnabas, the Associate Pastor of Aweil, was present at their departure. When he saw the confreres getting into the cars, Fr. Barnabas got close to one of them and told him: "Father, pray for us; we will see each other again only in heaven!"

Too soon his words became a reality. Heaven reached Father Barnabas at Wau, probably in the area of the military barracks, around 4 am of Monday, August 2, 1965.

All white missionaries had either escaped or been killed. Fr. Barnabas Deng, Fr. Arcangelo Ali' from Rumbek and their bishop Ireneo Dud held fast to their posts to minister to the Catholic population. But they were not safe. Bishop Dud offered Fr. Barnabas the chance to go to Khartoum for his own safety, but Fr. Barnabas still lingered, visiting people and comforting them. However his enemies were on his trail, and then he disappeared. Some brave Christians went to the military barracks and found the body of Fr. Barnabas with torture signs and his chest torn open by a volley of bullets. "An accident," the military authority had previously explained to the bishop. But when the body was found with evident signs of torture and gunshot wounds, then he said: "A mistake. We thought he was somebody else."

When Fr Barnabas was assigned to his last mission place, the confreres told him: "We send you like a sheep among wolves, but don't lose courage. The Lord will never abandon you..."

Fr. Barnabas answered: "In these last two years I got used to it; now I will have to grow more into it."

At 30 years of age, Fr. Barnabas Deng offered the immolation at the beginning of a new era.

Father GIUSEPPE SANTI

Lira , 14 April 1979

On Holy Saturday April 14, 1979 Fr. Santi was in the church of Aloï preparing to celebrate the liturgy of the Easter vigil. Two young men arrived from Patongo, where Amin's soldiers were spreading terror, and asked the father to give them a lift to Lira, the capital of the Province. The parishioners themselves exhorted Fr. Santi to help the young men instead of going on with the liturgical celebration. Charity prevailed. One hour later Fr. Santi, killed by Amin's soldiers, ended his earthly sacrifice.

On Easter Sunday the news of the killing of a missionary near the military quarters of Lira reached Bishop Asili ,who had locked himself in his house near the cathedral together with Fr. Pampaloni, Br. Pratt and some Sisters. But nobody could come out because Amin's soldiers were everywhere, and were shooting everybody on sight.

On Tuesday morning, April 17, since many soldiers had gone, the bishop and his companions succeeded in finding the hole where the body of Fr. Santi and six other persons had been thrown, about one kilometer from the cathedral. After a funeral in the cathedral, Fr. Santi was buried in a tomb near the diocesan priest , Fr. Anania Oryang, who had been killed fifteen days before.

Giuseppe Santi, ordained a priest on June 29, 1945, passed his first five years of priesthood in "vocation animation" (encouraging vocations to the religious and missionary life) in Italy. By 1949 there were 526 students in the eight apostolic Seminaries of Italy, of whom 90 in Crema and 82 in Brescia, fruit, in great part, of the labors, trips and letters of Fr. Santi.

In 1951 he had his desire for Africa fulfilled, and was in Gulu by September. After a period in Italy, he was in Africa again, in Gulu, 1961, and later, from 1964 to his death, in Lira: "From 330 persons who came to church in 1964, now we have reached the number 1,400."

"I am happy to be a missionary priest in the Congregation of the Comboni Missionaries. I am happy because I can give myself, and there is nothing better than to give oneself," Fr Santi wrote from Lira shortly before he was shot to death by Amin's soldiers on Holy Saturday, April 14, 1979. He was 59 years of age.

Fr. ANTONIO FIORANTE

Pakwach (Uganda), 3 May 1979

Fr. Fiorante, a native of Civitanova del Sannio, Province of Campobasso, was ordained priest on June 3, 1950.

In 1954 he was in Bahr El Ghazal, where he learned the Jur language well, and also Dinka and Ndogo. He was at Kayango, Gordhiim and Mbili.

In November 1962 he was among the first ones expelled from the Sudan. Fr. Bono says of him: "He was always a man available at the will of the Superiors, zealous, and refraining from any form of showing off, cheerful... always generous and ready to help everybody..."

After one year in Italy, he asked and obtained permission to leave for Uganda, and was assigned to Arua. He was at Angal first, and then he was put in charge of the new station in Parombo. In 1976 he was transferred to Pakwach. Both Parombo and Pakwach were huge and difficult parishes.

During his last vacation, he visited his brothers in Canada, and later he wrote: "I am happy to be here. Italy is beautiful. Canada is beautiful also, but Africa, with no offense to anyone, is the most beautiful of all. I will never change Africa for Italy or Canada."

Once he wrote to the people of his hometown: "You may say: Look at Fr. Fiorante who went to Africa to spend money he does not have, to help those people who perhaps will kill him tomorrow. You may be right. But we need also someone to help these poor people."

"... We have no floor or organ in our churches, because our churches are made of straw and mud. We have pledged, instead, a program of spiritual restoration: to renew the faith in the hearts of the Christians and to ignite it in the hearts of the pagans... For our part, we will try to sow as much as we can: something will grow."

At 53 years of age he was the seed who offered himself and died, so that the grain of wheat could grow and flourish.

PAKWACH - UGANDA
THE NIGHT OF THURSDAY MAY 3, 1979

"On Friday, May 4, 1979," related Sr. Paola of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Pakwach," Sr. Teresa and I found the church still locked at 7 am. Very unusual for the early rising missionaries. Then we went to the house of the fathers and found the entrance door ajar, and so were all the inside doors. We entered the room of Fr. Fiorante and we found his body lying on the floor, naked, with a cord tied at his neck to a leg of his bed, and a wound on his ear and on the opposite temple. There were signs of blows on father's back, and his stomach was swollen. Fr. Silvio Dal Maso's body, naked, was sitting on the floor with his face upward. He had his feet tied with a cord. He had a fire-arm wound across his neck. He was clenching his rosary in his left hand."

We can only make hypotheses on the reasons of the murder by Amin's armed thugs, because the killers had already obtained what they were looking for, money, gasoline, and cars: rapacity, anger, caprice, or hatred against the faith? The suppositions, and in particular the religious motive, seem to be confirmed by voices among the Pakwach people.

Father SILVIO DAL MASO

Pakwach (Uganda), 3 May 1979

When, on his third year of theology at the Vicenza seminary, Silvio made clear to his mother his intention to become a missionary, she came up with the question :

"You will go far away, among so many dangers, and perhaps they will kill you."
"Then I will die a martyr. Wouldn't you like to be the mother of a martyr?" Silvio answered.

Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda are the three fields of work where Fr. Silvio successively carried on his missionary apostolate. Three activities interrupted by three wars. He was involved three times and tossed around and finally savagely killed by events stronger than he was.

Fr. Dal Maso, a native of Pugnello d'Arzignano (Vicenza), entered the Congregation from the diocesan seminary, at 22 years of age. He was ordained a priest on April 16, 1939, and in October of the same year he was sent to Ethiopia, where he spent eight years between pastoral ministry and imprisonment at Gondar and Asmara.

From 1947 to October 1963 he was in various stations of Bahr El Ghazal among the Dinkas: Mayen, Abeyei, Thiet, Warap and Kwajok.

"Everybody remembers his labors among the Dinkas in the swamps and his bi-weekly safaris on horse back, when possible, or on foot, to go visit the Christians of the faraway Abyei, which was cut off most of the year by rains" (Fr. Bono) . He was expelled from the Sudan in 1964.

In 1965 he started a new mission work in the diocese of Arua, Uganda. In 1972 he was assigned to Pakwach.

He arrived in Pakwach in January 1972, from the beautiful mission of the Alur mountains. He was supposed to stay there "a few months", and several times he expressed the desire to return to the mountains where the climate was cooler and the faith of the Christians more lively. But since a substitution was not possible, he did not insist. "This," he said, "is a real mission, difficult, with yet so many pagans. It would be treason to leave them alone." He remained, and there he found his martyrdom. Amin was spreading terror in Uganda; and Don Lino Coffelea, friend of Fr. Silvio, told him: "Watch out, bearded missionary, that Amin's soldiers don't dispatch you." Silvio answered: "What is the difference between dying here in Africa? What matters is dying for a holy cause."

On the night of May 3, 1979, Amin's soldiers stormed the priests' house, stole or destroyed everything, and left Frs. Fiorante and Dal Maso beaten and shot and lying naked on the floor with a rope tied from their neck to a table leg.

Father SILVIO SERRI

Obongi (Uganda) 11 September 1979

One of Fr. Serri's favorite books was the story of the "Martyrs of Uganda."

"A man of only one word" was Fr. Serri's nickname among the natives of Obongi, Uganda. He was born in Ussana (Sardinia) on Sept. 10, 1933, and entered the Congregation in 1953, and was ordained a priest on May 31, 1958, by Cardinal Montini in Milan Cathedral. He arrived in the Diocese of Arua, Uganda, in 1962, and remained there for almost seventeen years. He worked in Maracha, Olovu and Obongi and was famous for his ability to adapt to anything.

In April 1979, when the final defeat of Amin was approaching and his soldiers were running in disorderly and desperate retreat ahead of the Tanzanian troops, some soldiers stopped at the Obongi mission and pointed their gun at Fr. Serri's chest.

"We need a car immediately to run away and find some food. Fast!" "Here are the car keys," answered Fr. Silvio, and here is what we have in the pantry. Take it and have a good journey."

To a confrere who objected to this kind of generosity, Fr. Silvio answered: "When we said yes to God's call, we offered everything including our life. So much more a car or some food."

When the Christians heard that the car had been stolen, they ran after the thieves, who meanwhile lost their courage, and abandoned the car in the thick grass, not far from the mission.

Fr. Silvio commented: "Our Christians are so brave... I feel so safe here. The soldiers know that even if they shoot me, they won't get very far."

On September 11, 1979, before dark, Fr. Silvio was driving the Landrover back to the mission from the river Nile where he had gone to load a water tank on his trailer. A man in shirt sleeves and carrying a gun was waiting in the churchyard. Fr. Silvio understood immediately that the man was one of Amin's soldiers.

"Give me the car keys," he ordered.

"Here they are," and Fr. Silvio offered them

"Unhook the trailer," the soldier commanded. Fr. Silvio unhooked the trailer with his tank full of water.

"Give me a drum of gasoline."

"Come with me and I'll give it to you."

They filled the gasoline drum.

Realizing that the man wanted to steal the car, a boy ran to ring the church bell. Br. Maran was in church, and as soon as he heard the bell ringing, came out and told the boy: "Don't ring the bell." and immediately two bullets whistled past by him. Then the brother started calling: "Fr. Serri, Fr. Serri, where are you? ..." Fr. Serri was hidden by the Landrover, very close to the soldier, who aimed his gun at him, and shot. The bullet went through Fr. Serri's arm and stomach, and came out at his left side, after passing through his heart.

The bandits drove away and Br. Maran found Fr. Serri looking intently at him, and trying to smile. Then he died.

The Africans had called him "The man of one word." Fr. Serri had promised: "I will remain with you no matter what."

He was 46 years old when evil forces took him away from them.

Father OSMUNDO BILBAO

Kampala 20 April 1982

Amin's disbanded soldiers, hiding in the jungle of northern Uganda, and the regular ones on the government side, were desperately fighting and spreading terror. And this situation lasted for about three years, while Fr. Bilbao was in the thick of it at Moyo.

He was repeatedly invited by the people to leave the mission and save his life. His answer: "If I go, who will defend you? I can't. I can't. I am already accustomed to the thought of death, which I find a very normal reality." When he heard about the confreres who had been killed in Uganda, he said, "I believe this is a clear example of what it means to share with people until the very end."

On Tuesday April 20, 1982 Fr. Bilbao was driving back from Kampala to Entebbe, in the Moyo Sisters' Volkswagen van. He had gone to the capital to arrange for the shipping of a farm tractor that he had requested for his Moyo mission. Traveling with him were Fr. T. Paolucci, and a young female Ugandan student. It was 11:45 am. On a straight stretch of the paved road, a white car with armed men in civilian clothes in it came level with the van. They motioned to Fr. Bilbao to stop, but he, fearing the worst, stepped on the accelerator to get away. In a short time the white car overtook the missionary van again and the bandits discharged a heavy barrage of fire. Sixteen bullets tore into the Volkswagen, smashing front and back windows. Fr. Bilbao was hit in the back, and the bullet lodged at the base of his skull. Fr. Paolucci and the student fell on the floor of the van, the student under a pile of literature which they had bought at Kisubi, and Fr. Bilbao's body on top of Fr. Paolucci.

The van, still going at full speed, ran off the road and smashed against a tree in the field. The three bandits stopped, broke into the van, and stole everything the missionaries were carrying, along with the spare wheel. Fr. Paolucci was covered with Fr. Bilbao's blood, and he pretended to be dead. The robbers did not see the girl. So they were sure there was no witness, and they left.

Fr. Bilbao, born in San Julian de Musques (Spain), on November 7, 1944, entered the novitiate in Corella, and then Moncada, where he made his first Profession on September 9, 1964. He was ordained in Venegono on April 6, 1969, and in 1971 he left for Uganda. He was in the West Nile first, and then in Metu, among the Madi. In 1975 he was in charge of the Regional Procure in Kampala, which then was the resource center for many other organizations, such as the Red Cross, UNICEF, CEE. In 1979 he was in Spain for one year, and then he returned to his beloved Madi. Meanwhile Metu was destroyed by the war, and he moved to Moyo, where he passed his last period of mission work between guerrillas and the Ugandan army.

On April 18, 1982, Fr. Bilbao went to Kampala for some errands, and on the 20th at noon, he was assassinated in the neighborhood of Kisubi. He was only 37 years old.

A Ugandan couple in a letter to his mother: "Father Bilbao was a man of the people and a light for humankind. His light was the infinite and indiscriminate love for the people to whom he had been sent to bring the word and the message of Christ."

A notable Madi said: "He was a son of our people".

Father EZECHIEL RAMIN

Cacoal (Brazil) 24 July 1985

At noon on July 24, 1985, Fr. Ezechiel fell under a volley of bullets, a victim of an ambush plotted by seven Jaguncos (people paid and armed by the landlord) within the Catuva fazenda, at Cacoal, Brazil.

Fr. Ramin was only 32 years old, and was coming out of a meeting with the farmers and their Rural Workers' Union president, Adilio De Souza, for the purpose of protecting the small pieces of land which they cultivated and from which the landlords kept pushing them away, using tens of strongly armed Jaguncos.

"Good Father, you created me, you called me to your service to go to the most poor..." Ezechiel had written on the day of his profession of Perpetual Vows.

Ezechiel Ramin was born in Padua on February 9, 1953. His six brothers were all graduates. His brother Dr. Paul said: "My brother's vocation was born in the heart of our mother."

Ezechiel graduated with honors in 1972 with top marks. When his father asked what college he was choosing, he answered: "Time." Finally toward the end of summer, he told his parents to get into the car because he wanted to take them to see the college he had chosen. After a long ride, they ended up in front of the Institute of the Comboni Missionaries on San Giovanni Da Verdara Street.

"There is my college"

"That is?"

"Missionary for Africa!"

"You are kidding!"

"I am serious, and I'll do it"

On October 6, 1974, Ezechiel entered the novitiate in Venegono, and on May 5th, 1976, he made his first Profession of Vows.

In 1976 he was sent to England to start Theology; and in 1977 he left for the North American Province of the Comboni Missionaries' Scholasticate in Chicago. He wanted to study medicine, but instead of getting a degree in medicine he graduated in theology with a specialization in missiology.

He was ordained a priest in his home parish in Padua on September 29, 1980, by Bishop E. Mason. A little more than a month afterwards, an earthquake shook the town of Irpino, and Fr. Ezechiel spent forty days there under mud and snow, sleeping very few hours a night in a small camper, coordinating supplies, burying the dead and consoling the survivors.

On September 14, 1983, he left for Brazil, as he had chosen, where he felt there were situations very proper to the service to the most poor he had vowed to serve on the day of his consecration.

Father EGIDIO FERRACIN

Alenga, Uganda, 4 August 1987

On his first mass souvenir picture, Fr. Egidio summarized his difficult journey: "Consummatum est. Et inclinato capite emisit spiritum" ("It is finished. And bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.")

Those who found the body of Fr. Egidio in the woods, simply said: "He was in the attitude of a Christ on the cross."

It was the morning of August 4, 1987. The bandits were everywhere in that area of Uganda, and were acting like sovereigns in that period of anarchy. Fr. Egidio wanted to visit his catechumens of Akokoro, near the ferry of Makindi, and notify them that he would celebrate Mass for them the following Sunday. Riding his motorcycle through a wooded area which was five kilometers from Kwuiubale, Fr. Egidio ran into a band of thieves who had kidnapped some people, including three girls. He pleaded with the bandits to let the girls go: "Hit me if you wish; I knew it would all have ended up like this one day or another. But leave them alone." And he commended himself to God. When the bandits were tired of beating him, they tied him on a tree and finished him with a volley of bullets. This is the account of a survivor.

When the raiders' pressure was diminishing, a search party found the body of Fr. Egidio, on August 11, reclining on his side with his hands tied to a log and his knees folded. During the seven days since he had died his body had been molested by the animals of the jungle. His thighs were cut by twine and his chest and back had marks of knife stripes and gun shots.

Some people remembered that on Sunday, August 2nd, Fr. Egidio had told the people during a mass in Awuilia: "I have no fear of the bandits. I came to die on the field of my labors."

It was a prophecy and an offer which God accepted from Egidio at the age of 50.

A strange report card preceded Egidio's entry to the novitiate of Florence. This card summarized his good and bad points with a series of adjectives on his temperament and character (voluble, innovative, fantastic, active, at times uncouth, too jolly, ready to sacrifice, sincere, affable, humble, accommodating, generous, cheerful).

Egidio had to conquer his vocation step by step like a mountain climber who burns his hands and knees to reach the summit.

Fortunately, at the end of high school, Fr. Gino Albrigo understood the fiber of the young aspirant. Without hesitation he wrote: "He is to be admitted to the renewal of the Vows... He will be the one who will bring comfort to the confreres in times of crisis, especially in the missions."

"I say," - affirms Fr. Mario Balzarin, "that Fr. Ferracin's death has all the marks of martyrdom, exactly like the first Christians of the church. The killers did not take anything important, except a couple of flashlights and a battery. They wanted to sacrifice an innocent victim only because he was opposed to their evident injustice regarding the three girls who had refused to be raped."

Father EGIDIO BISCARO

Kitgum 29 January 1990

"Mother, Mother Mary; Lord have mercy on me; I offer my life for the peace of this land of Uganda..." were the last words of Fr. Egidio as he was gunned down by the bullets of rebels on the road from Pajule to Kitgum.

On Monday, January 29, 1990, Fr. Egidio Biscaro and Father Aldo Pieragostini left Pajule around 8:45 in a Landrover which Fr. Aldo was driving. They were taking a sick woman to the hospital. Ten kilometers out of Pajule on the main road to Kitgum, the front end of the car was suddenly the target of machine-gun fire. The sick woman was hit and died instantly. Fr. Egidio had his right leg smashed into a pulp of flesh and crumbled bones. He suffered many other wounds to his shoulders, ears, and forehead. He died from loss of blood. The bandits approached the car, but seeing people gathering around, they looked, and left.

A week later came another attack of the bandits... and the shooting at Fr. Agostino Stocco and Sr. Genoveffa Giannasi. Both escaped alive by a miracle..."It all happened during a sudden resurgence of the violence against the messengers of peace and reconciliation." (Father Paul Donohue, and the Kitgum Fathers).

Egidio made his first profession of the Vows as a lay brother on August 2, 1949. After obtaining a diploma in mechanics, he left for Uganda at age 22. Egidio witnessed the independence of Uganda on Oct 9, 1962, which unfortunately did not bring immediate peace, but great tribulations, with blood and martyrs. He was not only was a skilled mechanic, but, above all, an excellent catechist. He wanted so much to be a priest, but thinking it was not possible, he expressed his desire to become a permanent deacon in a letter to his Superior General, January 1, 1970. Times were not ripe for it, yet. But it was not long afterwards that the Institute made it known to the Brothers that they could not only become deacons, but priests. Fr. Egidio, aged 41, jumped for joy. He was admitted to Beda College in Rome in 1971, and was ordained priest in Milan in 1974.

Back in Africa and surrounded by dangers and continued banditry, Fr. Egidio wrote:

"The Lord wants us to give of ourselves in the service of others, he wants us to put all we have in common with the needy ones, he wants us to use all our intellectual faculties and material work for the benefit of all."

Some confreres interpreted these words as imprudence and the taking of unnecessary risks. "Why should I be misunderstood even by my own confreres?" Fr. Egidio complained.

Many confreres had been targets for gunmen (the fathers Rossi, Fortuna, Simeoni, Mantovani, Bernareggi, Maffei, La Braca, McGinley, Novelli, Cristoforetti, Ambrosi, and others), and some of them still bore the marks. Fr. Egidio's words were not dictated by imprudence but by courage.

After a renewal course in Rome which ended with a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, father Egidio was back in Uganda, at Pajule in 1990, where on January 29 he shed his blood for his people, in his 61st year of age.

Father WILLIAM NYADRU

Morulem, 25 October 1991

William Nyadru, a native of Pakele, Uganda, was the first-born child of his parents, who were both teachers in the West Nile. William's father died when he was seven years old, and his mother Caterina Ayiko educated her four children in the Christian faith.

At an early age he joined the diocesan seminary of Arua and from there he joined the postulancy of the Comboni Missionaries because, he said, he "was impressed by the missionary vocation and decided to join the example of the missionaries who were living in my parish." And, entering the Congregation, he declared: "There is nothing that I can compare to the joy of knowing Jesus, the only person who can give a meaning to my life. Life in the Comboni Family is the best for following the will of God and for the total offering of my life to Jesus Christ."

He took vows for the first time on April 5, 1987, and went to Rome to study at the Gregoriana, where he graduated "magna cum laude." Joy and serenity were his characteristics.

From Rome, before being ordained, he went to study in London. He would have liked to study the Bible, but he accepted the superiors' pressure that he study journalism. He saw in it the will of God. In two years he obtained two master's degrees, one in "International Journalism" and another in "African Studies."

He went back to be ordained in his homeland and began his priesthood in Moyo, Uganda, on August 20, 1988. He was assigned to Morulem, in an area surrounded by the Karimojong warriors and cattle rustlers. There once again he was joyful, serene and faithful to his duties, always with a profound spirit of prayer, giving witness to the gospel values of service, healing, forgiveness.

On October 25, he went to celebrate mass in a mission station, and there Father William was killed with a bullet in his heart. He was only 30 years of age. A Ugandan, killed in his own land.

When William Nyadru was ordained a priest, he quoted Comboni on his ordination card: "The happiest of my days will be when I shall be able to give my life for Christ."

Brother Doctor ALFREDO FIORINI

Muiravale, Mozambique, 24 August 1992

Kalongo, where Bro. Fiorini first started exercising his profession as a doctor, and Mozambique where soon he would be assigned, were areas in turmoil and terrorism against whites, and missionaries - no matter what color. His future superior in Mozambique wrote to him: "While in Uganda be careful not to get killed or abducted. You can get all of that over here in Mozambique."

And he did. On August 24, 1992, Br. Alfredo was driving alone in his Landrover from Nacala to Carapira, and near the place called Muiravale, he slowed down because the road was full of pot-holes. Suddenly his car was hit by a hail of machine-gun bullets fired by Renamo people lying in ambush at the side of the road. His car was hit by twenty-seven bullets: one hit him in the head, one in his chest, one in his wrist and one on his leg.

He was only 28 year old. He was shot at the same spot where the

Comboni Missionary Sister Teresa Dalle Pezze had also been killed in an ambush on January 3, 1985.

Bro. Fiorini, the eldest of four children, was born in Terracina, near Rome, on September 5, 1954.

He graduated from the school of Medicine of the Siena University with top grades, and three months later he also passed the State qualifications, and began working in a private clinic in Terracina.

At first he thought of serving as a volunteer in a third-world country, and then he went all the way, entering the postulancy of the Comboni Missionaries in Florence in 1982.

Br. Doctor Alfredo Fiorini completed his theology studies in Kampala and Nairobi, where he obtained a bachelor's degree with top grades on March 1990. Facing the final decision between priesthood and lay brotherhood, he chose to remain a Brother, a "painful" decision, he stated, but one that really appealed to him. "I hold in great esteem the lay vocation."