

# Missionary *Reflections*

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## Editorial

The present issue of Missionary Reflections should have been published earlier this year. Unfortunately, a series of events impeded the regular work of our group and pushed the publication to today. However, this does not mean the Missionary Reflection group remained idle.

Some of the Missionary Reflection group participated in the Conference on Pastoralists held in Juba (May, 2014). Since the proceedings of that meeting will be published elsewhere, we opted for a special issue focusing on different aspects of working among pastoralists. We asked confreres committed in this service to give us their views, which we publish herewith.

To commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Plan for the Regeneration of Africa, we organized a two day symposium at Tangaza University College (29-30 September, 2014). The Symposium was organized with the cooperation of the Mission Department of that academic institution. On the first day, three Comboni Missionaries had the chance to present Comboni's work and the Plan. On the second day, speakers from the Mill Hill Missionaries, the Society of Missions in Africa, and the Spiritans, had the chance to focus on how their founders and confreres had interpreted evangelization and social work in

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Africa. The Symposium was well attended by students and staff. We plan to edit and publish the inputs offered by our confreres.

We have to register the First Conference on Social Transformation organized by the Institute of Social Ministry and Tangaza University College on 13-15 November, 2014. This conference was to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Institute of Social Ministry and saw the participation of over one thousand delegates. Among the keynote addresses, notable were those of Patrice Lumumba, Kenyan lawyer and expert drafter of the new Constitution of the country, and Peter Cardinal Turkson, from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Some of our confreres were directly involved with the planning of this conference, which also

received the financial support of our General Administration.

In 2015, we shall be busy reflecting on the upcoming General Chapter. Those working at Tangaza will also be committed in preparing a Conference on family life, which will work towards presenting the Synod of Bishops on the Family with proposals coming from Africa. So it seems that our work will continue and allow us to reflect and share. We also

hope others will be inspired by this and would like to share their own reflections. Please, send in any material you think of importance, we shall do our best to publish reflections that can be of use for our work.

On behalf of the Missionary Reflection Group, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Giuseppe Caramazza**

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## Evangelization among the Gumuz

The Church's presence among the Gumuz started in 2000 with the coming of the CMS to Mandura, followed by the MCCJ in 2003 and the Franciscan Missionaries of Christ in 2010. In 2011, the parish of Gilgel Beles was split to create the parish of Gublak. The Gumuz are a very isolated and marginalized population. Most practice traditional religion. There are some advantages and some disadvantages for their evangelization.

On the one side, they are open to accept either Christianity or Islam, the two faiths approaching them now, and they live in villages, so it is easy to approach them as a community. On the other side, they are reserved, especially the women. Adults resist any change to their habits, and their daily routine gives little opportunity for catechesis, meetings and other activities.

So far, in our action there has been a balance between pastoral the social aspects. Emphasis has been clearly on evangelization. The CMS, in particular, did not limit themselves to the school and clinic but had always at least one member of the community dedicated full time to pastoral work. Social activities have been an integral part of evangelization. This was expressed through standardized institutions like clinics and schools. There have been also occasional projects like wells, agriculture, mechanics... By the time we started direct evangelization by convoking people for prayer meetings, we were very much known in the area for our social activities and our closeness to people.

The Community Charter of the mission of Gublak may express this balance

b/n the social and pastoral activity, which could easily be subscribed by others. I quote some parts:

"The community considers the contribution to the welfare of the people an integral part of its evangelizing activity. The main projects in the social field are the kindergarten of Gublak and some primary schools run in dialogue with the local authorities. ... The community may carry out focused projects in order to answer particular needs of the people. ... Apart from "institutionalized" social work, each member of the community will do his best to be close to the people, helping them in case of sickness or any other urgent need. We follow in particular the blind and epileptic people".

"The community considers evangelization as the main reason for its presence among the Gumuz and, consequently, the priority goes to this task. Since the great majority of the Gumuz are followers of traditional religion and are open to the gospel, we address mainly to them. ... The formation of catechists is one of our main priorities. God blessed the new Parish with a good group of youth willing and motivated to do apostolic work. Weekly classes and occasional workshops are given to them".

### **Established procedure**

Our methodology of evangelization has crystallized in some standardized procedures which are followed by all. We open a dialogue with the local elders and with the people, explaining to them our intentions and asking permission to start catechetical meetings in their village. Their reaction is

almost always positive even in villages where the majority are Muslims. They say that they appreciate our presence.

After a few meetings, we entrust weekly catechesis to catechists since the villages are many. Yet, the missionary is frequently present. Whenever possible, and with local contribution, a chapel is built with local material. The duration of the catechumenate is of at least two years.

### **Apparent results**

The main characteristic of our Christian communities is that they are made of young people, most of them male. Girls are very few, adults almost totally absent. As a consequence it is an unstable community, subject to ups and down and with many baptized suddenly disappearing from the church.

There are many points to evaluate and some questions waiting for an answer. I mention some:

Those who come to the meetings are youth and children. Could we find ways to address the adults, particularly women, using a methodology of dialogue?

The programme we are using is linear: OT, life of Jesus, the sacraments, prayer... Catechists tend to spend much time in the stories of the OT without any particular purpose. This could be entertaining for children, but not for adults. Adults need something which touches their lives and challenges them. There should be some interaction.

Our degree of commitment to the language and culture is insufficient, even in comparison with the standards of the MCCJ in other parts of the country. There can be explanations for this but not a justification. Initiatives should be taken in this field.

Officially, we should use the Ethiopian rite. For practical reasons, we seldom use. To some, Gumuz is the first destination in Ethiopia and they have difficulty with Amharic. This becomes an insurmountable barrier. Many of us may think that the Latin rite would be more appropriate for the evangelization of the Gumuz.

*Juan A. González Núñez*

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## **Sfide tra i Karimojong**

Sin dall'inizio, i missionari impegnati in Karamoja si sono trovati in una situazione "diversa" rispetto a quelli attivi nell'evangelizzazione di altre aree. Quindi la questione della pastorale in Karamoja è sempre stata una priorità e un problema. I Karimojong, popolazione seminomade, richiedono un tipo di pastorale attenta al loro stile di vita e alla loro cultura. Non si può ancora parlare di vera e propria pastorale missionaria per i Karimojong che sia appropriata, anche se di tentativi ne sono stati fatti molti. In questi ultimi anni sono avvenuti in Karamoja degli avvenimenti che indubbiamente hanno portato dei cambiamenti radicali nella vita della popolazione e che inevitabilmente influiscono anche sul lavoro pastorale. Posso identificarne tre.

La prima trasformazione è da identificarsi nel programma di scolarizzazione

lanciato dal Governo più di un decennio fa. Il piano per l'Educazione Primaria Universale (UPE) ha come obiettivo di offrire a tutti i ragazzi e le ragazze il libero accesso alla scuola elementare. Nonostante i limiti di questo programma, la maggioranza dei Karimojong è ora consapevole dell'importanza della scuola nella vita dei loro figli. Se prima la popolazione era restia e scettica nel mandare i propri figli a scuola, si è ora verificata una svolta epocale. Oggi è quasi normale che i bambini vadano a scuola.

Un aspetto importante del progetto è il coinvolgimento delle comunità locali nella realizzazione delle loro scuole rurali. Il governo provvede alla sponsorizzazione dell'ottanta per cento dei fabbricati e il resto è dato dalla comunità locale che contribuisce con sassi e sabbia. Quando le aule sono pronte la scuola viene registrata e il governo

provvede a pagare il salario dei maestri. In questo modo molti più giovani karimojong hanno scelto di diventare maestri. Tutte le missioni hanno assistito al moltiplicarsi delle scuole in quasi tutte le aree della parrocchia e in alcune di queste gli agenti pastorali sono stati invitati a partecipare agli incontri di preparazione e realizzazione dei comitati del progetto. Non siamo esenti da limiti e problemi ci sono come ad esempio classi superaffollate per la mancanza di maestri o la regola che nessuno può essere respinto a detrimento della qualità dell'educazione. Tuttavia, l'aspetto decisamente positivo è da identificarsi nell'apertura all'educazione e alla formazione scolastica come diritto del bambino che cresce. Bisognerà preparare agenti pastorali adatti e strategie di pastorale giovanile per incontrare in maniera proficua tutti questi ragazzi e giovani che frequentano le scuole rurali.

### **Realtà disarmante**

Il secondo evento da prendere in considerazione per quanto riguarda la pastorale in Karamoja è il disarmamento avvenuto in questi ultimi anni. Le note razzie di bestiame e imboscate sulle strade con l'ausilio dei Kalashnikov era fino a pochi anni fa la piaga che rendeva la regione difficile da evangelizzare e da sviluppare. Molti innocenti hanno pagato un prezzo altissimo, tra questi una suora comboniana, un prete diocesano, un Mill Hill e tre comboniani. Da sempre la Chiesa in Karamoja ha promosso una cultura di pace. È stato un po' come preparare il terreno per il disarmamento che il governo ha lanciato nel 2003. Rimuovere pacificamente l'ingente numero di fucili in Karamoja è stato possibile grazie al paziente lavoro portato avanti con determinazione dalle chiese. Purtroppo non sono mancati anche i mezzi violenti per disarmare i Karimojong. Il fatto è che dal 2008, quando si è celebrato l'ottantesimo anniversario dell'arrivo dei primi missionari in Karamoja, è possibile muoversi per le strade del Karamoja senza il pericolo e il terrore di essere attaccati o colpiti dai banditi. Avere disarmato i karimojong non vuol dire automaticamente avere ristabilito la pace. Il lavoro è ancora molto lungo per far sì che la riconciliazione tra i vari gruppi karimojong continui e che si arrivi veramente a costruire una cultura di pace.

Il terzo fattore che deve preoccupare la pastorale è la comparsa di enormi quantità di alcol. L'Uganda ha notevolmente aumentato in questi ultimi anni la produzione di zucchero. Di conseguenza si sono riversati sul mercato clandestino ettolitri di distillato illegale proveniente dalla melassa, lo scarto della canna da zucchero. La distillazione della melassa sfugge ai controlli del governo. I karimojong hanno iniziato da qualche anno a vendere il proprio bestiame in cambio del distillato illegale in seguito alla dipendenza che genera. I casi di cirrosi epatica, di morti improvvise, di danni alla vista e al cervello si sono moltiplicati. Si dovrà lavorare su più fronti per affrontare il problema. Dapprima si dovrà insistere sulle autorità locali perché applichino la legge. Bisognerà poi insistere con programmi educativi e di propaganda degli effetti deleteri di tale sostanza e infine si dovrà incoraggiare i produttori di zucchero di trovare vie alternative agli scarti della canna da zucchero come la trasformazione in mangimi per allevamenti.

Queste sono le emergenze da affrontare in conseguenza ai cambiamenti in atto. Rimane poi sempre la sfida dell'annuncio agli adulti non cristiani e agli ostacoli che la poligamia pone, e il riconoscimento del ruolo e dei diritti della donna come veicolo di sviluppo integrale della società. Le coppie che ricevono il Sacramento del Matrimonio e che chiedono un accompagnamento costante di crescita e di sostegno nel cammino di testimonianza sono in aumento. I sacerdoti locali sono ancora un piccolo numero e le prospettive per il futuro non sono rosee. Rimane poi tutto il lavoro di sensibilizzazione per il rispetto dell'ambiente. La desertificazione aumenta a vista d'occhio e al di là di tante chiacchiere sono solo pochi che hanno cominciato a piantare alberi. Dagli ultimi rilevamenti effettuati risulta che il Karamoja sia ricco di minerali. L'estrazione di alcuni di essi e il relativo sfruttamento della gente del posto sono già iniziati. È arrivata da poco l'elettricità nel capoluogo della regione. Anche questo sta sensibilmente scombussolando la vita dei suoi abitanti.

C'è ancora molta strada da fare e le sfide sono tante ma come dicono i karimojong "ikidari Epei" (riconosco la Sua presenza) tirando un bel sospiro ci si affida allo Spirito e si continua il cammino con fiducia e speranza.

**Damiano Guzzetti**

# Sharing life

The situation of the pastoralists in East Africa varies a lot from one place to the other. Thus, the propositions I make here apply mostly to North Pokot, but they can assist others to move forward in the evangelization of pastoralists elsewhere, facing the future with creativity and hope. Creativity, because the situation of the youth is changing rapidly. Hope, because in the past pastoralists were stubborn regarding Christianity, while at present they are welcoming the faith.

The Comboni Missionaries have been masters of many trades though they did manage to concentrate on the core of their individual vocations and specializations: as technicians, teachers, nurses, priests, professors, etc. That proficiency has done good to the people living in remote areas; but it might not have helped the faith of beginners to take roots. People accepted baptism with eagerness yet that fire looks more like the flames of the savannah grass rather than the ambers of hard wood.

At the moment, the church has become a proliferation of different and distinct denominations, which bring confusion to those alien to this kind of organizations and ways of being Christian. Nonetheless, we need to concentrate on what the Spirit tells us to do, and the way it wishes us to do it without comparing ourselves to others. We are compelled to do like Paul: showing appreciation for what others do (1Cor 3:5-6). Nowadays, that appreciation demands acceptance and welcoming of the young generations that are the fruits of Africa and the contribution of the young faith of these churches towards the spreading of the Gospel, within the continent and outside it.

Closeness to the people has been an important characteristic of missionaries, and remains an essential element of the way missionaries ought to be if they want to bring the Good News of Jesus to the people today. An evangelizer is not a mere preacher, and much less one of those crusaders that fill up television sets. The evangelizer is a person that follows Jesus Christ and becomes part of the people with whom he shares the message of life (Cf. Phil 2: 4-7; 1Cor 9:20 ff). It will be a contradiction for him to propose something

that he does not share. Thus the evangelizer becomes an integral part of the people, giving and receiving; that is, each person sharing whatever he or she has in abundance or in scarcity. In this way the missionary feels the *“The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ”* (*Gaudium et Spes 1*). Something that Saint Daniel Comboni had made the practical motto of his ministry as bishop as it is clearly verified in his homily in Khartoum (Writings 3257 ff).

The Comboni missionary needs to identify himself with the people and to live close to them so that his witness becomes a practical teaching aid for the message. Thus his ministry is characterized by his personal concern for the single person and is able to show his own love and appreciation for the people and God’s love and care for those who are most forgotten, or are most exploited among the pastoralists. As evangelizer he is supposed to fulfil the mission of Christ among them (Lk 4:18).

## Ministries

The integration of the missionary with the people is paramount for his ministry. This implies that he knows what is going on and supplies solutions to problems. A real danger for us all is to be inserted in the surrounding of the people we minister to having our mind and heart elsewhere. The missionary integrated with the people is a friend, a brother and a sister to them, remaining available and at close call. In that, he finds it easier to share his faith in word, action and prayer.

The theological formation and introduction to ministry prepare good priests but lacks proper reflective exposure to the many nuances pastoral work demands, and much less the evangelisation of the pastoralists today. Evangelizing is a wholesome activity aimed at the improvement of the relations people have with God and with others, and a betterment of their living conditions so that they become more humane, just and dignified. As Comboni missionaries our activity is done



in community and in the complementarity of ministries as brothers and as priests.

The evangelization of pastoralist people has done a lot for their human development. It was a must because national governments were neglectful and because the pastoralist themselves had other priorities for their lives. As time goes on, many of those activities are to be shared with lay ministers. Those activities showed the charitable face of the Church, if need be, they should not disappear altogether. Other activities tackling issues like justice, local solidarity, prophecy, need to be continued (Cf Gal 3:26-29). This means that missionaries should denounce corruption, selfishness and injustices, enlightening people with the help of God's Word about cultural beliefs and practices that keep them backward. Besides, it is clear that pastoralists lack human development because of selfishness, tribalism, outdated traditional economic practices of survival that do not foster entrepreneurship.

### **Support local cultures**

Missionaries did a lot towards the spreading of the Gospel, translating the Bible and preparing catechetical material. Often, people enjoy conversing in their vernacular but are clumsy in reading or writing it, thus the ordinary vocabulary dwindles and the translations of the past become obsolete. The future of those languages is on the hands of the speakers. We can help keeping these languages alive. This implies flexibility, dexterity and effort: flexibility to adapt ourselves to the expectations of the people; dexterity to be able to use languages; effort because only our mother tongue is learned without sweating. No matter how young or old missionaries are, they should know that pastoralist people are proud, and it represents a humiliation for them not to be able to express themselves with agility. The missionary is the one to adjust himself to the people not the opposite. The Bible and catechesis have been translated. The challenge remains on the documents of the Church, the lives of saints, and other material. Much of this work is done better by local people than by foreigners; though the latter remain necessary for revisions and overseeing.

The evangelization of the pastoralist needs to combine activities of first

evangelization, pastoral care and ecclesial organization. First evangelization is more than catechesis, pastoral care more than office work and administration of sacraments, and ecclesial organization more than seminars and income generating activities. All this work is to be done in cooperation with catechists, sisters, local leaders. Activities regarding human development are to be handled by lay people and missionary brothers. Yet, they have to be done because of our faith in Jesus Christ and in His church. We are not NGOs, nor social workers. On our side, it will demand trust on the people and patience, because their speed differs from our expectations.

Pastoralists enjoy human closeness, the one shown in long conversations, visitations to the sick, gatherings. This means that missionaries cannot move in haste, but rather spend time with the people so that individuals may feel personal concern and may discover how God cares for them. Relationship is more than counselling, it deals with daily issues that include greetings, enquires, survival, prayers, blessings, spiritual advice. People prefer informal contacts rather than official addresses where much information is covered up with pleasantries. And as people are much spread within the vastness of savannah and mountains, missionaries cannot count on the inconveniences of long trips and occasional walking.

The evangelization of pastoralists goes hand in hand with celebrating "life". This means that the administration of Sacraments, the sharing of God's Word, the gatherings of Faith need to be done in an environment of festivity and joy. Thus routine is out of the equation and special gatherings need to be programmed. Lay people are very handy in the planning of such activities. All that priests need to do is to take part on them. Pastoralists prefer to be involved not just to be spectators in the liturgy. And liturgy is not just something that happens within the temple, it spills over the joy of the event and the consequences that influence the day to day activities. As people enjoy celebrations, the ministries related to singing, liturgical dance, public address have become very important in the faith sharing of the pastoralist.

**Thomas Herreros**

# Changing perspective

Cattle culture and cattle camps play a significant role among many tribes in South Sudan. More than 85% of the people engage in the care of livestock. Africa's newest nation has also some of the world's worst indicators in education. Half of all primary school-age children are out of school. Dropout rates are very high, and few children make it through to secondary education. Gender disparities are marked at all levels. And those children who are in school have limited prospects of learning. The infrastructure is poor, classrooms are overcrowded, and there are chronic shortages of learning materials.

President Salva Kiir stated that education holds the key to South Sudan's future. It is vital to poverty reduction and the development of strategies aimed at building a peaceful society. The greatest obstacle to effective learning is a shortage of adequately trained and properly supported teachers. South Sudan's challenges in education cannot be viewed in isolation. High levels of poverty, food insecurity, and parental illiteracy transmit educational disadvantages from parents to children. Conflict and insecurity are a perennial threat across large areas of the country. In a nutshell, South Sudan is facing an education emergency.

The Comboni Missionaries in South Sudan are present among the pastoralists. The Secretariat of Evangelization of the Province has organized several meetings about our commitment among cattle-keepers. In 2012 - after a four days workshop on *Comboni and the Pastoralists in South Sudan* - we drafted some guidelines for concrete action. Among them was the field of education with proposals like to promote education by supporting government schools through teacher training; to favour access of children to education in a way that they keep contact to their cultural environment; to help women to support the education of their daughters; to engage in civic education.

I have been working for more than seven years in Tali among the Mundari tribe, in Central Equatoria State. Lack of services has led to migration from rural into more settled areas. In recent years, conflicts between Mundari and neighbouring tribes have led to

cattle - raiding. The raiding is in part due to competition for grazing lands and use of water points in times of scarcity, but also reflective of wider raiding aimed at accumulating wealth.

## The Mundari

In Tali Mission we run a primary school where Fr. Martin Loku Mödi is the director. Fr. Martin is a Comboni Missionary and a son of this land.

The Mundari are pastoralists as well as settlers. They are settled but because of lack of pastures. During the rainy season, they move with the cows in order to look for salty grass in certain areas among neighbouring tribes. Cows provide security; any problem that may arise can be solved easily if a person owns cows. Cows are a treasure for pastoralists, for their survival and prestige. The more cows a person has, the happier he feels His family - especially his children - are respected and well known in the locality and in the surrounding villages. Furthermore, cows are a kept for dowry. Who is without them will neither be respected nor get married. In a family, girls are a source of cows. They are married away in exchange of many cows. Therefore girls are protected because they are a source of income for the family. They are protected until they get married. People access to cows also through trade and raiding.

Few among the pastoralists have understood the value of education. In a family the boys are divided: one or two go to school and the rest remain at home to take care of cows. However, when school fees are demanded, few are willing to part with a cow to pay them. As a result, students may have to leave school because of lack of family support. Cows are a treasure that cannot be parted with easily. Few boys go through the whole formal educational process.

It is also true that most parents are illiterate and find difficult to understand how education would help their children. In other words, more efforts must be exerted into educating the pastoralists. Education is the most powerful tool that can change their worldview. Formal education would help shaping a new understanding of the role of

people, community, relationship, and insert ideas like equity and justice in a society led by self-interest.

Education will also improve the lives of pastoralists. In fact, education would bring a change of behaviour, better treatment of each other in terms of respect of properties, practice of honesty and peaceful living. Educated persons ask the question “why”. In this way, there is an opening up to dialogue and deeper analysis which would lead to the peaceful solution of a problem.

Investing in education would help change the attitude of pastoralists. Education

changes the mindset. As such it frees the person from negative thinking and practices like cattle raiding, a source of strife and death. Often, pastoralists act ‘wildly’ simply for the sake of fame. Girls are disrespected and treated like commodities. Their consent to marriage is rarely considered. The father or the family is simply interested in how many cows this girl would bring to the family. These behaviours will change only through education.

**Markus Lorenz Korber**