

Mission Appeal of the Comboni Missionaries – Fr. Ruffino Ezama, mccj

Length: 4 minutes

I am Fr Ruffino EZAMA of the Comboni Missionaries. I want to thank you for this opportunity to share my experience, with the help of your Missions Office, to come to you in the common cause of our faith, and humanity.

I know the whole country has been put on its knees with this pandemic. Our prayers are with you as we join hands to pray God to keep us well and safe!

I was born in Arua in Uganda. It's a land of mud houses. A land where life and death can depend on the health of a half-dozen cattle. Sometimes a land of famine.

As a boy, growing up in Arua, I came to wonder about men who didn't look like my father or uncles. They were from an ocean away, and worked in our church and school. They spoke many languages, and were full of purpose.

They called themselves Comboni Missionaries.

Still as a boy, but growing older, I listened to the words of these men from across the sea, words of faith but words too of hard, hard action.

Saint Daniel Comboni, the founder of the Comboni Missionaries and Comboni Missionary Sisters, had a revolutionary belief for his time, and it was this: *Save Africa with Africa!* It was the job of his missionaries to evangelize, and to bring Christ to peoples who before had never heard the name of Jesus. Or seen a church. Or read the Bible. Then, once this was done, the missionaries moved on, deeper into Africa.

And what a passion Daniel Comboni brought to the task! And his missionaries with him. In the beginning, the life expectancy of a Comboni Missionary, once missioned, was three years! Such were the hardships, and the climate, and the diseases, and yes, sometimes the violence. Yet still they came. Men and women the likes of whom I grew up with.

“I have only one life to consecrate to the salvation of these souls,” said St. Daniel. “I wish I had a thousand to spend them all to such purpose.”

Later, as a boy growing into a man, this idealism, this selflessness, this call to something larger than myself, flooded into me such that I knew my path. The missionaries had come to educate, and to organize, and to bring forth from the

local community men and women to lead God's church in Uganda. And I answered that call.

My words thus come to you now as a spiritual descendant of Daniel Comboni, and they come to you seeking your help for the Church and its work in Africa.

For a project such as this:

There is a school in Arua, not far from my birthplace, with approximately 70 students. It's run by an order of Sisters established by the Comboni Missionary Sisters. In addition to the school, the Sisters provide help to children with disabilities. Twice a year, families bring their disabled children to the school for medical supplies. If the weather is rainy, and because these families are on foot, they sleep overnight on the floor of an old and unused building, one without electricity or plumbing, before returning home. Their children are receiving no education whatsoever.

The Sisters, because of the relationship established with these families, want to rehabilitate the unused building with the goal of turning it into a dormitory. Here, the children with disabilities could remain throughout the school year, and could receive an education alongside their peers *without* disabilities.

The goal is to educate these children – these precious gifts of God – so that they might have some control over their own lives. This project will need up to USD 30,000. Any contribution of 20, 50, 100 and more dollars according to your possibility will bring joy to these children with disabilities.

And if we are able, with your help, to build this dormitory, and if we have funds remaining, we want to help our Comboni parish in Eritrea in its work to bring people who are deaf into the Church's life. Eritrea is one of the most repressive countries on Earth, where no man under 50 is allowed ever to leave, yet we are there. We are consecrating our lives for the salvation of souls.

We are in Chad traversing parishes of 400,000 square kilometers. In Kenya running shantytown clinics trying our best to keep up with the COVID crisis. In 16 feeding stations spread over seven countries providing food to children who are hungry.

We are saving Africa with Africa.

Today, with the help of your Missions Office, I ask your support. Thank you.