

A JOURNEY CALLED MISSION

Comboni Missionary Sisters - USA

At the service of the Good News!

Summer 2018

VIVAT INTERNATIONAL

Committed to work for and with the most vulnerable

The Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS) are members of VIVAT International, which is a faith-based organization with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and addresses human rights issues at the UN.

Fourteen religious congregations are members of VIVAT and working in more than 120 countries. VIVAT engages in a two-fold mission of working at the grass-roots as well as doing advocacy work at the United Nations.

As the representative of the Comboni Missionary Sisters for VIVAT International, my main ministry is to advocate at the United Nations, and animate my religious sisters working in 35 countries to address human rights issues through VIVAT.

Advocacy work requires conducting research, networking with different organizations, and providing the information needed for governments and other principal stakeholders to take action based on evidence and fact.

My missionary experience in Brazil has been beneficial in my advocacy work. On April 16, 2018, I participated in a side event at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues presenting the topic "Women and Indigenous Land Rights in Brazil." I echoed many indigenous women's voices who have been dispossessed of their lands by governments and transnational

companies. As part of my ministry, I am in contact with my sisters in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which faces conflicts and a humanitarian crisis. My religious sisters and other congregations have collaborated with information about the situation in DRC. So, VIVAT, together with other faith-

have met State members to talk about the "Ten Acts," a civil society vision about the Global Compact, which expects "human mobility and migration that is safe, by choice and with human and labor rights." (Ten Acts).

Advocacy work takes time to see the fruits and to achieve change in policy and practice. As religious



Comboni Missionary Sisters during World Social forum in Salvador BA (Brazil)

based organizations, has written a letter of support for the people in the DRC, and another one addressed to the UN Secretary-General, urging him to do all that his position grants him to demand human rights protection by the government for the civilian population.

I have also participated in the process of developing the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), which will be the first negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration in the United Nations. As a representative of VIVAT International, I

leaders, we are committed to work for and with the most vulnerable and marginalized in the society. We want to ensure people that their voice is heard on issues that are important to them, and that their rights are protected. VIVAT International believes that social change is possible through advocacy work, even though advocacy is like a seed--we plant it and others will harvest the fruits.

By Sr. Olga Sanchez Caro - CMS

Contact us

Richmond, VA

Comboni Missionary Sisters
1307 Lakeside Avenue
Henrico, VA 23228-4710 Tel: +1
804 262 8827/266 2975

Baltimore, MD

Comboni Missionary Sisters
5401 Loch Raven Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21239-2902
Tel: +1 410 323 1469

If you have prayer intentions, comments, questions or if you would like to know us more, please use:

Email: misedu.cmsusa@gmail.com

Facebook page:

Comboni Missionary Sisters USA

Restorative Justice

By Sr. Ilaria Buonriposi - CMS

The approach offered by Restorative Justice (RJ) implies that communities commit themselves to the well-being of their members and helps them to resolve and positively transform the conflicts which may occur among them. Any form of harm impacts people on multiple levels and destroys relationships. RJ helps to restore relationships and to repair the harm through encounter, accountability, participation, and reintegration.

I heard of RJ for the first time more than 15 years ago, when I was living in Peru. Twenty years of internal conflict had caused tens of thousands of deaths and forced displacement, especially among the indigenous people living in the Andean region. To foster a fresh start, the President created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for the purpose of hearing the voices of those who had been affected by the violence. The sisters of my community and I accompanied our friends and neighbors to many of the ‘public hearings’ and to the remembrance ceremonies which were held in Lima. The TRC was a long, painful, but healing process that strongly affirmed the dignity of the voiceless and in which reparation was offered to the victims of violence and the perpetrators were held accountable.

After that, I kept hearing about RJ principles and practices during my prison ministry in several countries and my work with Catholic Mobilizing Network. I become more and



Sr. Ilaria and Prof. Zehr who is considered to be a pioneer of the modern concept of restorative justice.

“ We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity. By its very nature, hate destroys and tears down; by its very nature, love creates and builds up. Love transforms with redemptive power.”

Dr. Martin Luther King; Sermon ‘Loving your enemies’

more convinced that the values of RJ are not only rooted in my Catholic faith, but they are embedded in the ministries of the Comboni Missionary Sisters. All our documents of the last 20 years reiterate and reaffirm that we are called to be “bridges of reconciliation and forgiveness” and “weavers of dialogue” for the unity of peoples, of cultures and

religions. Currently, I am studying for an M.A. in Restorative Justice at Eastern Mennonite University. It gives a different and valuable perspective to my vocation and enhances my skills as peacebuilder. Paraphrasing Dr. King, love transforms and heals relationships for a world in which the inherent dignity of every human being is recognized and honored.

ERITREA & ETHIOPIA



Ethiopia & Eritrea walking side by side

The people of Eritrea and Ethiopia who has suffered war and its consequences for several decades has seen a great light of hope for a brighter future. We rejoice with them, PEACE is on the way!

June 26th, after twenty years of conflict and separation, the people of Ethiopia & Eritrea has seen a sparkling light of hope for peace and reconciliation .



WELCOME!

By Sr. Nelly Kangogo- CMS

My name is Sr. Nelly Kangogo, a Comboni Missionary Sister and a Kenyan by nationality. I came to the United States on 2 May 2018 and I am studying for a Master’s degree at Immaculata University (PA). Before coming to the States, I worked in Sri Lanka for six years among the Tamil people in the diocese of Kandy. I was sent there in March 2012, together with other two sisters, to open a community in a place called Talawakelle. I was teaching in a school that caters to poor children of the tea plantation workers. My experience was positive and I had a wonderful time with the people as well during my pastoral activities. I learned their language “Tamil”--not perfectly, but it was enough to communicate and interact with them. In the school, I taught both Hindu and Christian children and I had a wonderful time with both students and teachers. It was a good experience for me and I cherish every moment I spent with them.

This is my second time coming to United States. The first time was in 2007-2010 when I came to complete my bachelor’s degree at Immaculata University.



Sr. Nelly Kangogo in Sri Lanka.

Now I am back to pursue a Master’s in Educational Leadership, thanks to the generosity of the IHM Sisters who have for a long time been giving scholarship to our sisters. I can’t thank them enough, and I can say that I am lucky to be one of those who have been educated at Immaculata. I am grateful indeed and I

pray that the Lord may bless them more. I am also grateful to our sisters the CMS who have given me this wonderful opportunity in order to prepare well for the mission. After my studies, I will be ready to go back to the mission--I don’t know where, but I will be open to anywhere I will be sent.



Refugee Flag

In the world the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people around the world has topped 65 million, (UNHCR).

“**Refugee Nation**”, a relatively new organization, has created a flag that the refugees can call their own.

The refuge comes from different countries. They are raised in different cultures. They speak different languages. But **one thing still brings them all together: the will of finding a place to call home. Refugees are united by one hope.** And now, they are also united by one flag.

An orange and black flag is inspired by the life vests many brothers and sisters had to wear in their search for a safer land to live. Its a symbol of hope and solidarity. They are millions. And they matter. While this crisis persists, we’ll be on their side.



The Comboni Missionary Sisters participated, on National Gun Violence Awareness Day, wearing orange. We hope, pray and work for a world free of gun violence or any kind of violence.

Life is a Mission

By Sr. Delia Margarita del Toro

Life is a mission' is how Pope Francis defines the baptismal commitment of each Christian. In his Mission Sunday message for this year, the Pope says that since God took the initiative to bring us into life, God gave it with specific mission—to give ourselves in love.

It is in meeting the living God in Jesus Christ that we find joy and meaning in our lives. This encounter impels us to transmit our faith in Christ, witnessing God's love for us. As I remember my missionary call, I can confirm that this conviction is what moved me to say 'yes' to God's call and made me leave my family, country, and everything to prepare myself for the mission and go to Africa. I wanted to go to foreign lands to witness with joy what God has done in me, to tell of God's love, and to share how meeting Jesus Christ has given meaning to my life. I was full of joy, love, and enthusiasm.

Looking back at my life in Kenya, where I lived for sixteen years, I realized much could be desired of my service. Often I forgot that "I am mission", instead focusing doing things for God and for people. I lost myself in my activism, in solving problems. It wasn't easy to be present to people in their joys, pains, celebrations, and struggles. I became preoccupied with what to do for them instead of sharing the journey with them; on how to help them to improve their material needs instead of focusing on how to meet Christ or empowering them in an integral way. I took too little time to listen to their needs, concerns, or what was precious to them.

It is through them that I learned how to be present, how to listen, how to rejoice, how to



Front left: Sr. Delia with CMS and family in mission

love and how to be grateful. I will share a summary of my learning through a video story that went viral. An orphan street boy approaching a lady in a car to beg for money realized that the woman was 'poorer' than him because she was using a machine to breathe. Thus in dialoguing with her, he offered her the little money he had. The story went viral and both found solidarity from society--the woman found financial support for an operation to improve her breathing, and the boy an adopted family.

This social solidarity initiated by the gesture of a boy summarizes what Pope Francis calls us to be: mission. Empathizing with the woman's pain, the boy made a gift of self, offering the little he had. His generosity witnessed appreciation of human life, joy and service. People were moved to do the same. Yes, this is what mission is all about, transmitting God's love for us through concrete actions.

TEL AVIV

The Comboni Missionary Sisters, volunteers from African Refugee Women's Collective, public street artist Mia Schon and several artists collaborated on a mosaic mural in Tel Aviv to raise awareness about the asylum-seeker issue. The 3.5-meter x 2.5-meter mural at the corner of Rothschild and Herzl reads: "We were all once refugees."



We pray for peace, reconciliation and healing among peoples of all nations.

Small Church Big Heart

By Sr. Tiberh Zerezghi - CMS

Two years ago, in April, as I walked into this small and vibrant church for the first time, I couldn't help but ask myself, like the Elder, in the Book of Revelation, chapter 7, did: "Lord who are these people ... where do they come from?" As time goes by, and in journeying closely together, I can say it now in the clear light from the mountain top: these are people of great faith and action, who worship with each other joyfully, who stand for each other, who recognize God's gift in each other. And they are people who reach out to all. Indeed, St. Elisabeth's is a place where all are welcomed, and feel welcomed. To each and everyone, this is community. Regardless of who they are, where they come from, or what language they speak.

Every weekend, tirelessly, new comers are invited to stand and introduce themselves to those who are present for Mass. As a symbol of welcoming, they receive a small souvenir. It doesn't stop there, after the Eucharist, the people of St. Elizabeth's spontaneously approach the visitors/guests, make them feel more welcomed with small gestures, such as a warm hug, a broad smile, a word of blessing. At times, people share naturally who they are and a bit of what is important to them, because they feel listened and accepted and embraced.

St. Elizabeth's is an intercultural catholic faith community, predominantly African American, with a lively Gospel Choir that lifts up hearts and minds for prayer and gratitude. After the celebration, we go out of this place enlightened, strengthened, motivated and sustained to "actively share Christ's message of unity, love, and service" trusting that God is guiding and leading the beloved community.

Beginning last year, we are reaching out to the neighborhood refugees who came from various parts of Africa, mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo,

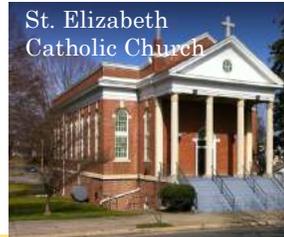
from Rwanda, Uganda... Most of them is going through the process of integration and "acclimatization". For quite sometimes, they have been out of reach mainly because of lack of connection and transportation. At the beginning I knew some few families, and then, through my friend Leslie, I came to know more beautiful families with their children. Regularly, we visit, listen, help them in their needs, and connect them to people and organizations, to churches and communities, who can facilitate the way to sustainability, confidence and autonomy.

Our Ministry with the Refugees is based on the strong vision and motto of St. Elizabeth's, that is: UNITY – UMOJA (a group made up of ones). Presently, there are more than twenty parishioners who take turn to give rides to families go to church and to other necessary places, with great love and respect.

Most of the time, the refugees come from great persecution because of who they are, their ethnic group, their faith. They passed through a lot of suffering due to war, conflicts and death. All this experienced before arriving to the "promise land" where they can be safe and breath freedom.

They have been uprooted from their environment, from where they deeply belonged. Now, they find themselves in a new environment with a new language, culture, food, customs and norms. Sometimes they feel overwhelmed by the newness of everything. To start off their life well, with deep confidence and solid relational foundation, they need our solidarity.

It is important to truly feel that they belong where they are; that they are most welcomed in our midst. We all know that



St. Elizabeth Faith Community
During Mass



human beings can live for few days without something to eat or drink, but a person cannot live without hope, not even a second! I truly believe that life without hope is void of its most essential value. Humanity needs just a bit of love and understanding, we need just to tell them: I see you, I hear you, you can count on me. Yes, it is a most terrible feeling not belonging anywhere, to be excluded from the "table of plenty" which God has given us freely to enjoy.



Above: Innocent & Scholastic from Congo-Rwanda after

More than we can imagine, there is a lot of goodness in this world, let us continue to make a difference in every way we can, "When the heart is big there is nothing small".



During RISK (Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities)

My particular gratitude to Fr. Jim, who loves and serves the community unreservedly. My gratefulness also to each one of the parishioners, who journey together in all seasons of life. COME & SEE, God bless us all!

That gift was for me

By Alberto

A group of young adults from various parishes got together for a youth retreat in Sacred Heart of Jesus parish in Baltimore, MD. Sr. Mary Carmen Galicia a Comboni Missionary Sister from Richmond VA, collaborated with the Parish Priest, Fr. Bruce, in the development of the Retreat. Alberto was one of the young participants, who is sharing his experience as follows...

Hello my name is Alberto. I am from El Salvador and I share my experience lived during the three day retreat.

At the beginning I did not really want to attend the retreat, as I was just returning to church after almost three years of absence. I also didn't have enough money for registration. While everything was indicating that I was not going for the retreat, a former school friend called me to tell me that he was returning back some money that he borrowed sometimes ago, I was not really expecting. At the same time my friend Pedro from parish who is like my brother insisted that it would be good if I participate to this retreat. Finally I accepted.

The day of the Retreat has come. I travelled with my friends, we sang all the way till we arrive the retreat place. I remember when my friend stopped the car, I felt a kind of nervousness and insecurity and I said: "Pedro, you can leave me here, I do not want to go in". After some conversation with my friend, I was convinced to go in. Some time later, we went to our rooms to sleep, but at about 3 a.m., I was awake, asking God, what purpose He has for me in life. Aftersometimes I fell asleep.

It dawned, and the second day arrived. I paid attention to the topics, very good indeed, but what I want to tell you is the most wonderful thing that happened to me. It happens that Sister Maria del Carmen gave some very creative themes and activities.

Well, she showed us what for me was the great gift that God had reserved for me in that retreat. The sister showed us a video about the missionary experience that people live in one of the countries of Africa, in the Nuba Mountains, Kordofan, Sudan. The video

showed a reality that many of us listen to and do not give it the importance it deserves; the spiritual and material needs that many Christian communities suffer, but what struck me most about the video was seeing how those people rise up despite the adversities ... Seeing how joy can do more than problems, it touched my heart, so much that it changed my way of thinking when I observe that we live in a world of vanity where everything can be lived in superficiality and some people living in those places of such material poverty and suffering, overcome everything based on faith, that faith that makes them smile no matter if 10 minutes



Center back: Alberto, front left Sr. Maria del Carmen with some of the

ago a bombardment took place in the area where they had a party. That...! That for me is the true essence of the human being! That video has driven me to try to be a better person every day...

I could not ask God anymore! The retreat was spectacular! Changed my initial perspective where, no matter how few people were or that there was no chorus (which for me was important) it was beautiful ☺ ...!

Well, to you who read this, I want to wish you God's blessing. Do not be discouraged. God works in our lives just in the perfect time although sometimes we do not believe it. And finally, I ask you for a special prayer for the Comboni Missionaries and of course, for Africa.



Multicultural

refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups.

People live alongside one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other.

For example, in a multicultural neighborhood people may frequent ethnic grocery stores and restaurants without really interacting with their neighbors from other countries.



Intercultural:

describes communities in which there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Intercultural communities focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships.

In an intercultural society, no one is left unchanged because everyone learns from one another and grows together.

(Taken from Spring Institute)

Changing the narrative

In February, Sr. Mercedes Castillo of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish joined hundreds of Catholics from throughout Maryland to attend the annual “Catholics in Annapolis” gathering, meeting with state legislators to discuss issues of importance for Catholics. At the event, Archbishop William Lori spoke about his desire to “change the narrative about Baltimore,” saying it is “often portrayed as nothing but negative...but has many stories of grace and goodness.”

An example of this, he said is their urban Catholic schools, which “open the doors to a much brighter future for young people, their families, and our city.” One of these schools, Cardinal Sheehan School, has been in the national spotlight recently after a video of the school choir singing “Rise Up” went viral, garnering over 50 million views. The choir has since been featured on Good Morning America and The View, and on this Lobby night joined Catholics in Annapolis to perform. They dedicated their closing song, “Rise Up” to Senator James E. DeGrange Sr.

By Sr. Mercedes Castillo - CMS



Cardinal Sheehan School children and Sr. Mercedes

(D-District 32), thanking him for creating and supporting the BOOST program, which benefits many students at Cardinal Sheehan School. The BOOST program provides scholarships for low-income students to attend a school of their choice. During the 2017 session, the Maryland legislature increased program funding from \$5 million to \$6 million for scholarships. For the

upcoming year, Governor Larry Hogan has proposed to increase BOOST funding to \$9 million.

Borders School at Sacred Heart Parishes offers a bilingual education and benefits from the BOOST program too. Under this program many immigrant children are able to attend a Catholic school and be well prepared for the future.

Towards the V American Missionar Congress

By Sr. Cecilia Sierra - CMS

“My family has been praying in Spanish for over 18 generations in the United States”, said one of the participants at the Episcopal Region 4 Regional Encuentro, held at The Catholic University of America in Washington on May 19, 2018, under the theme, “Missionary Disciples: Witnesses of God’s Love”.

The Encuentro is a continuous discernment on how the Catholic Church can better respond to the needs of Hispanics in the country. About 96 delegates from Richmond, Arlington, Baltimore, Washington and 3 other nearby dioceses worked on 8 different strategies, searching for ways to support, empower and evangelize the increasing Hispanic population in the catholic parishes.

Three Comboni Sisters participated in the event. Sr. Inma

Cuesta, of the Diocese of Richmond, participated in a panel together with other diocesan directors to share developments in the process.



The participants together with the CMS

During the encounter, Catholic Relief Services invited delegates to contact their congressmen regarding immigration and other issues facing the Hispanic community. A basket full of letters from the delegates was collected for Congress.

The event culminated with the Vigil Mass for the Feast of Pentecost in the crypt of the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception.

Washington Cardinal Donald Wuerl concelebrated, along with Bishop Dorsonville, Arlington Bishop Michael F. Burbidge, other bishops and clergy. Cardinal Wuerl, who recently returned from Rome, bestowed a blessing from Pope Francis on all participants.

The V Encuentro process in the 4 episcopal region in Washington included consultations from parish and diocesan levels. Representatives from all the parishes and dioceses across the USA will participate in the National Fifth Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry to be held Sept. 20-23, in Grapevine, Texas.

Comboni Missionary Sisters
5401 Loch Raven Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21239-2902

5th American Missionary Congress

From 10 to 14 July 2018, the V American Missionary Congress will be held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia), after a five-year preparation in which the church in Bolivia and throughout America engaged in becoming always more missionary.

MOTTO: America on mission, the Gospel is joy!

THEME: The joy of the gospel, which is the heart of prophetic mission, and source of reconciliation and communion.

GENERAL PURPOSE: Strengthen *Ad Gentes* missionary identity and commitment of the Church in America, to announce the joy of the Gospel to all peoples, with particular attention to the peripheries of the world today and at the service of a society that is more just in solidarity and familial.



Come join us & meet Comboni Friends!

A delicious meal prepared by a Special Top Italian Chef to benefit The Comboni Missionary Sisters



PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN
ITALIAN Dinner

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH, 2018
Cocktails 6:00 P.M.
Dinner 7:00 P.M.
LIVE AND SILENT AUCTION
\$50 PER PERSON
CASH BAR

Saint Anthony's Maronite Catholic Church
4611 SADLER ROAD | GLEN ALLEN, VA 23060

For more information please contact:
Sister Maria Jose da Silva
COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS | 804-335-4605

