

*The History of the Catholic Church*

*In West Nile*

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*Catechists-Leaders In West Nile- Arua Diocese*

## ***The Catholic Church towards Africa***

It is useful that the Catholics of West Nile come to know some historical events of the Catholic Church in Africa, which happened before the faith of Christ came in West Nile.

“The modern evangelization of Africa started in the XIX Century, along the coastal regions of the continent by groups of missionaries like the Franciscans, the Holy Ghost Fathers, the African Missions of Lyons, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Jesuits, the Capuchins, the Vincentians and others who managed to establish in a short time a chain of Apostolic Vicariates all around Africa.

But the interior of the continent, at the beginning of XIX Century was still largely unknown to the outside world.

As soon as the first routes towards the interior were opened the Church felt the responsibility for the evangelization of the people living there.

Therefore Pope Gregory XVI on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1846 with the Breve “Ex Debito Pastoralis Officio” erected the Vicariate of Central Africa, practically comprising all the territories of the interior of Africa not already part of the Vicariates along the coasts. Its Centre was in Khartoum.

As far as East Africa is concerned, three main routes made the missionary penetration into the continent possible: the northern route, via the Nile Valley, through which evangelization was brought first to Sudan and then to northern Uganda; the southern route, from Zanzibar to Bagamoyo, then to the southern shores of Lake Nyanza and, by boat, to southern Uganda; the third from Mombasa to the north-eastern shores of Lake Nyanza.

The first route was followed by the Comboni Missionaries known as Verona Fathers, the second by White Fathers and the third by the Mill Hill Fathers.

The Vicariate of Central Africa was divided many times in the course of the following years.

In 1872 the Vicariate was entrusted to Comboni as Pro-Vicar, and in 1877, when he was consecrated bishop in Rome, as Vicar Apostolic.

In 1878, on proposal of Msgr. Lavigerie, the whole northern part of the Vicariate, from the Sobat-Bahr el Arab rivers (Sudan) to the Zambesi river (actual Zambia-Zimbabwe border) was separated from the Central Africa Vicariate and four new ecclesiastical jurisdictions were erected and assigned to bishop Lavigerie as Apostolic Delegate for Equatorial Africa and Congo.

The first of these ecclesiastical jurisdictions was erected in Vicariate Apostolic of Nyanza on the 31st of March 1883, almost two years before the untimely death of Msgr. Comboni in Khartoum (10 October 1881) and before his successor, bishop Sogaro could fully understand what was going on, having arrived in Khartoum only on the 6th March 1883.

The Vicariate of Nyanza comprised the territories of Southern Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Western Congo, Rwanda and northern Tanzania. Msgr. Livinhac became its first Vicar Apostolic, and its Centre was the Rubaga Hill, Kampala.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1894 the whole Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda were returned to the Vicariate Apostolic of Central Africa of the Comboni Missionaries. Bishop Roveggio became the new Vicar Apostolic.

Meanwhile in Northern Sudan the Mahdist revolution, which had caused the collapse of all the missionary work of the Comboni Missionaries in the area, came to an end with the fall of Khartoum and Ondurman in the hands of the British forces on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1898, allowing thus Msgr. Roveggio to resume his duties with the return of the missionaries.

It was clearly felt in those years, after the experience of the Muslim revival in the North that the future of the missionary activities was in the territory of the South, among the people of the African stock. For this reason Msgr. Roveggio, after reopening the mission in Khartoum (100), opened Lull, among the Shilluk, 1901 and then proceeded to Gondokoro, among the Bari, with the intention of starting a new mission in that area, consecrated by the life and death of one of the first missionaries, Angelo Vinco. But he had an attack of malaria and going back he died at Berber on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1902

Bishop Geyer succeeded him. He continued the policy of bishop Roveggio for a southern expansion by opening the mission of Mbili (1904) in Bahr el Ghazal, since the unresolved problems between Belgian and English authorities over the Lado Enclave prevented in those years the establishment of a

mission in that area and the possibility of entering Uganda. It was only in 1910 that bishop Geyer with Bro. Cagol, his secretary, and Fr. Albino Colombaroli managed to set foot in Uganda.

## ***The Faith of Christ comes to West Nile***

### Introduction

In 1878 Bishop Daniel Comboni, Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa, had planned to travel southward from Khartoum to establish a mission in Uganda, but famine and disease had reduced his missionary personnel so much that he had to give up his cherished plan. The following year the White Fathers brought Faith to Uganda. In a few years it grew so strong as to give a number of Martyrs to the Catholic Church and it spread to all the South and Bunyoro. In 1895 the Mill Hill missionaries came to Eastern Uganda. The North, still very little known, was the last to receive the Faith, owing especially to the political situation prevailing in the Sudan during and after the Mahdi revolution. It was not until 1910 that the Comboni Missionaries, who had already established several missions in southern Sudan, were able to come to Uganda. This is the story of the beginnings of their apostolate in Uganda.

These beginnings derive from a source of divine origin. Jesus spoke to them: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Setting out therefore, make all the nations disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all whatever I commanded you. Indeed lo, I am with you all the days until the final end of the present time." (Mat 28: 18- 20)

It must be clear that Christianity is not a product of colonialism in West Nile, although the era of exploration helped the coming of Faith in West Nile. Numerous missionaries followed the footsteps of the great explorers such as Livingstone, Stanley, and Baker, just to mention a few, whose activities opened the way for the missions to the Great Lakes and Congo Basin. The aim of the explorers and that of the missionaries was totally different. The conviction of the Church to bring Faith to Africa started since the mandate of Christ to the Apostles. On the Black Continent Christianity started from North Africa just at

the beginning of the early Church with centers of learning as Alexandria, with St. Athanasius (373) and Cyril, as Carthage with St. Cyprian (258) and Augustine (430) who studied in Carthage.

Christianity came to Africa more than 6 hundred years before Islam. The expansion of Christianity in Africa received a heavy blow from 640 with the invasion of Arab Muslims who imposed Islam by their jihad.

The expansion of Christianity in Central Africa is just the continuation of the first coming of Catholic Faith in Egypt and North Africa, whose traces can be found here and there in North and South Sahara, i.e. Eritrea, Ethiopia, Nubia and West Africa.

The Pre-colonial period, from about 1800 to the 1880, was the heroic age of modern mission. A proof of that is enough to mention the one hundred Austrian missionaries (among them was Fr. Daniel Comboni) who from 1852 to 1862 penetrated along the Nile, up to Gondokoro in South Sudan, from where, later on, the Comboni Missionaries came to West Nile. It was a great struggle through which the Gospel penetrated in West Nile, thanks to the missionaries who were pushed by the zeal of the Gospel and by love for the “most abandoned ones.” That struggle of sacrifices brought abundant fruits. West Nile is now a Christian Country with 60% of Christians. The message of Christ is now a parcel of daily life of the culture of the *Westnilers*.

The first protagonists of the expansion of the Christian Faith in West Nile have been Ugandan lay people. The first Christians who stepped on the soil of West Nile, were not the European missionaries but Baganda, Banyoro and Alur who were baptized down countries (that is south of Uganda). In Gondokoro there were already Christians from Baganda and Bunyoro at the service of English government as clerks, soldiers and servants. When the Verona Fathers reached Omach, there was an Alur catechist teaching in Panyimur. The first missionaries of West Nile have been Ugandans. The great number of Christian believers shows us that the message of Christ has found its home in West Nile; it has become a big tree, whose branches reach the whole territory. Christ has been incarnated in the daily life of the population of West Nile. Christ is not a foreign personality any more; He is the One the *Westnilers* were waiting for.

It is worthy to notice that a great missionary, Angelo Vinco, tried from the North, along the Nile to reach the source of the Nile. In 1851 he was at Gondokoro, just 200 km from Nimule. From there he started his journey towards the South; unfortunately he was attacked by a strong fever and died in January 1853. To resume the expansion of Christianity in Africa the Holy See made a plan for the Sub-Sahara countries, when Propaganda Fide erected the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa (1846). West Nile was a part of it. When Msgr. Comboni became Apostolic Pro-Vicar of Central Africa (26/5/1872); his institute became responsible for its evangelization.

At the death of King Leopold II of Belgium, West Nile and Madi passed to the Sudan; Captain Stigand administered it from Kajo Kaji (in South Sudan).

On December 30, 1909, Bishop Francis Xavier Geyer, third successor of Bishop Comboni, left Khartoum on the mission steamer "Redemptor" (Savior) and sailed up the Nile towards Uganda, with his secretary Bro. Cagol August and Father Albino Colombaroli. On January 18, 1910, they reached Gondokoro, where a Catholic mission was established as far back as 1848. Comboni himself, as a very young priest, had made his first missionary experience not far from Gondokoro, at Holy Cross, but had to leave it after less than two years because of impossible living conditions. Of the old missions of Gondokoro and Holy Cross, nothing was left. Our three missionaries were overjoyed when they met some twenty Baganda Catholics, whose religious fervor impressed them deeply and enhanced their hopes for the success of their enterprise in Uganda. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> February the three missionaries arrived at Nimule on donkey back. On the Sudan-Uganda border, they met with the first difficulties. The British Commissioner would not allow them to enter Uganda as they could not produce an entry permit, except a recommendation from the Governor General of Sudan at Khartoum. Bishop Geyer tried in vain to convince him that a permit was granted as far back as March 19, 1906. The Governor General at Entebbe had to be consulted by telegram. After four days the reply came from Entebbe that the Verona Missionaries were allowed to enter Uganda and to establish Catholic Mission between Nimule and Lake Albert. With Gratitude to God, the Bishop and his two companions boarded the steamer that twice a month traveled between Nimule and

Butiaba on Lake Albert. On February 10, 1910 they landed at the government post of Koba, on the East bank of the Nile.

## *I part – The Beginning*

### *West Nile*

Before the exploration era, West Nile was not known as such. But the inhabitants there were the same that are now: the Alur in the South, the Lugbari in the middle and the Madi in the North. The territory of West Nile had a very strange history, passing from one hand to another without the knowledge of the owners of the land. In the Pre-colonial era West Nile had no proper boundaries. Each ethnic group had its own land, from the time of their settlement after their immigration period.

About 1600 AD, a wave of Lwo immigrants, finding the Acholiland already overcrowded, crossed the Nile near Pakwach and mixed with Okebu, Lendu, Madi and Pygmies. At about the same time, in North Eastern Uganda, a wave of Nilo - Hamitic Kakua and Bari crossed the West and settled in their present land. The Logbara and Madi, of the Moru - Madi group, which extends from Logbaraland to Lake Chad, were at that time already in the present place.

The first European to enter the area, which is now West Nile, was the Italian explorer Giovanni Miani. He journeyed from Gondokoro in 1859, and in January, 1860, stepped on what is now Uganda land at Galufi (Afuddu) around Nimule- Atiak- Zaipi among the Madi. He was on the way to the source of the Nile. But he returned back, being attacked by malaria, leaving his name written on the tamarind tree. Another was Annibale De Bono, a trader from Malta, and the nephew of the slave trader Andrea De Bono. From his uncle's trading post in Southern Sudan, he made a brief thrust down to Faloro, near Ajumani. J.H. Speke, a British explorer, from the Kabaka's court, passed through Adjumani to Sudan. Dufile and Wadelai were the usual places where the explorers were fixing their camps. At Wadelai Emin Pasha remained stranded by the Mahdist's revolution until relieved by Stanley in 1889.

In 1887 Dr. W. Junker, a private explorer, of Russo- German origin, walked from Yei to Koboko, Maracha and Olovu, maybe also as far as Adumi and Oluko.

In 1889 Emin Pasha, under attack from Mahdists, abandoned Dufile and later even Wadelai to return to the coast. He left behind some 10.000 soldiers and followers, among them some Logbara, especially Aringa, who became Muslims meanwhile in Sudan. These will be the first Muslims to settle in West Nile. Later on these Nubi soldiers settled in Bombo near Kampala.

In 1885 at the Berlin Conference, the great European powers shared out among themselves African territories yet under dispute.

In 1890 Uganda was declared a British Protectorate, but the boundaries of West Nile were not yet delimited. Meanwhile in 1892 a Belgian expedition, headed by the Belgian officer Lt. Milz, crossed the Nile - Congo divide and made a treaty of allegiance with Fadl el Mullah, one of the mutinied ex soldiers of Emin Pasha at Wadelai. They set a camp at Wandi in Aringa near Wollo. In that way West Nile came under Belgian rule.

In the year 1894, 15th January Propaganda Fide assigned the region of North Uganda to the Verona Fathers, depending from Khartoum. Lake Albert was included.

In 1909 at the death of Leopold II of Belgium, as it has been reported already, West Nile and Madi passed to the Sudan, as it was agreed upon. Captain Stigand administered it from Kajo Kaji. At this time President Roosevelt of America came in Rhino-Camp for hunting.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> February, bishop Geyer from Khartoum arrived at Nimule with Brother Cagol and Fr. Colombaroli, where he met President Roosevelt.

During the year 1913 the Holy See erected the Prefecture of Bar el Ghazal, in which was included West Nile, cut off from Khartoum. Msgr Stoppani Antonio was appointed the first Apostolic Prefect.

In 1914 the boundaries of West Nile were rearranged. To facilitate government administration, West Nile passed under the administration of Entebbe.

Mr. Weatherhead, nicknamed by the Acholi “ Jerikidi/Jerekede”, the one who walks swiftly, the first DC passed from Laropi to Rigbo, Aringa, Terego and



finally to Arua which he chose as his Head Quarters. He gave to the area the name of “West Nile”. At the beginning West Nile was one district that of Arua. In 1961 Moyo became sub- district and then district. Other four districts have been added recently: Adjumani, Nebbi and Yumbe.

In West Nile there are different ethnic groups, mainly Logbara, Alur, Madi, Kakua, Okebu and Lendu. Alur are Nilotic Lwo stem, meanwhile the others are called Sudanic (Hamitic) tribes or even Madi. The languages spoken are as many as the number of the tribes. By consequence in West Nile there is a pluralistic society with a mosaic of customs, cultures and beliefs. This will be the area of our researches.

### ***The foundation of Omach***

“The Commissioner at that time was Mr. Hannington, the son of the Anglican Bishop who was murdered by order of king Mwanga in Busoga on October 29, 1885. He received our missionaries very kindly and welcomed their proposal to start a mission there with these words; “Very good this is exactly what we want here.” So they pitched their tents nearby.

A few days later all Acholi and Alur chiefs were assembled together (see Bro. Fanti’s painting in the church of Pakwach). Bishop Geyer through an interpreter told them that the missionaries had come to preach Christianity and would like to hear their ideas as to the most suitable place where to start a mission. They replied that they were pleased to hear that a mission was to be opened among them and they would certainly send their children to learn to read and to write: as for the place the missionaries themselves should inspect the country and choose a suitable place: they would be very welcome anywhere.

The following days were spent in visiting the villages of the five Alur chiefs along the river and the two Acholi chiefs further eastward. Finally, Bishop Geyer decided to plant the first mission station among the Jonam of chief Omach.

He chose an elevated place some 600 meters from the eastern bank of the Nile and with the help of the Baganda porters and some local workers began to build the first hut.

### ***The Cross at Omach***

The cross is the greatest sign of Christianity. It has been always been a pride and a symbol of Faith for missionaries to implant it. Where the cross is it also means that there is salvation.

On March 10, 1910, the bishop blessed a big cross, made of two rough tree trunks and, with tears in their eyes, the three missionaries raised it high in the sky as a sign of faith and hope. They could hardly imagine that in a few years most of the people of Northern Uganda would benefit of the Redemption that Jesus brought to all men through the Cross. The Bishop dedicated the new mission to the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a short time the first hut, 15 yards long and 6 yards wide, was some how ready and the missionaries left the camp and took up residence in it.

During March other missionaries arrived from Italy; they were Fr. Luigi Cordone, Fr. Pasquale Crazzolaro, bro. Clement Schroer and bro. Benedetto Sigle. Fr. Colombaroli was appointed the first superior of the mission. Bishop Geyer blessed the missionaries and together with bro. Cagol left for Europe via Hoima- Mombasa.

### ***Omach a model for the future missions***

The missionaries started soon a little school. Most of the chiefs kept their promise to send their boys there; others came out of curiosity or attracted by some gifts from the missionaries. The Catholic Church from its beginning attached to evangelization the education for her children, knowing that ignorance is one of the greatest obstacles to any progress.

One of the first duties of a missionary is to learn the language of the people. The missionaries started to learn very hard the two languages: Acholi and Alur. Fr. Crazzolaro was the most successful and after a short time he was able to prepare a Catechism in Alur. At the coming of the missionaries, the Alur language was not yet put into writing. The missionaries have been the first to fix the orthography and grammar of the language. This will happen for the all-local languages in West Nile.

The mission was always crowded with people: delegates from Acholi and Alur chiefs offering goat in exchange for a piece of cloth; sick people asking for a medicine; old men and women showing their empty pipes and begging for a pinch of tobacco; young men watching bro. Clement busy in his workshop and commenting on his tools: everything was so new to them! Above all, crowds of little children, curious and chattering, enjoying the sight of these “ Mondo” so busy and so gentle was new.

### ***A forced adaptation***

Those beginnings, however, were not so easy. As the water from the river was undrinkable unless boiled, the brother began to excavate a well, but went down to over 15 meters without results. When the rainy season came, the grass roof of the house began to leak badly: Other huts had to be built in a hurry. The termites badly damaged the chapel: another had to be built. Clouds of mosquitoes rising from the riverbank attacked the missionaries bringing them malaria. Worse of all some body who did not like the Christian missionaries began to call them “ Khartoumi”, which was the name applied to slave traders, until the Commissioner intervened forbidding such nickname.

### ***Contacts with West Nile***

The place of the mission at Omach was not healthy at all. Moreover there was the tsetse fly - very dangerous for the life of the people. A mission on the West Bank of the Nile could have been a better solution. Also according to the news brought by people was describing the West Nile like the Promised Land. But the government refused to give them permission to cross the Nile, because the boundaries were not yet clear between English and Belgian governments.

One day Fr. Colombaroli received the visit of two men from across the river. They said that they were Alur and were sent by chief Okello. One of them had a Rosary around his neck. He told the priest that his name was Areni and that he had been baptized in Uganda where he had lived some years. He added: “Chief Okello too is a Catholic; I baptized him together with his wife and sister when

they were ill; all the people of the village want to become Catholics. I am instructing many of them and leading the Sunday prayers. Chief Okello invites you to go to his village; he will prepare the house for you and will send a boat to fetch you. Chief Okello wants a catechism in Alur, if you have one, or even in Kiswahili, and also a Rosary, and also some medals for those who come to catechism.”

Fr. Colombaroli was delighted to hear all these; he gave Areni all that he asked for and fixed a day for his visit to chief Okello.

On the appointed day, “after three Sundays and three days”, Areni arrived with the chief’s boat. “Chief Okello wants to see you very much”, he said. The following day, Fr. Colombaroli embarked on the small boat with Areni and his men and after 8 hours of rowing they landed at Panyimur. A little crowd watched while Okello welcomed the Father. “Here is the man of God who comes to teach us”, they said. Father pitched a tent near the hut where Areni gathered his little flock. That same evening he attended at the catechism lesson and prayers at which chief Okello too was present. It was all impressive and promising. “You see”, chief Okello told the priest, “my father is dead and I do not know where he is now; but I want to go to heaven after my death.”

### ***The joy of a missionary***

The missionary went back to Omach with great joy. Fr. Colombaroli related every thing to his confreres. “I am sure, he concluded, that if we could open a mission across the Nile we could gather an abundant harvest of souls”.

His dream, however, was not to become true for many years to come, and only after many trials. This story which we have reported in details shows especially two things; first that the faith was first brought to the West Nile by a Catechist; secondly, that catechists are indispensable in the vineyard of the Lord.

Omach, Mother of new missions

The number of children attending schools at Omach was rapidly increasing, but no one of them had yet been baptized. Only a few dying babes had been given baptism in “*articulo mortis*”; among them Peter Wathum, who survived and was one of the leading Catholics of Panyimur. He was son of Joseph

Openji and Maria Nyilak, baptized on 21/7/1911, Reg. No 7. Fr. Cordone gave the first solemn baptism administered by the Comboni Missionaries in Uganda, in 1911 to a Muganda: he was Njuba, the fathers' house boy, who took the name of Paulo. Later, some catechists arrived from the White Fathers' missions in Bunyoro, among them David Bigomi, and they helped the fathers to establish a regular catechumenate in Omach.

At the end of January 1911, Fr. Giovanni Fornasa arrived after traveling across Kenya, Lake Victoria, Buganda and Bunyoro. Three weeks later, he and Fr. Colombaroli went to Gulu and started the first mission there on February 19, 1911. In March two more priests came from Italy, making it possible to have more contacts and exchange of personnel between Omach and its daughter mission, Gulu. They were Frs. Giuseppe Beduschi and Pietro Audisio.

Their coming, however, brought a little relief from the many hardships that afflicted the mission at Omach. In 1912 the whole mission had to be rebuilt, this time in another place, on a little hill sloping down to the Nile.

About the middle of 1912 Fr. Albino Colombaroli came back from Italy, after a period of rest, accompanied by Fr. Giuseppe Zambonardi and Brother Luigi Savariano. It was their intention to start a third mission station, at Foweira, on the left bank of Victoria Nile; but after pondering all pros and cons they decided to go north, instead, and on October 19, 1912, they started the mission of Palaro, the village of the Madi chief Rasigala.

### ***The first baptisms at Omach- perseverance rewarded***

Three years had passed since the foundation of Omach; the mission had been growing despite all difficulties. The number of catechumens had increased, especially among the school children, but the missionaries thought it necessary to submit them to a long test before admitting them to holy baptism. At last on June 6, 1913, Fr. Colombaroli solemnly baptized twelve of them. They were coming from different places like Paroketo, Ragem, Angal, Alwi, Panyimur and Nyarambe.

The celebration of baptism was anticipated because of the epidemic of sleeping sickness, which from Bunyoro was spreading through the East Side of

the Nile. Some baptized in “*articulo mortis*” survived, among them Aloysius Alal, of Panyimur and John Otong of Pakwach, who eventually became catechists. Many more baptisms were administered in the following months, both to dying infants and catechumens, but many of them died of sleeping sickness or other disease not long afterwards.

### ***From bad to worse***

The situation became so bad that the government ordered all the people around Omach to leave the area: the Alur were to cross the Nile onto the West Bank, while the Acholi had to go eastwards. Gradually the land around Omach became almost deserted. The missionaries were anxious to follow the Alur across the Nile, but the government would not allow them. An attempt made by Fr. Bernabe’ Joseph, on December 1913, to build a house at Panyango had to be abandoned by order of the District Commissioner.

With the arrival of more missionaries, Frs. Antonio Vignato, Umberto Cardani, Giovan Battista Pedrana and Brother Simone Fanti, towards the end of 1913, the mission of Gulu and Palaro began to develop, but at Omach things were going from bad to worse. To the poverty and sickness were now added solitude and a certain amount of distrust on the part of some of the authorities, who constantly refused the missionaries to establish a mission in the West Nile.

### ***First World War affects the mission: the missionaries prisoners at Omach.***

On August 10, 1914, Fr. Laane, superior of the White Fathers’ mission at Nyarambe, arrived at Omach. Bro. Poloniato was seriously ill and during the night had received the last sacraments; Fr. Bombieri had an attack of black water fever; Fr. Fornasa went to the river to meet Fr. Laane.

“The whole world is on fire”, Fr. Laane said as he landed. “Germany and Austria have gone to war against the Allies. You are considered enemies and prisoners of war. I am not allowed to enter your house, but only give you this message and leave within ten minutes. The steamer will no longer stop at Omach

to deliver or fetch the mail: I will try to help you and do you this service from Nyarambe”.

Shocked by the news, Fr. Fornasa could hardly find words to thank the good Fr. Laane for his kindness. As the steamer left the bank, he felt oppressed by a terrible desolation. He had not the courage to tell the sad news to the two sick confreres, but went to the chapel and prayed: “My God, your will be done: just help us to do it”.

### ***Death and Resurrection***

It seemed that the whole hell was against Omach. After some days Fr. Bombieri recovered and Brother Poloniato regained enough strength to be carried to Gulu. Brother Nicola Co’ came to replace him. For over two years our missionaries remained confined at Omach in an agonizing situation: few catechumens and pupils, plenty of sickness, death and tribulations. The register of baptism that is still kept at Angal mission shows that in the years 1913, ’14, ’15 and ’16 the missionaries at Omach baptized 183 adults and that 59 of them died after baptism.

On March 14, 1916, a furious storm razed to the ground nearly all the mission buildings. Thanks God no one was injured. On October 29, Brother Nicola Co’ was struck by black water fever; all efforts to save his life were of no avail and he died, at the age of 32 on November 1, feast of All Saints. He was the first victim among the Comboni Missionaries in Uganda. He is buried in the cemetery at Angal. At his funeral, among the present was also the DC Postlethwaite, on the way to Nimule.

Six days after his death, from Masindi came at last the commissioner’s permission to establish a mission among the Alur in West Nile.

### ***Orussi: a controversial mission***

Fr. Vignato, who was the superior of all the Comboni missionaries in Uganda, from Laropi took the steamer to reach Omach, to bring comfort to the missionaries. When he arrived there, 10 November 1916 was informed that

Bwana Gweno (the district Commissioner) gave permission to cross the Nile. After two days, he crossed the great river and explored the Alur country in search for a suitable place. He visited Panyango and the Padyere, crossed the Nyarwodo and reached Okollo; then returned back to Angal where the acting District Commissioner of Arua was waiting to meet him. Angal had already attracted the attention of Fr. Vignato, but the British officer convinced him to opt for Orussi, which he described as ideal for a mission and rest. The Assistant District Commissioner added that he had already ordered the local chief to find enough workers to build the first houses as soon as possible.

In fact work started immediately. Fr. Dominic Spazian was the first to leave Omach and climb up to Orussi, followed by Pietro Audisio with a group of workers and of catechumens led by Marino Olony and Kerubino Ringe. These, however, did not show much enthusiasm for Orussi as the ADC did: it was a cold place!

The Jo- Nam people from a hot climate could not resist to a cold one of Orussi. Fr. Vignato tried his best to dispel all fears and worked very hard to prepare the houses; but he got ill and had to leave for Gulu just before Christmas.

By February, Fr. Giuseppe Santambrogio and Brother Poloniato joined the two priests at Orussi. They all tried hard to get the mission in full swing, but all sorts of problems cropped in: no catechumens from Padyere or Jonam were willing to go to Orussi; those who were there were falling sick with pneumonia and had to be sent home. Many died too. Of the 55 adults baptized in 1917, most of them at Orussi, 30 died within the same year. Orussi was too near to the border and too far from the main Alur centers; the missionaries felt much isolated there as they were at Omach. In addition, the weather in that year was so bad that they could not move about.

In August, Fr. Vignato went to Orussi and realized that he had made a mistake when he accepted the advice of the British ADC. He apologized to the fathers and told them to look for another more suitable place.

It is worthy to notice that at that time the British Commissioner removed the traditional chief of the Alur, Amula. In his place, Weatherhead put two ex Nubian soldiers, maybe among those of Wadelai, Emin Pasha left, Hamisi as county chief and Tama as sub chief of Orussi. This was the first time that our



missionaries came in contact with Muslims. In fact after Christmas Tama started to disturb the mission taking away from the school two boys tied with a rope. This was the first Coranic attitude the missionaries faced in their work. The sub chief accused the missionaries of helping the youth not to work for the government.

This is also the time when the Catholic Austrian Mission changed the name into “Italian Catholic Mission”, to avoid political inconveniences.

The ADC Weatherhead visited Orussi mission and congratulated the missionaries in finding the school children smart even in Arithmetic. He gave permission to the missionaries to open chapels, one for each chief.

At Orussi some pastoral problems came up especially that of Marriage. Father Audisio tried to put clear to the parents making them to swear that their daughters would be free in choosing their partners and profess their faith accordingly.

A Catholic, Luka, is found as *Karani* of the Muslim chief of Orussi. We shall see that neophytes and many young Catholics will be used as *Karani* in the government administration. This will be one of the aspects by which the missionaries will be well accepted by the British government. The Catholic Church helped very much through the learned Catholics in establishing a smooth and just administration.

From Orussi Fr. Audisio made a safari up to Arua. There he came to know that the Alur population was only 19.000 persons in Uganda. He met there few of his Christians, some leaving in concubinage. Was it opportune to ask from the Holy See dispensation from “*Disparitatis cultus*”? Will the marriages, afterwards remain steady? He baptized 4 of their infants.

### ***Disasters at Orussi***

There were not only the cold climate and hunger that made the missionaries to abandon Orussi but some disastrous events. Unknown illness, a plague reached up to Orussi, transmitted by Indian soldiers; it was like the Spanish influenza spread in Europe, a killer of millions of people. The plague reached West Nile through government steamer to Panyimur. Any gathering of

people was forbidden so that the missionaries could not go around, but remained indoors.

In June another sickness worse than influenza appeared at Orussi; also that was carried by the war: cerebral meningitis. In July and August of that year, hundreds of young people, also catechumens, were victims of that unknown enemy. Scarcity of food made things irreparable. For all these reasons catechumens and all other people around the mission were sent home, leaving the missionaries to suffer the sufferings of the cross.

Fr. Vignato from Moyo went to Orussi and with the missionaries, decided to abandon Orussi. Advised by the chief Hamisi, they chose Angal, a site for the new mission 25-km on the South -east of Orussi.

The statistics of Omach- Orussi give us the following figures: Christians 246, catechumens 13, and catechumens 386 and 14 catechists. The first fathers who reached Angal are Audisio and Santambrogio. These two fathers came down from Orussi, explored all around Padyere and finally, following the advice of Stanislaw Onegi, catechist at Padel, decided in favor of the present place of Angal, where the missionaries were warmly welcomed by *mukungu* Edward Onoyo.

The mission at Orussi, popularly known as “Italia”, remained, as a chapel for many years until it became a parish in 1964. In addition to the catechists and leading Catholics already mentioned, here are some others who cooperated with the missionaries in those early and difficult years: Ferdinando Odongo, Martino Olore, Desiderio Moto, Joseph Openji, Cecilia Mono, Helena Mono, Cecilia Katoko, and Romano Akwanya.

### ***Palaro***

After the establishment of Omach and Gulu, the missionaries felt the necessity to open a third mission as a procure for the service of the missionaries, in the South of Gulu on the Nile near Foweira. But there were some reasons that made the plan not feasible. So the missionaries turned to the North, towards Nimule. They chose the village of Palaro, among the Madi, who could speak Acholi too. The missionaries had no other choice because further north the boundaries were not yet clear, but they had to learn a new language, the Madi.

Frs. Albino Colombaroli and Giuseppe Zambonardi started the mission of Palaro on 12 October 1912. Bro. Savariano, from Gulu, joined them soon after to start the buildings of the new mission helped by Bro. Clement from Omach.

In April Fr. Molinaro came from Italy to help Fr. Zambonardi. Fr. Umberto Cardani also followed on Pentecost Day 1914. The chief Rasigalla helped them very much. On Christmas 1912 the first school was ready for 25 pupils. Three catechists arrived from Gulu for the Madi: Aleni, Petero and Philip who were posted in different places under the protection of chiefs. The best was Aleni who helped the missionaries for many years. In turn the fathers were visiting them from time to time, using the only bicycle they had for safari. After a year the first 5 baptisms were administered at Palaro: Joseph Agasi, Antonio, Albino, Federiko and Umberto. Joseph Agasi was the son of the chief of Palaro; he would have succeeded his father. For that reason the Commissioner of Nimule, Mr. More wanted the boy to join school after baptism. At the age of 18 Agasi married Maddalena. When he became chief, the elders offered him a girl as a second wife, but Agasi refused strongly saying that it was against the Christian faith. Fr. Zambonardi, has reported this fact in an article for Nigrizia, in June 1915

On Pentecost Day 1915 other 12 catechumens received the sacrament of baptism. At the end of 1915 the catechumens at Palaro were 300.

As we reported already, West Nile was a part of the Vicariate of Bhar el-Ghazal. Wau was very far, 1000 km from West Nile, with many consequences. There were different methods of apostolate, different languages, customs etc. For all these reasons Msgr. Stoppani, Apostolic Vicar of Bhar el Ghazal, appointed Fr. Vignato his delegate with full powers for all the missions in Uganda.

Soon as West Nile was annexed to Uganda, the missionaries felt the necessity to cross the great river to the West Madi for the same reasons as for Omach. The place was not healthy because of tsetse fly, killer of many people. At the end of 1915 Frs. Molinaro and Cardani met the chiefs of West Madi at Laropi. Joseph Agasi was the interpreter. The great chief of Odrupele (Dufile), Kenyi, introduced the other chiefs to the missionaries, Andira of Laropi, Mgbamgba of Moyo, Lukere of Metu-oru, Katulungu of Metu-li and Molembe of Arinyapi. All these chiefs accepted to have religion and schools in their lands. In fact they soon built chapels and schools near their homes.

Meanwhile the Commissioner Eden gave the fathers permission to transfer the mission of Palaro to West Madi. Msgr. Vignato chose Moyo as the place for the new mission in October 1916. Palaro was abandoned in July 1917, leaving two catechists in charge of the catechumens and the school.

### ***First Evangelization in West Madi: Moyo***

On the 15 August 1917 the new mission of Moyo was officially opened, dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady to Heaven. Mr. Place, Commissioner of Gulu, was present at the ceremony; he forbade the people to call the fathers by the nickname of “Khartoumi”.

Fr. Zambonardi, the leader of the missionaries of Moyo reported that on 25 of June 1917 there were already 400 catechumens, among them 70 girls, 60 sons of chiefs, 50 Christians resident in the mission, 30 chapels with 38 catechists. Many of these people were coming from the abandoned mission of Palaro. In the writings of the first missionaries who worked among the Madi, praised the Madi for their openness to the message of the Gospel and their welcoming spirit “although they have a slow character”.

Brother Fanti Simone has been the first great constructor of buildings in Moyo using the local material; he started the first “artisan school” in West Nile. Fr. Zambonardi worked with great zeal, together with Frs. Molinaro and Cardani Umberto. After the feast of the opening of the mission a terrible plague of meningitis killed 500 people especially among the youth. Fr. Molinaro writes to his superior general on 16 October 1917 that the mission looks abandoned and desolate because of the plague and starvation. For these reasons all the children were sent away. Only 20 catechumens were left in the mission because they were going to be baptized on All Saints Day. Among these there were 4 from Palaro whose parents wanted to take them away. But they refused saying that “also at home people were dying”. The year 1917 was a year of great rain. The Nile overflowed so much that the plain of Laropi became a swamp up to the foot of the hills. As Omach and Palaro were started in sufferings and hardships so too was Moyo. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, the evangelization was going on in West Madi by catechists who were scattered all over the territory helped by the

chiefs. Where the catechists were not enough the fathers appointed neophytes to teach the catechism. The school chapels were always full of pupils. It is true that during the period of plague and starvation some elders and women opposed the boarding schools in mission. The fathers were accused of the death of few catechumens who died in the mission. Some pupils answered the parents saying that at home people were dying too.

***In spite of the number of missionaries the gospel penetrated all corners***

For three years the missionaries were only two in the station: Fr. Cardani and Fr. Molinaro because Fr. Zambonardi left for the mission of Arua. One father was visiting the chapels on the right side of the river periodically; meanwhile the other was visiting the chapels of the left side of the Nile.

Finally on 5 July 1920 Fr. Pietro Foglio who can be considered the second founder arrived in Moyo with Brother Ignazio Rama. Brother Ignazio started the first kiln for baking bricks. It was a practical way of teaching the people how to use their own resources and material for improving their standard of living. After a little while Fr. Molinaro left for Torit in Sudan among the Lotuko. In the beginning the mission of Moyo was completely free from the Protestant propaganda. So there was no competition, so the evangelization was carried out peacefully. In fact Fr. Paravisi Alessandro on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1927 wrote to the superior general: "We thank the Lord that gave to the Madi abundant blessings. At this time we have 500 people in the mission. In the outstations, where the catechists are, there is a great movement towards the church. We feel the Grace of God, moving the heart of people to conversion. On Easter Day we blessed the new church, which has become already very small". "On 1924 Mons. Vignato sent to Moyo two Banyoro catechist girls: Prudenzianna and Cecilia to take care of girls and women who increased in a good number.... They were so good that the people called them "mama". (Msgr. Negri, *IL Venticinquesimo del Vicariato del Nilo Equatoriale*) They are buried in the cemetery of the mission.

The Comboni Sisters arrived in Moyo in August 1926; among them Sister Adalgisa Corradini worked very hard in the field of education and health. In

this period an orphanage was opened in Moyo, the first in all Uganda of those times.

In 1928 again a terrible starvation devastated the Madi area. Brother Frigerio Angelo wrote in those days: “Here also in Moyo the Christians are continuously increasing, but there is famine this year. By this time they have no food and die”. Brother Frigerio came to Moyo to substitute Brother Ignazio who left for Gulu.

### ***First Madi catechists***

“In the book of the Acts of the Apostles we read that the first Christian Community was full of zeal. The new converts were eager to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God to their fellowmen. The same thing in a way happened even in Madi. Some of the newly baptized young men accepted willingly the task of teaching the Christian Doctrine to their own people; they became the first catechists in Madi. Among the first ones the following can be mentioned: Aleni, Valeriano Bua, Lazaro Origa, Gaetano Ani, Massimiliano Amarecira, Ciro Kaja, Davide Drabua and Rubano Timale. But many other young people dedicated their lives to the service of God as catechists. The spread of the Good News in Madi would not have been done, had not so many good and dedicated catechists give their full support to the missionaries and tirelessly taught the basic Concepts of Christian faith.” (75 years of Christianity in Moyo, 14 September 1992).

### ***Other Verona Fathers who worked in Madi Moyo mission, worthy to be mentioned***

Bro. Landonio Francesco is the one who organized the technical school in Moyo, adding shoemaking as subject. He could repair watches too. He directed many constructions and taught many youth how to gain food and money out of their personal abilities. He worked for 50 years in different missions in North Uganda. Meanwhile serving at Lacor hospital he was attacked by unknown infectious disease. He was sent to Italy where he died in 1981.

Fr. Luigi Moizi from Karamoja came to Moyo. He can be considered the linguist who fixed rules and phonetics for Madi language. He died in Arua in a motor accident on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1966 and is buried in Ombaci. At that time he was chaplain of Ombaci technical school.

Fr. Ermenegildo Caretta arrived in Moyo in 1944 from Nyapea. He loved the people and liked chatting with them. He had a difficulty in learning the new language of Madi. His apostolic work was devoted in a special way to the catechists; he followed them closely giving them short courses. He walked throughout the West Madi area, making safari, visiting people at their villages. He had a great patience in instructing the catechumens. He liked so much the catechists that at the end of his life he wanted to be buried near the tomb of his friend catechist Colombano at Patongo.

Fr. Osmundo Bilbao Garamendi arrived in Moyo in 1971, the first Spanish Comboni Father in West Nile. He learned the Madi very quickly. After his holiday the superior transferred him to Mbuya as Provincial Procurator in 1975. He came back to Moyo in 1979, just to see the destruction of the war. On 18 April Fr. Osmundo went to Kampala to bring liturgical books from Kisubi Press. On the 20 April an armed man who tried to steal the car of the father killed him on the way to Entebbe near Kisubi. After his death the Madi wanted to remember him. They built a “Bilbao Memorial Primary School” in Moyo mission.

Fr. Giuliano Oricchi arrived in Pakele in December in 1954 and then to Moyo in 1955 working there up to 1960. He dedicated himself in the care of Christians and in the evangelization of the pagans. He walked on foot around the mission or on bicycle among the villages or riding a motorcycle in safari to chapels. He used to meet the people on the roadside or under a shade of a tree. Although he could not speak Madi fluently, nevertheless the people could understand him because his words were coming from a great heart. He died in Nairobi, Kenya, in hospital on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1994. In the cemetery of Ombaci there is a memorial tomb in remembrance of him but without the body, which was buried in Nairobi. Fr. Giuliano has been also among the Alur (Orussi 64-70) and the Logbara (Maracha 1971-1976: Ombaci 1977 to the end of his life).

Fr. Pietro Zuani was posted at first in Pakele 1970 and after to Moyo 1977. He started to translate a new catechism in Madi “Africa’s Way to Life” to

substitute the catechism of Pius X that became obsolete. He loved safari and the formation of catechists but he devoted himself also in the spiritual formation of the sisters. For health reason he left Uganda and only after three years he died in Italy of cancer, in October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1981.

Fr Guido Bertuzzi can be considered the Patriarch of the Madi because he spent 48 years among them. He reached Moyo in 1949. Fr. Molinaro Luigi was still there as superior of the mission. He was extremely demanding, so that Fr. Bertuzzi had a much harder “novitiate” with him than at Venegono. The “old man” gave him difficult “safari” and wanted him back in the mission by nightfall. So partly on foot and partly riding a bicycle, Fr. Guido scampered up and down the steep hills of Moyo. He took charge of the schools from Fr. Moizi, as a supervisor. During his 12 years as superior of Moyo, he developed from scratch a new parish at Metu. He built an orphanage and a Centre for the elderly and the handicapped, and a small brick dwelling for old women with no relatives. He was concerned with development programs for women to make their role in the family more effective. He set up a dressmaking school for girls, with sewing machines donated from Italy. “Help the people to help themselves” was his Motto. A catechist summed his life in these words: “A kind heart beat under a white cassock; he never sent away anyone, but even went to look for those in need”. He suffered a lot in 1979 when he escaped from Metu to Loa in Sudan, walking for 200 km with little food. He came back to Madi in 1988 and was assigned to Ajumani. In 1990 he returned to Moyo where he stayed until his last grave illness that brought him back to Italy to the center for sick confreres in Milan where he died in 19 January 1997.

Many other missionaries worked in Madi area some of them are still alive: Fr. Buffoni Joseph, the musician. His songs are still sung now, Father Moser Luigi, Fr Luigi Gabaglio, and Bro. Ciriaco Gusmeroli - the “good Brother”. In 1997 Moyo was handed over to the Diocesan Clergy.



### ***The Comboni Fathers in Padyere***

The Alur are divided in three main groups: Okoro, on the mountains, Jonam, along the great river, and Padyere, Alur of the plains, between Okoro and Jonam. There were three important chiefs at that time: Owiny for the Jonam, Awisi for Padyere, and Jal Amula for Okoro. Jalawore substituted this last, because he was against the English occupation.

Among the Alur the calamities were attributed often to an old man or to an old woman called *jaljok*. Sometimes these people were burnt alive by a riot of people. When the missionaries arrived there, they tried to put an end to that barbaric practice. They defended those old people and opened a house for them, in the mission.

Angal was opened in December 1917. Fr. Audisio Pietro and Fr. Domenico Spazian had been the first ones to be appointed to it. Bro. Savariano, from Moyo, via Arua, arrived at Angal to help building the Fathers house, a church and huts for Christians and schools.

On Christmas Day 20 baptisms were administered among the catechumens from Orussi, who came down with the Fathers. After so many sufferings some fruits came, those were sowed in tears. But the joy turned soon in sorrow: the smallpox killed many people.

On 8 April the Holy See erected the new Apostolic Vicariate of Bhar el Gazal detached from Khartoum. Msgr. Antonio Stoppani was appointed to it. He was consecrated bishop in Cairo on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1917. West Nile was within it.

The New Year started with starvation. Many people suffered death, though the missionaries did what they could. The help from Italy was scarce due to the First World War. Fr. Santambrogio followed Fr. Audisio in the direction of the parish. He can be considered the true founder of Angal mission; under his leadership many people joined the Catholic Faith. He established chapels in every corner of the territory, appointing catechists to each Christian Community. He led the parish up to December 1921. He came back to Angal in 1932 and remained till 1935.

During this time Bro. Savariano built a huge church that could contain 1000 people. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, the missionaries and the

catechists took the Word of God from Angal to the remote places of Alur county. They were warmly received everywhere by the chiefs and people. In November 1924, the Comboni Sisters arrived in Angal. They worked in the catechumenate and among women and girls. Four years later, Msgr. Vignato blessed the foundation stone of the new church, started by Bro. Betti Emilio and continued by Bro. Battistata Emilio. It took them four years to finish it, a large beautiful church that Msgr. Vignato, already Prefect Apostolic from 1923, inaugurated solemnly on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1932. It is dedicated to St Anthony of Padua, the wonderworker Saint.

From the baptismal register in 1918 Angal had 249 Christians, 70 catechumens in the mission, 18 catechists, 6 school-chapels with 234 pupils, 75 Christians in mission.

In 1919 Father Audisio was transferred from Angal to Gulu to develop the school for catechists-teachers. The plan of Fr. Audisio was to prepare full-time catechists as leaders to other catechists, capable to lead the Sunday service where the priest was not available. The subjects taught at the school, were: Holy Scripture, moral, the beginnings of the Church History, grammar, arithmetic and Kiswahili. Another aim was to form catechists for Adult Catechesis.

Fr. Fornasa came back to Angal in the beginning of 1922. He was a great apostle and serious father, a bit pessimistic in judging the Christian life of the Christians. Bro. Poloniato lamented the method of constriction of the father he had in the apostolate work.

In 1923 at Angal were Fr. Fornasa, Fr. Spazian and Bro. Poloniato who was practicing medical care, being a dresser. In the same year Fr. Carlo Campi came from Kitgum. Fr. Fornasa wanted to adopt the same method the White Fathers had in Congo in regard to the teaching for catechumens. In Congo, among the Alur the White Fathers were requesting the catechumens to follow the teaching at chapel level for 3 or 4 years before being admitted to the mission for another four months before baptism. After baptism the neophytes were spending other three months in the mission. The catechumens were bringing food from home to eat during their stay at mission. In this way the mission did not have the burden of feeding them. The time of formation for the catechumens was indeed a long period. Instead the Verona Fathers were using a shorter period of formation.

The mission was feeding the catechumens. For this reason the number of Christians was higher in the mission of Verona Fathers than in those of the White Fathers. Fr. Fornasa was of the opinion that the Christians of White Fathers were of better quality. He is the one who introduced the *safari* as a means of evangelization, visiting all the Christians at their villages at least four times a year. Some few old Christians still remember Fr. Fornasa who liked to be among them. The other fathers who followed Fr. Fornasa continued the safari, which was introduced also in all the missions up to '70s.

It is worthy of notice the carpentry-workshop and a saw- mill put up by Bro. Battistata using chains and wheels of bicycles. It worked for a long time, splitting huge trunk of mahogany trees

Fr. Giuseppe Bertinazzo arrived at Angal in 1951 and worked there up to 1957. He renewed the buildings of the mission. He started the maternity and the Hospital with the cooperation of the sisters. Fr. Calvi Giuseppe succeeded Fr. Bertinazzo. He made some experiments in Botanic crafting local trees. He is the first who introduced vine in West Nile. Unfortunately he was expelled from Uganda in 1967 by Obote first falsely accused by a Catholic teacher who claimed a piece of land on the site of the mission. Fr. Aldo Codognola extended the hospital. The first doctor and director was Antonia Mondini, helped by Mina Pandolfi. In 1960 Msgr. Angelo Tarantino, the new bishop of Arua diocese, blessed the hospital.

When Fr. Bertinazzo left Angal, there were 20.000 Catholics. Other missionaries worked in Angal like Fr. Bruno Marcabruni, Fr. Silvio Adia, a Diocesan priest, Fr. Primo Biolo, Fr. Leone Venturini, Bro. De Rossi Lodovico. That has been the golden period of expansion of Faith by building churches and chapels, appointing catechists everywhere, opening bush-schools and primaries. Fr. Dall'Amico came in 1966 as parish priest and remained up to 1972. After that he became the administrator of the hospital.

Fr. Manfroni Dante, John for the Alur, worked in this mission for 7 years. He was never resting, always moving on his Gilera, and visiting catechists, sick people, and families. He was very enthusiastic in his apostolate, and gave in as much he could to implement the Vatican II. He was saying that much conversion took place during the "*Peregrinatio Mariae*" (1973) among the

villages that the Blessed Virgin Mary worked many miracles. Unfortunately he was deported on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1975, under the Amin regime, may be because he was too much popular among the people. I do not think that he was expelled for politics. He was one who did not know much about it.

After the departure of Fr. Manfroni, Fr. Lorenzo Bono was sent to Angal in 1975, with Msgr. Paolo Jalcebo and Fr. Dall'Amico. He tested the turmoil of the guerilla war. Once from Koboko to Arua he was shot at the ear meanwhile he was travelling in his little Suzuki. He was using film show as a means of evangelization. He died on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1995, and is buried in the cemetery at Angal.

Msgr. Jalcebo Paolo became parish priest during the time of Amin Dada, starting the process of africanization in Arua diocese.

Another missionary, who worked very hard for a long period, was Bro. Magistrelli Natale. He improved and expanded the premises of the hospital and built a great number of chapels, He bought cows with his money to provide milk for children and the sick of the hospital. He spent in Angal 26 years and died there on the first July 1987. He is buried in the cemetery of the mission.

Fr. Luigi Sala, still alive, promoted the laity with many initiatives. He started a good technical school for the young so that they may have a job, and a laboratory for spectacles. Fr. Felice Centis can be considered the founder of the pastoral Centre of Angal. His major work certainly, is the translation of the full Bible in Alur; it is the only Bible in Uganda translated in a Vernacular language. Fr. Chiste' and sister Mariagrazia Palumbo made the catechists Centre a place of a good standard of formation for catechists and laity.

Fr. Antonio Spugnardi worked also here in Angal with a great zeal. He loved very much the catechists. In fact he built many houses for them. He was in many parishes learning Madi, Logbara and Alur. He died on 11 June 1998 and he is buried in the cemetery of the mission of Angal.

At this time we write, January 2003, Fr. Mario Zecca is the parish priest, helped by Fr. Centis Felice.

Angal can be considered the mother of all the missions among the Alur, in Nebbi diocese.

### *Evangelization among the Logbara*

Fr. Audisio from Angal made a safari to Arua area to visit the Alur Christians who went there from Omach brought by the English Commissioner. There he baptized 4 Alur children. He has been the first Verona missionary to reach Arua. During November 1917 Father Zambonardi and Bro. Savariano were sent from Moyo to Arua to explore the possibility of establishing a mission. Arua was already a residence of the District Commissioner. The two had discussion with the DC Weatherhead, and through him with Entebbe. From the record of Fr. Zambonardi we come to know that the distance Moyo Arua was 160 km. The missionaries spent 6 days to reach Arua. The meeting with the DC took place on 24 November 1917. The Father gives some very important descriptions and impressions of the place. Arua is 1400 meters on sea level; there is fresh air; the population is spread in small families; the huts are small and badly maintained; men were completely naked; the women were wearing two turfs one in front and the other behind; they were changing them every morning. The Logbara were speaking a language similar to Madi. One thing impressed them much was the “CERE” (howl) which other tribes didn’t have. By “Cere” they were calling each other, or were expressing joy or sorrow. The DC was describing the Logbara as violent and untrustworthy people. Economically the Logbara were considered rich of animals and of agricultural products, therefore the diet was well balanced and they had a good health. In 1919 the Logbara population was estimated about 250.000.

Fr. Zambonardi spoke also with some chiefs and with the few Alur Christians. He soon made friendship with Catholic Goans and the Alur worker (fundi) Rafaeli and his wife Katerina. I knew this family personally in 1953 in Arua mission where I was a curate. During those days the missionaries slept at the government rest house, meanwhile they saw a hill on the West of Arua on the other side of the river Enyau, a wonderful and quiet place belonging to the chief Adroni.

### ***Why a mission in Arua***

West Nile was already declared a District with its own Commissioner. The missionaries considered it a strategic place for evangelization. The political reason presented to the Commissioner by the missionaries was the religious assistance to the Baganda and Alur Christians. The real motive, which pushed the missionaries to start a mission in Arua, was “ to stop the advance of Islam and Protestantism”, both of them considered as enemies to the Catholic Faith. These motives did not exclude the major one, that is, the evangelization to the pagans as well. But also the English Commissioner was inviting them. Fr. Vignato wrote a postcard from Gulu to Fr. Montanari: “ Mr. Ashhton Warner wants at any cost the mission of Arua where starvation is at home”. Fr. Vignato, in a meeting with the Fathers in Gulu, decided to open a mission in Arua. He wrote a letter to his superior general to Verona on 18 January 1918 in these words: “ We have come to a conclusion of a big task, to face any difficulty for the foundation of a mission in Arua among the Logbara. Fr. Zambonardi will go there with Fr. Fornasa. We considered both the difficulties and loss we meet in delaying the mission of Arua for the presence of Muslims and Protestants and the insistent invitation from the Authority. So we decided to commit ourselves to a proof of the Providence”. So there are reasons of antagonism, politics and Evangelization. All these reasons will be in the process of proselytism in West Nile on the side of any religion. The reasons to open Arua mission were different from any other mission started by the Verona Fathers. Fr. Zambonardi was the right man to meet all these requirements. He reached Arua definitely with Fr. Fornasa on 14 February 1918 from Moyo. Fr. Joseph chose Fr. Fornasa as his companion because he was his classmate and could speak Alur and knew the Alur Christians from Omach.

### ***Islam in West Nile***

The following is the story of Islam in Aringa as Mr. Hajji Jafari Delu narrated it in a seminar held at Lodonga Mission, on 12 December 1995.

Summary.

“The spreading of Islam in Aringa did not come from Buganda. In 1850 an army from Egypt led by Emin Pasha came to rule the Equatorial Province. (At that time the territory, known now as West Nile was under Belgian power). Emin Pasha came to Northern Uganda to recruit able people to assist them in their war. Among the recruited were: Addu Anule from Ambala clan, Okuni Diba from Anyifira, Azabo Uruta from Aliapi, Geriga Ondoga from Langi, Abiyo Longira from Romogi and Andi. These recruited young people were brought to Emin Pasha’s camp, where they found all soldiers were Muslims. These Nubi made the Aringa young people to follow their way to believe in Allah. So they began to convert these Aringa people giving them Muslim names without circumcising them. Addu Anule was named Fadhal el Mula Ali, Okuni Diba was called Fadha el Mula Morjan, Azabo was named Bilal Farjala, Geriga Ondoga was called Adam Mbasasaka, Abiyo named Rizi, Andi was named Asubala. In 1911, after the service under Emin Pasha, they were retired and came back to Uganda, making their barracks in Bombo. In 1914 Addu came back to his Aringa land, leaving his fellow brothers behind. Thereafter Addu was given chieftainship in Aringa. In that time Aringa people were worshipping evil spirits (Abiyonga). As he had acquired Islamic religion in the army in Khartoum, he began to influence Aringa people to become Muslims. By January 1916 the first Muslims were circumcised in the first mosque called “ Alelinga” in the clan of Renda. The responsible person made for the circumcision was Charaka. The circumcised people were about 19. The conversion of these people to Islam had a remarkable event in Aringa. Addu had to ask his fellow army men, with whom he had been together in Khartoum, to come and teach these people. Ramadan Abyia, from Ayivu, was well versed in Islam; he became the first “Sheikh” of the Muslims of Aringa.

By 1920 a white father, called Valcavi, an Italian missionary, visited Addu. The father asked chief Addu to give him land to start Christianity. At first he refused, because he was against colonialists. But the Commissioner forced him to give land to the father. Addu gave him the place of Lodonga. The first Christians were Ambrogio Guma and his father Edward Chabe, Giorgio Ariga from Robu.”

The English government, as a reward of war against Mahdi, made these Aringa ex-soldiers chiefs all over West Nile. We met them already in Moyo, Orussi, Angal and Arua. Certainly Addu Fadha el Mula can be considered the founder of Islam in Aringa and West Nile as a whole. He was at the same time a head of the power and of religion according to the teaching of the Qur'an. That is why up to now the Muslims of Aringa think that the land belongs to them. That is also the basic reason of a kind of persecution against the Christians. They sometimes disturbed the missionaries especially by night. The catechumens were bitten on the way going to the mission for instruction; chapels were burnt during night. The local and central government were taking no steps to stop these injustices. . Once the English Commissioner went to see the missionaries at the request of Fr. Valcavi. He told the fathers to be patient and to suffer as Jesus Christ. At these words the father through Fr. Sembiente, told the Commissioner that he was not in need of his spiritual sermon and could go away.

I heard personally this event from Fr. Sembiente. Fr. Valcavi did not know English. Muslims of Aringa have been refractory persons to the education in general. They had only Coranic schools (garan) for their children. But they acquired a great belonging to their faith, and supremacy in trades through shops everywhere in West Nile.

From the census of 1991 the total Muslim population in Arua District was 146,149 (22.9%). In Arua municipality the Muslims were 12,293 (55%); in Aringa County the Muslims were 78,187 ( 78.3%). This shows us that Islam is the second religion in West Nile. Population statistics: Literacy (estimates) in Aringa county, data from the 1991 Uganda Population census: literate population (10 + years), educated to primary –4 or beyond: overall County 14,776 (22.7%), male 11, 300 (36.6%), Female 3,352 (9. 8%). From 1987 there is a great revival of Islam with construction of new mosques and primary schools especially in the new District of Yumbe. All this brings along a change of mentality among many of young Muslims requesting more tolerance and respect towards other denominations. Interreligious dialogue can be a means to come closer to the Christians and vice versa.



### ***First impact with people***

The people under the chief Adroni occupied the place given to the Verona Fathers. They welcomed the fathers with arrows and spears. Fr. Zambonardi answered them “ that he did not come to fight but to build a school, if somebody claims any compensation for the land we are ready to pay for it”. The people, satisfied by the words of the father, put their bows down and went away. The DC Weatherhead gave disposition to the chief Adroni for the constructions of the mission because “ his people were insubordinate and lazy”. Each man should have offered 10 days of work and at the end would receive one rupee. About 100 men came completely naked for the work at an hour they liked. Some started to level the ground; others went to cut poles and bamboo for the roof. They went and came back the day after with some crooked poles asking for the pay. “ You are going to receive it after ten days of work as agreed upon”. Answered the father. But they threw away the ticket and went and never came back. No worker was able to finish the 10 days of work. So the missionaries didn’t spend any money; nevertheless a small house and a classroom were built on the slope of the hill. At that time there was not even a hut on the place of the mission.

Slowly the people got confidence and some even started to bring some gifts to the fathers as eggs, sweet potatoes, and papaw. Some wanted to build their homes near the mission

On the 3rd March 1918, about 30 persons among the Baganda and Alur were enrolled for the catechumenate. This was the first hope also for the Logbara to join in the teaching of the gospel.

The DC Bwana Jerekede through the Muslim chiefs succeeded to trace some roads like Rhino- Camp –Arua and to build some rest houses for him and tourists which were used also by the missionaries. He started to make people to pay *musoro* (tax) of two rupees a year

### ***The Water of Allah***

This superstitious practice was introduced in West Nile by some sheikhs that were teaching the Water of Allah, the people could become rich,

acquire cloths and freedom from the colonial power. By using it the people were expressing disagreement against the British. The Muslims of Aringa were the masters of this practice, encouraged by Sudanese sheikhs. People were walking after an influent sheikh that was promising them any good in using the water of Allah. One of the greatest effects was to make people invulnerable against bullets, which at the touch of the body, would fall down without causing any hurt. The followers should make guns out of straw, which at the time of battle would have changed into real guns to kill “ the infidel dogs”, meaning the Christians. The holy water was preserved in containers under small huts. The followers were going there to drink some drops at a time, and taking away a little in calabashes as talisman against evil eye, snakes, wild beast and government.

The DC Driberg fought against that practice in burning the small huts and killing the promoters appearing also by night suddenly.

The two missionaries were lamenting against the barracks of Arua for the immorality and vices. Here the historic group of Nubians was making laws and traditions at their wish. They were Muslims linked to corrupt chiefs of the place like Fadha el- Mullah Ali of Aringa and Fadha el Mullah Morjan of Bondo.

### ***Opposition of the Logbara to the British rule***

The territory called now West Nile, who goes along the Albert Nile to Nimule and Congo, was under the direct domain of King Leopold II of Belgium. A monument was erected at Alikoa near Offude Mountain, Maracha, as a memorial to the Belgium army. At the death of the king, December 1909, according to a treaty of 1910, this territory passed from Belgium to Sudan in June 1910. In 1912 a treaty was made to exchange districts between Khartoum and Entebbe. In January 1914 West Nile passed to Uganda meanwhile Nimule and Gondokoro passed to Sudan.

The Logbara had a hostile attitude towards the British government. Twice the Logbara of Udupi attempted to kill the Commissioner Weatherhead, who established himself in Arua in 1915. The Logbara believed to immunize themselves against the army in using the spell, which could change the bullets in unhurtful little stones. A chief, siding with the new government, feared to be

killed by his own people, asked protection from the Commissioner, who sent 7 soldiers to protect him. The people killed three of them and chopped the chief up in pieces. In 1919 the Commissioner sent reinforcement and about three hundred people died in O'dupi. Others escaped in Congo and others arrested. From that time the DC forbade the Logbara to carry along bows and spears. (Fornasa, *Alla conquista d'un popolo*, in *Nigrizia*, March 1920). For the insecurity the Commissioner asked from Entebbe, a helper. An ADC was sent to Arua, by name Mr. Driberg. The Acholi nicknamed him *Bwana tong*, *Mr. Spear*, because he was carrying a spear in his hand.

Because of this hostile attitude of the Logbara, the authorities refused the missionaries the permission to establish chapels with catechists in the territory. This was the time when Weatherhead erected the gallows in Arua town. This Barbaric method stopped rebellions and violence among the Logbara. After three years of British occupation, Fr. Vignato travelled from Gulu to Masindi, where he met the Provincial Commissioner, Mr. Eden, who gave him permission to establish chapels and schools.

### ***The arrival of the Protestants in West Nile***

Contemporary to the visit of the two missionaries in Arua, the District Commissioner Weatherhead invited the Protestants, Quakers, originally from America. He gave them a place in Mvara. They were not interested in Sacraments and Baptisms, but in Social works as medicine and schools. The first Quakers reached Arua via Congo in 1918. They were half a dozen. They wished Mvara to become the H/Q for Quakers in Uganda and Congo. The DC refused their request. Their official name was "The African Inland Mission" (American Protestants). I remember this road post affixed to a big tree at Mvara.

Rev. J Dobson wrote in "Down in West Nile": " In 1918 Mr. Frank Gardener came with his wife, little Beryl and his brother Alfred, hoping that in West Nile they could not be attacked by black fever as in Congo. The two brothers were building, digging a well and learning the language. In the beginning the Sabbath was conducted in Kiswahili; afterwards they were using the Hymnal and the prayer book in Luganda sent from Kampala. In the end of 1918 there were

already three *kanisa* where the people gathered to pray in the name of Jesus Christ: Vurra, Ezoku and Eruba. "That year was devastated by epidemic and we were not spared". Gardener sent a message to the Catholic priest, asking for help. He came, although he was ill. He was diagnosed to be with black fever. The Gardener's family went to Kenya where he remained for 4 years; later on he went to Scotland. Going away from Arua he said:" This station of Arua started in tears and blood. I am sure that the Lord will perform great things for Arua".

Mr. Mount came from Congo to substitute him. He was a good musician; he translated the gospel of St. Matthew in Logbara." We know from an article sent to Nigrizia by Fr. Fornasa that he was that priest who assisted the Gardeners. Some Quakers from Arua went to Aba.

From the writer J. Dobson we know that Gardener could open the mission under a condition that the Quakers of West Nile should have become a part of the Anglican Church of Uganda. Mr. Dobson blames this kind of interference: "The attitude of Rome can be judged of arrogance, but ours of independence. This needs an answer which one day may come from the mission in Uganda". Between 1918 and 1923 twenty different protestant missionaries stayed in Mvara. In 1922 Mr. Mount of the African Inland Mission completed the first Logbara translation of St Mark's gospel. During this year a group of 22 were baptized in Mvara.

Fr. Mario Cisternino in his book " Passione per l'Africa" from which I took all these information, in page 484 says: " The Quakers in Kenya, Tanganyika and Congo were a sect, in Uganda became Anglican Church, forced to accept its hierarchy and dogmas". The preference and influence of the British power for the Anglican Church in Uganda is still going on up to day, after 40 years of independence. This means that a new colonialism succeeded to the former. This is seen in the present situation. Although the Catholics are the greatest majority in the country, nevertheless in the Cabinet and in the places of relevant importance like in education, the Protestants of the Church of Uganda are powerfully present in number, and this happens not by election or by merit but only for that malice established and inoculated by the British which influence exists till at the present time. As for Sudan the English authorities had in mind to divide West Nile according to the three religious denomination: the Madi to Catholics, the Logbara

to Islam and the Alur to the Anglican Church. They could not succeed in their plan for several reasons especially for the particular political situation of the period in West Nile.

When the Catechists- schools started, the DC Weatherhead was helping the Verona Fathers in sending children (the sons of peasants) to their school but, instead he was sending the son of chiefs to the Quakers as it was the general praxis already in all Uganda.

Rev. Vollor and his wife arrived in West Nile at Mvara via Mombasa-Butiaba-Pakwach. They spent one week to reach Arua from Pakwach.

In 1931 all over Uganda the baptized Protestants were 391,947, the Catholics were 406,768 and Muslims were about 70,000. Over half of the population of Uganda was Christian.

In 1951 the doctors Williams Edward and Peter opened Kuluva hospital and leper settlement in a humble way but effective.

In 1955 the Protestant Bible in Alur was published in one volume

In 1964 bishop Silvano Wani was elected to head the diocese of Northern Uganda in Gulu. He was consecrated in Namirembe on 7 June 1964. In the same year the translation of the Logbara Bible was completed in one volume.

In 1969 the Protestant Diocese of West Nile and Madi was cut off from the Diocese of Northern Uganda. Rt. Rev. Silvanus Wani was appointed its first bishop.

### ***Epidemics and starvation in West Nile***

The years 1918-1919 have been the years of great epidemics and starvation. These epidemics, unknown to the people were meningitis, smallpox and Spanish fever. From the writings of the missionaries we come to know that these scourges were brought and spread by the soldiers through their frequent movements from one place to another. A measure to prevent spreading illnesses was to avoid any gathering. People did not have protection and medicines and moreover were lacking hygiene.

Famine came at the same time to make the life of the people worse. The cause was a long period of drought. In all Uganda people were dying in a great

number. The government and missionaries were not ready to meet and cope with the situation. The government used the missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic in the distribution of “pande”, pistachio, beans, and groundnuts.

Fr. Beduschi from Angal 3 October 1918 writes: “There is a terrible famine and pestilence in our districts. More than 1000 people died in Angal in 4 months; in Arua may be more where they suffer lack of everything and the fathers are demoralized. The Quakers received thousands of bags of beans to distribute to the people. We Catholics cannot help in any way for lack of means”.

### *Strategy of Apostolate takes shape*

The two missionaries Zambonardi and Fornasa were committed in Building schools and doing safaris. It was difficult to move around on those days because of sickness and famine. A work of priority of this first year 1918 was the appointment of the catechists to the chiefs’ centers like Offude, Logo, Maracha, and Terego. There were no Logbara catechists yet. Likely 4 Acholi catechists arrived, two of which we know the names: Cirillo of Kitgum and Giancarlo of Gulu.

After training in the language, Rafaeli, an Alur worker from Angal, settled in Arua at the service of the English government, accompanied the four catechists to the appointed chiefs. But the DC ordered them back because they didn’t have permission from Entebbe. The chiefs convinced him of the need they had of catechists –teachers.

Fr. Zambonardi wanted to be surrounded by good people and good families in the mission. This has been a tactic used by all Verona Fathers in their missions. At Ediofe there were Rafaeli and his wife Katerina, as told already, Damiano, a good huts constructor, the first Logbara family Aprili and his wife Teresa and Celina their daughter, sent by the Dominican Fathers from Farajje in Belgian Congo, Philip, a cook, sent by the missionaries of Aba in Congo, from where the Quakers came in Uganda. There was also a Munyoro, Bagyenda, a constructor.

At the end of September 1918, Fr. Zambonardi was invited to go to Aru in Congo at 25 km from Arua, by Msgr. Reginald van Schoote, Apostolic Prefect

of Nyangara. The Prelate was there to pay a visit to the mission of Aru. This mission was started in 1915 cared for by the Dominican fathers of Farajje. It had 1900 Catholics, 3189 catechumens and 26 chapels. In Aru there were very few huts for the Belgian administration. The Prefect baptized some catechumens prepared by two catechists.

Fr. Zambonardi had a very bad impression of the way the catechesis was imparted to the catechumens, too superficial regarding the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. After the reception of the sacraments these poor people were left without seeing a priest for years. The nearest mission was Aba at 200km away.

Also Fr. Beduschi went there in October 1918, and he had the same impression. What appeared amazing to the Comboni missionaries was that the missionaries in Congo should have been only Belgian citizens, financed by Belgian government. The Lingala language was the only to be used in the catechumenates and not the Logbara. The policy used in Congo was the same used in Uganda by the British in Uganda according to the axiom “Cuius regio eius religio”.

At the end of 1919 Fr. Zambonardi made his last safari from Arua, to the chief Kenyi in Koboko. He understood that the language was different from that of the Logbara. In Koboko in fact live Kakua people similar to Bari in Sudan for customs and language. The population was about 3000 in Uganda, others living in Congo and Sudan. The Fr. “In his memories” says “the Kakua were more educated and dressed because they had been in contact with Europeans and Arabs” under Emin Pasha.

### ***The Catholic Church is improving all over West Nile***

From Nimule through Moyo Fr. Enrico Redaelli arrived in Arua on 19 March 1919. He rode a bicycle from Nimule to Moyo alone, but he had several flat tyres. It was necessary to wait for new tyres from Gondokoro to reach Arua. He new English language very well and learned the Logbara very soon. The people liked him very much in 1925 he became secretary of Msgr. Silvestri in Khartoum. In 1929 he taught in the post primary school and in the Seminary of

Gulu, he became also the education secretary for the Equatorial Nile Province. In 1932 he was in Lodonga and after in Arua as a director of the Normal School for teachers of Grade C.

This Normal School was situated where is now the bishop's house. A good number of teachers came out from that school. The primary of Ediofe Boys and that of Lodonga Demonstration School and that of Nyapea boys were the first schools benefited by these first teachers. The buildings of these schools are still standing to witness the importance of the education in West Nile promoted by the missionaries.

Some missionaries of the first evangelization were not happy with the behavior of some Christians. They wanted more fidelity on the part of the new Christians through a longer catechumenate. The fathers came also to another consideration on the field of education. From the beginning the missionaries gave great importance to technical schools like that of Gulu started by Bro. Fanti in 1916, in Arua another one started by Fr. Simoncelli in 1920. Instead the Protestants gave more attention to the future intellectuals. Therefore in the long run the Catholics will appear technical people, a working class people; instead the Protestant would become the leaders of different department in the government, the leading class. Some missionaries were thinking to devote themselves more to the formation of catechists. Through these quasi-deacons people will believe in Christ the Savior in great number.

In May 1919 Fr. Vignato travelled from Gulu to West Nile on bicycle, visiting Angal, Arua and Moyo. Arua was a bit in difficulty for the boundaries of the mission and for weak relations with the government in regard to the assignment of the catechists to the chiefs. The boundaries of the mission were delimited out of the municipality of the town, thanks to the visit of the governor Mr. Robert Coryndon. Fr. Vignato noticed that the people of Arua were afflicted by famine, smallpox and by other two illnesses: cholera imported by the Indian soldiers, and leprosy may be from Ethiopia. The DC of Arua prohibited Fr. Zambonardi to send out catechists for teaching. In June 1919 the Provincial Commissioner gave permission to build chapels for catechists. From now on the door for the evangelization is opened to the Logbara people.



During 1920 Fr. Silvestri who succeeded Fr. Vignato in Gulu, travelled riding a bicycle to Moyo, Arua and Angal. In a letter of Bro. Attilio Consolaro we know that Fr. Silvestri administered 24 baptisms in Moyo, where the Christians were more than 400; in Arua he gave 23 baptisms; 250 were residing in the mission; at Angal he administered 151 baptisms. In Angal there was already a church built with three aisles and “everywhere we met zealous catechists”.

Fr. Zambonardi was transferred to Rejaf, Sudan; in his place came Fr. Pietro Simoncelli in 1920, who can be called the second founder of Arua. Fr. Simoncelli Pietro was born at Mozzecane in Verona), on 17 June 1891; he was ordained priest on 30 May 1915. He arrived in Uganda, Gulu on 23 December 1920. On 3 June 1920 became the superior of Arua, again in Arua in 1927. He became the Superior general of the Congregation of the Sons of the sacred heart of Jesus in 1931. He made all efforts for Gulu to become the Apostolic Vicariate of Equatorial Nile in 1934. He came in Uganda again in 1938, being in different missions, especially in Nyapea; at last he went to Maracha in 1959 his last mission. He died in Verona on 26 June, in 1964, at 73 years of age, of which 40 years in North Uganda. Also Fr. Molinaro moved to Torit, Sudan, from Moyo. Two young missionaries, Fr. Pietro Foglio and Bro. Ignazio Rama came to Moyo to substitute Fr. Molinaro. The year 1920 is characterized by a great number of catechumens especially in Angal. Frs. Santambrogio and Spazian were fearful about so large number: “We shall have 150 baptisms at Easter and several couples for marriage. There is a question: how could we maintain so many Christians for months in the mission? And there will be also many catechumens. Food and dresses are needed. This year we are expecting more than 300 new Christians”. Fr. Santambrogio wrote these words to the General Fr. Vianello.

### ***The first Comboni Sisters in Arua***

Fr. Simoncelli, with the aim of having sisters in Arua mission, built a house for them opposite to the father’s house. He purposely made a plan for that with Fr. Tranquillo Silvestri. The sisters in fact came in 1922 just in time to celebrate Christmas in Arua. The following are their names: Elisa Perosini, Eugenia Berlato, Odilia Oss Bals and Natalia Baggi. (Sr. K. Pinkman, A history of

the Comboni Sisters in Uganda, 1918-1979). This of Arua was the third Community of Comboni sisters after Gulu and Kitgum. Their activities were looking after the sick, care of the catechumenate, home visiting, cooking also for the missionaries and taking care of the church. They opened an orphanage in the mission. In the mind of Fr. Simoncelli the sisters would have devoted themselves in a special way to the human and religious promotion of women and girls. Were the Verona sisters qualified for the mission and for the expectations the Africans were waiting for?

Fr. Vignato wanted some qualities and qualifications for the sisters. He wrote a letter to Verona on 9 October 1917 where he speaks about some qualities the sisters should have. “ Cerchino delle suore di testa almeno per la prima entrata (sisters of wisdom especially as the first comers). The superior should know English and able to make plans for the harmony in the Community, capable to learn the language and teach in the school; another should be a dresser to help the sick; another should look after the kitchen and garden; another be a dressmaker. If they give a good impression for the beginning much the better for the mission.” The sisters would have replaced the fathers in the teaching to catechumens and in the formation of the women and girls for their human and religious promotion. The problem for their maintenance roused from the beginning. Msgr. Stoppani wrote on 8 March 1919 from Wau, Bahr el –Ghazal: “ We do not know from which fund the sisters will be maintained. But I trust in the help of divine Providence”.

In Gulu Sister Camilla Uberti was directing the Girls school with success. The women were dressing large shirts to give more freedom to their movements. The school was nicknamed “ Women’s University”. Another initiative was to give to the mothers a deeper knowledge of the gospel on Sunday after the mass. This was the conference to the Christian Mothers. This apostolate done by the sisters has been recorded in “ Nigrizia” 11.7.1919 and 7.9 1920.

The sisters of Arua were happy of their third Community. Often the success of the apostolate of the sisters in a mission was depending in a particular way on the good relationship between the sisters and the father superior of the mission itself. This dependence made the sisters not free to their own initiatives. In fact in West Nile, to the best of my knowledge, they didn’t have for instance

their own school, their own hospital or any other commitment administered by them. The Ediofe dispensary has become independent after the death of bishop Tarantino. Although the great majority of the sisters had a good will to do their best, nevertheless they did not have always the qualification and preparations for their commitments. These were other communities of Verona sisters in West Nile: Angal, Lodonga, Nyapea, Moyo, Maracha, Koboko, Otumbari and Warr. They have been in charge of schools: Girls' primaries: Arua, Angal, Nyapea, Lodonga, Moyo, Maracha; Junior school in Moyo and then transferred to Arua at the place of the Normal School (the present bishop's house), after changed into Ediofe Girls Senior school, and Warr Girls Senior school. Angal Hospital became famous thanks to the good service of the Verona Sisters. Also different medical units were entrusted to them like Ediofe, Lodonga, Koboko and Otumbari. Some of them have been active in the catechumenates like sisters Petronia and Marziana in Arua, Lodonga and Maracha. Old women still remember them. Many girls and catechumens learnt sewing, knitting cookery and other domestic arts from the Verona sisters. The most important characteristics of the sisters were their good example of prayer and community life. It is a pity, which is lamented by the Christians of West Nile that they left all the missions with exception of Ediofe.

We should remember also those sisters who died in different missions of West Nile, like in the cemetery of Angal, Arua and Lodonga.

### ***New prospective for Arua mission***

At his visit in Arua Fr. Silvestri understood that the colonial boundaries were dividing the two tribes Alur and Logbara between Congo and Uganda. He blamed that decision as "unjust boundaries". He expressed these sentiments to Fr. Meroni, general of the Verona Fathers, with a letter from Arua written on 18 September 1921. Fr. Silvestri was not for the number of Christians but rather for quality.

Fr. Simoncelli was following its own directives in regarding the Christian life of the faithful. "It is discouraging to see defections and bad behavior among Christians. The Alur girls, soon after baptism go to men. We introduced a new system for the Logbara girls: if they are not married will not be

baptized”. (Letter to Fr. Meroni from Arua 6/2/1922). We understand that in the North Uganda the Church was growing fast because of neophytes and catechists. The missionaries were visiting continuously the Christians in their villages with zeal and great sacrifices walking on foot or riding a bicycle without taking into account boundaries, languages or customs. The only aim of their work was to bring Christ to the people. “Working! Working! Working this is the best system that God blesses and will remain in the future. This I believe firmly; all the rest are empty words”. Fr. Silvestri from Arua to Fr. Montanari on first February 1923).

During this year Moyo became a sub-district dependent from Arua

For all that immense territory remained only two fathers: Foglio and Paravisi. But the population diminished 10% because of the tsetse fly.

When Fr. Redaelli was taken away from Arua in January, Fr. Valcavi Pietro, a new priest, replaced him.

Fr. Simoncelli started the first technical school in Arua for carpentry, masonry and agriculture, which at the end of the year 1923 was a reality. The Bros. Amedeo Salvadori and Betti Emilio were in charge of it.

In this year there were 30 catechists’ centers (chapels), but only five were complete with churches and schools. The number of Christians was about 600.

But Islam was making proselytes in Aringa through Muslims who were appointed chiefs by the English authorities, as a reward of fidelity during the war against the Mahdi in Sudan. The missionaries considered the Muslim movement a threat. “ These people are very simple, they can accept any thing. You can imagine how the Muslim danger can be destructive for this district!” A missionary wrote these words for “ Nigrizia” in November 1924.

### ***The New Apostolic Prefecture***

The full name is “ Apostolic Prefecture of Equatorial Nile”. It was erected on 12 June 1923. “*Datum Romae ex Aed. Dictae S. Congregationis die 12 Junii 1923*”.

The telegram reached Gulu on the feast of the Assumption 1923. Now also the “Italian Mission” has its own Apostolic Prefecture. Fr. Antonio Vignato

was elected the first Prefect Apostolic on the same day of the creation of the Prefecture.

Meanwhile a month before this great event for the evangelization of the North Uganda, the Cardinal of Propaganda Fide, on 20 May 1923, on Pentecost Day, sent to all superiors of missionary institutions an instruction regarding “the care of a specific preparation of the missionaries and of promoting the formation of the Diocesan Clergy and indigenous religious”. “The missionary institutions should give to their members a specific preparation on language, customs, methodology of evangelization, and also practical skills so that the missionaries may be able to carry on by themselves whatever could be useful and necessary for the right development of the mission”.

The Cardinal stressed that the superiors of the missionary institutes see that in their missions the formation of the indigenous Clergy be a priority in the evangelization. “The conversion of the infidels is only a beginning of the establishment of the Church. To the conversion the formation of Christianities must follow with chapels, churches, with construction of schools, orphanages, kindergartens, hospitals and other institutions. The formation of indigenous Clergy and of the indigenous religious institutions of both sex should follow to all that at the same pace”.

In that document it was also stressed that the mission is not a property of the missionary congregation; instead “it is a territory entrusted by the Church of Christ to zealous apostles to establish the admirable institution of Our Redeemer in full vitality”.

Some times there has been a kind of competition and rivalry between congregations in mission land, at time accusing each other to the Holy See. That was the case between the White Fathers and the Verona Fathers soon after the II World War, causing a great grievance to Msgr. Negri.

### ***Slowly but steadily Arua is growing***

The permission came from Entebbe for the appointments of catechists to the chiefs. On the same year 1919, a large land was allocated to the Arua mission on the occasion of the visit of the Provincial Commissioner Watson. “During the

year 1919 10 adults were baptized, in 1920 they were 158, the majority were Alur from the old mission of Omach, in 1925 76 adults were baptized". Fr. Antonio Antonioli reported for the occasion of the first 25th anniversary of the Vicariate Apostolic of the Equatorial Nile- Gulu 1935)

In the Memoirs of Fr. Fornasa we find that the catechists made a kind of revolution in the Mission of Arua on March 1922. "After Easter, writes the father, the catechists made a half revolution. We should begin a reform starting from the catechists. I dismissed soon 25 catechists out of 90, the ringleaders of the riot, which produced a scandal to the Christians. I confess that was more the work to reform than to reconciliation. The discontent and hatefulness increased against us."

Fr. Antonioli, in an article to Nigrizia, October 1934, informs us that at that time the catechists were 120. They baptized 1.342 pagans in "*aticulo mortis*" during the year 1933.

In the year 1924 Fr. Simoncelli sent to Sudan three Kakua catechists: Justin went to the chief of Gumbiri, Enriko Dada to the chief of Kiriba and Baba with his wife, still catechumen to the chief Tombe of Bilinyan. Other three catechists from Moyo went to Rejaf. (Cisternino page 521). The area of Koboko remained always out of the reach of the work of Verona fathers till the construction of the mission in 1952.

### ***Short Story of the Bible (Sacred History) and songs***

The evangelization is not only a question of teaching the gospel, but also to have the Word of God translated into the indigenous language to make Christ to be inculturated in the life of the people. This has been a big task of the missionaries up to day. Fr. Simoncelli printed in Verona the first Short Story of the Bible in Logbara Language in 1925. That was a great adventure if we consider the time and circumstances when it was done. It was a collection of most important passages of the Bible narrated in a simple way. It was used in the catechumenate and in the schools as Vernacular reading.

Religious songs are part of the liturgy and of the teaching. In the beginning the missionaries adopted the popular Italian songs to the local language.

The most famous ones are “Ama Le Mungu Bikira Maria” a marching song loved very much by the people; “Yosefo ama tambapi” to St. Joseph the protector:” Kristo ndeni “from a Latin song” Christus Vincit: “Culu Alaro Yesu dri” to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, etc. These same songs were translated in Alur and in Madi as well. The Gregorian melody was also much appreciated in a special way the “Missa De Angelis” which became very popular and sung in Feast Days. The old Christians still remember it.

These melodies could be heard on journey, at work in fields, in villages even by night.

The catechism of Pius X was translated in the three languages, Alur, Madi and Logbara. It was divided in two parts: The sacraments and the first catechism (Edozori and Sacramento dri). In general the explanation was done by the father at the presence of the catechist, who was going to repeat it during the lessons to the catechumens. This method was used up to 60s when a catechism of South Africa (Our Way to life) was translated in different languages. In Logbara was “ Oduko Mokeri”

### ***Arua a Vanguard Mission.***

In June 1928 feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Msgr. Vignato blessed the new church of Arua mission and dedicated it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The church, the future Cathedral of the diocese of Arua is a superb building measuring 45 m x 14, in a Romanesque style. A bell tower is shown from afar from every corner. When the English Commissioner saw the foundations he asked the fathers: “Do you think you will fill this church?” “We build it for the future” answered the fathers. Fr. Antonioli referred this incident to me. He was present near the foundations. Fr. Antonioli arrived in Arua on August in 1924 and worked here for 40 years. He died in Angal on 16 October 1969; he is buried in the cemetery of Arua mission. At the time of the inauguration of the church the converts were few. But the blessing of the church constituted the springboard to launch evangelization among the Logbara. The Logbara began to flock in a great number to the Catholic Faith. The number of the catechumens and of the faithful was so great that the mission of Arua was nicknamed by the fathers “the Vanguard

Mission”. This massive movement to the Catholic Faith was due in a special way to catechists of exceptional quality. (C/O P. Medeghini, Storia d’Uganda, pag. 506)

### ***Lodonga and Aringa***

Aringa county, now new district of Yumbe from 2001, is a very large area, has been the place of Muslims since 1914, as we have seen. The people are Logbara Kulluba.

The first missionaries arrived in this place in 1920 from Arua. They established the chapels of Wandu, Aringa, Odravu, Aupi and Odupi in Terego County.

Fr. Sembiane Fernando made a report about the foundation of Lodonga in the occasion of the 25th anniversary of “The Vicariate of the Equatorial Nile” in 1937.

“ Frs. Pietro Valcavi and Ferdinando Sembiane with Bro. Amedeo Salvadori arrived in Lodonga on the feast of the Sacred Heart 1927. In the name of the Lord they occupied this area which was detached from Arua. The reasons of this division were especially two: 1) to alleviate the station of Arua whose territory was too vast; 2) to stem the Islam propaganda, which was spreading all over the area of the Protectorate of Uganda, through the work of some old Muslim soldiers, appointed chiefs by the English government.

In this new mission there were already 17 Christians, baptized in Arua, coming from different counties like Omugo, Aringa and Koboko. The mission is founded on a hill place where there was nothing. At the first moment we occupied the rest house of the officer at 3 km. from the place where the mission will be built. (This place nowadays is called “Lodonga Black).

“Our work is the work of God. It is not the first time that the crescent moon gives up to the austere greatness of the Cross. We shall put in all places here and there among the people, not yet contaminated by the Islam. We shall travel among the people, making contact with them as much as possible. When the mission will be consolidated, the Christians will grow in faith”. Fr. Sembiane for Nigrizia wrote these words in 1928.



Koboko, Aringa and half of Terego constituted Lodonga mission. At the first celebration of Christmas all the Christians came and numerous pagans and Muslims too. The catechumens who wanted to be enrolled for the catechumenate were around 600. Why this great number? It was because catechumens followed the instruction for three years. They were not going to Arua any more since the new mission was going to start. A school and more than 20 huts were built for the instruction. When the building of the mission was ready, the missionaries left the rest house and occupied the house of the mission where there was a mosque where the Muslims were reciting the Qur'an. For that reason Fr. Valcavi began to invite Christians to build their huts near the mission. In that way, after few years the mission appeared a Christian village.

As we have seen, Addu Fadha el Mula refused in the beginning to give the place to the Fathers. The English Commissioner who made the chief to send away all the Muslims of the place far as 15 km instead gave the place.

In May 1928 the first baptisms were administered. By the end of 1929 the faithful were a thousand. In June 1936 the baptisms were 3500

At the end of December 1928 the house of the fathers was already built in backed brick. In 1929 also the house for sisters was ready. They arrived in May of the same year. The superior, sister Beniamina died at 17 May in 1933 because of much fatigue.

In this time 1929 a bigger church was built although in straw and mud and poles. Without doubt Fr. Valcavi has been the prominent figure in the events of this mission. He was a man of sacrifice, of active apostolic life. He suffered especially in seeing catechumens beaten, flogged to death and poisoned. The Muslims were burning chapels, destroying the fields of the parents of the catechumens, or robbing their cattle. No Muslim girl could marry a Christian young man; or if she went to a Christian man she would have been taken away by her parents by force and disappear from the place. Fr. Valcavi denounced these abuses to the chiefs but nothing was done because they were the same people who were perpetrating the injustices in Aringa in the name of Allah.

### ***Lodonga Mission in progress***

In 1932 the first Primary School was started under the headship of Sister Diletta Nicolini. Particularly solemn was the inauguration of the new elementary school in 1934. The British Commissioner, who took part in the ceremony declared: “This is one of the finest school in the Protectorate”. It was the first primary school of 4 classes built with baked bricks in West Nile. The report given at the 25th Anniversary of the Apostolic Vicariate of the Equatorial Nile in Gulu 1937 says: “*All this material and spiritual progress was due to the work of the fathers, sisters but in special way to “our catechists.”*”

Lodonga was a mission of great faith because it grew in persecution from the Muslims. The only way to defend the Christians was to spread catechists in different places and frequent safaris by the fathers.

The report referred above ends: “*May the Immaculate Virgin stop the Islam danger that is a threat for our people not only but also for the Uganda Protectorate as a whole*”. The majority of the catechumens was coming from Omugo, Odupi, Imvepi, Tara, Lima, and Koboko. Instead few catechumens were coming from Aringa County like Odravo, Wollo, Ibisi, Romogi, Mocha, Oriajini, Keyi, Aupi and Olivu. In Aringa the Muslims were posing obstacles to the work of the fathers. Fr. Sembiantè in an article to Nigrizia said: “*If we could have come before Islam, and more personnel available, things could have gone in a different way*”. “*Per Crucem ad Lucem*” Lodonga will become the Centre of Marian devotion for the West Nile.

### ***Prominent fathers who worked in Lodonga mission***

Fr. Valcavi surely is the founder of Lodonga. He was born in Paullo, Reggio Emilia, Italy, on 6th February 1887. He was ordained priest on 13 May 1915. On 26 June 1923 he arrived in Arua. His first safari to Aringa was in 1924 where he understood that a foundation of a mission there was necessary for two reasons; the Islamic invasion and long distance from Arua. In January 1927 Fr. Zambonardi, Provincial superior wrote a letter to Fr. Valcavi: “*The superiors of Verona wish you to go to Aringa and prepare for a new mission. In accordance*

*with the Prefect Apostolic you will be the superior of the mission still depending from Arua for the time being*". In the middle of February, with Fr. Simoncelli he went to see and explore the place for the new mission. They saw a nice hill at equal distance from Omugo and Koboko. Mr. Postlethwaite gave them the place where Lodonga is now. Thus Fr. Pietro Valcavi, with Fr. Sembiente and brother Salvadori arrived in Lodonga on 24 June 1927.

Under the leadership of Fr. Valcavi the mission took shape with different buildings for the catechumenate, schools, and a big church with three aisles constructed with 'palm tree'.

Fr. Valcavi used the strategy of making the mission a Christian village in giving land to the new Christians so that they will live around the mission. In Omugo he obliged the catechumens to have a dress for baptism. Some were not baptised because the parents were not giving the dress to their children.

Fr. Valcavi suffered a real persecution from the Muslims who were forcing the new Christians to renegade their faith in favor of Islam. "In fact hundreds of catechumens became Muslims" as reported by Fr. Sembiente. Safari was his greatest means of evangelization. He suffered black fever three times.

Fr. Isidoro Alule, who became vicar general of Arua, was one of the seminarians sent by Fr. Valcavi to become priest.

In 1938 Fr Valcavi became the Provincial superior of the Verona Fathers in Uganda.

His catechists, friends in a special way were Remigio Agotre, Augusto Dubua, Federiko Urivule, Ettore Anyoko, Giacinto Do, and Gregorio. Often the witchdoctors accused the catechists of epidemic, drought, famine, deaths and other calamities. Fr. Valcavi on 11 June 1940 was in Katigondo among his confreres as prisoner. In 1947 Fr. Pietro went to Italy for the General Chapter. After he was sent to Venegono as spiritual father of the students in theology. On 27 September 1954 he came again in Uganda to Lodonga where he died on 10 April 1959. He is buried in the cemetery of the mission with other confreres: Betti, Agostini and Fanti. He loved his people and they loved him calling him "ABBA' - our father.

He has been the first promoter of priestly vocations: Silvio Adia, Isidoro Alule, Anthony Androa, Silvio Amandua, Joseph Eka and Msgr. Martino Luluga, the present bishop of Nebbi and Lino Anguani are priests because of his concern.

**Brother Salvadori Amedeo**, born at Bagolino (Brescia-Italy) 8 October 1889, died at Kitgum on 17 September in 1971. His first destination in Uganda was Gulu where he directed the first technical school of the Vicariate. He knew many jobs and several languages. He learned Logbara in Lodonga where he reached with Fr. Valcavi in 1927. He was in different missions of North Uganda. He assisted Fr. Valcavi at his death.

**Fr. Sembiante Fernando** was born in Spresiano (Treviso-Italy) on 26 November 1902. He came in Arua at the age of 25 in January 1927. He is the third co-founder of Lodonga. He spent his life in teaching; from 1927 to 1932 he was the rector of the seminary of Arua. In 1961 to 1965 he has been the Head Master of Warr Girls Secondary School. He died in Verona on 8 December 1993. He was assigned in different places like Congo, Ethiopia, and North America.

**Fr. Sartori Bernardo** was the second founder of Lodonga. He was born in Falze' di Trevigiano (Treviso-Italy) on 20 May 1897. He founded in Troia (Foggia, Italy) a minor seminary for missionaries' vocations. He arrived at Arua in 1934. The bishop sent him to Lodonga. Fr. Valcavi handed over the mission to him with these words: "*Father, here there is nothing to do than to weep and pray. The tribe is already Muslim, and with Muslims you cannot reason. Who becomes Muslim does not pay musoro (tax) and has a month of holidays as a reward. A wave of fanaticism is invading any thing. Do you see that hill of the Kakwa? They are all lost*". After those words Fr. Valcavi burst in tears.

Fr. Sartori took courage and consecrated the mission to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces as he did in Troia for the seminary. He will build a huge sanctuary to the Mediatrix of which we are going to talk soon. Prayer and safari was the summary of his life in Lodonga. The mission was always full of hundreds of Catechumens and marriages. Fr. Sartori was not a great organiser as Fr. Valcavi but he was attracting people through his example of a holy man. Through his kindness he conquered also Muslims to the faith in a particular way a Chief of Koboko, Mr. Musa whom Fr. Bernardo baptized at the end of his life.

He started the mission of Koboko in 1952 where he built a sanctuary to the Blessed Virgin of Fatima.

In 1963 he erected another sanctuary to the Queen of the world in the new mission of Otumbari.

In 1966 he opened the mission of Arivu where he built another Church in honour of Mary Mother of the church. He came back to Otumbari in 1978. During the war he suffered a lot, and was humiliated by the rebels. That was the time when he lost the tympanic membrane of an ear because of the sound of a bullet slipping at his head. It happened at the chapel of Omugo meanwhile he was administering confession. He spent his last two years at Ombaci. He could not go back to Otumbari because of insecurity. He died early in the morning at Easter Sunday in the chapel of the college at the foot of the altar, with the lamp still lit. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1983. We can summarize his African life in these words: devotion to Blessed Mary, prayer, safari and a great love for the Logbara. “ A holy man has died” was the common comment of the crowd. He is buried in the cemetery of Ombaci mission.

**Francesco Landonio arrived in Lodonga in 1927.** He was born on 6 February 1906. He learned to be a builder in Lodonga under the teaching of Fr. Valcavi. His first building was the refectory of the mission where there is now the catechists centre. He learnt a lot by himself, autodidact in many jobs, even to repair watches. He knew many local languages, Logbara, Madi, Alur, Acholi and English. He worked in several missions of North Uganda. In Moyo he started a technical school which is now the Moyo technical school. His last place was Lacor Hospital. He went to Italy for a serious infectious disease. He died at his home in Busto Arsizio, Italy on 30 May 1981

**Brother Rodolfo Arosio** was born in Lissone (Milano-Italy) on 7 June 1896. He came to Lodonga under the invitation of Fr. Sartori for the construction of the Church to be dedicated to Blessed Virgin Mary Mediatrix. We are going to see this work later. As Bro. Landonio so Bro. Arosio was a hard worker. He built also the fathers' house of Pokea seminary when Fr. Toni Lasalandra was rector. He started the building of the Lay Helpers Centre of Maracha, which is now the Domestic science institute. He was a man of prayer and he was also faithful to his duties. He was a great example to the young missionaries.

He died in Rebbio (Como) 15 May 1988.

Fr. Mario Dal Maistro was born in Schio (Vicenza- Italy) on 16 September 1912.

Fr. Mario arrived in Uganda in 1939. His first destination was Lodonga; the place where Fr. Valcavi had worked with so much dedication, an area so deeply marked by a strong Islamic presence. Here he met Fr. Sartori who was working with a great enthusiasm. But the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War came and the missionaries were interned in Katigondo seminary on 11th June 1940. By 8th December 1941 they were allowed to go back to their missions. Fr. Mario was also back and started to help Fr. Sartori to build the church. Mario went to Koboko to cut big trees and pulled them to Lodonga using oxen.

He was a good builder and knew to do many jobs useful to a missionary. He was never seen idle. He spent his life in constructing churches, schools, houses and missions always among the Logbara and Kakwa. He began the mission of Otumbari in 1957. On 26 December 1957 he was transferred to Arua to take the place of Fr. Toni La Salandra. When Arua became the See of a new diocese detached from Gulu in 1959 Fr. Mario was appointed the procurator, a responsibility that he held for 20 years. He worked for God and the poorer Logbara, always with a smile.

He died at Ediofe on 11th July 1992. He is buried in the cemetery of Ediofe mission. He will be remembered for his human promotion of the Logbara people. He is said to have opened the present road that links Lodonga and Otumbari with the help of prisoners given by the colonial government. He started many primary schools such as in Yumbe where many muslims attended and sent Cesare to Kerwa at the Sudan border as the first teachers.

**Many other fathers** worked in Lodonga like Fr. Ramponi Egidio, who wrote also a storybook about the Logbara; Fr. Pietro Vignato whom the old people still remember; Fr. Agostini Giuseppe who never wanted to be superior, he was a bit strict in his approaches with people in the apostolate; Fr. Silvio Adia a Diocesan priest. Others worked in other fields like education of which we are going to speak later on. There are few others who are still alive.

## *History of the Basilica*

Besides the influence of the Protestants, backed up by the government, Uganda was also besieged by Islam coming from Sudan. Divine providence had prepared two exceptional persons to stop this landslide. The first was Fr. Valcavi, a man with a burning zeal for souls. Combined with an extraordinary spirit of sacrifice, ready to put with any hardship. The other man was Fr. Bernardo Sartori, a man who overcame obstacles that had defeated all others through his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. From his biography we quoted his discussion with Msgr. Negri, when he was planning to build Lodonga Basilica.

“ The idea to build a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary had really put wings to Fr. Sartori’s feet. Fr. Sartori wanted Brother Arosio to come and help to build it. This is what Bro. Arosio has written about it “ After a long talk with Fr. Sartori, I had really clear in mind the shape of the church. I set out to prepare the materials. At least 750.000 bricks were necessary for it. So we started laying bricks by the thousands, drying and baking them; then we needed stones for the foundations, and poles for the scaffolding. Thus we hired a crowd of workers of all kinds; all people trained in the mission since its opening. But when Msgr. Negri saw the plan was frightened. “A church of this size? Are you crazy? This is not Rome or Milan... cut down the size.” “ My Lord, please, do not look at the plan, because I am not an engineer ” argued Fr. Sartori, “ the church will not be so large after all. Yes, the sanctuary is large.. that’s all”- “ I see you are not an engineer, father, but the measurements are written out here clearly, 12x 45x 25 metres, I can see that...”

Fr. Bernardo did not give in easily. He told the bishop that the foundations had already been laid, and even quoted the Bible, when David prepared a lot of materials for the Temple, because “ The building to be erected for the Lord must be extraordinarily large, such that it will call for the admiration of all people around” (1 Chr 12). “ My Lord, -Fr. Sartori went on- “ The African people are similar to the Oriental people: they believe more with their eyes than with their ears. Seeing a large church, they will think of the greatness of God”.

Msgr. Negri was speechless. The reasons that Fr. Sartori presented were so compelling that he didn’t dare to object them. And so he concluded: “ Well

start, leave out the sanctuary for the moment, the rest is even too large. We shall see later on”. “ My Lord, you know very well that since we came here the Muslim fanaticism has decreased; they even complain that after 20 years of promises for school, they cannot read and write yet. So let us look to the future and prepare a worthy church. I will not trouble you for funds, as I will write to all my benefactors, pleading for support. Just sign the plan as it is, My Lord”.

Fr. Bernardo had presented the cause so well, but Msgr. Angelo Negri was not easily moved, so he concluded: “ For the time being, start work and later on we shall see.. We might have to lower all the building as it looks too high”. Msgr. Negri then blessed the first stone of what was going to be first Basilica in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Under the guidance of Bro. Arosio, the work went on well and fast. But as the walls went up, it appeared clear that such a big church with a small sanctuary would look like a crippled child. So Fr. Sartori went back to Msgr. Negri, accompanied by Bro. Arosio.

“ My Lord, we cannot leave out the sanctuary nor reduce its size...” Msgr. Negri, being a realistic man, was still of the opinion that it was too large, but because he loved his missionaries, and didn’t want to disappoint them, he just replied: “ Go on as you think best”.

Some time after, when the bishop came for the opening, seeing the church so packed with Christians, he whispered: “ Praise the Lord, that Fr. Bernardo had a harder head than mine.” We must add here an important detail. Msgr. Negri had come to know the government plan for the West Nile. This piece of land was to provide workers for the sugar factory at Lugazi, and it was set apart to be a Muslim territory. Both these plans had to fail, thanks to the people like Fr. Sartori and others in the area”.

All this has been written in the book of the life of Fr. Sartori: “ *La Sfida d’un uomo in ginocchio*”.

This church was renewed in 1960 to prepare it to be approved as Basilica by the Holy See. Fr. Sartori was in Koboko. Fr. Mario Ruggieri with Bro. Fanti Vittorio changed the floor of the church with terrazzo work. The presbytery was also changed according to the new directives from Rome on Liturgy. Bro. Fanti decorated the presbytery with a nice vault with a marvelous design of a beehive.



A complete ceiling was put throughout the church. Bro. Fochesato constructed the choir with a winding staircase.

A letter prepared by Fr. Sartori and Fr. Mario Ruggieri, signed by bishop Angelo Tarantino was sent to the Holy See. Pope John the XXIII on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1961 sent to the Bishop the parchment of the approval: “Lodonga Minor Basilica of Sultana of Africa”.

The war of 1979 caused great destruction on the Basilica. It was necessary to repair and renew the Basilica. The work started in 1990 under the supervision of Bro. Udeschini Giuseppe and Fr. Toni. The roof was changed completely from tiles and poles to a steel work and iron sheets. The decorations remained the same but refined by Mr. Makario Diku. It is now a masterpiece of Romanesque style as a monument to the Blessed Virgin. I think Fr. Sartori can be happy from heaven.

### ***Going back to Alur: Nyapea***

There was a great need for another mission among the Alur of upper Okoro. A good number of Christians were there too far from Angal.

On 9th December 1932, the day following the solemn benediction and inauguration of the church of Angal it was decided to divide the vast sub-district of the Alur with a new foundation of a mission on the mountains of Okoro.

Nyapea was chosen as a suitable place. Nyapea is situated 10 miles from the Congo boarder, at 1500 m above sea level. The position is an enchanting one surrounded by green mountains. The missionaries were attracted by this little heaven. At that time when this report was given, there were already 30.000 inhabitants, of strong and sound people.

The territory was divided in five counties each one under a chief: Kango, Warr, Zeu, Nyapea and Paidha.

The first missionaries appointed for the new mission were: Fr. Vignato Pietro, Fr. Domenico Spazian and Bro. Emilio Battistata who was nicknamed by the confreres “The cat” for his ability in climbing scaffoldings for the construction of buildings and church towers as that of Ediofe (1932). They started soon

building hutment for dwelling, some huts for schools and catechumenate and Church.

Angal gave to her first daughter a dowry of 2,750 Catholics. The apostolic work brought soon some fruits. In April 1933 some old catechumens could be baptized.

Some few years later good buildings in bricks substituted the huts. The primary school was built according to the government rules with dormitories. In 1937 the Catholics were 5000. In those 8 years of the mission other missionaries went to help Nyapea like Bro. Federico, Bonalumi, Bro. Enrico Lorandi, Fr. Campi and Fr. Francesco Saverio Magagnotto.

Verona sisters arrived in Nyapea in 1936 to direct the girls' Primary School. Their names are Dirce Salvi, Raffaella Ferrario, Nicolina Minesso and Adolfa Parati.

As for the other missions Nyapea suffered for the II World War when the fathers were interned to Katigondo. In 1941 Msgr. Negri came here and remained for two years as in exile. He could not go back to Gulu because Fr. Hughes Arthur, a White Father, as administrator of Gulu, occupied Gulu. How did things go around?

### ***Attempted coup***

Meanwhile at Katigondo in exile, Msgr. Negri taught to have a Synod with the missionaries. While Msgr. Negri was suffering and working in these difficulties, his pro-vicar Fr. Hughes was plotting to take away his mission from him. Taking advantage of the prevailing anti-Italian climate because of the war, he planned a take-over in the collaboration with the Governor Mitchell. Not only would he have been glad to see the Italians out of Uganda, but hoped to replace Msgr. Negri as bishop. In the autumn 1941 Charles Dundas replaced Mitchell. The change of attitude was soon noticed.... He told Fr. Hughes to revise the dealing with the Italian missionaries. On 27th November Fr. Hughes brought the missionaries the news that they were free. On 5th December Dundas went personally to greet the missionaries. They could return to their missions. Thus on

6th December the first group of missionaries left Katigondo for West Nile and on the 8th December the others.

Msgr. Negri was still on his way home, when he received a telegram telling him to go to Kampala immediately. At Masindi the DC very politely read the content of the telegram. He was told he could not go back to his Vicariate, as Fr. Hughes was still in charge. "But how can this be, said the bishop, since I was the only one not forced to go to Katigondo? You know well how I chose to go there myself to be near my missionaries!" "My Lord Bishop, I know all this, and I admire you for what you did, still this telegram is from London. I can only express my personal regret". The truth, which came out, was that Fr. Hughes wanted to take his place, and he was making use of the political situation for this.

At Nyapea Bishop Negri was given a small wing of the house by the White Fathers who were there in the place of the Verona fathers because of the war.

Msgr. Negri remained in Nyapea for two years as in exile till when Fr. Huges was transferred elsewhere.

In May 1944 the Colonial Office in London authorized the White Fathers to return to their missions and the Comboni Fathers resumed the full responsibility of their missions. Thus bishop Negri was reinstated in his office in full freedom.

Bishop Negri took the opportunity in Nyapea to work on the rules for the Sisters of Mary Immaculate. All these information, with little adjustment, have been taken from "Short Life of Bishop Angelo Negri" by Fr. Lorenzo Gaiga, translated in English, Gulu, 1994, printed by Catholic Press, Gulu.

### ***Worthy Appreciation's***

Mr John Hall succeeded Mr Dundas in 1945. He wanted to know the missionaries personally and followed the policy of his predecessor, using kindness towards them. In fact he wrote: "They are peaceful workers of the Gospel, fully engaged in uplifting the people, morally, culturally and socially".

We read in the mission diary of Gulu: "On 13th June 1947, the solemnity of the Sacred Hearth, Archbishop David Matthew, Apostolic Delegate to British Africa, made his entry in Gulu. In the morning of the 14th June 1947 consecrated

the Cathedral, dedicating it to St. Joseph, the Patron Saint of the universal Church. On Sunday 15th he celebrated a solemn mass in the presence of the Governor General of Uganda Sir John H. Hall. At 3p.m. Msgr. Matthew convoked in the bishop's house all the Comboni Fathers and Brothers, telling them: "I am pleased to see that the Verona Missionaries, among all the missionaries working in Africa, have a keen ability to become fond of the local people and enjoy their sympathy. This is one of the precious qualities you have inherited from that great apostle of Africa, Bishop Daniel Comboni, one of the greatest missionaries of the last Century. His zeal has made you to overcome every obstacle and to day you have in front of you a magnificent bloom of apostolic works".

### ***Fr. Primo Biolo: Count of Nyapea***

The Confreres nicknamed him "the count of Nyapea" for his long stay in this mission and for his love towards it. His great work remains always the building of the new church through the great effort of Bro. Ferrari Andrea who executed the work. When this new church was inaugurated, 92% of the population was Catholic. The Nyapea College, directed by the Sacred Heart Brothers is still now a pride for the people of Nyapea. Bro. Betti from Arua was transferred to Nyapea on February 1952 for the construction of St. Aloysius' College. From this mission came out some Diocesan priests. Fr. Emilio Onegua is the first among them. Fr. Biolo took care of these priests. He was saying: "We missionaries should become useless if we want that the Ugandan Church should walk on its own legs". He started also a modern dispensary, which now is a great hospital. He was developmental minded.

He was active with the Xaverians.

His work and his influence on the people were not appreciated well by the Obote regime. In fact on 17 January 1967 with other nine missionaries was expelled from Uganda, as a "*persona non grata*" Fr. Biolo never took part in politics. His popularity was the only reason for the expulsion. He never came back to Uganda.

## *The era of expansion: new missions opened*

### **Uleppi among the Madi of Arua-1948**

“Since 1934 it was in plan to open a mission among the Madi of Okollo. These people have a language nearer to the Logbara than the Madi Moyo. It had a population of 15.000 at that time. Several difficulties delayed the erection of the mission. The right times came. The first priest to start this mission was the Diocesan priest Fr. Santino Kudu. But he left soon the mission because of illness and died in Moyo. Fr. Donation Bala succeeded him in the parish. Fr. Donation can be considered the founder of this mission. Fr. Bala was ordained in Gulu on 24th December 1938 at Christmas Vigil. He has been the first priest of Moyo and of West Nile. Fr. Silvio Amandua was transferred from Uleppi to Arua in February 1952.

When Msgr. Tarantino was installed as bishop on 13th June 1959, Fr. Bala received from the Holy See the title of MONSIGNOR. From this parish came out few priests among whom Bishop Frederic Drandua who succeeded Bishop Angelo Tarantino in 1986. From the Clergy Bulletin we read: “By decree of His Lordship, dated 12th September 1963, Rev. Fr. Luigi Sacco has been nominated Parish Priest of the parish of Uleppi”. In 1972 the catechists were 29 and 18 chapels. The population was 25.683 of which 14.336 were Catholics.

With the erection of the new diocese of Nebbi (1994) Uleppi went under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Nebbi. It seems that this choice was not appropriate because of the language of the people different from the Alur and of administration of the county depending from Arua.

### ***Maracha: The people of Grasshoppers***

The beginning of this mission can be fixed on the day in which Msgr. Angelo Negri threw the miraculous medal of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the hill called Lurua. He was going on safari from Arua to Lodonga passing through Maracha. In throwing the Medal he said: “The new mission let be here”. It was in the beginning of 1948. Another version says that the mission should have been built near the house of the chief Meskini Miriadua in Bora, the right place called

Maracha. Bora was one of the first chapels built in the area may be about 1920. The elders met with government authorities to decide and choose the place to be given to the missionaries of Ediofe. The Christians of Bora, instigated by somebody, refused to give the land for the mission. Instead a pagan elder offered his land for the Catholic Mission. The land is where the mission is now called Lurua. Alija was the man who gave the land near his home. His son, late Mussa became the sub-chief of Nyadri division.

The mission of Maracha was erected in 15<sup>th</sup> November 1949. Fr Antonio Antonioli and Bro. Palmiro Pagani were appointed as the first missionaries. The Bro. started to prepare materials for the buildings. A permanent kiln was built and a big shed house to lay bricks and Roman tiles. In 1950 Fr. Aristodemo Maccagnan and Bro. Calderola Luigi, nicknamed Bijiot succeeded Fr. Antonioli and Bro. Palmiro.

In the beginning of 1952 a long house was started that was meant to be used as a church. Next came the fathers' house that was finished at the end of 1952. Both the buildings were roofed with Roman tiles. In December 1952 Fr. Antonio (Toni) La Salandra arrived, just one year after his priestly ordination. Meanwhile the foundation of the new church was dug. There was no means for transporting material for the construction. Women were organised to transport the ironstones from Ovojjo, where the chief's house is now to the church. There were three donkeys to transport the sand from the valley to the site of the church. In February Msgr. Cesana blessed the first corner stone at the presence of the three missionaries, of the chief Meskini Miriadia and a great crowd of people. The chief made a speech in Logbara in a low voice, according to the custom of the time, and the catechist Ores was repeating in a loud voice in Logbara. For that occasion the chief gave meat for all the people. Fr. Maccagnan prepared the parchment, written in Latin and put it in an ampoule. The mission was dedicated to St. Joseph. There were already a good number of chapels in the territory with catechists. I remember Leto Azaa of Kamadi, Emilio of Ambidro, Oreste of Onzilabori, Romualdo of Oleba, Kassiano of Amanipi, Emmanuel of Bora, Romano and Isaia of Lurua, Emmanuel of Olovu and Oreste the head catechist who was accompanying the father on safari. Bro. Calderola was removed from Maracha to Gulu when the construction was only two meters high. The work was

left to the young priest who was also removed from Maracha (16<sup>th</sup> August 1953) to Arua when the construction was near to the roof. Bro. Felice Gradante came to cover the church.

### ***Faithful Servant***

The catechist Oreste married Pia but they did not have children. His relatives instigated him to take another wife as other men do very often. But Oreste remained firm in his convictions and refused any temptation saying: “Our Christian faith forbids a second wife. Our marriage is sacred and cannot be divided. If the Lord wants to give us children I shall be happy, otherwise his will be done”. Ten years passed from the celebration of their wedding when the Lord heard their prayer. The first son came and they named him Joseph; and then the second named Jacob and then Assunta and Lawrence. Oreste and Pia lived in fidelity and love till the end of their life. They are resting one besides the other in the cemetery of the mission.

This example at the beginning of the parish of Maracha was more than a sermon for the Christians.

### ***Happenings in Maracha***

Fr. Zambonardi arrived in this place in 1920, he sent catechists in the region as at Amanipi, Olovu, Oleba, Offude, Kamadi. When Maracha was opened the Christians were about 3000 in the whole county.

In 1958 Fr. Maccagnan opened a dispensary with the help of Miss Mina Pandolfi, who later on started the maternity that actually became the present hospital.

During this period some primaries also were opened like Kijoro, Ambidro, Oleba Azipi, Olovu, Atratraka. A junior school was opened in 1958. In March 1953 the missionaries occupied the new fathers’ house at Lurua leaving the huts where they lived for a year. In the late evening of that same day the Blessed Sacrament was transferred to the temporary church from the grass roofed church. The temporary church was what is now a part of the CTC (Catechists’ Training

Centre at times known as Pastoral Training Centre). Fr. Maccagnan was holding the tabernacle; I was holding a common umbrella and Bro. Luigi a lamp. All this was done in secret and with haste. When Fr. Toni was transferred to Ediofe in August 1953, Fr. Mario Ruggieri came to take his place.

Fr. Maccagnan was succeeded by Fr. Joseph Zeno Picotti in 1961 meanwhile Fr. Simoncelli Pietro came also in Maracha, a place that he knew very well since 1920. In 1962 a new missionary, Fr. Salvano Renzo came to help Fr. Picotti. Under Fr. Picotti the maternity became the hospital of Maracha under the direction of Mina Pandolfi. The first doctors who served the hospital were Mr Enrico Populin and Mr. Nando Ghimenton.

The number of the Christians increased extraordinarily about 90.000, so that in January 25<sup>th</sup> 1965 Olovo parish was erected.

In 1968 Fr. Toni succeeded to Fr. Picotti as parish priest of Maracha where Fr. Martinelli was the curate. In 1969 Fr. Domenici Aldo came to replace Fr. Martinelli Marco. This was the period post-Vatican Council II. Thus there was a ferment of renovation in Liturgy and evangelisation, of renewal of liturgical Rites. The greatest innovation was of the Christian Initiation with the restoration of the Catechumenate. The new meaning of the church as “The people of God” introduced a revolution in the responsibility of the laity with the introduction of the non - ordained ministries. Thus the formation of councils at all levels took place in the diocese with the participation of the laity. The church gave to the laity the power that was due to it by the sacrament of baptism. It took a long time of teaching to make the laity to take their responsibility in the life of the church.

Meanwhile in Maracha in May 1969 Fr. Toni started the Association of the Lay Helpers of which something will be said later on.

In January 1971 by surprise Amin Dada made a *coup d'etat* overthrowing the UPC government. This event brought some perplexity in the Catholic Church. In fact soon after the Dictator declared Uganda “Islamic State” with consequences in public affairs and in religious matter. Sure the Muslims took this opportunity for their advantage. As the Obote regime expelled some missionaries on political basis under the pressure of the Protestants so also Amin will send away some missionaries on religious basis.



During this period of insecurity the missionaries worked harder. In Maracha this has been the time of growth of Christian Communities with the construction of many permanent chapels, aided schools and village schools in any corner possible. It can be said that the Catholics in West Nile were better off than the Protestants who were boosting under Obote regime. We can also say that some missionaries were expelled under both regimes.

In 1973 the church was renewed. The roof was raised up with vents. The presbytery was beautified with terrazzo work. Bro. Gelmini Ottorino worked night and day. Bro. Vittorio Fanti decorated the church and painted the beautiful Crucifix, so venerated by the Christians of Maracha.

In 1974 Fr. Salvano came in Maracha and took over from Fr. Toni the leadership of the mission. He went on with the same program begun by the former parish priest. At that time in Maracha there were 35 catechists with 30 chapels. The population was 34.327 of which 21,484 were Catholics.

In 1979 the war stopped any pastoral activity. The majority of the population went to exile in Congo. The hospital was looted partly by soldiers and partly by the Christians around the mission. The Lay Helpers took refuge in Ariwara in Congo. The "Liberators" who took possession of the mission continuing looting and destruction killed few Christians, who did not escape.

The Blessed Sacrament was profaned; sacred vestments were used as dresses, pyxes and chalices used for drinking beer. The house of the Sisters and the Lay Helpers were burnt up. The cross and the statue of our Lady of the chapel of the sisters were reduced in pieces. The reconstruction started only in 1982 when Fr. Toni came in December. Soon after, Fr. Tonino Pasolini who took the leadership of the mission followed him. He built the PLC and the library. He called Mr. Diko to decorate the church with new gospel pictures

In 1983 Fr. Toni started the CTC for the formation of the catechists of the parish; after it will become a Diocesan CTC with Fr. Martinelli.

Another great achievement was the opening of the "Domestic Science Institute" for girls in 1986. The aim was to give an integral feminine formation to women.

In 1986 Fr. Toni was transferred to Lodonga mission; Fr. Dellagiacomma replaced him in the direction of the Lay Helpers. Fr. Antonio Spugnardi came as a

curate, and then became parish priest with Fr. Ruggieri as curate. He will hand over the parish to the Diocesan Clergy on 1<sup>st</sup>. May 1992. Fr. Ojobile Stephen was the first Diocesan priest to be parish priest of Maracha. Fr. Ayu Arkangelo succeeded him as parish priest till at the present time (2003) and from July 2003 Fr Kasto Amudra became the Parish Priest.

Maracha has been a mission of priestly vocations. At least 15 priests came out from this mission; Msgr. Kasto Adeti, the present Vicar General (2003), is one of them.

### ***Fr. Aristodemo Maccagnan: the true founder of Maracha***

Fr. Maccagnan was born in Torreglia (Padova) on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1905. Soon after his ordination he came in Uganda to Arua in 1933. He worked in Ediofe mission up to 1939. In 1946 he was appointed H/M to the VTTC of Lodonga because he had the Colonial Course certificate. Afterwards he became the Supervisor of the Catholic Schools in West Nile. In 1951 he was appointed superior and parish priest of Maracha mission till 1961. Under his leadership Christianity increased very much. The diary of the mission says: “1951: 200 New Christians came in the mission to complete the Christian instruction. At Easter the communicants are more than 2.000. In September 1951 the foundations of the church were laid down according to the plan made by Bro. Biasin: 41 x 11 m. Every day hundreds of girls, women, men and youth come from the villages to work and help the church. At the end of 1951 1.020 baptisms were administered”. In 1952 was the boom of bush-schools and primary schools in Maracha mission. The father obliged the parents to send all the children to school.

In 1954 the parish church was inaugurated. The Christians gave 34.800 working days. The “Legion of Mary” was flourishing. In 1954 the “Peregrinatio Mariae” took place with a great participation of people.

Fr. Maccagnan has been the missionary of *safari visiting continuously the Christianity* at home. He knew very well the Logbara language, Acholi, Alur Kiswahili and Luganda. In 1969 he was at Ombaci from where in 1975 was expelled by the Amin regime. He died at Naivasha in Kenya, on 26 October in 1978.

These are the missionaries who became parish priests after Fr. Maccagnan: Picotti Zeno, Toni La Salandra, Giuliano Oricchi, Salvano Enzo, Tonino Pasolini, Antonio Spugnardi who handed over the mission to the Diocesan Clergy.

### ***Pakele: the mission of the rock***

Mgr. Angelo Negri died in Arua on 11th November 1949. Before his death the bishop had decided already the opening of this mission in a place among the rocks where serpents and scorpions had their homes.

In 1928 a chapel was blessed in Pakele. Bro. Angelo Frigerio constructed it in bricks. This mission has an importance because, in a way, revived the former mission of Palaro. (Medeghini).

Valerio Bua was one of the first catechists and can be considered the founder of Pakele. This is a typical example of a lay person who went ahead before the missionaries to start evangelisation. Fr. Milani Gino was appointed the first parish priest by bishop Cesana. Fr. Bertuzzi Guido reached here in 1950 as a curate. Soon after Bro. Felice Gradante joined them for the construction of the church. Fr. Silvio Adia was transferred to Pakele from Arua in February 1952 where Fr. Paravisi was alone. In 1965 Fr. Santinoli Antonio was parish priest helped by Fr. Zuani Pietro. In 1968 Bro. Rossignoli Mario went to Pakele to help building the chapel of Zaipi. In 1972 the catechists were 13, 7 chapels and the population was about 25.683 of which the Catholics were 14.336. Pakele is in East Madi bordering on to the South with the Acholi. Pakele was detached from Moyo.

### ***Terego: the people of the mountains***

This mission is situated near the foot of mountain Eti (Jebel Wati). A legend says that the Terego people originated from a leper woman and an Acholi wanderer. Hence the name Teregot an Acholi word meaning the people of the mountain.

Bishop John Baptist Cesana succeeded to Msgr. Negri in 1950. He began to open missions in his Vicariate, thanks to a good number of new missionaries. There was a difficulty to send missionaries to Sudan for political reason. Uganda benefited of this situation. Fr. Ercole De Marchi was sent to open the Terego mission on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1952. In the end of the year Fr. Spugnardi went to help him. The new mission was detached from Ediofe parish, the mother of all Logbara missions. As Maracha was the first mission in the Maracha County so Terego the first mission in Terego County the place was in the valley that resulted not healthy. Thus the mission was moved to the hill site near the main road. As usual the custom of those times the missionaries lived under huts. Only after some years Bro. Fochesato, who was supervising the works from Onbaci, built the fathers' house.

Fr. Donaziano Bala, Diocesan priest, succeeded Fr. De Marchi about 1955. Fr. Donaziano has been the first Diocesan priest of West Nile, a Madi from Pakele side. He was ordained priest in Gulu on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1938 helped by Fr. Jenasio Jakech, Alur from Angal.

After Fr. Jakech, Fr. Silvio Amandua took the leadership of the mission. The Clergy Bulletin No 6, September 1960, reports: "By the Episcopal decree, dated 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1960, the Rev. Fr. Silvio Amandua has been appointed Parish Priest of Terego, succeeding to the Rev. Fr. Jenasio. He is helped by the Rev. Fr. Jovenale Gale, whose particular task is to supervise the school of the Parish." Angelo Tarantino, Bishop of Arua. Fr. Jovenale Gale was a Relly from Obongi. Terego was the second mission taken by the Diocesan Clergy.

The sisters of Mary Immaculate arrived in Terego to take charge of the girls' primary school.

At 1972 there were 26 catechists and 18 chapels. The population was around 21.833, the Catholics being 14.482. A part of the Terego count was under the care of Lodonga mission.

### ***Warr: daughter of Nyapea***

The Catholics of Nyapea mission increased very rapidly so that a necessity was felt to open a mission at the extreme North West of the Alur land, at

Warr or Agerimach. Warr was opened on 1<sup>st</sup>. January 1952 Fr. Adelio Dall'Amico with Fr. Biolo Primo and Bro. Farina Giuseppe are considered the founder of that mission. A fathers' house was soon built and the church. Meanwhile the Bro. started a big coffee plantation. The mission was swarming with catechumens, workers and Christians and school children. The income from the coffee farm was helping to feed the catechumens. Bro. Farina was used to visit the Christians at home especially during Sunday. He liked to help the old people. Bro. Giuseppe died in Warr on 15th. July 1981. He arrived in Warr in 1961 where he spent 20 years. He used to say to the superiors: "If you want good African Combonian missionaries, tell the formator to form the aspirants in having a great love for Jesus and a great devotion towards the Eucharistic Mystery and to have Him as their greatest Friend".

At the end of 1953 another young missionary came in Warr mission: Fr. Gusmeroli Ferdinando. He started his work with a great enthusiasm of his youth. His main work was among the young who soon saw in him their friend. He had a particular care for the catechists in whom he saw the future of the church in West Nile. He tried to send boys to the seminary for future priests. He also cared for the formation of leaders, the pastoral agents and human promotion.

In 1972 the population was 28.890 of which 21.269 were Catholics. The catechists were 33 with 19 chapels.

### ***Fr. Adelio Dall'Amico: hard working missionary***

He was born in Thiene, Vicenza Italy on 31<sup>st</sup>.July 1906. He has been in Sudan and in many missions of North Uganda.

In Arua they still remember the great job he did in organising the technical school. He was very active in the formation of catechists and local Clergy, and this was one of the pillars of his entire apostolic ministry.

In 1951 he was sent to open a new mission at Warr, formerly attached to Nyapea parish. He began this new work with very few material means: he formed a good and lively Christian community. He worked in this mission for 15 years. He built the parish church, the fathers' house, schools and chapels and the Way of the Cross. He was a very good teacher to the young newly arrived missionaries,

helping them in learning the language and the local culture of the Alur. He worked for human promotion. Speaking to confreres he would say: “There is plenty of land here; all we need is to teach people how to make a good use of it in order to boost production”. His main concern was however education for the people, that is schools. Thus he supervised the construction of buildings of many primary schools and a very good technical school in the Centre of the mission. In 1966 he went away from Warr to Angal till the end of his life that happened on 28 September 1992. He is buried in the cemetery of the mission of Angal, near other missionaries who humbly and lovingly spread the gospel among the Alur people.

### ***Pakwach: mission among the people of the River***

This mission was detached from Angal on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1952. It is situated along the Albert Nile among the Jonam, which means the people of the River. They are Alur but they are proud to specify that they are not as the other Alur. Before being declared mission Pakwach chapel goes back to the early beginning of Angal. A Munyoro catechist was sent there from Omach. The missionaries who did a good deal of work were Frs. Leone Ventutrin, Bruno Marcabruni and Bro. Bonalumi Federico. About ten years after, at the time of the opening of the mission came Fr Cappelletti Carlo and in 1953 Bro. Battistata joined him. The fathers' house was already built at that time. The Brother began the foundations of the church making very deep trenches because the soil was too sandy. He used all his ability to put down very solid foundations.

In 1960 arrived Fr Campochiaro Gennaro who remained here up to 1967 when he was expelled by the Obote regime. He loved to be with youth. In fact he organised the “Xaverians Movement” that attracted hundreds of youth. This could have been the reason of his expulsion. Fr. Sala Luigi followed him as curate.

At the departure of Fr. Cappelletti, Fr. Fiorante Antonio was sent to replace him in 1976. He was born in Civitavecchia del Sannio on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1925. He was killed in this mission on 3<sup>rd</sup>. May 1979. He was transferred from Parombo mission to Pakwach as superior and parish priest.

Fr. Silvio Dal Maso was appointed to Pakwach in 1972 as curate. He as Fr. Fiorante had been in Sudan among the Denka. Together they were expelled

from Sudan by the Islamic regime. Before coming to Pakwach he was parish priest at Zeu. On 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1979 he was murdered together with Fr. Fiorante. Fr. Bono said of him: "He was a true missionary, a man of the old formation, dedicated completely to the cause of God". He had a special care of the Altar servers, Catholic Action movement and the poor, says Fr. Sala.

The sisters of Mary Immaculate arrived in Pakwach during the leadership of Fr. Cappelletti to take over the Girls Primary School.

### ***The two victims of Pakwach***

This is a summary of a report written by Fr. Dellagiocoma 14.5.1979.

"On Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> of May about 4 p.m. some soldiers (of Amin in retreat) came to the mission at Pakwach asking for petrol. The Father (Antonio) answered that there was no petrol. But they went into the store and found a drum of kerosene, which they took. Towards evening the sisters heard dogs barking and shouting to the house of the fathers. Some body came to their gate. Being locked, the soldiers did not dare to unlock it. On Friday morning, Teresa, the woman in charge of the catechumens and sister Paola, the superior, found the church still closed at 7 o'clock. Then they went to the fathers' house and saw the main door opened. Entering the room of Fr. Fiorante, they saw his body on the floor on his back, naked, with a rope tied at his neck not tightly, a wound at a year and another wound on the opposite side of the temple. His face was black but no sign of blood. On the back some there were signs of beating. The rope was tied to a foot of the bed.

Fr. Silvio was lying down on the floor with the face upwards, covered only with a flannel. They tied his feet with a string together. A bullet perforated his neck from one side to another. There was much blood on the floor. On the left hand there was the Rosary. The rooms were all looted completely. The sister dressed the two bodies as she could. Meanwhile many people came. Some soldiers were keeping the people far away. They decided to bury them at Angal mission. About 11 in the morning they put the two fathers on a pick-up with mattresses, proceeded to Angal with escort of some soldiers. Fr Dall'Amico received them. The two corps were brought in the church in front of the altar. The

Verona sisters washed the corps with bandages around the wounds. Meanwhile some workers dug one grave for the two coffins. At 5 p.m. Msgr. Paolo Jalcebo, Frs. Dall'Amico, Bono and Negrini concelebrated the Mass with a great participation of 500 people. Towards 6.30 evening the two coffins were buried side by side. They were buried near the tomb of Bro. Co Nicola.”

### ***10th Anniversary of the tragic death of Fr Silvio Dal Maso and Fr Antonio Fiorante.***

(From Dialogo May 1989)

Ten years have already passed since the death of our beloved Confreres, Fr. Silvio and Fr. Antonio. We thought of taking the chance of this anniversary in order to celebrate it in a special way by talking a little about our missionary life, so much so that this year we are going to hand over Pakwach parish to the Diocesan Clergy. The idea has been welcomed by the Parish Council, and arrangements were made to this purpose.... On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May a good many people attended the first Mass, during which father Bono preached about the lives of the two fathers. At the 10 o'clock Mass Fr Carmelo, the parish priest, spoke about the meaning of being true shepherds, ready to give up their lives for the people entrusted to them. (Fr. Carmelo Del Rio).

### ***Koboko: The Kakua***

We have seen that the first missionary to reach Koboko has been Fr. Zambonardi in 1920. He put a catechist at the chief's Kenyi home. From this tribe some new Christians were sent to Sudan as catechists.

In West Nile all counties had their mission. So it was reasonable that also this county could have its own mission. This event coincided with the erection of the hierarchy in Uganda in 1953. Therefore Msgr. Cesana became bishop of Gulu *sui juris*. At this date the Apostolic Vicariate of Equatorial Nile of Gulu ended. Now it is the diocese of Gulu.

The mission of Koboko started on 7th January in the year 1953. In 1951 the Catholics were about 3.000. The population of the Kakua in Koboko was



about 15.000; the Protestants were about 2.000. Half of the population was Muslim. A prominent sheikh was Sakari who will give much trouble to the missionaries, but at the end, after the war of 1979, he became a defender of the Catholic mission. In 1951 on 20th January, the county Council approved the request for a new mission for the Catholics. The members asked from the missionaries to start also a Secondary school in Koboko. In January 1952 Bro. Giuseppe Farina chose also the site for a farming school. Afterwards Bro. De Rossi took the direction of this school, which will be closed by Obote in 1964. A big hut was constructed for the first church. Fr. Sartori Bernardo was appointed parish priest transferred from Lodonga. In fact Koboko was detached from it, where Fr. Sartori with Bro. Arosio built the church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of all graces. Also here Fr. Sartori will build another sanctuary to Mary of Fatima. Bro. Landonio first and then Bro. De Rossi Ludovico (Vico) helped the father to construct the church. Fr. Bernardo himself decorated it with flowers and painted marble. The corner stone was laid down on 15th August 1954. Meanwhile Fr. Sartori intensified his safaris so that even children of Muslims in a good number became Christians. In 1979 the population was about 45.000: the Catholics were 13.450 and the Muslims 22.000.

In the same year 1953 Fr. Cifaldi Francesco began a “Junior School” which will soon be changed in Senior Secondary school. Under the leadership of Fr. Cifaldi this school will become one of the best in Uganda. The Father loved the pupils and the teacher. He was accused to be too strict in discipline. That was the only way to bring the school at that standard. The teachers and the students also loved him. Fr. Cifaldi could manage to restore the school even during the rebellion in the country. He defended the school also during the Amin regime. He obtained help from the ministry, soon after the war, to rebuild the school; meanwhile other schools found obstacles to do it.

These are other Fathers who worked in Koboko mission: Dalfovo Alberto, Aldo Domenici, and Renzo Salvano. Fr. Benedetti and Fr. Aldino Mirandola reopened the mission after the war in 1986 followed by Fr. Santinoli Antonio.

Koboko was handed over to the Diocesan Clergy in 1994. Fr. Ajusi Luigi became the first Diocesan Parish Priest of Koboko. After him the following

succeeded him: Fr. Valentine Matua, Mario Andiako and Fr. Simon Obatu is the present parish priest.

### ***Fr. Menghe***

Fr. Cifaldi was nicknamed “Menghe” because of his stout body and toughness. Fr. Carmine Francesco Cifaldi was born at Montaguto (Avellino-Italy) on 8th October 1921. Fr. Cifaldi was born for education; in fact throughout his missionary life worked for the education. The school was at his heart. He realized his missionary vocation in the formation of the youth in the school, which was his joy and his cross, and for it he died when he understood that he could not come to Uganda to lead his school of Koboko. He died in Verona, at the hospital, on 28 of June 1983. Fr. Sartori recruited him for the missionary seminary in Troia. He was loved by him and worked with him in the construction of the mission of Koboko.

He came in Uganda in 1951. For two years he remained in Moyo. From 1953 became the founder and director of Koboko Senior Secondary School. At his death the ex-students wanted to erect a memorial in remembrance of Fr. Cifaldi. The circumstances of the guerrilla-war did not permit it. Soon after the death of the Father a letter came to Verona written by Adomati Chris Acidri in the name of all the students: “In this corner of Uganda Father Cifaldi saw the seed of the Kingdom of God. From this school have come out outstanding citizens who serve the nation. Koboko pagan and unknown, has become Christian and well known on the map of Uganda because of Father Cifaldi Francesco”

### ***Otumbari: a controversial mission***

“The Church of Otumbari, dedicated to “Corpus Christi” has been erected into a parochial Church, with the territory detached from Lodonga Parish, since March 1<sup>st</sup> 1960.

The main reason for the erection of the new Parish is that most of the Catholics are living within Otumbari area. Besides that it will help also to promote the conversion of the strong number of pagans still remaining, before they fall a prey of Mohamedanism. The Rev. Fr. A. La Salandra has been appointed Parish

Priest, having as curate Rev. Fr. A. Androa. The Rev. Fr. Mich has been appointed “*Vicarius Substitutus*” of Lodonga while waiting for the appointment of the new Parish Priest”. (Clergy Bulletin, No 4 March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1960)

### ***The new diocese of Arua***

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1958, the Holy See erected the new Diocese of Arua, detached from Gulu. Arua comprised the two districts of Madi and West Nile, the territory on the West Albert Nile

“I officially notify everyone of this Diocese (Gulu) of the erection of the New Diocese of Arua by order of S.C. of Propaganda Fide, the 9th July, 1958 and was published in the “*Osservatore Romano*” on the 28th July. His Lordship, the Bishop, (Msgr. Cesana) in the letter by which he communicates this news invites all the fathers to thank Our Lord and to congratulate the fathers of the West Nile and Madi districts.

He also urges the Parish Priests to make public announcements to the faithful. Signed: Fr. A. Tarantino, F.S.C.J., and Vicar General. (From "Truth and Charity"- August 1958) (n.d. Truth and Charity was the Clergy Bulletin of Gulu Diocese). Fr. Tarantino, Vicar General of Gulu, wanted to clarify on this news: “The erection of the new Diocese of Arua will be effective only when the Pontifical Document is published officially in the “*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*” and when the Delegate Apostolic comes to put it into execution. Meanwhile, everything will go on completely as before.” When he was writing these words Fr. Tarantino did not know yet that he was going to become the Bishop of Arua. It seemed that he was too much preoccupied of the matter, knowing that he was not among the chosen ones. Some times God makes jokes.

In August 1958, Fr. Antonio Todesco, father general of the Verona Fathers congregation, wrote a letter to Fr. Tarantino, vicar general of Gulu Diocese to invite the missionaries of West Nile to choose three fathers on preference, and send the three names to Verona so that one might be chosen as bishop of Arua. But the name of Fr. Tarantino never appeared on the paper. Together with Msgr. Cesana Fr. Tarantino began to prepare for the division and allocation of goods for the new mission. He had not been generous in the partition

for the new Diocese. When the Holy See chose him as bishop of the new Diocese, he regretted for the few goods allocated for the new Diocese. He asked Msgr. Cesana to re-examine the allocation. “What we have decided let it be done” answered Msgr. Cesana. The Missionaries of West Nile did not vote Fr. Angelo, but, as a father told me, “In this case the Holy Spirit landed on him by force”.

On 12th February 1959, Msgr. Angelo Tarantino, vicar general of Gulu diocese, was elected first bishop of Arua. Msgr. Tarantino has already been missionary in Lira for 27 years. On the first May 1959 the bishop of Concordia consecrated him.

On 13th June Msgr. Tarantino entered in Arua to take possess of the new See of Arua diocese, welcomed enthusiastically by a great crowd. Msgr. Mojaiski Perrelli the Delegate Apostolic installed him on the cathedra (the Episcopal chair).

### ***The Clergy Bulletin***

The bishop Tarantino started the Arua Clergy Bulletin. It was reserved only for the priests. The first No was out on 24th August 1959. In the introductory letter to the priests the bishop said: “As you gather from the cover, this Bulletin is exclusively reserved for the Clergy of the Diocese. The bishop must feel free to address in a fatherly and even straightforward manner his priests without fear of being interfered with, in his duty, by outsiders, who ignorant of the true facts, might express comments out of season or spread news which they are not entitle to give. This cannot be called a monthly Bulletin, for I do not think it can be issued regularly every month. I personally feel that this Bulletin will not turn out to be a mere reminder of dispositions or advises already given; but also that of carrying out into practice.” It served as a link between the bishop and his priests. In it all the most important decisions, problems, documents, meetings of pastoral councils and Presbiteral Council and progress of the evangelisation were printed as well as the letters of the bishop to the priests. It is the only accurate source of information of the 25 years of the Episcopal work of Msgr. Tarantino. From now on I will quote it in this work. Fr. Dellagiacomma has been the editor for several years of the Bulletin. He made the statistics very accurate of the diocese

and reports from different corners of West Nile. The Bulletin stopped with the resignation of bishop Tarantino in 1986. The last number was 70.

### ***Continuation of Otumbari Parish***

The territory of the parish of Otumbari is in Terego County. It was detached from Lodonga. Msgr. Cesana made a plan to establish a mission in 1957. Fr. Mario Dal Maistro began the first rudimental buildings. At the end of 1957 Fr. Dal Maistro was transferred to Ediofe mission in the place of Fr. Toni. The late reached Lodonga on the feast of St. Stephen to replace Fr. Mario as parish priest. Msgr. Cesana appointed Fr. Toni parish priest of Lodonga with a letter in urging him to start definitely the buildings of the new mission. The fathers' house was the first and then followed by the sisters' house and a temporary church.

In the vast territory there were 25 chapels with catechists not formed, who were repeating the Pius X catechism by heart. Very few had Primary 6 certificate as Alfonso Alikuru of Tara, Kasto of Tara Uliepi, John Edega of Omugo, and Kesia John who was killed during the war of 1979 by the rebels in April 1980. In the mission the catechists were Aureliano and Giovanni.

In 1961 Fr. Toni was transferred to Pokea seminary. Fr. Woods later on succeeded him. In 1962 Msgr. Tarantino sent Fr. Sartori to Otumbari as parish priest. The aim was to build the parish church which was started in 1964. Bro. Arosio, the inseparable constructor and friend of Fr. Sartori since 1932, helped the father in building the church of "Regina Mundi", the Queen of the world. When Arosio left, Bro. Mario Rossignoli worked to finish the new sanctuary.

In 1972 the catechists were 43 with 28 chapels, the population was 32.761 of which 27.026 were Catholics. After Fr. Sartori the following are the Frs. who worked in this mission: Fr. Piffer, who built many chapels in bricks and iron sheets, Fr. Ceriani Giuseppe who printed the life of Jesus in Logbara, Fr. Benedetti and Fr. Pegorari who handed over the mission to the Diocesan Clergy. Fr. Mario Ajiga has been the first parish priest among the Diocesan Clergy. The Divine Masters followed him. But they left the mission again in the hands of the Clergy.

### *Parish of Rhino Camp along the Nile*

It was a sanctuary of White Rhinos. Now, unfortunately this very rare species disappeared. From that animal comes the name of the parish. From the time of explorers has been the place for hunting for Europeans and Asians. A cotton ginner was established in the fifties. The cotton of Rhino Camp was estimated one of the best in Uganda for its fiber.

The road Rhino Camp to Arua has been one of the firsts traced in West Nile. It was supposed to join Gulu to Arua. For that reason a harbour was constructed. Passengers' ship was passing regularly from Nimule to Butiaba.

The first chapel of Rhino Camp started since 1925. Rhino Camp became a place of attraction for different tribes: the Madi of Rhino Camp or Rigbo, Acholi, Alur and Banyoro joined in. Eduardo Babala started a 4-class primary school about 1948. Fathers from Ediofe were visiting the Christianity 4 times a year. The safari was lasting also 20 days. The chapels of those times were Ewanga, Rigbo, Invenga, Aliba, Fundo, Rhino Camp, Bobo. The Christianity increased in number so that it was necessary to establish a mission in Rhino Camp also because Arua was very far.

“By the Bishop's decree dated the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1960, the church of Rhino Camp has been erected into a Parochial Church, with the territory detached from the parishes of Arua, Uleppi and Pakwach. The parish of Arua paid all the expenses met with in building the fathers' house and the kitchen. The Procure equipped the house with the furniture, and built the parish office as well as it provided the new parish with a Landrover for the safaris.

The Rev. Fr. Jenesio Jakec has been appointed Parish Priest, and he will have Rev. Fr. Ludovico Ongom as his curate. Rhino Camp is 40 miles from Arua”. (C.B.6 September 1960)

“By decree of his Lordship, dated 15th September 1963, Rev. Fr. Jovenale Gale has been named Parish Priest of the Parish of Rhino Camp”

The Mission is dedicated to “Our Lady, Help of the Christians”

At the time of the erection of the mission the population was 17.200, of which 5.912 were Catholics, with 6 chapels and 12 catechists.

Other priests have been in this mission as Fr. Lino Anguani and Fr. John Sabo who handed over the parish to Msgr. Jacan in 1994 when the parish came under the new Diocese of Nebbi.

### ***Arua Catholic Centre: place of encounter***

A parish priests meeting was held at the bishop's house on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1959 This meeting presided over by His Lordship, was attended by all parish priests of the Diocese. The erection of "Arua Catholic Centre" was discussed. The aim to open this Centre was to have offices for the School Supervisor and Assistant of the Editor of the Diocese Newspaper the "West Nile Catholic Gazette"; an office for the Director of the Catholic Action, plus a hall to be used for holding meetings and also a few rooms for the bookshop.

The government granted the building site. The plans of the building, drawn up by Bro. Fochesato Armando, have been approved by the local Authority. (Clergy Bulletin No 2- October 4th 1959).

"The building of the Catholic Centre in Arua township have been completed, and the School Supervisor and his Assistant have already moved in. As soon as Rev. Fr. Asili will come back from Rome, he will have his own office in the "Catholic Centre Headquarters", as Diocesan Director of the Catholic Action.

We all feel grateful to Fr. Medeghini who spared no pains to set up this fine Centre. The same father has also supplied us with all the details concerning the expenses met with in the erection of the Centre. Later on we hope to build near by a small church with a house for the fathers." (C.B. 6 September 1960)

"The Arua Catholic Centre has now become the Headquarters of the School Supervisor and his three assistants, the Bursar of the Schools Finances, of the Catholic Action, of the West Nile Gazette, and the Bookshop. It has been found necessary, therefore, to appoint someone to act as the head of the Centre, though each nominee enjoys autonomy in his respective office. The Rev. Fr. Medeghini has been appointed as the head of the Centre." C.B.No 4 1962)

In truth Msgr Cesana desired it before the erection of the Arua Diocese as a meeting place for the Catholic professionals (politicians, officers, teachers etc) to prepare them for the Independence.

By the decree of the bishop the new church of “Christ the King” in the town of Arua has been erected Parish on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1964. The boundaries of the new parish are more or less the same boundary of the town extended to Ragem chapel. Rev. Fr. Medeghini Alessandro is appointed the first parish priest.

In 1968 the population was 13.000 of which the Catholics were 4.604 with 3 catechists and 3 chapels. During the war 1979 the Catholic Centre was nearly completely destroyed. The sacristy was set on fire. The church was safe miraculously. But the house of the fathers with church, and shop was looted of everything. After the war the parish was restored and the church extended by Bro. Udeschini Beppi. Bro. Fanti Vittorio decorated and painted the walls remembering the destruction of the Arua parish and of Koboko Parish carried out by the rebels of Amin. Unfortunately some changes happened with multipurpose building which are of no help to the parish, leaving no place for future extension.

The parish was handed over to the Diocesan Clergy before the war. Msgr. Martin Luluga was appointed parish priest. He was the vicar general of the Diocese succeeding Msgr. Isidoro Alule. Dr. Cosmas Alule is the present parish priest.

### ***The Minor Seminary: the hope of tomorrow.***

The Canon Law at chapter III describes at length about the formation of the seminarians. Among other prescriptions the Canon Law urges the Bishops to have a minor seminary and where possible also the Major seminary. The aim of a seminary is “to provide to the necessity of the sacred ministry in the entire church”.

The new bishop knew this duty, and so he started soon the minor seminary for his diocese. When he went to see the pope before coming to Uganda, John XXIII told him to build a seminary to prepare African priests.

Msgr. Tarantino called his friend Fr. Felice Farina from Karimojon to be the first rector of the seminary. For the time being the seminary started in Warr in



1959 with two classes. They were in all 63 pupils. Msgr. Drandua was one of them. Meanwhile the suitable place was chosen with the help of Fr. Lino Negrato and Fr. Toni at Pokea. Here there were no people, a nice hill and the *Mukungu Raffaele was Catholic*. Fr. Lino Zucco made a plan for the construction. Bros. Arosio and Barbiero were in charge of the constructions

In the Clergy Bulletin No 2 October 1959 during the parish priests meeting the new bishop said; “Parish meetings should be held with the view to getting donation for the erection of the new Diocesan Seminary. These meetings should be presided by the bishop, is possible, and all notables of the parish, teachers and catechists should attend them. Paper bags “pro seminario” for collecting food staff should be given out to the people”. From Warr the rector wrote a letter to the bishop given some suggestions how to make propaganda for vocations to the seminary. This letter was written in November 16th 1959. “In their visits to the schools the priests should not fail to speak to the boys about the beauty and greatness of the priestly vocation and insist on the necessity of having a greater number of African priests”.

Msgr. Tarantino in 1960 announced to the priests in a meeting: “We sincerely hope to get the seminary at Pokea ready for 1961 to welcome the new aspirants; but if these are very few the whole thing will practically be a failure. The heaviest punishment God would possibly inflict on a country is to leave it without priests”.

In 1960 the boys were brought to Pokea from Warr; they occupied the first buildings. In the beginning of 1961 Fr. Felice went to Italy for illness reason, and did not come back anymore.

The seminary was dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul.

In September 1961 Msgr. Tarantino called Fr. Toni to replace Fr. Farina as rector of Pokea seminary from Otumbari. He remained for 6 years. During this time the seminary took the full shape, a place in which the seminarians could study without disturbance. Bro. Rodolfo Arosio built the fathers’ house. The church has being the masterpiece of Bro. Fanti Vittorio. He decorated and painted it not only in working but also in paying. Bro. Barbiero was in charge of the fields so that the stores were always full of food. The seminarians worked in the field for two hours a day to help the brother. The seminarians planted a eucalyptus

plantation which up to now helped to produce firewood. Under the Fr. Dellagiacomma, vice rector, many fields of different sports were arranged. Primary 6 was abolished. The standard was raised in introducing subjects according to the government syllabus for senior schools

The teachers were all priests. In 1968 Fr. Caesar Asili succeeded Fr. Toni in the leadership of Pokea Seminary. From now on all rectors will be Diocesan priests: Fr. Drandua, in whose rectorship the war of 1979 destroyed a part of the seminary, with the seminarians fled to Congo. After the war the seminary was renewed and extended for the High School. Meanwhile rectors succeeded one after another, Fr. Opira, Amafua, Ongom and to Fr. Pio Yobuta, the present rector. More than 50 priests have come out from Pokea seminary, well prepared and learned ones able to meet the necessity of the Diocese.

### ***Orussi: for the second time***

The new bishop Angelo Tarantino saw the necessity to open new missions as a means for consolidating the faith of the faithful and for spreading the evangelisation more effectively. The Christians were increasing every year 15.000. It means a parish a year.

The first mission that has the signature of Tarantino is Orussi parish.

“By the bishop’s decree dated the 1st February 1961, the church of Orussi dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima has been erected into a parish church, with the territory detached from Angal parish. The Rev. Fr. Aldo Codognola has been appointed parish priest and Fr. Mecerleen as his curate. The Orussi mission has a Catholic population of about 8.000”

We know already some history about this mission and its site. It was abandoned because of climate not suitable for the catechumens coming from Omach. In 1961 the situation changed. The native Christians multiplied to 10.000 who wanted the presence of the fathers.

Fr. Codognola with the help of Bro. Aladino Mirandola constructed the fathers’ house and a magnificent church out of stones. On 31<sup>st</sup>. September 1968 the catechists were 27 with 15 chapels.

In 1978 unknown people who shot at him assaulted Fr. Ambrosi Giuseppe. The father narrowly escaped death.

At the present (2003) the Apostles of Jesus staff the parish

### ***Ombaci parish***

In my permanence in Ediofe, 1953- 1957 nobody was thinking that Ombaci could have become parish. There were other chapels more important like Oreko, Ewadri and the first among all was Yole. I built the first chapel in the area of Ombaci in 1954. We in Ediofe were thinking about Oreko because the missionary brothers already occupied Ombaci with the technical school. Ombaci was easier because of the house for the parish priest. He could use the same facilities of the Brothers, teachers of the technical.

“By the bishop’s decree dated the 1<sup>st</sup>. February 1961, the church of Ombaci dedicated to the Holy Cross has been erected into a parochial Church, with the territory detached from the parishes of Arua and Terego.

The Rev. Fr. Lino Zucco has been appointed as “Delegatus Episcopalis”. The Catholics are about 7.000. In 1968 the population was 18,700 among which the Catholics were about 13.207. The chapels were 19 with 21 catechists. Up to now the parish is entrusted to Verona Fathers. Fr. Piffer, Fr. Giuliano Oricchi, Torquato Paolucci and Fr. Pegorari Roberto the present parish priest succeeded in the direction of Ombaci mission. In the cemetery of the parish are buried 5 missionaries.

Fr. Lino built the parish church and decorated it with a Way of the Cross. The Crucifixion is a masterpiece of Bro. Fanti Vittorio. Instead Mr Diko painted the three pictures at entrance of the church.

Nearby the parish there is the famous St. Joseph College. A community of Marian Brothers has been established in 1962 for the direction of the primary school. There are also facilities for the training of catechists and lay people.

The fathers’ house

Is not a parish house but it belongs to the Verona Fathers for hospitality for the confreres and others. In the compound of the house there is also a retreat building for meetings and guests’ rooms.

### ***Logiri parish. The “Ki” people***

The Logiri people use “ki” instead of “si” like “*A mu Arua a pa ki*”.

Logiri is a hill country with nice valleys. It has a fertile land for bananas, maize, millet, sweet potatoes, fresh air and nice views. The most famous chapels were Ketekele, where is the mission, Opia, Okavo, Ezo and Aliba. Here there was a big rest house for the government officers and guests.

“By the bishop’s decree dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1961, the church of Logiri, dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary has been erected into a Parochial Church, with the territory detached from the parishes of Arua and Uleppi. The Rev. Fr. Antonio Androa has been appointed to the new parish as “*Delegatus Episcopalis*” and has as a curate the Rev. Fr. Joseph Eka.

Logiri has 7.000 Catholics”.

Msgr. Tarantino was of the opinion to Africanize the church as much as it was possible, because Uganda was going towards the independence and the future was obscure for the Church. There was already in 1960 a local government of transition. Benedict Kiwanuka was elected the president ad *interim*. Three political parties were contesting for the presidency; DP, UPC, and Kabaka Yekka.

Also for this event in view Msgr. Tarantino chose as his Vicar General Msgr. Isidoro Alule, a Logbara educated in Lodonga.

## ***II Part – Expansion of the Catholic Church***

### ***I-Uganda becomes independent - New Challenges for the Catholic Church***

The Clergy Bulletin No 12, June 1962 refers a letter of the bishop Tarantino in which he says: “There was a great fear that the long and continued propaganda for independence by the parties, the propaganda made by the evil minded people against the good, could have caused difficulties and set back in our apostolate work. But the statistics which will be available at the end of June will show that this has not happened, which is a clear proof that Our Lady Mediatrix of Lodonga is protecting our diocese well”.

He was animating the priest to bring up a new method of Apostolate: “the systems used in the past in our apostolate are not so effective any more at the present day”. He urged them to revive the Catholic Action as a means to strengthen the faith in the Christianity. The Social Centre of Lodonga should be an opportunity to form social and religious leaders of the diocese. The catechists’ body should be up to date too. “The catechists should have the same character and education equal to the teachers, employed full time and well paid, will render a greater service to the church than a large number of catechists who are indolent, poorly instructed.”

Foreseeing the future the bishop went on saying: “If one day we no longer have control of our schools and teachers, only a group of good and capable catechists will be able to guarantee a solid teaching of catechism to the pupils. What would happen to our schools in future could not be exactly stated then. Whoever be the manager of our schools in future it will be still possible to do much spiritual work in them if we have teachers our real collaborators”. The other two valid instruments to face changes in the new government, Msgr. Tarantino urged the priests to organize strong Parish councils and parents Association for schools.

What should be the attitude of the church towards the new government? Msgr. Tarantino was a good politician and so he told to his priests: “It is obvious that now we must collaborate with the present government as in the past we have collaborated with the English government. I would even say that now we are held more than ever to give such co operation since the former government was destined to lay down its Protectorate, while the present one will continue in an independent Uganda. Let us respect as we should all government authorities from the highest to the lowest”

The date of Uganda independence was approaching, so the bishop gave his direction: “I recommend that you solemnize the day of Uganda Independence in the best way possible. Decorate the mission as for a feast day, invite the local authority and in agreement with them make a programme for the occasion. First a religious feast in the church with the singing of the “*Te Deum*” and then external feast with school parade and games should be organized. Buy or make in a good

time a beautiful and big enough flag of Uganda to be raised in the courtyard on that day and on other suitable occasions”.

God created people free and they have the right to govern themselves according to their wishes in line with the laws of God. It happened that all tribes in Uganda were gathered to form one people: the Ugandans.

On the 9th October 1962 the English Jack was hauled down and the three colour Ugandan flag was raised up in all the Districts.

### ***A summary of political history***

*An Administrative and legislative body was formed named “Legico” which means Legislative Council. In the beginning the members were elected only by the Governor. They were selected only among English, Europeans, Indus and Asians.*

Afterwards came in few Africans.

Mr. Lord Chandos, minister of Colonial Office in 1953 declared that Uganda would have become independent with an African Government. Therefore it was necessary to form political parties.

In 1952 the first party, the National Congress was formed. This party was opened to everybody without discrimination whatsoever. Unfortunately the other parties will have discriminatory aspect willfully or unwillingly according to the founder’s faith.

In 1955 the Progressive Party started; the members were coming mostly from Budo College, of protestant tendency. The National Party, because of some members coming from abroad, began teaching communistic ideas, so that many Catholics abandoned it.

In 1956 the Democratic Party (DP) was born in which Catholics, Protestants and Indus entered in. Mr. Benedict Kiwanuka was elected Chairman of the party. Soon after the “Manifesto” of the Democratic Party was published. (Leadership No 39, June 1960). The DP was very much opposed by the Protestants and by the government and accused of “Neo-imperialism of Rome. The Catholics were spies of the pope”. (Apter page 343) The aim of the DP was

only to assure that Uganda could become a democratic country and not a dictatorship.

So as to oppose DP Obote formed the Uganda Peoples Congress, a party much loved by the English Officials. In the end two parties remained: DP with B. Kiwanuka Chairman and UPC with Obote Chairman. The first goal for each party was to conquer the *Legico*.

In March 1961 the elections took place. Notwithstanding the propaganda against Catholics, Benedict Kiwanuka became the first leader or Chief Minister of the parliament. (Fr. Agostoni, *Una dura lezione*, in *Nigrizia*, 1961). This was the first parliament *ad interim*. In London it was decided that Uganda should remain in the British Commonwealth. On 18th September, during a conference the minister of the Colonial Office announced publicly that on 9th October 1962 Uganda would be declared independent. There was a kind of nervousness among the Protestants, Lukiko and British personnel about the future results of the elections. Those people were terrified by an eventual victory of the DP. To defeat the Catholics the Baganda created a new party the Kabaka Yekka (only the Kabaka) “The DP must be finished once and for ever” was their intention. To this shameful propaganda the British had their responsibility. They prepared and wanted the Protestants for the posts and important offices in the government.

The Archbishop Joseph Kiwanuka wrote a pastoral letter in defense of human principles. (In *Leadership* 3rd March 1962 and, like a prophet, told the Baganda that God will punish them. And it happened.

The general election took place in April 1962. UPC and Kabaka Yekka won the election with intrigue and injustices against DP, which was apparently defeated. The British did not like to hand over the government in the hands of a Catholic, so they played the greatest part in manipulating the ballot boxes.

Soon after the declaration of the Independence, the Catholic Bishops wrote a letter teaching the Catholics how to behavior in those circumstances, comforting and urging them to co-operate for the unity and progress of the country. The title of the letter was “*Shaping our National Destiny*”, Kisubi 1962. Also John Pope XXIII sent his envoy Msgr. Joseph Mojoli to bring his message to the people of Uganda.

Queen Elisabeth sent the duke of Kent to represent her in presiding over the celebrations. The Uganda Anthem “Oh Uganda may God uphold you” replaced “God Save the Queen”. The Uganda motto “For my God and my Country” was inscribed on the Coat of Arms. The handing over the power from the British Protectorate to Mr. Obote took place on Kololo Hill. Mr. Obote in his speech said: “Probably to-day among those who are most happy are the missionaries whose spiritual, educational and assistance work co-operated more than any other thing in making this day great”.

At the Independence Day the population of Uganda was about 6.536.616. On October 9, 1963 Uganda was proclaimed “Republic”. Mutesa II became the first president of Uganda and Mr. Milton Obote the first Minister. On 30th July 1964 the minister of education wrote a letter by which all the primary schools became government schools without compensation and without any dialogue with the owners. (Fr. Medeghini, *Storia d'Uganda* pages 548 to 554). In the Clergy Bulletin No 15 May 1963 Bishop Tarantino told the priests: “The problem of primary and of Junior S. Schools is going to be solved in the foreseen and yet in a painful way. In a short time the government will take over the whole control of the schools, so that the fathers will have only to reorganize the continuation of the religious instruction”.

Certainly these events brought changes of mentality in the life of the people in all fields. The Catholic Church adjusted herself very well to the circumstances and changes in politics, religion and economy. At the Independence the Catholic Church became Ugandan; she prepared herself in choosing native bishops and priests, in creating also a chain of religious congregations and lay institutions. The Catholic Church is not at all foreign as it was accused during the missionary time. Uganda has become her home.

The Independence Day in Arua had a great colorful feast with a long procession preceded by a huge English man moving with a stick accompanying the chant in a rhythmical waving of the body. All the people were jubilant in the entire district. I was there in Arua leading the car parade from Ombaci road to the central offices. Bishop Tarantino led the prayer in the name of the Catholics. We were also happy for the results of the elections. All the members to the parliament from West Nile were Catholics Martin Okello, Gasper Oda, Butele Anthony



(UPC), Felix Onama (UPC), and Biagio Etole. Mr. Martin will be killed by Obote regime in 1967 and so also Mr. Oda by the second Obote in 1984 near his home at Ediofe.

### ***Vatican Council II***

Just two days after Uganda reached independence on the 11th October 1962 in St. Peter's in Rome the Holy Father Pope John XXIII opened the 21st Ecumenical Council. It was on January 25, 1962 that the pope made the first and unexpected announcement of his plan to convoke the Church's Twenty- First Ecumenical Council, the first since Vatican I of 1869-70. "The Church and the world need the medicine of mercy". The tone of the Council had been pastoral, ecumenical and dialogue. "Open the doors so that fresh air may enter in" was the cry of John XXIII. Pope John and Pope Paul as well as the Council documents call for Catholics to engage in that sincere dialogue which knows how to listen humbly as well as how to speak candidly.

The Official texts Promulgated by the Ecumenical Council are in all sixteen.

In Arua diocese that process of renewal wanted by the Council, started in all parishes. Liturgical books were translated in Vernacular; Christian Initiation was introduced; lay ministries were explained. A better participation at mass was soon noticed. Catechists Training Centers were built and staffed with competent personnel. A more Christ-Centered catechesis replaced the catechism of Pius X.

The Marianum Centre of Lodonga, for the formation of leaders was opened on 4th February 1963, with the first course for formation of catechists under the direction of Fr. Lino Negrato. There will be more courses for teachers, selected members of the Parish Councils and for members of other associations. (C.B. No 14 February 1963)

The diocese had its Presbyteral and Pastoral Councils re-organized for a better pastoral and administrative leadership and governance of the people of God. In all parishes had formed their ministries and pastoral and financial committees. This process is still going on.

On the example of the Vatican Council, the bishop of Arua, Msgr. Drandua convoked already three Diocesan Synods. Some body says that we are still in the beginning of the implementation of the Vatican II and the synods have not being digested yet.

### ***More Parishes: Nebbi***

By the bishop's decree dated 18th May 1963, the Church of Nebbi, dedicated to the Immaculate Hearth of Mary has been erected into a parish church, with territory detached from Angal Parish.

The Rev. Emilio Onegwa has been appointed Parish Priest. He will be helped, for the time being, by Rev. Fr. Jenesio. Nebbi has a Catholic population of about 8.000.

Fr. Calvi Giuseppe did a lot in building Nebbi chapel. He constructed the church, which still functions now. It will become a diocese in 1994 because of its centrality and for the political and administrative reasons. The existence of the District in Nebbi made the chance for the church to promote the diocese of Nebbi.

For the importance of the past Angal should have claimed the privilege to become the Centre of the diocese for the Alur.

In 1968, on 31rst. December the population of Nebbi was 11.400, among which 8. 775 were Catholics, the catechists 17 and 16 chapels.

### ***Paidha Mission 18 May 1963***

By the Bishop's decree dated 18th May 1963 the church of Paidha, dedicated to Mary Immaculate, has been erected into a Parish Church, with territory detached from Nyapea and Angal Parishes.

The Rev. Fr. Piffer has been appointed Parish Priest and Rev. Fr. Gennaro Campochiaro as his curate. The new parish has a population of 13.000 Catholics. But on 31rst December 1968 the total population was about 19.100 of which 16.125 Catholics. The catechists were 17 with 10 chapels.

Later on a beautiful Church was built to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Nowadays Paidha has become a big political and economic Centre. The production of Coffee is one of the best in West Nile. There is a great relationship with the Alur of near Congo. The Comboni missionaries handed it over to the Diocesan Clergy.

### ***Adjumani in the East Madi***

By the bishop's decree dated 19th March 1964, the new church of Adjumani, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, has been erected into a parish Church with the territory detached from Pakele parish. Rev. Fr. Benedetti has been appointed the first parish priest of Adjumani. Fr. Eugenio Calligari arrived in 1965 as curate.

In 1964 Verona Fathers were expelled from the Sudan. Anyanya began more lively in activity, which in turn resulted in more refugees escaping to Uganda. Also in Congo the Simba revolution started. Missionaries and religious came in Uganda. Refugees from Congo and Sudan increased in number. Consequently the activities of the Church in Arua diocese along the borders were considerably hampered.

In 1968 the population was about 12,600, of which 10,063 were Catholics. The statistics of 1968 says that the catechists were 12 meanwhile the chapels were 7.

When Adjumani became district the mission of Pakele lost its importance.

Meanwhile Fr. Benedetti went to Metu to start a new mission leaving Fr. Calligari as parish priest. In 1975 Fr. Benedetti came again to Adjumani. From here he was expelled by Amin regime as *persona non grata*. In truth the reason of the expulsion happened as follows: The catechist of the mission gave his daughter to Mr. Moses Ali a Muslim. The father reproached the catechist for his consent. The matter was reported to Ali who arranged with Amin for the expulsion of the father.

### ***Olovu Parish: Born from Maracha Parish***

By the bishop decree, dated 25th January 1965, the Church of Olovu, dedicated to All Saints, has been erected into a parish Church, with the territory detached from the Parish of Maracha. The Rev. Fr. Luigi Sacco has been appointed “Delegatus Episcopi” to the new parish.

In 1872 the percentage of Catholics was 80, with a population of 25.000.

Fr. Enzo Salvano with Fr. Serri and Bros. Ricci Benito and Udeschini Giuseppe built a modern Church. Bro. Fanti decorated the church with classic paintings from the gospel. During the war of 1979 also this mission suffered the consequences of looting. But soon after the war Fr. Luigi Moser, helped by Fr. Pegorari Roberto restored it and equipped it with solar panels and water pump.

The mission was handed over to the Marian Brothers.

### ***Zeus: the highest mission in West Nile***

Meanwhile Rhino Camp Mission is at the lowest altitude 640 m. Zeus is at the highest at 1.620m.

By the bishop's decree dated 1st January 1966 the church of Zeus, dedicated to St. Joseph, has been erected into a parish church with territory detached from Nyapea and Warr parishes.

The Rev. Fr. Paolo Negrini has been appointed first parish priest of Zeus. Fr. Silvio Dalmaso is his curate.

The population of the parish is about 16.000 of which 10.000 are Catholics. The Catechists are 12 with 8 chapels. After the fathers house, a large church was built.

### ***Adumi: with a foot in Congo***

By the Bishop's decree, dated 1st. March

1966 the Church of Adumi dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been erected into a parish Church, with the territory detached from Arua Cathedral.

The Rev. Fr. Trabucchi Vittorio has been appointed first Parish Priest of Adumi.

The Parish has a total population of 15.000 of which 12.000 are Catholics. It has 12 chapels and 15 catechists.

The beginning of this mission goes back to 1920 when Rokoni was chief. The place is called Oje meanwhile Adumi is the name of a small mountain, sacred to the people. It was one of the first chapels built in backed bricks and roofed with tiles. Fr. Maccagnan loved this place very much and he built a small and nice house for safari. Because of the influence of the chief who gave all his children to the “*Paderi*” also the population accepted the faith. Augusto, one of the sons of Adroni became chief at the death of his father. He helped a lot the Catholic Church in granting many places for the chapels. One of his daughters became sister of Mary Immaculate.

One of the catechists who worked for the expansion of the faith has been Romolo, who taught for many years the catechism.

Bro. Ottorino Gelmini built a beautiful church that Bro. Fanti Vittorio decorated with classic and natural paintings, most interesting is the Annunciation. Fr. Mastromauro, who was the parish priest at that time, organized the pastoral ministries and financial councils. Bro. Monchieri worked with Fr. Trabucchi in building the Fathers’ House.

It was handed over to the Diocesan Clergy.

Sisters of the Sacred Heart came for the dispensary and girls primary school.

## ***Arivu***

By the decree of the Bishop dated 17th June 1966 the church of Arivu dedicated to the Blessed Virgin “*Mater Ecclesiae*” has been erected into a parish Church with the territory detached from the parishes of Arua Cathedral and Uleppi.

The Rev. Fr. Sartori Bernardo has been appointed the first parish priest. Fr. Salvatore Coppo is his curate.

The parish has a total population of 14.000 and the Catholics are 7.276.

The first chapel goes back to 1920 when Fr. Zambonardi sent the first catechists to the chief of Bondo. This people were the poorest among the other Logbara people during my stay at Ediofe. (1953-57). This territory was infested by Guinea worm, because of dirty water. I got it also in 1954 around Ajia. At that time buffaloes and elephants could be seen in that area.

Fr. Sartori embellished the mission with a modern church dedicated to the Mother of the Church, built by Bro. .De Rossi with the help of the nephew of father Sartori named Toni. It is the second church built with a bell tower in the diocese after the Cathedral.

After the war of 1979 this parish was handed over to the Diocesan Clergy.

### ***Parombo: again to the Alur***

By the Bishop's decree of 1<sup>st</sup> July 1966 the church of Parombo has been erected into a parish church with the territory detached from the parish of Angal. Rev. Fr. Fiorante Antonio has been appointed first parish priest of the new mission. Fr. G. De Tomasi is his curate.

The new parish has a total population of 17.000 of which 14.000 are Catholics.

The mission has a nice and large church, decorated with gusto.

### ***Handing over of Parombo Parish***

The handing over of a parish it means that the local church reached a stage of self-governing and for missionaries it is the end of their goal.

Frs. David Baltz, Luigi Sala and Felice Centis made their report of the event.

“Sunday, October 10th feast of our Father, Blessed Daniel Comboni, Parombo parish was ended over to the Local Clergy. The Bishop Msgr. Martin Luluga introduced two newly ordained priests as caretakers. After Mass, during which the Bishop gave the Sacrament of Confirmation to 130 young people, all the assembly rushed into the courtyard of the new Nursery for the cutting of the

ribbon and the blessing of its premises. Parombo has not a very long history: detached from Angal in 1966, under the dynamic leadership of Fr. Antonio Fiorante, (killed in Pakwach in 1979, but still very much loved by the people of Parombo), it has seen other Comboni missionaries working there with zeal: Fr. Graziano Panza, Fr. Aldo Pozza, Fr. Elio Zanei, Fr. Gino Stocchero. The parish registers show 28.440 Baptisms, 1440 marriages. The permanent chapels are 14 on a total of 32. Catholics are from 18.000 to 20.000. Lately a community of the Sacred Heart Sisters of Moyo enriched it; the parish church has been enlarged with a big transept, the statue of the patron saint, Teresa of the Child Jesus. A new nursery was constructed. The co-operation of the Communities, of the catechists and of the Laity has been good.”

### ***New Parish of Metu at the sight of Otze***

By the Bishop’s decree dated 25th March 1969, the church of Metu, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin of the Miraculous Medal, has been erected into a parish church with the territory detached from the parish of Moyo and comprising the following chapels: Kweyo, Amua, Eremi, Aya, Laropi, Panyanga, Dufile, and Ara.

The Rev. Fr. Luigi Benedetti has been appointed the first parish priest of Metu. The Catholic population was 16.000 with only 10 catechists.

Bro. Gusmeroli built a wonderful Church and the Fathers House and other buildings.

On 7th November 1993 Metu parish was handed over to the Diocesan Clergy.

Fr. Martin Engamvile was appointed the parish priest of Metu.

At the present time the parish is in the hands of the Divine Masters.

### ***Pope Paul VI in Uganda***

The 22 Martyrs of Uganda were beatified on 16th June 1920. After 44 years on 18th October 1964 the blessed Martyrs were canonized by Pope Paul VI. The celebration took place during the Vatican Council II. It was a moving

celebration, because for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church African (black) people, considered for centuries the last in the human society, were elevated to the honour of the altar. Many fathers of the Council participated in the ceremony among them 75 were African bishops. Never in the past Church history African bishops from black Africa participated in Ecumenical Council.

In Uganda the celebrations took place on 7th February 1965 and then in all the dioceses, parishes of the country. The Vatican Council II and the canonization of the Martyrs were the occasions for the African bishops to arrange for a symposium in Kampala. The bishops accepted the idea enthusiastically. They thought that it was time to discuss common issues for the Church in Africa. The Catholic Church of Africa has become adult. She can decide her future. Also the message of Pope Paul VI "*Africae Terrarum*" stimulated the bishops to come together.

The symposium took place at the Pastoral Institute of Ggaba on 28 to 30 July 1969. At the symposium 6 cardinals were present with all the presidents of the Episcopal conferences.

Pope Paul VI arrived at Entebbe on 31<sup>st</sup> July. The aim of his visit was double: to honour the Martyrs canonized by him and to meet the bishops at their symposium. The president Obote welcomed the Pope at the airport. The Pope in his speech said that he was happy to be the first Pope to step on the African Soil." (Medeghini)

At the passage of the Pope the people were welcoming him in clapping hands and waving papal flags. I saw with my eyes Indus, Muslims, Protestants and Catholics kneeling down at the sight of the pope. Everybody accepted Paul VI as their common Father. Many people from West Nile flocked to Kampala to see the Pope. His visit in Uganda was a bath of faith for the Catholics and a sign of the love of Christ. Christ has become African among the Africans. The blood of the Martyrs was not shed in vain. Also the Pope understood that Christian faith was not foreign in Africa. So confidently he told the bishops: "Be missionaries of your land." He consecrated 12 new bishops like the number of the Apostles, to be ready to go to the entire world.

The Papal Mass at Namugongo and the visit to the Protestant Martyrs moved the people to happiness and unity.



As a token of appreciation the Pope gave 20.000 dollars to the bishops for the training of catechists, the true protagonists of the spread of the faith in Africa.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August Paul VI departed from Entebbe to Rome.

The “Lay Apostolate Report” October 1970 referred that in Uganda there were 12 dioceses, 3.500.000 Catholics, 332 Diocesan priests, 544 missionaries, 157 Ugandan Brothers, 153 missionary Brothers, 1.533 Ugandan sisters and 471 missionary sisters, 4970 catechists, 190 students in Major seminary and 1380 seminarians in Minor seminaries. (Medeghini, page 591).

### ***Ocodri Parish along the road to Rhino Camp***

By the bishop’s decree the church of Ocodri, dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary has been erected to Parish Church on September in 1970. Its territory has been detached from the parishes of Arua and Terego. Re. Fr. Sabino Anyanzo has been appointed first parish priest of Ocodri and Rev. Fr. Frederic Drandua as his curate. The total population was of 8.869 of which 4.000 were Catholics. At 1972 the catechists were 11 with 9 chapels.

The fathers’ house and other premises were built by the mission of Ombaci. Later on Comboni Brothers built a beautiful church. Recently the house has been restored anew by Dr. Fr. Cosmas Alule a son of Ocodri mission, and equipped with a modern solar system. A new dispensary began to function this year 2003.

Other Diocesan priests worked in this mission like Fr. Gabriele Banduga, Killed at Bondo by the Amin soldiers, Fr. James Saka who died in a car accident. During the war the Comboni Fathers from Ombaci were serving the mission. At the present the parish priest is Fr. Costantino Acidri and Fr. Vincent Bekia.

### ***Idi Amin Dada: Uganda an Islamic State***

On 25th January 1971 Amin Dada overthrew the UPC government, while president Obote was in Singapore for a conference. Many Acholi soldiers and pro Obote citizens were killed in a great number among them the Archbishop

of the Church of Uganda Luwum and the attorney general of Amin Benedict Kiwanuka, a Catholic and a former DP Chairman. The relationship between the government and the Muslim Community changed immediately. In Idi Amin, a Muslim President, fellow Muslims found a saviour and sought to use him and his government to solve their problems. Amin had other ideas. He wished to use the Muslims in the country as his political and social base and to consolidate his power both internally and externally. Within a short period of his assumption of power in Uganda, Islam was declared a state religion notwithstanding the fact that the overwhelming majority of Ugandans were Christians. He and his advisers took a leading role in unifying the Muslims factions into one single organization. This was the birth of the UMSC (Uganda Muslim Supreme Council) Following the foundation of the Council, the Amin government embarked upon policies aimed at expanding the Islamic faith in the country. Muslims were given preference and appointed in the civil services, often without the required qualifications. In the army Muslim commanders dominated in the ranks. Islam became one of the criteria for appointment and promotion in the public sector, the army and the police. Some Christians and non-believers became Muslims, not out of religious conviction but because they believed it was the shortest way to eminence and success.

In 1972 Amin expelled the Asians. Muslim traders took over their shops and economy. This group of the big traders was called “the *Mafuta Mingi*”. They supported Amin politically and economically. Uganda came to rely on the Arab states for any kind of support. With a Muslim population of about 10% or less, Uganda became in 1974, a member of the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Countries). Followers of other faiths were either persecuted or marginalised. With massive killings, tortures and disappearances of thousands of Ugandans during Amin’s reign of terror, Islam came to be identified with brutality and inhumanity. (See George W.Kanyehamba, *Muslim Leadership*, Fountain Publishers, Kampala 1998)

When Amin’s government was overthrown in 1979 the Muslims faced problems of survival. Under the Amin’s regime the Catholic Church managed very well to resist to the dictatorship and grew stronger though some of her members suffered tortures and persecutions.

### ***Obongi: hybrid mission***

By the bishop's decree dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 1976, the church of Obongi has been erected into a parish church with territory detached from Moyo and Lodonga parishes. It comprises the following chapels: Lucumgbu, Gopele, Luzira, Obongi, Lomunga, Itula, Legu, Ewafa, Ilekwesinyonyo, Kagoma, Endilinga, Aiwa, Awinga, Ayago, Erezeli, Ewanga, Adjumani Roga, Odapi, Delu. It covers Obongi division and *mukungu* Rigbonga with a total area of 967 square km. and a population of approximately 18.500. It has a Catholic population of about 5.700 (3.500 taken from Moyo and 2.200 from Lodonga) By the erection of Odravu parish, 1997 the area of Rigbonga has returned to Odravu parish.

Rev. Frs. Martinez and Silvio Serri have been appointed to this new parish as parish priest and assistant respectively.

The catechists were 23 with 19 chapels. The mission is situated along the Nile on the West of Madi district. The population is mixed of different tribes: Madi, Kakua Kuku, Relly Gimara and Logbara Aringa.

### ***The martyrdom of Fr. Serri***

It was evening of the 11th September 1979; at about 8 o'clock Fr. Silvio was coming in the mission by the land rover carrying water with some youth. Suddenly armed soldiers came in front of him asking by force for petrol. At gunpoint the father told a boy to bring petrol for the soldier. A barrel of petrol was rolled from the store. With the help of the cook and others the barrel was put on the land rover. A boy rang the bell of the church. At this moment Bro. Maran came out of the church. "The soldier shot at me two bullets without hurting me". Related the brother. "The boys escaped all away for fear. The soldier seeing the father alone near him shot at Fr. Silvio one bullet. The Father immediately fell down and died in a pool of blood. The bullet went through the right arm, the abdomen and went out to the opposite side, leaving a big wound. Meanwhile the killer escaped away with the car at full speed. I saw in the dark the body of Fr. Silvio on the ground in a death rattle. With the help of people, who rushed to the

scene, I took the body of Fr. Silvio into the house. Looking at me he gave the last breathing in my arms to God the Father". The body was transported to Ombaci and on 13th September was buried in the cemetery of the mission near other confreres. The bishop and many people were present at the funeral.

Fr. Silvio came in Uganda in 1962 and worked in Maracha, Uleppi, and Olovu where he was responsible for the construction of the church. At Otumbari was parish priest. In 1976 offered himself for the opening of the parish of Obongi. He was loved even by the Muslims and especially by the boys who regretted very much for the killing. When he died he was only 46 years. He knew the danger, he could go to Otumbari to wait, but he loved his people, he could not leave them alone and he died for them.

### ***The civil War of 1979***

The overthrowing of Amin's regime brought confusion in Uganda with killings and revenge. Ugandan groups and exiles that had campaigned against the atrocities and misrule of Amin and his government formed the new UNLF government. Yusuf Lule became the new president, an ex Muslim converted to Christianity. In June 1979 he was removed and Mr. Godfrey Binaisa succeeded him. Paulo Muwanga was the Chairman of the Military Commission. In 1980 UPC and Obote recaptured power again and began to govern the country.

From 1979 to 1982 has been the worst period of sufferings in West Nile. In the desperate retreat of the Amin soldiers many people were killed from Pakwach to Arua. Two missionaries at Pakwach, Fr. Fiorante and Fr. Dalmaso were killed in their own rooms; Fr. Banduga Gabriel was murdered at Bondo barracks; terror invaded all the corners of Logbara and Madi areas. The worse came on the 7th October 1979 when the Amin remnants invaded Lodonga, Koboko up to Arua killing Acholi and Banyankole soldiers. An order of revenge to kill any Logbara and Madi was given from Kampala. An Exodus of 200.000 terrified people fled to Congo and Sudan, for survival. Only few, most of them old people remained at home.

In Congo cholera started among the exiles. Luckily vaccine came from Italy by air through the concern of Rev. Vittorio Pastore. The medical personal of Maracha in exile saved the refugees from the deadly disease.

### ***The Bishop letter***

In August 1979 Bishop Msgr. Tarantino wrote a letter to the priests about the events of that period. Which tells us the worries of the authority of the church.

“ Dear fathers,

During this year 1979, which is the year of the Centenary of the Catholic Faith in Uganda, we have been witnessing so many different events, some of them happy others at contrary, rather painful but all of them very relevant to the profession and celebration of our faith. Indeed God gave such a test to the Catholic Communities in Uganda, that he was much glorified by their profession of faith and trust in Him. The attendance for instance to the prayer in all the churches is a sign of it.

The National Celebration of the Centenary held in Kampala, Rubaga, Namugongo from 11th to 17th February 1979 have been a success enough to convince all those who attended them that the Catholic Church has been very active indeed in the past 100 years and it did an immense work without wasting time. According to the reports received from our parishes in 1978, all the chapels prepared themselves very well spiritually and financially. The majority of our Christians were just waiting the time for national, diocesan, deanary level celebration, when the already political situation became worse and the war started. We know what happened in our diocese from 12th April (Holy Week) up to the end of May under the control of Amin’s soldiers, and after the liberators afterwards. Let us hope that the situation will improve and become normal again very soon, so that before the end of the year we may celebrate the closing of the Centenary at Diocesan level.

The material ruins and distractions caused by the war are very big all over the Diocese. Church and government institutions have been badly affected and will take some time before things are repaired. But the moral and spiritual damage done to the people of Uganda is a matter of great concern to the religious

and civil authorities who are responsible for a harmonious and peaceful coexistence of the different groups of people who live in Uganda.”

The Bishops invited the priests to preach and teach about the commandments of God “ You shall not kill, you shall not steal”. The Christians needed to be reconciled and bring “them back to the commandment of love given by the Lord”.

### ***Pokea Parish: The smallest Parish***

The chapel of Pokea dedicated to the Holy Martyrs of Uganda has been erected into a parish church on 30th May 1982. Its territory has been detached from the Cathedral Parish of Ediofe.

Rev. Fr. Pius Yobuta, who is also the spiritual director and teacher in the Minor Seminary of Arua, was appointed first parish priest of Pokea parish. The Parish has an estimated Catholic Population of 5.000 Catholics. It is sited on the seminary lease land. There are only three chapels.

The first chapel of Pokea goes back to the beginning of the seminary. The aim was to give opportunity to the Catholics of the area to celebrate the Sunday service and receive the sacraments but also to give the staff of the seminary to exercise their priestly ministry. Bro. Fanti built the chapel. and painted on the wall the glory of the Martyrs of Uganda. The rector of the seminary was in charge of its function. A bush school was started which actually became the primary school.

At the present Fr. Alitia Marcellino is the parish priest.

I think this parish has been the last erected by Bishop Angelo Tarantino.

### ***Another letter of the Bishop***

At the end of the year 1982 in December Bishop Angelo Tarantino wanted to share with his priests, he calls "My dear Brothers", all his feelings caused by three years of war and sufferings. I will report it in full as the best witness of the Catholic Church of West Nile.

“ My dear Brothers,

With the beginning of the liberation war that started on Easter 1979 up to the end of the year 1981, our Diocese went through a very severe test, with much bloodshed and looting during all three years.

Pakwach parish was the first to experience the effects of the war. It was in May 1979 the retreating Amin's soldiers looted the mission and murdered Rev. Fr. Antonio Fiorante and Fr. Silvio Dalmaso.

The other parish of the Alur area also suffered a great loss of property, and the death of Fr. Graziano Panza as the consequence of the beating inflicted on him during the looting of Parombo Parish.

The Rev. Fr. Gabriel Banduga met his death while doing a great act of charity towards one of his fellow priest. He was killed on 26th May 1979 at Bondo military barracks. He is buried in Arivu parish cemetery.

In September 1979 the news reached Arua that Rev. Fr. Silvio Serri was shot dead by an Aringa Muslim soldier at Obongi Parish, and his land rover stolen by the murderer.

This was the first part of the tragedy that our diocese went through. From October 1979 up to September 1980 the situation in the diocese was fair because the liberation army composed of Tanzanians and others were kept under a strict discipline and lived in good harmony with the civil population. All parishes could continue without much difficulty their pastoral activities and the results were good. It is of this time also that some important events took place like the closing of the Centenary of the faith in all parishes with great solemnity, the consecration of the Church of Christ the King of Arua town and the ordination of 4 diocesan priests.

The general impression was that the country was quickly moving towards stability because the political military situation was good. The Tanzanian soldiers were removed from West Nile and the Uganda liberation Army replaced them in the supervision of the district. A general census of all Uganda population was successful held, and immediately after the preparation began for the political general elections all over Uganda with the intention of forming a new civil government. The registration of the people who could vote was going on very successful when suddenly the ex-Amin soldiers attacked Koboko and Arua and occupied them.

Only after a week on 16 October 1980 the liberation army composed of Tanzanians and Ugandans recaptured Arua, Maracha and Koboko. The killing of people, the looting of houses and the burning of the villages went on for several days all over the district. Many mission buildings and most of the town of Arua have been destroyed. And several churches including the Cathedral have been profaned. Near the whole civil population took refuge in Zaire and Sudan and therefore the Arua and Moyo districts remained desolated up to March 1981.

In the meantime the church and few administration officers to encourage the returning of the people to their villages did everything.

In the East Madi the priestly ordination of Fr. Joachim Agwe was organized at Adjumani Parish on 28th February 1981 at the presence of over three thousand people who took refuge in the mission for their security. In Arua district several primary schools were reopened and several chapels began to function again with the catechists who returned from the exile.

Pokea seminary received back all the seminarians and regular classes resumed without much difficulty. In the month of May we had at Pokea seminary the ordination of Fr. Pius Yobuta and Marcellinus Alitia with great solemnity. It was announced to the people that the opening of Pokea seminary will take place by the middle of January 1982..

The teachers were asked to reopen their schools and some of them did it with success. The offices and Market of Arua began to function and life returned to normal again in the district. Instead the counties of Koboko, Aringa and Moyo, where the population is still in exile, do not function yet. Therefore the parishes of that area cannot be reopened soon.

The statistics of the year 1981-82 show that the number of the Church Marriages in some parishes of Logbara deaneries were ten times more than any previous year. Each Christian village community is doing its best to have the church well built and finished by buying cement and *mabati*. In the whole diocese each chapel tries to contribute generously for the maintenance of their catechist and other church's necessities. Also the selling of the gospel book and other religious items shows that the interest in reading the word of God is in the increasing among the people of God.



Our seminaries, the convents and novitiates of the religious congregations do not lack vocations. The catechists are good and in sufficient number. Some of them are really zealous apostles in the Kingdom of God.

I thought it opportune, my dear brothers, to remind you through this short report of all the trials, tests of patience but also of the consolations and proofs of the love of God for us, that our diocese went through in the past years. This I did not only for the sake of recording these historical events but also to invite you to be always grateful to God and to praise Him because now we have seen that our Christian Communities have a deep faith in God, they trust in Him and love Him. This means that God accepted and blessed all the efforts we have put as good shepherds in taking care of the souls entrusted to us.

Let us hope and let us pray the Lord that the New Year be a year of true peace and of many divine Graces for everybody in the diocese of Arua.”

Yours in CJ. Angelo Tarantino. Bishop of Arua.

### ***The 75th anniversary of the Christian faith in Arua Diocese-1910-1985.***

On 10 October 1884 Bishop Tarantino wrote a letter to the Christians of his diocese. “ I am happy to inform you that we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Christian faith in our diocese. It was on the year 1910 that the first three missionaries of the Verona Fathers arrived in West Nile at Omach, Jonam County to start the preaching of the Good News of the Lord Jesus to the people of the Northern Uganda. During the past 75 years the seed of the gospel planted at Omach grew very well and became a large tree whose branches are now covering the all territory of Arua Diocese: The districts of Arua, Nebbi and Moyo

The Kingdom of God spread throughout the countryside of the West Nile and reached even the most remote villages. I propose that the first Sunday of Advent, 2<sup>nd</sup>. December 1984 be a day of prayer in the Cathedral with the presence of the bishop, fathers, brothers, sisters, catechists, parish councilors and Christian who may come. The closing day of the anniversary will be the 6th March 1985 at Pakwach parish. The detail of the closing will be notified in due time.

May God bless you all. Angelo Tarantino bishop of Arua.

This was a letter of farewell of Bishop Tarantino because he resigned soon after from his office.

### ***Resignation of Msgr. Tarantino***

On 29 December 1984 the “*Osservatore Romano*” published the resignation of Msgr. Tarantino. The Holy See accepted his resignation according to the Canon Law (401) reaching the age of 75. Karl Josef Rauber, Apostolic Pronuncio from Kampala communicated the news to Tarantino, adding “Coram Domino I tell that you have been “Pastor Bonus” qui animam suam ponit pro ovibus”. On 15th January 1985 Msgr. Angelo Tarantino handed over the diocese of Arua to Msgr. Frederic Drandua, the new administrator of the diocese, previously his vicar general.

On 20 January Msgr. Drandua wrote a letter of information to “Rev. Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, and the faithful of Arua diocese”.

“I am writing to you to announce to you officially that the Holy See has accepted the resignation of Rt. Rev. Angelo Tarantino as the Bishop of Arua diocese.

Since 29 December the Vatican announced that the Episcopal See of Arua (diocese) is vacant. According to the Laws of the Church, while the See is Vacant and until the appointment of a new bishop is announced, the Governance of the diocese devolves upon the college of Consultors and the Diocesan Administrator who is to be elected by the college of Consultors.” Msgr. Drandua was elected Administrator on 15th January. “I accept this choice, knowing fully well that I shall have to suffer” told to the Christians of Arua diocese. “I therefore appeal to you all my dear brothers and sisters, to continue in your prayers so that the Lord may send us a good shepherd”.

### ***An African Bishop for Arua diocese***

On 3 June 1986, feast of the Martyrs of Uganda, Cardinal Tomko during the celebration at the shrine of the Martyrs at Namugongo announced that the Holy Father John Paul II had nominated Most Re. Msgr. Frederic Drandua new

bishop of Arua Diocese. On the same day Msgr. Tarantino announced the same news in the Cathedral of Arua to the Christians during the celebration of the feast in honour of the Martyrs of Uganda.

Msgr. Tarantino retired to the new house built for him behind the Cathedral.

Msgr. Drandua was consecrated Bishop in the Cathedral of Arua on the 15 August 1986 on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady to heaven. With all the guests Msgr. Frederic made a pilgrimage to the Mediatrix at Lodonga Basilica to thank the Virgin Mary and to put the diocese and his new ministry under the patronage of the Sultana of Africa.

Bishop Drandua was born in Uleppi on 12 August 1943, ordained priest on (August 1970, elected bishop on 27 May 1986 and consecrated Bishop of Arua on 15 August 1986.

This historical event showed that the Catholic Church of West Nile had achieved the full maturity and emancipation of an adult church. The happiest of all were the missionaries who saw the fruit of their work and the completion of their mission. The Catholic Church of West Nile has become fully African with her own hierarchy.

At the time of the installation of Bishop Frederic the statistics were reading as follows: Total population of the diocese 869.185 of which 517.685 Catholics; 32 parishes with 594 chapels led by 877 catechists; private schools 95 with 12.317 pupils, secular priests residing in the diocese 46, regular priests residing in the diocese 33, major seminarians 59, religious of male congregations 61, religious of female congregations 209. Thus Arua diocese was well staffed and solid in her framework. Monsignor Drandua could be confident in starting his journey as the shepherd of the flock of the Arua Diocese.

### ***The handing over of Panyimur Parish***

“On Sunday 26th August 1990, the parish of Panyimur Diocese of Arua was handed over to the Diocesan Clergy. The new parish was part of Parombo parish of which it formed about one third of the population. It now consists of about 13.000 people distributed in 12 chapels. Bishop Tarantino erected the parish

in 1981 but it remained under the care of the community of Parombo. Bishop Frederick Drandua presided over the solemn mass at which 100 confirmations were conferred and 10 marriages blessed.

Concelebrants were the fathers of Parombo and the two Diocesan priests who have taken over the parish: Fr. Charles Gwali Onegiu, parish priest, and father Stephen Candia his assistant, together with a number of other priests. Father Torquato Paolucci represented the Provincial. The Mass was attended by a large number of parishioners and people from Parombo.

The bishop reminded the parishioners of Panyimur of their duties to increase their co-operation both in the material and spiritual field so that the parish may acquire new vigour and stand on its own feet and complete the work brought to a very good stage by the Verona Fathers". From "*Dialogo* No 189, September 1990.

### ***The Church of Panyimur***

#### **Speech given on the day of the handing over of Panyimur Parish**

"The first Catholic missionaries in Northern Uganda were the Verona Fathers, who arrived at Omach near Para, in January 1910. But by then, the faith had already reached Panyimur. A Ugandan whose name was Areni brought it.

One day Areni heard that the Catholic missionaries had arrived at Omach. So he crossed the Nile with a friend and went to see them. He told Fr. Colombaroli that he was a Catholic, baptized in Uganda where he had lived some years and that his chief Okello of Panyimur sent him to Omach. He added: "Chief Okello too is a Catholic. I baptized him together with his wife and sister when they were ill. All the people of the village want to become Catholics. I am instructing many of them and I lead the Sunday prayers. Chief Okello invites you to go to his village; he will prepare the house for you and will send a boat to fetch you. Chief Okello wants a catechism in Alur language, if you have one or in Kiswahili and also a Rosary, some medals for those who come to catechism."

Fr. Colombaroli was delighted to hear all these; he gave Areni all that he asked and fixed a day for his visit to chief Okello.

Some time after, together with Areni and his men, Father Colombaroli crossed the river Nile. After 8 hours of rowing he landed at Panyimur. A little crowd watched with Okello, while Okello welcomed the missionary. The same evening the father assisted at the catechism lesson and prayer led by Areni, at which chief Okello too was present. “You see”, chief Okello told the missionary, “my father is dead and I do not know where he is now, but I want to go to heaven after my death”.

Brothers and Fathers were delighted to hear that which was happening in Panyimur and wanted to cross the river and establish a mission among the Alur of West Nile; but the British government did not allow them for many years.

This episode shows us that a catechist, a Ugandan catechist in the Diocese of Arua, first brought the faith to the West Nile. This was in 1910, eighty years ago.

On 6th June 1913 the missionaries at Omach gave the first solemn baptisms to 12 catechumens. More were baptized the following years.

On Christmas Eve 1916 Father Vignato arrived at Panyimur from Orussi, a new mission. On Christmas Day he celebrated mass for the few Christians there and although very ill, he remained with his Christian community for some days before crossing the lake and walking to Gulu.

In 1917 the missionaries left Orussi and established the mission of Angal. The mission then extended from the Nile to Okollo and beyond Warr. Panyimur was visited several times every year; the catechists there were sending catechumens to Angal for instruction; schools and chapels were also opened. The number of Catholics grew steadily.

In 1966 the missionaries went to stay at Parombo so Panyimur passed under the parish of Parombo; the old chapel was repaired but the Christians wanted a new church. After many difficulties the work for the new church was almost completed in 1973.

Fr. Fiorante on Easter Sunday of the same year celebrated the first mass. This started a period of fervour among the Christians of Panyimur. It was with the contribution of the Christians that the floor of the church was done in May 1975. The following year the church was plastered. At that time the attendance at Sunday prayer was very good and it seemed that the church was far too small.

In 1981 Bishop Tarantino made Panyimur into a Parish entrusted to the Verona Fathers of Parombo.

Fr. Aldo Pozza, parish priest of Parombo, took a special care of Panyimur, visiting the various chapels and guiding the Pastoral Agents in their work of assisting the Christians.

Now the parish of Panyimur, under the guidance of its own priests, is launched into further spiritual progress for which we ask the Grace of God and the co-operation of all the people, so that Panyimur may not boast in vain of being the first Catholic Community of the Diocese of Arua”.

I reported all the speech as an example of how the faith spread all over West Nile.

### ***III Part - The Ministry of Bishop Drandua***

#### ***The Curia and Synods***

A glance at the pastoral work done by Bishop Frederic shows that this great achievement has been the reorganization of the Diocese as wanted by the Church and the new Canon Law.

Bishop Tarantino was not so keen in putting many structures. His Curia was very simple; he had only a procurator and a secretary not even full time. For a long time he did not have a driver. He established the Consulta and the Presbyteral Council. He put up also the Diocesan pastoral Council. But the pastoral coordinator did not have any office. The diocese was divided in deaneries according to the tribes. The Clergy Bulletin was his instrument for communicating with his priests.

It has been the task of Msgr. Drandua to establish Diocesan offices required by the Holy See and the new Canon Law.

A nice building was constructed near the Bishops house for the Curia. In truth it depends on the capable personnel to make the Curia to function efficiently.

When Bishop Drandua became the administrator of the diocese, the 75th Anniversary of the faith in West Nile was celebrated in Pakwach. From 1910 with

the foundation of Omach to 1985 no Synod took place. It was necessary to examine the past and resolve problems of the present and make resolutions for the future.

To do that the Catholic Church instituted the Diocesan Synod. (Canon 460-68). “The Diocesan Synod is the assembly of priests and of the other faithful of the particular church, chosen to help the Diocesan Bishop for the good of the entire Christian Community regulated by the Canon Laws”.

### ***The first Synod***

Msgr. Frederic Drandua convoked the first synod of Arua Diocese on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1987. In his letter to Monsignors, Deans, Parish Priests, All Clergy, All Religious and the Faithful said: “It is 28 years since the Diocese of Arua has been founded. Within this period, conditions concerning the Clergy, the Religious and the Laity of this Diocese have changed enormously. New questions or pastoral problems challenge our faith in daily life. I have decided to convoke the First Diocesan Synod in which you will be consulted and asked to give your opinion so that all the needs of our Diocese of Arua may be answered and all pastoral problems may be resolved”.

Fr. Dellagiacomma Raphael was appointed as the General Organizing Secretary to the Diocesan Synod.

The Synod was opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1989 by Archbishop Karl J. Rauber Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, in Ediofe Cathedral during the celebration of the mass.

Msgr. Frederic Drandua closed the Synod on the 15<sup>th</sup> July in Pokea Minor Seminary.

The theme of the Synod has been “A Local Church Living Committed to Christ”.

Msgr. Drandua presented and promulgated the first Diocesan Synod Statutes at Ediofe on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1990 Feast of St. Joseph. The Bishop ended the promulgation saying: “I decree that they shall assume the force of law on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1990.

## *Synod News*

Synod News was established as a means of information for the Christian Communities. In the issue No 6, January 1989 the history of Arua Diocese is reported in brief, which has been said already in this book. I take from it only what follows.

“At the end of 1984 Bishop Tarantino resigned from his post and Msgr. Frederic Drandua, his vicar general and rector of the seminary, took over as Apostolic Administrator. He was later confirmed as Bishop of the diocese and consecrated Bishop on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1986. When the new Ordinary took over the situation of the diocese (Diocesan Statistics 1986) was as follows:

Total Population 807,000

Catholics 496,000 (61.5% of the population)

Parishes 31

Catechists 956

Permanent churches 279

Major Seminarians 50

The Synod News tells also about the administrative structures of the diocese as they were in 1989.

‘We look upon our Bishop, Msgr. Frederic Drandua, as the successor of the Apostles at Arua. He is the shepherd and teacher given to us by Christ, who enabled him to be our leader through the sacrament of Order. Pope John Paul II, whom he visits every 5 years (during the *ad Limina Visit*), has appointed him. The Pro- Nuncio is the ambassador of the Pope to the Uganda Government.

Within the diocese Bp. Drandua has a Vicar General that he has personally elected to act as his deputy. He is V. Rev. Msgr. L. Ongom rector of Pokea seminary. He has moreover several other officials who help him in various capacities to run the diocese. There is the Chancellor, Fr. Odama John Baptist; the procurator, Bro. John, the pastoral coordinator Fr. Oyuru, the secretary for Social services, Fr. Sabino Anyanzo, the medical Bureau, headed by Dr, Conrad and sister Vittoria, his personal secretary Fr. Odubi, the vocation director, Fr. S Ojobile.”



### The parishes

The territory of Arua is divided into 33 parishes. It is up to the Bishop to open or close or change boundaries of parishes and to appoint personnel to run them.

At the present the parishes are sub-divided into 4 deaneries; Angal, Ediofe, Lodonga and Moyo

The parish priest may have another priest to help him full time in the parish, he is the curate. The parish is divided into chapels headed by a catechist. The catechists meet once a month with their parish Clergy to review work done and plan ahead. Every parish must have a parish Council for the pastoral administrative problems of the parish....

### Educational and medical works

At Pokea the diocese runs the Minor Seminary for priestly education from S.I to S. 6. The Bishop receives some help from Rome for the training of the seminarians.

Catechists were trained at the interdiocesan school in Gulu. We have now two Catechists Training centres at Angal and Maracha and plan to reopen the one of Lodonga. A diocesan commission deals with the affairs of the catechists and they have their own Association.

The majority of the school in West Nile and Madi were started and managed at first by the Catholic Church like Nyapea, Ombaci, Koboko, Warr and Lodonga PTC just to mention some. At the present the Diocese runs a private school the Domestic Science Institute of Maracha. At Angal there is a Midwifery Training Centre, at Maracha a Carpentry school. There are also plans to set up a Renewal Centre at Lodonga.

The diocese runs three private hospitals: Angal, Maracha and Nyapea. There are dispensaries run by church personnel at Pakwach, Orussi, Paidha, Warr, Ediofe, Adumi, Otumbari, Moyo, Adjumani and Pakele. At Moyo there is a Babies' Home and an Old Peoples' home.

### The Clergy

By the beginning of 1989 the total number of priests ordained in the Diocese was 75. To this number we should add fifteen priests who belong to Arua Diocese and have joined missionaries societies as Apostles of Jesus (6),

Missionaries of the Divine Master (5), Comboni Fathers (6), Spiritan Fathers (1), they are sent by the Diocese. Four of the priests have become Bishops: Asili, Luguga and Drandua and Archbishop Odama in Gulu.

13 priests received ordination before Arua became an independent diocese. From 1959 to 1984, during the time of Bishop Tarantino, 41 new priests received ordination. 21 new priests were ordained since January 1985.

About 60 candidates are in the pipeline at Ggaba and Katigondo.

31 Comboni missionaries are still in the diocese. The average age of the missionaries is 59 years.”

This was a complete picture of the status of the diocese of Arua at the first Synod.

### ***African Synod***

“On 6Th January 1989, the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, the Holy Father made the surprise announcement during his Angelus talk to convoke a Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops so as to celebrate the communion and Collegiality of the African Episcopate with Rome and the Universal Church, and thereby promote renewed pastoral efforts and activity for the Church in Africa. In this regard the Holy Father determined that the topic for discussion at this Special Assembly was to be “The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: ‘You shall be my witnesses’ (Acts 1:8)”. (Towards the African Synod).

In June 1989 a commission was set up to prepare and suggest themes for discussion. The following subjects were proposed as far as Evangelization: Proclamation of the Good News of Salvation; Inculturation; Dialogue; Justice and peace; and means of Social communications. Thus a document or *Lineamenta* or “Outline” was offered to the Episcopal conferences, as a tool for discussions on the Synod topics in view of the Special Assembly.

The “*Instrumentum Laboris*” was drawn up at later time on the bases of the official responses that came out from the various Episcopal conferences on the African Continent and from certain offices of the Roman Curia who had a direct association with the Synod topics.

While some people were making questions about the city which could hold the African Synod the pope at his visit to Kampala in 1993 declared that it would be held in Rome. In fact it was on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1993 at Rubaga Cathedral during the Vespers, the pope said: “The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will begin on Low Sunday 10 April 1994”. There were some prominent representatives from Africa among the high officials: Cardinal Laureano Rugambwa of Bukoba and Cardinal Gantin, Prefect of the Congregation for the Bishops and Dean of the College of Cardinals and Arinze Francis, president of the Papal Council for Interreligious Dialogue. There were about 21 Bishops from Africa in different departments of the Synod.

At 09:30 on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April 1994, Sunday of the Octave of Easter, at the tomb of the Apostle Peter, John Paul II presided at the solemn Eucharistic celebration for the opening of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of the Bishops, which would take place in the Hall of the Synod in the Vatican from 10 April to 8 May 1994 on “The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: “You shall be My Witnesses”.

The first session of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of the Bishops took place on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1994. On 6<sup>th</sup> of May, the Press of the Holy See released the “Message of the African Synod” which was called also the Synod of the Resurrection, the Synod of Hope.

Pope John at his visit in Kenya, at Resurrection Garden Nairobi handed over the post- Synodal Exhortation “The Church in Africa” to Bishops and all Christians in Africa. He emphasised that “The Document itself is only an instrument and a beginning. What counts is the effective renewal of the Church’s members and their ever more generous ministry and service”.

Did Arua diocese benefit from the African Synod? Do we want to implement the diocese synod or that of the universal Church? In Johannesburg, South Africa, the Holy Father also said: “The fruits of the Synod set out in the Apostolic Exhortation constitute a kind of pastoral plan of action for the Church in Africa as she seeks to be faithful to her vocation and mission, and as she serves suffering humanity in this fluid and turbulent period of history”. I think there are some teachings or topics in the Message of the African Synod and in the Exhortation of the pope very important and up to date for our Christian renewal in

our diocese like as Peace and justice, Ecumenism and Interreligious dialogue, Inculturation, the diocesan priests, Social development, schools and cultural centres, laity involvement in political fields, even catechists have not been promoted much to a better formation, women also are not taking in a satisfactory consideration for their promotion.

Another emerging issue is that the faithful are not informed and thought enough about what is going on in the diocese and Christian life.

In meetings and in body decisions the representatives of laity are not qualified. The majority of them are P. 7 leavers. There is no a right reshuffles in the diocesan commissions.

### ***Pastoral Chistus Centre***

After the first Synod Msgr. Drandua elected a new pastoral co-ordinator, Fr. Tonino Pasolini. Together with the Bishop he started the construction of the Centre for the formation of all the ministries and pastoral agents in the diocese. It was a superb plan, which needed also a very determined mind. Fr. Pasolini succeeded in it. From that centre a revival of fresh pastoral plans and formation. Liturgical and catechesis books have been printed in Vernacular languages. But one of the most important works has been the compilation of declarations and solutions, which came out from the Synods: the Policy Book.

### ***The second Synod: on the way together***

The Second Synod was convoked by the Bishop of Arua Frederic Drandua on the 8Th December 1993 feast of the Immaculate Conception.

120 members participated in the celebration of the Synod from 23 November until 8 December 1994. Msgr. Lodoviko Ongom opened it at Ediofe Cathedral at the presence of Bishop Henry Orombi, of Church of Uganda of Nebbi Diocese, on the 23 November 1994. The five-year pastoral plan was officially promulgated at Lodonga Basilica on 8Th December 1994. In the convocation ceremony the Bishop said: "I have decided to convoke the Second Diocesan Synod whose theme shall be: EVANGELISATION. The Organising

Executive Steering Committee was composed of Chairman Fr. Pasolini, the General Secretary, Ms. Sherry Meyer. Representatives from the Bishop's office, Msgr. Lodoviko Ongom, Vicar General of Arua diocese, Fr. Pierino Madrua, Chancellor, Representatives from the Lay Apostate, Fr. Matthias and Ms. Lilly Kareo.

*The year 1994 was characterized also with some bad events in our diocese. The influx of refugees from Sudan was constant and in increase. Their number was approximately 300.000 only in Madi area.*

The enemies of the Catholic Church wanted to attack at the heart of the diocese. That was the plot to kill the Bishop Drandua. But it served to awake the Catholics. People of every religion pledged their full support to the Bishop and wanted an explanation from the Authorities. It seemed certain that the plot was been arranged outside the area. It was difficult to give an explanation at moment. But after the case done through the court, the truth came up. It seemed that government authorities decided the plot. The boy, used for the plot won the case but it was difficult to retort the case against the government authority for lack of money and also fearing more retaliation. We wait for the future. The Catholics felt very much and were much concerned of the health of the Bishop

At the close of the Second Diocesan Synod in the Basilica on 8December, the Christians cheered the Bishop with a prolonged clapping of hands. To the visit to Rome he wrote his pastoral letter "Let Me live".

### ***Nebbi Diocese***

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>. 1996 Rev Fr. John Baptist Odama has been elected Bishop of Nebbi diocese.

The Episcopal Ordination took place on 26 May 1996 at Nebbi. Almost all the Catholic Bishops of Uganda, scores of priests and thousands of very enthusiastic lay faithful attended the ceremony. The president of Uganda, Museveni, was also there. The new Bishop in his speech noted that his Episcopal nomination came almost simultaneously with the beatification of Daniel Comboni. He said he considered this fact as an important personal message to him to continue the work of the evangelization that he and his missionaries pioneered many years ago.

The new diocese has been detached from Arua diocese, comprising the Alur and the Madi of Okollo.

### ***Odravu: waited too long***

In 1976 Bishop Tarantino, during the celebration of Confirmation, he promised to the Christians that in 5 years time Odravu will become parish. They waited for 20 years.

In “The Voice of the Council” of the Comboni Missionaries No 31, January 1994 it is said: “The Bishop wants to open Odravu Parish (part of Lodonga): 40.000 Muslims, 4.000 Catholics, 16 chapels; it is a work of first evangelization and in line with our priorities; can the Comboni Missionaries do anything?”

On the 1<sup>st</sup>. August 1987 the Provincial father Elia Pampaloni wrote to Fr. Toni: “As you know already we intend to support Bishop Drandua in the endeavour to strengthen the Christian presence among the Muslim area; so with this letter and in agreement with the Provincial Council, I assign you to the community of Lodonga Space in Charging of developing Odravu”.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup>. August Fr. Toni was already in Odravu to celebrate the mass.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1997 the Bishop sent a letter to the parish priest of Lodonga with the title: “Decree of the erection of Odravu Zone as a parish.”

The letter says: “Since the spiritual needs of the people of Odravu have increased over the recent years, and the Catholic inhabitants of the place require a parish, after much consideration and after consulting the Presbyteral Council of the diocese, with the advice of the parish priest of Lodonga parish I divide by virtue of this diocese the territory of the parish in Lodonga, and I erect the zonal church in Odravu, which until now belonged to the parish of Lodonga, as a parochial church of the New Parish of Odravu. The new parish will have the limits including all its chapels and all the other chapels which have been listed at the constitution of the sub-parish of Odravu including those detached from Obongi parish, Rhino-Camp parish and Otumbari parish... And I appoint also you Rev. Fr. Anthony La Salandra as the administrator of the new parish with all obligations and the rights of a parish priest “.

In 1999 Fr. Gino Stocchero joined as a curate. In the end of 1999 Fr. Toni left for illness. Fr. Baltz David came to Odravu to help Fr. Gino who is up to now the parish priest.

### ***Attack at Odravu***

On the morning of October 27<sup>th</sup>, we had gone to Yumbe for a meeting with other religious leaders on the theme; SECURITY. At 8:15pm while speaking on the radio call with Fr. Moser in Lodonga, Fr. Toni was outside the house in order to listen better to the Italian radio. Hurriedly he came in, showing me that there were some suspicious persons outside who started to call Fr. Toni for help and open the door. We heard some shots and the barking of the dog. They drag the cook out of the kitchen and a worker who was sleeping nearby. Their boss came forward and forced the two to call Fr. Toni to open the door. But Fr. Toni was hiding below the window, so the boss obliged the worker to knock down the door with a piece of wood. I was hiding in the dining hall; I had switched off the radio and trying to see if there were other rebels behind. Not seeing anybody I dared to go out. But the two rebels ordered: hands up! And out with money. "If you want the money, tell your boss to stoop shooting and not knock down the door". So they came in. The boss was domineering and menacing. He obliged me to kneel down and tried to beat me with his gun. One rebel and Fr. Toni came in to rescue me. They took 250.000 shillings prepared for the pay the mission workers, our two radios and watches and went calmly away.

(Fr. Gino Stocchero- Lodonga, 30-10-1998).

*Two days later on the 30/10/1998 the rebels assaulted a mini-bus coming from Moyo at Wandi near Wollo killing Fr. Kerubino Izale with other three persons. Fr. Moser from Lodonga went to collect the body of the Father, which was put in the Basilica. The day after, 31<sup>st</sup>. a requiem Mass was celebrated at 7am with many people. Afterwards the body was carried to Moyo for burial.*

### *The 3<sup>rd</sup>. Synod of Arua Diocese*

The theme of this Synod was tuned with the Jubilee 2000: “Our call to forgiveness and reconciliation. In his speech the Bishop Drandua said: “This is our biggest challenge, our great task, to respond to the signs of our times; to touch the lives of the people we are called to serve, to be relevant, credible and authentic. No other challenge surpasses this no other task is more important than this”.

The Pro-Nuncio in his speech said: “This is not just the Church in Arua, but this is the true Catholic Church with all its dimensions of being Catholic Church: one, holy, Catholic and apostolic.... We cannot stand at the border of the Jordan looking at the things. We cannot be spectators, we must participate: Evangelization is urgent, importance of Formation, deepening the Faith, witnessing our faith, inculturating the faith as the Apostles did in the beginning of the Church, there must be a reconciling community”.

After the speech the Pro Nuncio declared the Synod opened on 23 November 1999 at Arua.

#### Declaration

*“We the Catholics of Arua Diocese declare that we want to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a radical challenge to all cultures of the world. We are also aware that Christ came not to destroy cultures, but to perfect them”. Two were the main declarations of the third Synod: Bride wealth and funerals. “Consequently, we declare in this Jubilee year of 2000 that from this time forward Catholics of Arua Diocese shall abandon the practice of bride wealth which has become abusive- Consequently we declare in this Jubilee year 2000 that from this time forward Catholics of Arua Diocese shall abandon all practices that cause financial problems for the bereaved, traditional payments and all sinful behavior at funerals”. The struggle continues towards the achievements of declarations to destroy old customs is not ease. A continuous catechesis will do better than imposing drastically decisions, which will be the last and true aims of the gospel. I am confident that a changing society will bring also a change of behavior.*



On 7th December 1999 Msgr. Frederic closed the Synod at Arua. “Tomorrow - he ended the close speech- we make the pilgrimage for the intercession of the Virgin Mary- the Sultana of Africa. There we shall ask to be born again, a new power generating sons and daughters in the faith and educating ourselves towards the fullness of Christ”.

### ***The Parish of Akanyo***

After handing over the parish of Parambo on October 10, 1999, the feast of our Blessed Founder, on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1999 Fr. Aladino Mirandola and Fr. Luigi Sala went to live in the house of Akanyo. “We are still without water and electricity, but the co-operation of the people is good. We have to complete the construction of the second wing, with 2 garages and a place for fuel”.

This new parish has about 10.000 Catholics, 3.000 Protestants, 65 Muslims, 375 belonging to various sects and a few hundred pagans. The total population is of 14.000 people. It is situated 15 km East of Angal from which is detached. The community has chosen as the Patron saint, Blessed Daniel Comboni. Thus Akanyo is the first parish to be dedicated to Saint Daniel Comboni. (Fr. Luigi Sala- Fr. Aladino Mirandola) From Dialogo March 2000, No 231.

### ***Micu Parish***

On August 15th 1999 the new Catholic Parish was dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady. Micu has been a sub-parish since July 1998. The sub-parish was cut from Ombaci parish, Adumi and Olovu. The territory of the new parish includes the following chapels: Drisi, Onezo, Angunizo, Aroi, Leibo, Ombu, Rudu, Aliba, Ombadia, Robu Talia, Obokoa, Esemi, Lamila, Obindua, Aako and Anzu.

Fr. Aquilino Acidri has been appointed first parish priest of Micu Catholic Parish, effective 15.8.99. (Arua Diocese Bulletin No 29, August 1999)

The Verona Fathers of Ombaci with the co-operation of the Christians have done the entire construction of the fathers’ house.

Recently Fr. Felix Epima, parish priest, installed a solar system and apparatus of loud speaker in the parish church.

### ***Decree of erection of Ajia Catholic Sub-Parish, 10th May 2000***

I declare by virtue of this decree, Ajia as Sub-Parish, which will be Ajia Catholic Sub-Parish. Ajia Catholic Sub-Parish will territorially be composed of the following chapels:

Ajia Zone: Ombokoro, Aupi, Oyeko Surukoni, Amalo and Ajia; Aya zone: Aya Centre, Ojipako, Atonze, Alingulu, Adroyi, Aya; Olevo zone: Olevo, Kayi, Sagbulu, Alijioda.

For a more stable establishment of this new community of Christ faithful in Ajia Catholic Sub Parish *entrust the parish priest of the mother Parish of Arivu, Fr. Martin Engamvile with all power as administrator of the said Sub-Parish.*

### ***Decree of erection of Obi Catholic Parish***

“Since the spiritual needs of the people of Otumbari parish could not be properly attended to because of the ever-growing number of Christians and long distances to the parish Centre, I have erected Obi sub-parish by my decree of 6Th July 1998 in preparation to serve the concerned areas in a more and permanent manner.

I declare by virtue of this decree, Obi Sub-parish a Full Parish which shall be known as “ Obi Catholic Parish”, territorially Obi Catholic Church takes the boundary of Obi Sub-Parish. This decree takes effect from the 26Th November 2000, the Feast of Christ the King. (Bishop F. Drandua). No priest yet was appointed for the parish.

### ***Erection of the Sub-parish of Offude***

Offude has been erected Sub-perish, effective 13 January 2003. It comprises the following chapels: Offude, Ambalajabo, Naku, Egamara, Aripe,

Okavu, Aroi, Obitava, Omba, Arizara, Ombiabora, Aliro, Padruko, Itia and Agobia.

Fr. Ayu Arkangelo is the priest in charge of the new parish.

(Arua Diocese Bulletin No 44, March, 2003)

## ***Jubilee***

Since 1933 there is a tradition in the Catholic Church to celebrate the Anniversary of the Redemption worked by Jesus Christ for the humanity.

In 1933 Pope Pious XI by a happy inspiration decreed that the XIX Century of the Redemption should be celebrated by an Extraordinary Year, without going into the question of the exact date of the Lord's Crucifixion. He announced the Jubilee by the Bull "Quod Nuper" AAS 25, 1933, 6.

Pope Paul VI announced that 1975 be the Holy Year for the renewal in Christ and reconciliation with God. It was proclaimed by the Bull "Apostolorum Limina" I: AAS 66, 1974, 292 ff.

Pope John Paul II called also for a Jubilee. "Since in the present year 1983 there occurs the 1950th anniversary of the supreme event of Redemptio, I came to the decision, already manifested to the College of Cardinals on 26 November 1982, to devote a full year to the special commemoration of the Redemption, so that this event might penetrate deeply into the thought and action of the whole Church. This Jubilee will begin on 25 March next, the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, and will end on 22 April 1984, Easter Sunday". Its theme was "Aperite portas Redemptori" open the doors to the Redeemer.

Pope John Paul II declared three years for preparation of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. 1997 was devoted to meditate Christ the Redeemer, the second year 1998 to meditate on the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life, the love of God, and the third year 1999 to meditate on the Glory of the Father. The Jubilee lasted for one full year

It was opened on Christmas evening at St. Peter's Basilica with the opening of the Holy Door. It was a moving ceremony with half a million of participants. During the year there were different groups for gaining indulgences and doing reconciliation through penance and prayers. The Jubilee was closed on

the feast of Epiphany in 2001. The Roman Pontiff granted permission to gain the Jubilee all over the world, in cathedrals and parishes.

## ***IVPart - at the service of the all people of West Nile***

### ***Service for integral formation: the growth of the people of God in West Nile***

Comboni envisaged the development of the country under the aspect of Christianization and Civilization. This is the common Catholic view in which the civilising task is immediately connected with the spread of the Gospel. Another field of Comboni interest was the development of handicraft schools, and the mission's own agricultural and construction works. It is in this spirit that the sons of Comboni developed their missions; Spirituality centered on the announcing the Word of God and civilization through education for an integral formation of human beings. The later is in line with the ethic principles of the Gospel. Christ came to liberate humankind from all oppressions spiritual and material. That is why from the beginning of the Mission of Omach to this present day catechesis is always united with education.

The aim of evangelization from Omach on has been the growth of the Church, which means the spread of Christianity. It is true that this has been carried out by human beings that had their characters, culture, language, faith and conviction.

In West Nile the missionaries were most of Italian Nationality. In the beginning the missionaries did not have a clear idea about a method of evangelization. "Go and teach, make them my disciples' this command of Jesus was always in their heart and the example of their founder "Save Africa with Africa". The three Ss " Self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating" have been coined recently, as a product of Latin America. They had in mind to catechize and baptize as many people as possible, making them children of God, ready for heaven.

Evangelization and education were going together; catechism; writing and reading were the basic method for integral formation given by the missionaries in West Nile.

The parish or mission has been always the Centre of irradiation for spiritual and material growth towards the chapels and villages. At missions the catechumens and neophytes could learn the Christian life and jobs. The first skilled people in building, carpentry etc had been educated in the missions. The first *Karani and fotafota* for the English officers were prepared in the mission under the guidance of the fathers and brothers. A human civilization started in missions. Certainly many pagans were attracted to faith because of the new skills of reading and writing. These were bringing way to gain money and other commodities.

Sacramental life was another preoccupation of the missionaries; the sacraments are means for holiness. The word of God was followed by the “practice” of the sacraments. Baptism was intended as the door to enter the Kingdom of heaven, necessary for salvation for all. “Compelle entrare” was another missionary slogan. The shepherd goes in any corner to meet his sheep. The missionaries were making *safaris* in a systematic method for evangelization. It was a grave duty to visit the Christians in their chapel and villages three four times a year. The safari was consisting in celebrating the Eucharist, giving penance, seeing the work of the catechist, meeting the catechumens, and settling marriages but most encouraging and comforting the Christian community. A safari was always a feast for the Christians and a pleasure for the father.

The Vernacular language was the essential means for transmitting the message of the Gospel; it was a moral obligation to learn it. Another parcel was to know the culture and customs of the people. We had some missionaries worthy of praise; they became so “Africans” that the people were saying, “he is one of us”. Unfortunately we had also few missionaries who did not care of learning much both language and customs; they remained at the margin of their missionary life.

What has been the response to the message of the gospel by the tribes of West Nile? We have seen in the course of this excursus. The Alur and Madi did not put any obstacle, they accepted it willingly; instead the Logbara in the beginning put a kind of resistance. But if we judge according to the number of the

Christians (75%) we should admit that the response has been above of any expectation. We can say that before independence Christianity was already a great reality.

Through the ministry of Msgr. Tarantino we had a great expansion of the faith due to an increasing number of catechists and of establishing of new missions. The missions represented the Centre of unity of Christians and their root of belonging to Christ. Paradoxically the founding of new mission lessened the commitment of safari. In the recent years there has been a decline of holy marriages and consequently a decline of the sacraments of penance and Holy Eucharist. Although the third synod made a declaration on marriages for abolishing the bride wealth, considered a cause of unlawful marriages, the decline continues and the bride prize is going on.

In the early days the missionary was used to bring along with him in safari a catechist and some Catholic Action members. The catechist was much more than a teacher, he became a leader of the Christian community taking care of the spiritual welfare of the Christians; he enjoined a good moral authority among people. There has been a great improvement for the update of catechists through training centres: nevertheless his handicap still remains for his rudimentary knowledge of the Christian faith; but what he lacks in erudition, he made up with conviction. It is generally admitted that the real missionaries of Africa were these catechists. What West Nile is today it is due to them. About 90% of all conversions may be the fruit of their work. In West Nile the schoolteachers never replaced the catechists.

At the time of wars (First world war the Verona Fathers were all interned to Katigondo) or during persecution (some fathers were expelled or even killed) nowhere the sheep were dispersed. The catechists shepherded the flock and increase their number. This is a great lesson for the priests; they should love their catechists and help them even materially.

Under the leadership of Msgr. Tarantino and with the advent of Vatican II West Nile revived in maturity. The Presbyteral Council was formed, and pastoral Council was established; the diocese reorganized in Deaneries; all the parishes established their Councils so that the laity could have more access in the administration and apostolate of the parish. The laity were invited to abandon the

old idea that “everything depends on the priests. The process is still going on. Lodonga Social Centre began with the aim of training leaders, the unfortunately became a training Centre for catechists only.

The Christian Initiation was introduced and the catechumenate revived. In 1973 an initiative so-called “Ba wara” began, meant for adult catechesis and for a renewal of faith for the “lapsi” Christians.

The Catholic Action, the old Christian movement in West Nile is still alive although lost the former aim of defending the Catholic Church and its teaching. The learned Catholics deserted it more or less completely. The *Legio Mariae* started with interest in the beginning due to some missionaries coming from Ireland and Britain. Recently two movements came in West Nile, the new catechumenate movement and the Renewal of the Spirit (charismatic). We cannot judge yet the good or wrong brought by these two controversial groups.

### ***Education***

Missionary concern was chiefly with extension, meanwhile the Christian community needed some inner consolidation. This came in a way through a better education and through establishing small Christian Communities

Education started in embryo with catechist’s chapel-school learning writing and reading in Vernacular language. From 50s to 60s was the era of bush-schools in any corner. But this teaching was so rudimentary that the children later on forgot even how to write and read. One of the main aims of bush-schools was to have more catechumens for baptism. On those days the missions of Pakwach, Angal, Nyapea, Warr, Ediofe, Maracha, Koboko, Terego and Moyo were crowded of young children who were bringing life and joy in the mission. To the few primary schools other were added. Msgr. Tarantino was always insisting on education. Primary education started under the auspices of the missions with some control and financial support from the British government.

### ***Laitiy participation***

Pope Pious XI and the Vatican II encouraged and stressed the need for a lay participation in the hierarchical apostolate of the church. As we have seen the

Catholic Action and *Legio Mariae* were established in the West Nile, the former in 1948 and the other in 1960s. In some missions the St. Vincent de Paul conference was introduced. In 60s Arua diocese was flourishing of youth associations like YCS and YCY, Xaverians and Crusaders. During Obote regime all these youth groups disappeared. They were accused of interference in politics, but in truth the protestant government feared the Catholic youth organizations and also because the UPC party could not do it. What is funny Bishop Tarantino ordered the fathers to stop all Catholic youth movements thinking that they had politics tendencies. I would attribute to the close of those movements the apathy of the Catholic youth towards they church and their faith.

Youth has become one of the greatest pastoral problems in the diocese. The majority of priests do not know what to do to attract them to the church. There is a youth Centre in Ediofe, well built and organized with offices, but the director finds difficult to sensitize and mobilize youth at parish levels. True they have catechists at their villages, but these good men have no more the authority of former times. The qualifications that catechists have are not enough to make them cope with the expectations of the youth, who slowly by slowly desert the Sunday service and lose faith.

As years pass, the picture changes. Indifferentism is invading all the corners of the society. Money attracts more than religion. Dances and the influence of the West change the attitude of the youth. Drugs are circulating in the schools and markets. All these problems have been tackled in all deanery meetings and in the recent Diocesan Pastoral Council of last year (26 November-29 November 2002)

### ***Bishop and priests for leadership***

The aim of missionary activity is to found a local church capable to fulfill the three “S”- self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting. All the missionaries were convinced of that but some were discussing about the time to start a call for priesthood. The source of vocations is the Christian community.

Pope Pius XI wrote the Encyclical letter “*Rerum Ecclesiae*” in 1926, which at that time was considered the ‘*Magna Charta*’ of evangelization. It was



said: “Every mission should open a seminary for the formation of priests”. That was the will and the command of the pope.

The Verona Fathers started the seminary in 1924. The first aspirants were three two Acholi, Francisko Ocen, Justo Oryem and the Madi Feliciano Boy. These and other few aspirants were sent to Nyenga. In June 1927 the seminary was opened in Gulu. In 1928 the seminary from Gulu was transferred to Arua. Fr. Sembiante became the first rector. In 1931 the seminary went back to Gulu. Fr. Emilio Spreafico became rector. In 1938 the seminary took place at Lacor. In 1938, Donation Bala, Madi and John Ongom, Acholi, were ordained priests on 24 December. This event happened only 27 years after the arrival of the missionaries in Gulu. In Lacor the Verona Fathers started also the Philosophical and theological seminary. Fr. Paul Jalcebo, Alur, Fr. Isidoro Alule, Logbara, Fr. Jovenale Gale, Silvio Adia, Anthony Andrua, Kudu Santino, Amandua Silvio, Eka Joseph, Jakech Jenesio and Caesar Asili, have been the pioneers of Arua diocese in the priesthood.

144 priests have been ordained in the history of Arua diocese.

By the division of Nebbi 55 priests are present in Arua diocese, 30 in Nebbi diocese. 9 out for commitments, 14 for studies, 2 suspended, 3 left, 31 dead (Statistics of December 2000, from Arua pastoral co-ordinator office).

In 1959 Bishop Tarantino started the Minor Seminary of Arua diocese at Warr mission. Msgr. Tarantino appointed Fr. Felice Farina the first rector of the seminary. In 1960 from Warr the seminary came to Pokea, which was named Pokea Sts Peter and Paul seminary. In 1961 the Bishop appointed Fr. Toni to succeed Fr. Farina. In 1968 the seminary of Pokea was handed over to the diocesan priest, Fr. Caesar Asili.

The wish of Pope Pius XI, as the second directive given in *Rerum Ecclesiae*, was to prepare the erection of the African hierarchy. Pius XII in 1953 changed the Vicariate Apostolic of Gulu in Gulu Diocese. Thus he erected the hierarchy in British Africa. This meant that the African Bishops had the same rights and duties as all other Bishops in Europe. On the eve of independence of Uganda in June 13, 1959 Bishop Tarantino was installed in the Cathedral as the first Bishop of Arua diocese. His leadership lasted for 25 year. He resigned in the end of 1985. Msgr. Drandua Frederic succeeded him. He was consecrated in Arua

Cathedral on 15 August 1986. He is the first diocesan priest to be Bishop of Arua diocese. From that time on we can say that Arua diocese has acquired indigenous leadership with a full responsibility. This Africanization meets problems and difficulties especially on economy and administration field. Msgr. Drandua tried his best to organize the Curia that under Tarantino was not existent entity; three synods took place so far. The pastoral Centre has been well organized due to the tireless effort of Fr. Tonino Pasolini. Recently the Centre has been handed over to a diocesan priest Fr. Aquilino Acidri. Various commissions are operating in the diocese like liturgical, pastoral, financial dialogue, ecumenism and Justice and peace. The diocesan priests have their association, ADIPA, as their place of resolving their problems. Recently Bishop Drandua instituted a well-built orphanage as a sign of love of the Church of Arua towards the poor. Mss Domitilla Ejioro (Lay helper) is the manager.

Bishop Drandua suffered a lot when a plot was orchestrated by government elements to kill him on political ground. aimed at to destroy the popularity of the Catholic church in West Nile. On this occasion, being in Rome, wrote a pastoral letter “Let me live” in which he denounces the evil and proclaim his dedication towards the Catholics and all the people of his diocese as their shepherd.

### ***Fellowship-discipleship in Religious life***

From the beginning of the church there have been always faithful of both sexes who will practice the Christian life more closely to the pattern of Christ. They accept willingly a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting, as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren. The Consecrated life is a sign of maturity in faith of a particular church.

The first to join the consecrated life in Arua have been women. Msgr. Negri instituted in 1939 the Sisters of Mary Immaculate as teachers in primary schools. They are present in some of the parishes as teachers and nurses.

In Diocese there are also the sisters of the Secret Heart started in Sudan and escaped in Moyo where their Provincial house is.

The sisters of The Mother of the Church, instituted by Msgr. Asili in Lira are in Arua diocese working in different fields.

The Lay Helpers, although it is not a religious institution, they have precise aims in the Christian community which is the human promotion of women in the society and in the Church (Fr. Medeghini, page 579). The Lay Helpers is the sole Lay Catholic Association approved in the Diocese of Arua. Fr. Toni started it in Maracha in 1969. They were approved definitely by Msgr. Drandua on 16 May 1987 with the approval of the new constitution. "This is an established society in Arua Diocese for girls who want to consecrate themselves for the work of the Church especially in promoting women's role without taken religious vows. They belong to the societies of Apostolic life Canon 731".

Msgr. Negri had in mind to institute a congregation of Brothers with the same aim of the Immaculate sisters. But his death prevented him to initiate it. Msgr. Cesana, following the desire of Negri, started in Lodonga the Marian Brothers. Fr. Albrigo Gino has been their first formator. It is the only religious congregation of Arua diocese.

Another congregation came in Arua diocese: the Apostle of Jesus instituted by Msgr. Mazzoldi. They function already in various missions giving a great help to the diocese priests and Christians.

The last group of religious congregations is the Divine Masters started by Msgr. Asili in Lira. Actually are incardinated in Arua Diocese, still under a process to be approved by the Holy See.

Surely this flourishing of institutions shows the vitality of the faith in Arua diocese under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### ***The Schools***

Education is another service the Catholic Church has given to the people of West Nile. Education is a means to develop the integral human person. From her beginning the Catholic Church devoted herself to help the humanity in knowledge. The first universities in fact in the world bring the mark of Catholic Church. Although her first mission is to announce the Good New of the Gospel,

nevertheless the Church takes the education also as a means for evangelization. Faith without knowledge is weak.

From Omach the missionaries introduced education. With the teaching of the catechism the catechumens were learning the rudimentary elements of Writing and Reading. The chapels became chapel-schools; the first catechists became catechists- teachers. The bright neophytes became the Karani and interpreters (Fotafota) of the English government. The necessity to have a better education and teachers the missionaries started the elementary schools.

In the five missions, Moyo, Angal, Arua, Nyapea, and Lodonga had primary schools for boys and girls since 1930. We can admire even now their building .In Lodonga the first primary school began in 1932 under the Head ship of Sr. Diletta Nicolini. Particularly solemn was the inauguration of the new elementary school in 1934. The British Commissioner, who took part in the ceremony declared: “This is one of the finest schools in the Protectorate”.

Because of the Second World War the education system in Catholic Missions suffered a lot. In 1940 the British Army took over the buildings of Gulu Seminary, forcing the transfer of the seminarians to West Nile: The Major Seminary was accommodated in Arua, in the Normal School, and the Minor in Lodonga. St. Aloysius College in Gulu was also affected. It was transferred to Nyapea, where it has developed as one of the best Senior Secondary Schools.

The post primary shoals administered by the Catholic Church in West Nile were: St. Aloysius College of Nyapea headed by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart which was the only school in the north up to 1951, which prepared the students for the Cambridge Certificate.

Another post primary school was St. Joseph Technical School, Ombaci, which started in 1943, headed by the Verona Brothers. A good number of high skilled people and technicians were prepared at Ombaci for the Public Works Departments and for the private sector. The first offices building for English administration in Arua was built, and covered with Roman tiles, by the students of Ombaci Technical School. Unfortunately this school lost its previous aim under Obote regime by the instigation of Protestants ministers. Now is a common Secondary school.

Primary Schools need teachers. In 1934 a Normal School was established in Ediofe for the formation of Primary Teachers where now the Bishop's House is. But unfortunately it was closed, when the War started, and the Verona Fathers were interned to Katigondo. It was considered as a subsidiary to the Lira Normal School. After its closure young men from West Nile interested in becoming qualified teachers had to be on the march for several days in order to reach Lira. Besides the distance another difficulty met by Logbara, Madi and Kakwa students was the Lwo Language which was used in teaching the students at Lira Normal School.

Among many difficulties, medical services, distance from trading centres, at the end of January 1945 the New Lodonga Teachers' Centre was inaugurated and given the name St. John Bosco under the head ship of Father Traversi Pietro. The new Educational Institution was born as VTTC or PTTC or St. John Bosco Teachers College. (From a speech in the occasion of the "Golden Jubilee 1945-1995 delivered by Fr. Pedrini Ettore)

In 1953 Fr. Cifaldi began another Secondary school in Koboko Mission, which has become also famous in West Nile and Uganda.

Contemporary to Primary schools, bush schools were spread as mushrooms all over the territory of West Nile from 1955 to 1970. When in 1963 the Obote government took over the school, bush schools continued and remained in the hand of the missions. They were running at very low cost and could not reach to P. 6. Their standard remained below the requirements of education because of no qualified teachers. Nevertheless they were useful enough for that time when aide schools were few. Actually many bush-school became government schools.

The first primary schools were boarding schools to give change to pupils far away from the centres that had a good will and the parents could effort food for them.

The British used missionaries as agencies of education given only grants in aid meanwhile the construction of the schools was completely on the shoulders of the missions but the government was supervising the standard. The colonialists were not much after education but after land. Why the missionaries are so interesting for education? ADC of Arua Mr. Wheeler in 1956 told me that some

officers say that the missionaries teach the people how to send them (the British) away. In part it was true.

In 1929 Msgr. Hinsley, the first Delegate Apostolic of British Africa, after having visited the schools in Uganda, gave in his report some directives to the missionaries. He insisted on the following points: 1) the need of sisters for girls' schools, 2) The concern to educate the elite to a higher standard, 3) Not to prepare the Blacks to serve better the Whites but to raise them to a higher Christian civilization, to make them "a bit more human" and "better servants of the Lord". 4) To have preference to the building of the schools over the building of the Churches. (John Baur-2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, page 272). Msgr.> Hinsley is the one who called the Comboni missionaries "Verona Fathers" may be he did not know their founders.

Certainly education has been a vehicle to civilization and helped the Christians to better understanding the Message of Christ. No doubt the schools in West Nile brought progress, civilization and raised the standard of the people to a rank of human beings willed by God. They can enjoy freedom and full responsibility to judge what to do for a better world. Through the Christian education based on the teaching of Christ, women are no more second class people in the society. They are going to gain full emancipation and have their own role to play in the society and in the Church. For this reason another school was started in Maracha in 1985 with the aim to give women and girls a thoroughly woman education which is the Domestic Science Institute which is still private post primary school of Arua Diocese up to present time. This institution wanted to sensitize girls and women to come out from the oppression of their old customs and understand their real role in the Church and society for which God created them.

In Koboko in 1954 Bro. started an agriculture school. Farina and continued by Bros. De Rossi and Barbiero. But the Obote regime, as for Ombaci College, suppressed it in 1964 in refusing any aid for the instructors. So another chance to have an Agricultural Institute, a way for the people to improve the way of life through a better nutrition and a better used of the land was lost forever. All government in Uganda up to now had no interest to improve agriculture and technical skills in West Nile.

Also the missionaries and the Clergy since the taking over the schools lost the enthusiasm for the education. The money is their goal. To refer to the mentality of our governments of the past and now it seems true what John Bar says in his book-2000 Years of Christianity in Africa Pag.274, “The old word of Agriculture and simple crafts came to be identified with backwardness and “bush life” in contrast with new way of life of towns, clerks, teachers and salaries that enable you to wear fine cloths, to roof your house with iron sheets”. The old times you could find women making nice and decorated pots, baskets out of straw and tree fibres, making calabashes out of pumpkin; and men produce bows and arrows, spears and even hoes. There is a disparate consequence coming out from the actual education system. We have a ruling class with 90% of dropouts from primary, Secondary schools and even from universities, a disillusioned class among whom a good number becoming thieves, idles, drugs addicted, roaming around without any ideal for their life. At any time this situation can explode to cause disasters and civil wars. The documents of the church and of Bishops give strong directives to look after the youth and the poor.

### ***Health care of the Catholic Church***

On the example of Jesus who showed his divine power in words and deeds, so also the Catholic Church in West Nile imitated her Head. “Let me see your work and I will judge your faith”. (James, 2:18)

The first missionaries had a rudimentary knowledge about medicine. Bro. Poloniato worked a lot in curing sores and wounds. Some sisters also were practising first aid and giving injections

When the British government asked qualifications to exercise medicine, the Verona sisters adjusted them also to that. It was a providential step. From 60s various dispensaries were opened as we said already in Moyo, Angal (1956), Maracha (1958) and Ediofe the same year. Angal and Maracha became hospitals and with Nyapea now give a qualified medical service to all people of West Nile without discrimination.

The Anglican CMS or the IMS started the first hospital in and a leper camp at Kulumva which became also a Centre research for the Bakett tumour for which was found the medicine and the West Nile Disease was detected.

It is true that West Nile is Catholic as far as population. But this tremendous growth of the Catholic Church has never been paralleled by a corresponding growth in public influence. Relationship with Protestants and Muslims has always mixed up with suspicion and prejudices.

Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue is one year old but limping especially on the Protestant side than on the Muslims side. It has been the first time in January 12 and 19, 2003 when the two Bishops ENOCK Drati of the Church of Uganda and Drandua Frederic joined together in prayer for the Unity of the Christians.

### ***Where did Christianity come from to West Nile?***

Some times Catholics are asked to answer that question, thus it is to help them that we end with a summary taken from the Leadership of March 2003 No 414.

On 25 March 1953 Pope Pius XII raised the six Vicariates Apostolic of Uganda - the Archdiocese of Rubaga and the diocese of Gulu, Kampala Masaka, Mbarara and Tororo to the rank of fully pledged dioceses.

By elevating the six Vicariates to the status of a diocese, the Holy Father recognized that the Church in Uganda had come of age.

Most Missionary territories started out being designated as Prefectures Apostolic, over seen by a Prefecture Apostolic, who was usually a priest. Then as they grow, particularly in the number of the converts, they became Vicariates Apostolic, over seen by a Bishop. Finally they are elevated to the status of a diocese.

A diocese is ordinarily expected to be a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church. A self- supporting church should have a fair degree of its own material and financial resources; a self-governing church has its own indigenous ministers and other personnel resources. A self-propagating church



should be capable of extending its own growth and passing on the faith to other areas through material and personnel resources.

When at beginning of the 19Th Century the first explorers attempted to travel to the interior of Africa the Pope's department of the missions drew up a first plan for the evangelization of Africa. Uganda vaguely defined land of the Great Lakes and Mountains of the Moon, was part of the Vicariate of Central Africa entrusted to Bishop Daniel Comboni of Khartoum recently declared Saint in October 2003, and he died in Khartoum in 1881. In 1878 the area was assigned to the White Fathers who were about to move into it from the eastern seacoast the Victoria-Nyanza Vicariate.

The department of the missions in Rome on 13Th July 1894 then divided the Victoria-Nyanza into three Vicariates: 1) the Vicariate Apostolic of Upper Nile- to Mill Hill Missionaries, 2) the Vicariate Apostolic of North Nyanza entrusted to the White Fathers, 3) The Vicariate of South Nyanza entrusted to the White Fathers.

On the same date the Northern part of Uganda was given back to the Verona Fathers working in the Sudan. They would finally be allowed to cross into Uganda in 1910.

Northern Uganda originally belonged to the Central African Vicariate with See in Khartoum. It became part of the Victoria-Nyanza Vicariate when the White Fathers came to Uganda. It was returned to Khartoum in 1894, belonging successively to the Prefecture of Bar-el Gazal in 1913; it became the Prefecture of Equatorial Nile with its See at Gulu in 1923; it became a Vicariate in 1934 and was raised to the rank of a diocese on 25 March in 1953.

The diocese of Gulu was made a Metropolitan Archdiocese on 2<sup>nd</sup>. January 1999; suffragan See: Arua, Lira, Nebbi and Moroto.

Arua diocese was cut off from Gulu on 23<sup>rd</sup>. June 1958. Bishop Angelo Tarantino was its first Bishop. Bishop F. Drandua is the second and present Bishop.

Moroto diocese was cut off from Gulu on 22<sup>nd</sup>. March 1965. Its first Bishop was Sisto Mazzoldi; the present Bishop is H Ssentongo.

Lira diocese was cut off from Gulu on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1968. Its first Bishop was Caesar Asili; then Joseph Onyanga present one is Joseph Franzelli.

Kotido diocese was cut off from Moroto on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1991. Its first and present Bishop is DL Kiwanuka.

Nebbi diocese was cut off from Arua on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1996. Its first Bishop was J.B.Odama; the present one is Bishop Martin Luluga.

This is a summary of the Catholic Church of Northern Uganda and West Nile from 1894 to day.

In Uganda the dioceses in all are 19

### ***A Conclusion and a consideration***

The history of the Catholic Church in West Nile is a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles. It does not bring the history of the Christians but rather portrays the history of how God's Salvation in Jesus Christ was proclaimed first to the Alur secondly to Madi and thirdly to the Logbara and how they received it. We can see in it the graduation spread of the Word of Lord from Omach to all over West Nile.

Some places and cities will become centres of missionary irradiation of the Gospel and civilization like Omach, Palaro, Angal, Moyo, Arua, Lodonga and Nyapea. The gradual incorporation of different ethnic groups and tribes without any barrier or discrimination is one of the greatest miracles of this history. There had not been a quick spreading of the Good News in any other part of the world such as in West Nile. Not all accepted the message; some refused it and still refused it for unknown reason.

We can acknowledge the extraordinary manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the some One that descended upon the Apostles on the Pentecost Day. It would be a pretension to give complete history of the Church of the past nearly 100 years of Christianity in West Nile. This book presents only a summary of events and dates. In doing that I wanted to make a memorial of the actions and deeds of people chosen by the will of God at the time He wanted. It is a celebration of the ministry of Christ made human incarnated in the Christians of West Nile pushed to salvation under the action of the Holy Spirit. This action is not easy to identify and describe.

I invite the readers to have always in mind this hidden element of faith. This book is an act of faith and an act of thanksgiving to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit expressed by the Christians of West Nile. God privileged these people in elevating them to the rank of His sons and daughters. The protagonists of these events are the faithful, chosen by God, are the bishops and priests elected by God to guide and lead the faithful, are the catechists called by the Holy Spirit in helping the growth of the Church in teaching the Word of God. I do not hesitate to say that if West Nile is what it is, it is due in first place to the work of the host of these humble evangelists. I dared to unveil or report those wonders to honour all these protagonists for the glory of God.

I had at hand very limited sources and they needed enlightenment for an explanation. Some events were understood, others were complex and others cannot be reported. These may be disclosed in the future.

In all church history there is a divine factor and human one. The divine is almost hidden; the human factor has two aspects: one is positive and the other is negative. To be objective sometimes is difficult in a special way when the writer is also a protagonist as in my case.

### ***Sources***

The sources I used are few:

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- Fr. Medeghini, “*Storia d’Uganda*” editrice Nigrizia, 1973.
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- “*The Clergy Bulletin*” of Arua diocese from No 1 to 74. Year 1958-1985.
- “*Dialogo*” a magazine of the Verona Father of Uganda province.
- Some writings of some missionaries like Fr, Ramponi, Sembiane,
- Anniversaries of different missions like Omach, Moyo, Angal,

- Msgr. Negri “ 25 mo anniversario del Vicariato Apostolico del Nile”
- “Equatoriale” Gulu 1937.
- *The mission diaries* of Ediofe, Lodonga, Moyo
- “*The Arua Diocese Bulletin*” 1990...
- From conferences and speeches held by missionaries or lay people in some areas
- Circumstances like the Lodonga TTC 75 anniversary.
- The last source my own notes and memory of my experience of more that 51 years, more than half of the period of the history in West Nile.

I invite in a special way the priests of West Nile to find out more events and words not told in this book and fill the gap in the future work.

Have a book in the mission to keep records of the major happenings in your Pastoral works.

The archives of the diocese should be kept properly by a capable person and up to date for a future history.

“Umanum est errare” it is human to make mistakes the Latin were saying. You are welcome for corrections and new findings.

Fr. Toni

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