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MISSION MESSAGE

A Missionary's Journey of Faith and Hope: Father Ruffino **Ezama's Story**

By Ines San Martin, Vice President of Marketing & Communions, National Propagation of the Faith Office

as a missionary began in the heart relatives were around dad's casket. of Northern Uganda, a land that Through this sorrow, I understood the welcomed the Comboni Missionaries newly born Jesus, Emmanuel — God over a century ago. Born into a with us as a God who is with us all the community deeply shaped by their times of our lives till the end of days." presence, his life bears the indelible to share God's love with the world.

father on Christmas Eve, a tragedy that transformed his understanding of and life in abundance." faith. "While growing up, I used to think the most important feast in the Church was Christmas, because there was the possibility of having a good meal and drinking a soda. Yet that Dec. 25, when the whole world was around the crib celebrating the birth

Father Ruffino Ezama's journey of Jesus Christ, my siblings, mum and

Later, he would discover that marks of their service. He was "the most important feast is Easter, baptized by a Comboni missionary, when we celebrate the suffering, death confirmed by a Comboni bishop, and and resurrection of Jesus Christ." educated at a school they founded. Consoled by his mother's unwavering Through their example — and his faith, Father Ruffino found hope in mother's faith — he found his calling the promise of Easter and discovered his vocation: to bring life to those But his journey wasn't without experiencing death, whether physical, challenges. Father Ruffino lost his moral, or spiritual. "As we read in John 10:10, I have come to bring life

> One formative moment in Father Ruffino's life came from a classmate named Taban, a South Sudanese refugee. When asked how often his family attended Mass, Taban's response shook Father Ruffino: "Once every eight or nine months." This scarcity of priests and sacraments planted a seed in his heart — a desire to bring the Eucharist and the hope of Christ to those who hunger for it.

Though his faith was strong, Father Ruffino acknowledges, even today, that one of the biggest challenges he has had to face because of his YES to his call to the priesthood was "being far from home, family, friends and loved. After the death of Dad, Mum was all for me. My joy was immense in her presence. Yet the moment I joined the minor seminary, I found a loving Mother in the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mother Mary gave her only begotten Son for the salvation of the world. My mother offered me to the Church as a missionary with joy."

"As the missionary is aware that evangelization implies following Christ even to the greatest testimony

of love, he accepts situations of persecution and is even ready to unite the sacrifice of his own life to that of Christ," Father Ruffino says, quoting the Rule of the Cambony missionaries.

Ordained as a priest in 1994, Father Ezama has served in various capacities across Africa, including in Uganda and the Togo-Ghana-Benin Province. In January 2020, he became the first African Provincial Superior of the North American Province of the Comboni Missionaries, overseeing missions in the United States and Canada. His work reflects the principles of the Society of Saint Peter Apostle, which supports the formation of priests and religious in mission territories.

Today, Father Ruffino embodies the Comboni Missionaries' vision of empowering local communities to become agents of change. Whether ministering in Uganda or the United States, his mission is clear: to help others recognize their God-given talents and use them for the good of their neighbors.

Inspired by Saint Daniel Camboni's principle of "save Africa with Africa," Father Ruffino's missionary endeavors have been centered in empowering the people to whom God has sent you to minister so that they become the change agents of their fellow brothers and sisters. "It becomes a moment of enabling the people to tap on their talents, potentials for the good of others. This applies anywhere I have been sent."

Sometimes, missionaries need a little financial help to help others tap into their talents.

Father Ruffino offers this encouragement for those who may never set foot in mission lands: "If you do not go to the missions by giving your lives, go to the missions through your prayers and financial support." Your contributions make it possible for missionaries like him to bring hope and healing to the world's most remote corners.

As we journey through Lent, a time of reflection and renewal, Father Ruffino's story invites us to consider how we can share God's merciful love with others. Through your support, you are part of a legacy that transforms lives and builds faith, one soul at a time.



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