

Religious orders still giving a thousand lives for Africa

John L. Allen Jr. | Oct. 10, 2009 NCR Today

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Rome

As it happens, Oct. 10 is the anniversary of the death of St. Daniel Comboni, a 19th century Italian missionary who spent much of his life in Sudan. Among other claims to fame, Comboni was probably the source of more epigrammatic one-liners about the church's mission in Africa than any other single Catholic figure, living or dead.

Memorable Comboni-isms include, "Either Africa or death," a classic expression of his missionary drive; "Save Africa through Africa," an early formula for the transition to self-reliance; and his famous sentiment upon approaching his death in 1881, "I wish I had a thousand lives to give for Africa."

The coincidence that Comboni's dying day falls smack in the middle of the Synod for Africa offers a reminder that no force within the Catholic church, either historically or in the present, has invested a greater share of its own blood, toil, tears and sweat on behalf of Africa than the church's missionary orders. That legacy makes this morning's seminar on the Synod for Africa organized by Sedos, an acronym for "Service of Documentation and Study for Global Mission," a consortium of religious orders in Rome, well worth noting.

The Synod of Bishops for Africa is meeting Oct. 4-25 in Rome.

Saturday morning's event took place at the headquarters of the Christian Brothers on Rome's Via Aurelia, where roughly 100 religious men and women braved an early thunderstorm to hear two of their own speak about the prophetic role of the Catholic church in Africa:

- Fr. Kieran O'Reilly, an Irishman and superior general of the Society of African Missions, who has spent decades in and out of Africa, and who is currently a member of the synod;
- Sr. Anne Béatrice Faye of Senegal, general councillor of the Sisters of Notre Dame of the Immaculate Conception, who is among the experts appointed to the Synod for Africa.

Read the full story here: [Religious discuss their visions for Africa](#) [1]

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