



### **Priestly Ordination of Aimé Kamanda in the Delegation of Belgium**

**LEUVEN, Belgium** - "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Mt 24:35). What Jesus said two millennia ago continues to have relevance in Europe which currently witnesses a time of re-evangelization and new evangelization. He told His disciples: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest" (Lk 10:2). The land, Belgium, which sent out missionaries to the ends of the world has become itself a mission field. She needs missionaries to evangelize and renew faith. As an appropriate response to the present needs of the Church, the Belgian delegation has taken initiatives to invite missionaries from Congo. This delegation which had no vocations and priestly ordination for decades is glad to arrange the priestly ordination of the missionaries in the mission field itself.

Following the last year's ordination, Aimé Kamanda was ordained to priesthood this year on 20 September 2020 at St. Peter's Church, Leuven, which is in the diocese of Mechelen-Brussel. Despite the unpleasant atmosphere and fear generated by Covid-19, trusting in the providence of God, relying on the motherly care of Mary and moved by the zeal of Montfort, we, the Belgian Montfortians, celebrated with immense joy this historic moment with care and caution. Although Covid-19 kept many invitees away, the social distancing, which had to be followed, made the church seem full to share in this significant prayerful moment. There was no choir, yet the celebration was melodious. There was no traditional Congolese dance, yet the church was colourful and joyous. There were not many priests, yet God's presence was felt in its fullness. No doubt, this day has definitely taken a special place in the history of the Montfort

Fathers and will amazingly be remembered in the years to come because of its unexpected and remarkable rare auspiciousness.

Saint Montfort prayed: "What, then, am I asking for? *Liberos*, men who are free, priests who are free with the freedom that comes from you, detached from everything, without father, mother, brothers, sisters or relatives and friends... and devoid of all self-interest" (*God Alone: Prayer for Missionaries* § 7). On this important day, Aimé was standing alone without his family and friends. Even the international Montfortian family was not present to bless and pray over him. Yet, with a heavenly smile and peace at heart, he has completely offered himself into God's care to be used as He wills. The difficulties posed by the pandemic are nothing before the power of God. The bishop, Koen Vanhoutte, has extended his wholehearted support to us and friends and people of goodwill also stood by us to show their love for Aimé and the Montfort fathers on this day. This made the priestly ordination solemn and grand.

A celebration is incomplete if there is neither a reception nor a festive meal. Given the unfavourable situation, we could not give a reception nor a festive meal to the invitees. Yet, following strictly the directives given by the government, we have arranged a festal evening in the community in Leuven. It was simple but the refectory was filled with laughter and the table was filled with a good variety of cheese, fruits and bread. We congratulated our new priest and new missionary. Aimé thanked the Delegation Superior and the confreres for the accompaniment and support. He has also expressed his gratitude for making the priestly ordination go on livestream. He said, "I believe my parents, family, friends and relatives have watched it livestream."

Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (27). He also underlined that "A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise" (266). We assure Aimé of our prayers and we also wish him to be a spring of Gospel joy and be filled with the missionary impulse so that his missionary life can refresh and renew others in faith, charity and Christian love.

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