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### **60<sup>th</sup> Priestly Ordination Anniversary of Confreres Jef SCHEEPENS, Frans FABRY, and Jos VERBELEN**

**BELGIUM** - This year, the Belgian Delegation was pleased and proud to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> priestly ordination anniversary of Fr. Jef SCHEEPENS, SMM, Fr. Frans FABRY, SMM, and Fr. Jos VERBELEN, SMM.

While Fr. Frans was ordained to the priesthood on 9 February 1964, Frs. Jef and Jos were ordained in the same year but on 8 March. After their ordination, with due preparation including learning the English language, Frs. Jef and Jos traveled to Malawi as missionaries. Fr. Jos returned to Belgium after two decades of missionary work while Fr. Jef remained there until 2009, spending 44 years in Malawi. Currently, Fr. Jos resides in an old-age home, while Fr. Jef enjoys retired life in the community of Genk. After the ordination, Fr. Frans remained in Belgium to help the Marian Centre. For years, he has been guiding the Marian Centre as its director.

Moreover, a celebration could not be organized for Fr. Jos because of his health issues. Instead, they all signed a card and sent it to him on the anniversary of his priestly ordination. In the community of Kessel-Lo, Fr. Frans celebrated his priestly ordination within the circle of confreres.

Since the community of Genk has a chapel that is still active to serve the believers who come for daily Eucharistic and other liturgical services, they organized a solemn Eucharistic Celebration for Fr. Jef on 8 March 2024. Thirteen people joined the celebration and prayed for him in honor of his missionary service in Malawi. Fr. Nepo presided over the Eucharistic celebration while Fr. Jef concelebrated due to his old age and health. Fr. Nepo preached about the pioneering mission of Fr. Jef in Malawi, quoting a few interesting events. Fr. Jef is content with what he has done in Malawi as a missionary.

After the Holy Eucharist, those who partook were invited to breakfast. During breakfast, people felt at ease posing interesting questions to Fr. Jef about his missionary work in Malawi, and he was more than happy to answer. The morning was filled with laughter and friendly chats. Confreres who could still travel came to the community of Genk in the afternoon for the Jubilee lunch. Lindsay prepared a delicious meal with the assistance of Fr. Ludo, who is a good friend of the Montfort Fathers in Genk. On this day, candles with pictures of the Jubilee celebrants imprinted on them were distributed to the guests along with a few pieces of chocolates.

Fr. Jef thanked the community and the Belgian Delegation for organizing such a memorable feast day celebration. Jef's family, including his sisters and nephews, expressed their compliments and gratitude for being invited and for making the day unforgettable for Fr. Jef and for them.

Likewise, the Belgian Delegation thanked the confreres for their dedicated service to the congregation and congratulated them on their 60 years of priestly service in the church. May God bless them and grant them good health.

*Fr. Nepo JAMES RAJ, SMM*