



## **Father Wim Peeters SMM: A Model of Holiness and Discipline**

**PONSA MALANG, Indonesia** - Hello Confreres, greetings from our Scholasticate Community, “Ponsa” in Malang. On this occasion we would like to share a story about the Golden Jubilee of the Priesthood from a Missionary who is famous for his friendliness and discipline, Fr. Wilhelmus Johannes Bernardus Peeters, SMM or familiarly called Father Wim.

The community of Montfort Major Seminary, Pondok Kebijakan (abbreviated “Ponsa”- “Dwelling of Wisdom”) Malang, would like to congratulate Father Wim Peeters SMM on celebrating his Golden Jubilee of the Priesthood. May he become more and more a blessing to many people. Approximately that was the string of congratulations given by the Fathers and Brothers and invited guests to this Dutch missionary who celebrated his 50 years of Priesthood on September 7, 2024. The celebration of Fr. Wim’s golden jubilee took place in the prayer garden of the Seminary, in front of the Grotto of Our Lady of the Way. By agreement of the Montfort Fathers of the Java Region, the Eucharistic celebration began at 10:00 am. Because on that day, the brothers still had to attend lectures, the Student Board of the House with the approval of the Rector had made a letter of request to the Philosophical and Theological College asking permission not to attend classes.

At around 8.45 a.m. the guests began to arrive. They were welcomed by members of the community and the Guest Department coordinated by Bro. Evan. Around 9:30 a.m., already many guests filled the courtyard of the Marian Grotto. Almost all members of the neighbouring Basic Ecclesiastical Communities of St. Claire and St. Bernard attended the celebration. In addition, many religious, benefactors, and three relatives of Father Wim who had arrived from Holland, attended the thanksgiving Mass. Even some of our Muslim neighbours had come to attend this special celebration. Altogether, approximately 400 people were present at the Mass. This affirms the fact that many people love and care for Father Wim.

Also present at the celebration was Bishop Henricus Pidyarto GUNAWAN, O.Carm, Bishop of the Diocese of Malang, who that morning had just returned from attending the visit of Pope Francis in Jakarta. At exactly 10.00 a.m., the Eucharistic celebration began. The procession of concelebrants was escorted by a dance performed by the children of the St. Claire BEC. The procession started from the Montfort Chapel – the main chapel of the seminary – up to the Marian Grotto. The Mass presider was Father Wim, accompanied by about 20 concelebrants. Besides the confreres of East-Java, present were the Provincial Superior and some confreres from Bandung as well as Fr. Willibrordus SELMAN, a Montfort Missionary ministering in France, and the Parish Priest together with several priests from different congregations.

The celebration of Father Wim's 50 years of priesthood was grand and festive. This certainly contributed to the atmosphere of joy experienced by Father Wim who thanked God for the blessings bestowed upon him during his 50-year priestly journey. In his sermon, Father Wim candidly recounted how God guided him to the path of holy priesthood. He shared that since childhood he had an interest in becoming a missionary priest. The interest arose because his parents had often told him stories about missionaries before going to sleep, and also his teachers at school had this missionary zeal. Fr Wim shared: *"As a little boy, after school time, I liked to play Mass at home, with my friends, brothers and sisters attending, who were playing being the faithful."* That's how Father Wim described the story of his childhood. The Mass equipment he used as a child, stored by his mother for many years, was deliberately brought from Holland by his brother and sister, as a precious memory of Father Wim's early vocation journey. He showed in his sermon these small Mass utensils such as a small chasuble, chalice and ciborium, a bell, a small monstrance and a censer. The longing to be a priest was apparently realized and 50 years ago Father Wim was ordained by Bishop Lambertus van KESSEL, SMM, emeritus-bishop of Sintang, Indonesia. And so we celebrate a very special day, namely the jubilee of 50 years of priesthood. Not easily every priest today will reach that number of years of priesthood.

In his speech, the Provincial Superior, Father Anton TENSI, SMM, expressed his gratitude to all those who have actively participated in Fr. Wim's life, supported him, and prayed for him until now. Father Anton also expressed his gratitude to Father Wim for his living testimony and example, for giving himself to the congregation through the mission entrusted to him that he is still fulfilling today.

Then, Father Anton emphasized three legacies that Father Wim bequeathed to the congregation. These three legacies are: first, Father Wim as a fighter for and a pioneer of the SMM formation program in Indonesia; second, his deep love and loyalty to the spirituality and charism of our founder; and, third, we can affirm the fulfilment of the truth of God's words for His chosen ones found in Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you, sanctified you and appointed you to be my messenger."

These three legacies became also evident in the testimonies of the confreres in the Ponsa community. One of the peculiarities of Fr. Wim is that he can manage in at least 10 foreign languages and in 6 of them he can communicate well. Therefore, apart from being the spiritual director of the Montfort Seminary community, he is also an accomplished translator. This Dutch missionary is also always smiling and always shares with the seminarians what he brings home from his ministry, be it experiences or food. He comes then to the recreation hall and computer rooms, and even late at night knocks on the doors of the brothers whose lamps are still lit, just to distribute some food or snacks.

After Father Anton had delivered his speech, the floor was then given to Fr. Wim's younger brother, Peter. In line with the Superior of the SMM in Indonesia, Mr. Peter Peeters expressed his gratitude to everyone who attended the Eucharistic celebration to rejoice with Father Wim. He was very happy because apparently so many people showed love to his eldest brother. Also Bishop Pidyarto in his speech thanked Father Wim for faithfully living his priesthood until now. This bishop of Malang also expressed his gratitude for Father Wim's self-giving by rendering assistance to parishes, by serving as a member of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, and by faithfully attending diocesan recollection days for the priests despite his many duties in the seminary community.

After the Mass, a short talk show with Fr. Wim and his eldest sister, Ria, was hosted by Bro. Yano. Then the attendants were given the opportunity to offer their congratulations and then Fr. Wim was paraded from the Marian Grotto towards the seminary building. At the main entrance, Fr. Wim took part in a traditional cane cutting ceremony guided by Bro. Pipo. This is a custom of the Dayaks of Kalimantan when welcoming an honored guest. This ceremony was followed by a procession towards the reception venue, accompanied with Javanese music and dance. The dance was performed by 4 little girls from the St. Claire Basic Ecclesiastical Community.

Once again, congratulations to Father Wim, may you bring blessings to many people. Thank you for giving a good example and a great testimony of life to all of us. May you remain joyful and always be graced with abundant blessings.

*Bro. Wens,*

*Scholastic*