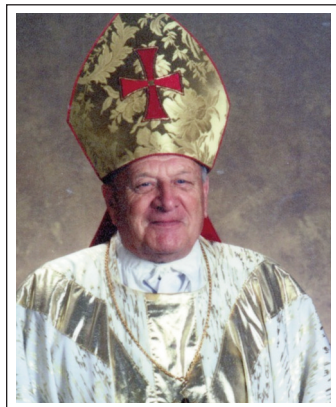


# Bishop Evert Baaij, SCJ

## 1921-2012

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At 90, Bishop Evert Baaij, SCJ, was the eldest bishop in the congregation at the time of his death in 2012. A member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart since 1942 (he would have celebrated his 70th anniversary of profession the same year as his death), Bishop Baaij was born in the Netherlands, became a citizen of Canada, was a member of the U.S. Province, but called South Africa his home for over 55 years.



Bishop Evert Baaij, SCJ

A convert to Catholicism, the bishop was introduced to the Church by a childhood friend. The friend told the young Evert that he was going to “tell his sins to the priest.” The bishop said that to an eight-year-old the idea of telling an adult “what you did wrong” sounded odd. “What punishment would he get for whatever he had confessed?” But when he saw his friend coming out of the confessional happy and smiling he decided to find out a bit more about the Catholic Church. He went to Mass with the friend and was so impressed by the sacredness of the celebration “that I decided that I wanted to become a priest,” said the bishop.

Evert Baaij was ordained a priest on July 20, 1947. After his ordination, he went to France for language studies in preparation for an assignment in French Canada. He arrived in Canada in 1949. There, he had his first experience with hospital chaplaincy, a ministry that remained close to his heart. He taught in Canada and the United States, and in 1957, left for the missions in South Africa. In 1974, Pope Paul VI named him bishop of Aliwal North.

Bishop Baaij served as bishop of Aliwal North until 1981, when health concerns prompted him to resign. In his final years he served as chaplain to Nazareth House, a senior living community where he resided. In his last days the bishop was surrounded by many of the religious sisters whom he knew at Nazareth; they prayed the rosary at his bedside in his last hours.