



The Arnoldus Family Story

GOOD NEWS FROM THE CHINA MISSION

During the General Chapter in Steyl Fr. Freinademetz sent a very encouraging report about the South Shantung Mission to Steyl. On May 24, 1885 he had written: "I just returned home from a mission trip to Ischui, where I stayed for more than a month and baptized 126 catechumens; among them are some excellent Christians who give us great joy, particularly in the district of Mungin. The mission in Tschingzuin in Mungin has to be mentioned in a special way, because it encountered such great difficulties that I already feared it to be lost.; likewise the mission in Zingwangdschuang. However, presently just these two communities are our most flourishing Christian communities. And not only that; even the non-Christians in the neighbourhood who in former times had raged so furiously against us, are now full of admiration towards the Christians and they often ask them: "When will your big man (the missionary) come? We also want to speak to him" (*Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], vol. 13, No. 1, October 1885, p. 7).

SUPPORT FROM THE LAZARISTS / VINCENTIANS

On June 14, 1885 Fr. Arnold travelled to Paris where he met the Superior General of the Lazarists or Vincentians, Fr. Fiat and other experienced priests. He also took excerpts from the Vincentian Rule. On this June 14, Fr. Arnold wrote a letter to Fr. Fiat with the following requests: "that he adopt a spiritual fatherhood over the sons of the SVD, agree to a fraternity of prayer and a community of good works, grant counsel in extraordinary matters himself and that Fr. Medits do so in ordinary questions and that the latter assist in establishing the novitiate in Steyl" (*Josef Alt, Journey in Faith*, p. 216). On June 15, 1885 Fr. Fiat sent a positive answer and on June 24 the General Chapter agreed unanimously to the agreement (*ibid.*). On this very same day the General Chapter decided that Fr. Medits "should direct the novitiate for some months, however under our own superior" (*Fritz Bornemann, Ferdinand Medits und Magdalene Leitner in der Geschichte des Steyler Missionswerkes* [Ferdinand Medits and Magdalene Leitner in the history of the Steyl mission organization], *Verbum Supplementum* 4, Rome 1968, pp. 19.108, endnote 6 to p. 19).

FRANCISCAN VISITORS IN STEYL

During the General chapter, on July 18 and 19, the minister general of the reformed Franciscans, Fr. Bernardino da Portogruaro and some more leading members of the Franciscans visited Steyl. One topic will have probably been the elevation of

Criticism of the many days of fasting and abstinence

In St. Michael's mission house there were many days of fasting according to the Rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic. Still in the February 1885 rule "the year had about 100 days of fasting." Even though dispensation could be granted according to the rule, "on an average every fourth day" was a day of fasting. Upon Fr. Medits' suggestion, except for the general church fast days, all these special days were cut out, except for three: Those three were: "vigil of the feast of the Sacred Heart in honor of the Divine Word, vigil of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary in honor of the Holy Spirit and his Immaculate Spouse, and in the evening of the feast of an angel or patron of the house in honor of the Eternal Father" (*ibid.*, p. 18).

Regarding the days of abstinence, at Fr. Medit's proposal all were cut out, "except those that were prescribed by general church law, that is the ordinary Fridays". However, that did not mean that the confreres had the right, to demand daily meat for lunch and dinner. There was the possibility that on some weekdays no meat was served in the evening "and it took more than one year until the abstinence had really been abolished. August 2, 1886 was the first time that on Mondays meat was served; meat was served on Wednesdays and Saturdays only in summer of 1887" (*ibid.*).

FRS. ARNOLD AND ANZER IN ROME

October 7, 1885 Frs. Arnold and Anzer travelled to Rome where they arrived on October 9. The goal of the journey had been the separation of the South Shantung mission from the Apostolic Vicariate of Shantung and the elevation of South Shantung to an Apostolic Vicariate with Anzer as first bishop. At their arrival no hope was given to them for a speedy decision. "Cardinal Simeoni ... has been influenced and is obviously trying to put things off. The Secretary is still in favor of the proposal, also concerning Tsining" (*Bornemann, Arnold Janssen*, transl. John Vogelgesang, Manila, 1975, p. 152). The cardinal offered an Apostolic Vicariate to Fr. Arnold in India and the Secretary of the Propaganda offered him a mission in Africa. Fr. Arnold interpreted these two offers in this way: They were "obviously made to make it easier for us to give up China, but we are absolutely unwilling to do that, even if we are in the way of others" (*ibid.*).

THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN ST. MICHAEL'S MISSION HOUSE IN STEYL

When in October 1885 the winter semester 1885/86 began, the mission house numbered 192 students. More than 60 new students had applied, but only 25 could be accepted. "That tells us in no uncertain terms that we must continue building", we read in the "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote" [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart] of November 1885.

the South Shantung mission to an Apostolic Vicariate which Fr. Arnold had applied for. In 1883 the visit of Msgr. Cosi, the Franciscan Vicar Apostolic of Shantung, had fostered personal contacts and in that way helped to make some progress; in the same way the visit of Fr. Bernardino and his confreres “was of a great significance” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 185).

FR. JOHN BAPTIST ANZER ADDRESSES THE ASSEMBLY OF GERMAN CATHOLICS

Leaving the General Chapter for a short while, Fr. John Baptist Anzer attended the Assembly of the German Catholics in Muenster from September 1-4, 1885. He launched this appeal with the assembly:

“That the General Assembly of the German Catholics in Muenster may specially recommend to the generosity of the German Catholics the extremely poor mission of South Shantung, the first German mission in China.”

Fr. Anzer's speech

In his speech justifying the appeal, Fr. Anzer pointed out that the mission in South Shantung was the first German mission. From the reformation on until the foundation of a mission house in Steyl/Netherlands there had been no German institute for the formation and education of missionaries. “When I recommend to you urgently the German mission house in Steyl, then I recommend at the same time the South Shantung mission and vice versa.” Concluding his speech he said: “Gentlemen! I come to the end. When I was in Rome a few months ago and complained about the poverty of my mission, the answer I got was: How is that? You are complaining!?! A German and superior of a German mission! The generous Catholic Germany will never let down its own mission! This response I had also frequently received elsewhere. Gentlemen! With that trust in the generous German Catholics I went to China for the first time and will return to China.”

Anzer asked the assembly to remember all Catholic missions in the whole world, and he finally said. “And since everybody has the right, to ask first for his own benefit, I ask you to show interest and effective help for the German mission in South Shantung.” This speech achieved its goal: The appeal was accepted unanimously and with enthusiastic Bravo (all this from: *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart] 13, No. 1, October 1885).

THE SEPTEMBER 1885 RULE

Most of the work regarding the Latin version of the Rule was done in September 1885, “So it was called the ‘September 1885 Rule’, also to mark the tenth anniversary of the Mission House which occurred in that month” (Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 216).

Regarding the name of our Society “SOCIETAS VERBI DIVINI” it was decided that the short form of our long name was to be “VERBISTAS” (Fontes Historici, Vol. I, p. 95).

Sources of the September Rule

Fr. Arnold used the following sources and documents for the September Rule:

Life of St. Vincent de Paul, Rule of the congregation of the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, called ‘Picpus’ after the first House of the congregation in the Rue de Picpus in Paris (Wikipedia)], Rule of the Resurrectionists, Rule of Mill Hill (in Eng-

land), Rule of the Paris Missionaries, Thomas Aquinas, Summa theol. II-IIae. The Rule of the Lazarists/Vincentians was not mentioned; however Fr. Arnold had taken excerpts from it (see: Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 216).

FR. ARNOLD IN VIENNA

On September 28, 1885 Fr. Arnold went for a short visit to Vienna. He gave the September Rule to Fr. Medits for his evaluation and since Miss Leitner did not understand Latin, she was only given some individual matters for examination (Bornemann, *Ferdinand Medits und Magdalene Leitner.....*, p. 82)

MISS LEITNER'S INFLUENCE ON THE SEPTEMBER RULE

Change Regarding the religious habit

According to Fr. Bornemann, Miss Leitner's influence was restricted to minor matters, for instance she agreed to a change regarding the religious habit which originally, with her agreement, had been rather colorful. It had been changed to look simpler; the red color of the cincture was to be worn on the inside, except for the Brother novices. The red color symbolized the acceptance of martyrdom and – this was new – the love of the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*).

Term of office of the superior general

According to the February 1885 Rule and with the agreement of Miss Leitner, the superior general was elected for life - as happened with Fr. Arnold. However, a year later Miss Leitner strongly advocated a term of office of only seven years as being in accordance with God's will and she gave the following reasons: Fr. Janssen had failed against the “childlike humility which was owed to God. 2) he committed some offences against justice and love, and towards his subjects he had not been like a father and mother, but more of a Lord and he had not treated everybody in the same way, but was led and dominated by his natural attraction and aversion!” (*ibid.*, p. 83) The general chapter, therefore, decided on March 15, 1886 “that the general chapter is to elect a superior general only until the next general chapter, that means for seven years...”. However, this change did not affect Fr. Arnold, since he had been elected for life according to the February 1885 Rule. But, so Fr. Bornemann writes: “Through the change in the text he perpetuated the drastic *Correctio fraterna* of Leitner-Medits” (*ibid.*).

FR. MEDITS' GENERAL CRITICISM OF THE LATIN RULE

Criticism of the overall conception of the rule

Fr. Medits criticized the “overall conception of the Rule. He wished a short summary of the legal rules for the society.” He said, Fr. Arnold should publish his explanations in a separate small handbook or appendix. This was also the opinion of Fr. Arnold's Franciscan friend Fr. Ignatius Jeiler, who lived near Florence, and to whom he had also presented the rule for his comments. The thinking of the censor of the Dioese of Roermond, Prof. Drehmanns, was along the same line. However, Fr. Arnold strongly believed: “Compared to the religious content of the rule, the laws are only marginal. Therefore he stuck to the unity of law and spirituality”; he probably never presented Fr. Medits' comments to the general chapter (*ibid.*, p. 19)