

clearly, ‘Since the Society has received papal approval I can no longer give a dispensation. This is the law for recognized congregations; only the Pope dispenses’” (*ibid.*, p. 238).

VOWS ONLY ON THE FIRST PART OF THE 1891 RULE

The bishop of Roermond had only approved the first part of the new rule, which had been translated from Latin into German and was valid for both priests and brothers; the vows were only taken on this part, not on the second and third part which were approved by the bishop only in 1892. On October 29, 1891 Fr. Arnold wrote to Fr. Superior Becher in Argentina: He did not see it as a problem, since the *regulae de regimini* [rules about governance] would only become effective when someone took over an office. The third part of the rule was only for the priests and was like the one of 1885, only divided into constitutions and statutes. Furthermore the founder had informed the confreres of those two parts (*Alt, Arnold Janssen, Briefe nach Südamerika* [Letters to South America], vol. I, p. 41).

The religious habit and Rule of the Missionary Sisters

On October 27, Fr. Arnold visited Bishop Boermans in Roermond and wrote in his ‘Memoriale’: “Bishop Boermans approved the blue habit of the Missionary Sisters and agreed that they might begin their novitiate on 8 December” (*Alt, Journey in Faith*, p. 352).

On October 29, Fr. Arnold travelled to St. Gabriel. In his absence in Steyl Fr. Steger bought the material for the habit. “The sisters did their best to pattern the clothes after the picture [drawn by Br. Lucas] and with the Lord’s help they succeeded”, as Mother Josepha remembered (*Mulberge, Apostolic Novices, In their own Words...5*, p.8).

From St. Gabriel Fr. Arnold wrote on November 20 to the sisters in Steyl that he had begun doing final work on the Sisters’ Rule: “As soon as it has been copied, and any amendments incorporated which the Bishop may require, I will present it to the sisters and discuss it with each individual sister” (*Jos. Alt, Journey in Faith*, p. 348).



THE ETERNAL WORD HAS ENTERED OUR EARTHLY LIFE,
SO THAT WE WOULD BECOME HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS:
GOD’S SON HAS TRULY BECOME OUR BROTHER!

(Arnold Janssen)

Blessed and merry Christmas to all!



The Arnoldus Family Story

SEPTEMBER 1981

During this month in Steyl the deliberations about the Rule for the Holy Spirit Sisters continued. The participants were Arnold Janssen, Hermann Wegener, Bernard Eikenbrock and from December 13, John Janssen as well.

Investiture and religious habit

On September 8, 1891 Fr. Arnold informed the Holy Spirit Sisters’ postulants that the first investiture would probably be on December 8, 1891, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The Postulants were overjoyed, for some of them had waited “to receive the religious habit for so long.” However, nobody knew what the style and colour of the habit was to be (in Jacqueline Mulberge SSpS, *Apostolic Novices, In their own words*, no. 5, p.7).

A few days later the founder showed them “a picture of a nun in a blue dress and scapular and white veil,” drawn by the well-known Steyl artist, Bro. Lucas Kolzem SVD. Mother Maria notes in her chronicle that the Sisters were very happy to be clothed in the same way as the Mother of God and Immaculate spouse of the Holy Spirit was in her mortal life. The blue habit was to remind the Sisters of Mary’s purity, modesty and humility and it should inspire them to imitate those virtues as much as they could.



Sessions of the General Council – the most important topics

The most important topics for the General Council’s meetings of September 14, 15, 18 and 21 were the Rule of the Sisters, the building of a church in St. Gabriel’s and a new mission house in Silesia.

The revision of the first SVD Rule – Report of the canon lawyer Prof. Drehmanns

In the midst of these sessions, on September 17, Fr. Arnold got the report of Prof. Drehmanns whom Bishop Boermans of Roermond had given the task to revise the 1885 SVD Rule.

He had previously advised the founder to “draw up the constitutions as briefly as possible like a statute book – that is, brief, clear, ... avoiding all theological and ascetical considerations.” Yet when he received the revised rule from Fr. Arnold he reacted with surprise and wrote: “Now I see, however, from your last communication that this was not your view and that you are seeking episcopal approval for both [the

constitutions and statutes].” Since he believed that Fr. Arnold planned to present the Rule also to Rome for approval, he quoted from a Roman book about the approval of rules: In the rule questions “about virtue and vows should not be mixed with questions concerning the essence of the vows.” He then made a few proposals about writing the rule according to Roman norms. Yet Fr. Arnold “did not listen to this sincere advice”, Fr. Alt writes, in spite of the fact that the prepared text “contravened all these warnings and suggestions in the extreme” (Josef Alt, transl. Frank Mansfield, Jacqueline Mulberge, *Journey in Faith*, p.232-234).

Rule or Constitutions - the proper name

Prof. Drehmanns drew Fr. Arnold’s attention to another important matter: “Besides, the word “Rule” should not be used; there are only four well-known “Rules” – the Augustinian, Benedictine, Franciscan, and Dominican. In the case of later congregations the regulations are called constitutions” (*ibid.*, p.233). Yet in general the word “rule” continued to be used.

The Rule of the Sisters

The General Council concluded its deliberations about the Sisters’ Rule on September 18.

OCTOBER 1891

October 16/17 – The revised SVD Rule

The rule had three parts; the first one was for priests and brothers together and had been translated from the Latin original into German; on October 16 it was approved by Bishop Boermans of Roermond. The second and third parts, written in Latin, were approved by the Bishop on December 26, 1892.

After the episcopal approval had been given, so Fr. Arnold wrote to St. Gabriel’s, “much work had to be done by typesetters, printers and binders. But they succeeded! On Saturday evening at 7:30 I was able to distribute the first ten copies and today more of them. It seems everything is going well... The lovely little book is generally welcomed. May the Rule itself be kept and loyally followed”(Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 234). The title of the Rule Book was: “Allgemeine Constitutionen und Statuten der Gesellschaft des Göttlichen Wortes von 1891” = Common Constitutions and Statutes of the Society of the Divine Word of 1891.

October 25 – Vows on the new rule

On October 25, 1891, vows were taken on the new rule and there was also a transfer of the vows made in 1885 to the new rule of 1891; the solemn celebration was held in the presence of Bishop Boermans of Roermond. The celebration began with a Mass celebrated by the Bishop, beginning at 8:30 am. After the gospel the choir sang a four voice Veni Creator, the prologue of the gospel according to John was sung and the vow celebration began. “Then one by one,” so Fr. Arnold wrote to Fr. Superior Becher in Argentina, “we went to the altar to make our profession, first I alone by decree of his Lordship, then all the others in four groups. Seven priests took

their perpetual vows on the new rule... as well as three Brothers (Martinus, Marcolinus and Bernardus); Brothers Augustinus and Matthias took second vows, and twenty-one priests, eight deacons and fifty-four brothers transferred their vows. There was no actual *acceptatio votorum* [acceptance of the vows in the name of God or the Society]. During the ceremony, however, Mgr. Boermans sat on the predella of the high altar, and one after another we handed him our vow document and received the new Rule from him (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 235-236).

In the mission magazine *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart] of December 1891 we read: When the Bishop handed the little Rule Book to the priests and brothers he said: “Most beloved sons, receive the Rule of the Society of the Divine Word. It is your duty to live according to it in future. When you learn this with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and with pious sentiment and observe it in what you do, you will see the Triune God in the glory of his saints.”

After the vow ceremony the bishop greeted the professed priests and brothers in German with a short homily ; he concluded with the words: “When you observe faithfully what the rule prescribes, I, your old bishop, tell you, you will receive eternal life in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen”. The sacramental blessing concluded the celebration. It was now 12:30 – four hours after it had begun. The 76 year old bishop showed no sign of being tired!

NO ACCEPTATIO VOTORUM – private vows

Fr. Arnold wrote that there was no ACCEPTATIO VOTORUM, that means they were not received in the name of God or the Society. The vows therefore were private and not public vows. The Superior General could dispense from private vows.

However, the Bishop and Prof. Drehmanns, in approving the rule, “had inserted the addition, ‘before you, Reverend Father, as Superior General of the Society’ into the vow formula. That was the classical formula for the vows known as canonical and public”, Fr. Alt writes (Jos. Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 237).

But on October 25, “the formulation used was, ‘... before you, Most Reverend Bishop, and before you, Reverend Father, as Superior General of the Society.’ Precisely from the juxtaposition of bishop and Superior General we could conclude that the word ‘before’ is interpreted as when someone is a witness to an official document. Bishop and Superior General were witnesses to the confrere having made the vows (*ibid.*). Therefore we read in no. 25 of the 1891 Rule: “With us the vows are to be taken in such a way that no reception in the name of God or the Society takes place, so that the confreres, even though they imitate religious life in many ways, are not truly and rightly religious, and so the clerics remain in the state of secular priests and are not subject to those rules of canon law which are valid for religious” (in *Fontes Historici Societatis Verbi Divini*, vol. I, p. 216).

For Fr. Arnold all of this changed once the Society was recognized as a papal society on January 25, 1901. “From this date on he no longer felt he had the authority to give dispensation from the vows. He no longer regarded them as *vota privata* [private vows]. The recognition of the Society by the highest ecclesiastical authority made the vows a ‘public matter’, *vota publica* [public vows]. Thus he wrote in one case quite