

and novitiate for lay Brothers, as soon as you can provide the necessary guarantees that they will receive a good training. At first, of course, only for German-Americans, although this should not be made public as a general principle in order not to offend the Irish. I would also be in favor of doing the same [establishing a novitiate] for the Sisters, but only when I am convinced that this can be done with good justification. ...

* I beg you to build above all your spiritual house. I regard everything else as nothing. And strive to become holy yourself" (*ibid.*, pp. 112-115).

MAY 1901

Togo – Report on the Togo Mission at the end of 1900

5 main stations, 1 sisters' convent in Lome, 12 priests, 7 Brothers, 7 Sisters, 26 local teachers, 23 schools, 1 trade school, 807 male students (as of February 1, 1901), 138 female students (as of February 1, 1901), 15 Christian communities, 1331 Christians, 926 solemnly baptized adults, 423 solemnly baptized children, 1716 baptisms in danger of death, 2166 confessions (in 1900), 1883 holy communions in the year 1900, 327 confirmations in 1900, 26 legal marriages.

The progress of the mission is ... in spite of a number of trials, a steady one, thanks be to God (Steyler *Herz-Jesu Bote* [Steyl *Sacred Heart Messenger*], 28, No. 8).

New Guinea

May 6: Arnold Janssen writes to the Apostolic Prefect, Fr.Limbrock (excerpt)

* "I intend to send you some Sisters at the next opportunity; but first you must inform me, as I have often asked you, what the ship connections with Monumbo are. The priests will not be travelling before October or November... Perhaps I will let the Sisters wait until the priests go, then they could all travel together. Some time ago I appointed 4 Sisters for your mission, among them two teachers. ... I cannot say anything yet about the priests.

* "Sincerest condolences over the death of Fr. Spoelgens and that of Fr. Schleiermacher, as well as over the sinking of your ship "Antonius". Such events are splinters of the cross of Christ. A person must bear them with patience and pray: "I thank you, Lord, that it has pleased you to test your servant..."

* "The mission is now far enough developed that it can be raised to the state of a "praeposituras". Until now I am still waiting for the detailed confidential report on the brethren which our rule prescribes. ...Please bring that report along this time, so that I can proceed with the appropriate decree" (Alt, transl. Frank Mihalic, *Arnold Janssen SVD, Letters to New Guinea and Australia*, pp. 72-73).



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The Arnoldus Family Story

150 YEARS AGO – AT THE BEGINNING OF THE JUBILEE YEAR

We begin the jubilee year on September 8, 2024. And so it has to be. For our story began 150 years ago, in September 1874. During that month Fr. Arnold made the decision to begin with the Mission House and he took the first foundational steps, as we will see now.

The beginning of our story: September 1874

Fr. Arnold spent Pentecost 1874 in Neuwerk near Mönchengladbach/Germany. There he met the Apostolic Prefect of Hongkong, Timoleone Raimondi. Having interviewed him about the situation of the Church in China, he mentioned that Germany had no house to train missionaries. It was Raimondi who then over the next few weeks encouraged Arnold Janssen to establish such a house himself. The new mission seminary should be an Apostolic School in which he trained his missionaries from the first year of high school until ordination. After much prayer he decided, in September 1874, to begin to work for the establishment of a mission seminary.

Coming to the Decision

He reasoned that it was urgent to start a mission house. But who should do it? "The newly ordained priests in Prussia cannot find a place for their pastoral ministry because of the Kulturkampf. They should be given a post in the foreign missions. But who can organize their work? The elderly priests who are pastors should not abandon their posts because by government regulation they cannot have any successor. Newly ordained priests have no experience and are not qualified for it. Well who then can do it? To write for the missions, as I have done, is good but it does not suffice. But something ought to be done about the work that is so necessary. I am convinced that it ought to begin with an apostolic school where Latin and all other subjects are taught. Since I have been teaching in a high school for twelve years and taught all subjects, I cannot deny that because of my experience up to now I am in a way prepared for the solution of the problems of this kind. Therefore, recognize God's will and put your hand to the task" (Reuter, *Proclaiming the Word in the power of the Spirit*, p. 24).

First Founding Activities

The German Catholic Church was suffering from the Kulturkampf and it was impossible to start the seminary there. So Arnold Janssen decided to look for a suitable property in the neighboring Netherlands. On September 21, he went by train

from Kempen where he resided, to Venlo in the Netherlands. In Venlo he met the Dutch priest Professor Moubis with whom he had become acquainted earlier. He advised him against looking in Venlo for a property and suggested Tegelen instead. Moubis got a resident of Tegelen, Mr Canoy, to visit Arnold Janssen on September 28 in Kempen. Mr Canoy offered him the property “de Münt” in Tegelen which belonged to his father-in-law. Fr. Arnold decided to travel to Tegelen the next day, accompanied by a farmer from Kempen. It was the feast of St. Michael and during Mass he felt the urge to pray especially to St. Michael and promise him to place the property under his protection if he was successful in finding one. In Tegelen, Fr. Arnold and his advisor looked at the property and liked it. But when the price (75000 marks) was named, it seemed too high, and Fr. Arnold’s guide advised against buying the property. Thus the negotiations came to a sudden end. But before Fr. Arnold left, Mr. Canoy led him to the Steyl sand hills, from where he had a beautiful view of the whole area, the river Maas and the tavern of Nicholas Ronck. This was the spot on which later the new mission house was to rise. Of course, Fr. Janssen was not aware of the fact at that time, but on the feast of St. Michael, he had at least, for the first time laid eyes on the site of his great establishment to be (Hermann Fischer, transl. Frederick M. Lynk, *Life of Arnold Janssen*, Mission Press SVD, Techny 1925, p. 116

27 YEARS LATER – APRIL 1901

ST. WENDEL

April 19: Fr. Arnold and Fr. auf der Heide travelled to St. Wendel where they arrived in the evening. They had broken their journey in Cologne to call on Archbishop Simar and in Bonn where they visited sick Fr. Reinke in the hospital on the Venusberg. Fr. auf der Heide writes: “The poor confrere was very happy and listened carefully to Fr. Superior’s words of support and encouragement and the stories he told. In spite of being in great pain he was alert and cheerful. It seems that there is no cure for him.” (Alt, unpublished manuscript of Fr. Arnold’s travels).

April 25: Fr. Arnold writes to Frs. Wegener and Blum in Steyl

“Last Friday [19.4.] we arrived safely here at 10 pm. Fr. Beckert arrived Monday evening. ... Regarding the administration I draw your attention to the proverb: Nil innovetur [nothing new must be introduced] which is valid for the time of the absence of the main superior. But then, letters arrive here fast and if necessary, one can ask” (ibid.).

USA – April 29: Fr. Blum in Steyl writes to Fr. Peil in the USA

“It was actually my intention not to reply to your letter. Actually, it is not within my competence to be able to help you. If you wish to have Brothers, would you please address yourself to Fr. Superior. [...] You already wrote to Fr. Superior, in a letter which I have read with my own eyes: ‘If Fr. Blum says there are no Brothers available there, do not believe him.’ Why should I give a lecture to Fr. Superior, if he is not to believe me! As far as the matter itself is concerned, there is certainly no greater need than here [...] The result is continuous overtime, disorder and tensions in every nook and

cranny. Under such circumstances, an orderly religious life and well-regulated activity are out of question. It is surely our first task here in the Mother House itself to ensure constant, firm and reliable conditions. If that does not happen soon, we will be at the beginning of the end. I relinquish every responsibility. ...”. Fr. Alt writes that Fr. Blum sent this letter first to Fr. auf der Heide in St. Wendel. He urged him to tear up the letter to Peil, if he found it unsuitable. But at the same time Blum compiled a list of seven Brothers, whom he proposed for Shermerville, and concluded his letter by enunciating a very basic principle; “If we don’t want to go completely to the dogs in body and soul, then it is essential that a 3 - 5 year standstill in the expansion of the Society be introduced, both in Europe and in the Missions. It is essential that well-ordered conditions be first established everywhere. When everything is so overburdened and overloaded, and so over-rushed, it is impossible to maintain good order, unless one wants to be a tyrant” (Alt, transl. Robert Pung and Peter Spring, *Arnold Janssen SVD, Letters to the United States of America*, Steyler Verlag Nettetal 1998, pp. 110-111, footnote 9 to Letter 48).

April 30: Fr. Arnold writes to Fr. Peil (excerpt)

* I presumed that, because of the shortage of staff and classrooms, you would accommodate the Sisters in your new house. The purpose of my last letter was to find out the true state of affairs and I was glad when I received your negative answer. For the time being I am not giving my permission for the Sisters to take over the kitchen. They do not even expect this. Two Sisters have been appointed as teachers and will have to be given further training by an American teacher in the American pronunciation of English and in other matters. The three others will have enough work on their hands with the cleaning of the house and any needlework they may have to do for you.

* You now propose that the Sisters take over the kitchen and the chapel. I presume that it will be only for a relatively brief transitional period. I am not sure whether I can grant such a request in response to a particular pressing need. But if you want to succeed in this, you will have to:

a) prove that this is not alien to American customs, by showing that other male ecclesiastical educational institutes already have Sisters in charge of their kitchens.

b) let us know what you plan to ensure that the Sisters can retain their cloistered life, and have an enclosed area in the garden for themselves.

* Your letter to Fr. Blum has been forwarded to me. I realize that you need Brothers and I deeply regret that I cannot give you more help. Something will be done. You will readily understand, however, that a new house, still in its founding stages, will always have to struggle against great obstacles, also in regard to staff. These are the birth pangs inseparable from the privilege of fatherhood and motherhood.... Believe me, I have amply experienced this in my own life. Since the Lord God has made you the spiritual father of many, it will be no different for you.

* Since we cannot help you with as many Brothers as you need, I would not be averse to coming to your assistance by permitting you to establish a postulancy