

For your reflection

As present-day members of the Arnold Janssen family we continue writing its story. That we can do it in the spirit of Arnold Janssen, towards that goal this little publication of the Arnold Janssen Secretariat in Steyl wishes to contribute. It wants to provide information from our founding history which is the basic story of our family. Only when we are familiar with it we will be able to continue writing the story of the Arnold Janssen family. Not knowing it we might write a story which is unrelated to Arnold Janssen and his first co-workers, the Priests, Brothers and Sisters of the founding generation. We have to write our story in relation to the world and church we live in right now. This publication wishes, therefore, to also make a contribution towards doing that: it wants to be at the service of the PROPHETIC DIALOGUE which characterises our mission work today.

AT THE SERVICE OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE – a few thoughts

“We give witness to the Kingdom of God through the Prophetic Dialogue and the characteristic dimensions”, so the 16. General Chapter recently described our mission. Dialogue is the way how we relate to the people to whom we have been sent. In doing so we are fully in line with the thinking of the Church since Vat. II. According to the German Cardinal Lehmann during the Council the two most influential issues were: Service and Dialogue. Service and Dialogue are the ways how the church is to be church today, he said.

In his encyclical “Ecclesiam Suam”(1964) Pope Paul VI wrote: “The church has to enter a dialogue with the world in which she lives.”

In 1984 the then Secretariat for Non-Christians published “The attitude of the Church towards followers of other religions. (Reflections and orientations on dialogue and mission). In no. 29 we read: “Any sense of mission not permeated by such a dialogical spirit would go against the demands of true humanity and against the teachings of the Gospel.”

Why does the Church, why do we Divine Word Missionaries emphasise dialogue so much?

We are part of our world and at the beginning of the 20th century a new kind of thinking was born, which was influenced by what is called “dialogical philosophy”. According to Cardinal Walter Kasper its starting point and basic principle is the certitude: “I am not without You.” “We don’t exist for ourselves.” “We do

not only have encounter, we are encounter, we are dialogue.” “The Other is not my limitation, rather the Other is part and enrichment of my existence.” The content of dialogue is “that human beings live with one another and in solidarity for one another.”

If God can speak to us through a rose, why can't he speak to us through a Moslem?"
(Bishop Bienvenido Tudtut (†), Mindanao, Philippines)

FOR OUR DAILY LIFE – FROM ST. ARNOLD JANSSEN:

It necessarily belongs to God's guidance that He reveals his intentions only gradually to us. How else would we learn to walk before Him in the light of faith and unconditional trust?!
(Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote, February 1874, p. 12).

PRAYERS ANSWERED

In February 2007 a German woman wrote to the Secretariat Arnold Janssen in Steyl:

"I just want to inform you that in a matter of grave concern to me, upon the intercession of your pious and zealous Servant of God Fr. A. Janssen, my prayers were answered."

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The Arnoldus Family Story

Any family has its own story to tell and so has our very own ARNOLD JANSSEN FAMILY. Our story began on- well when? There are two dates which can be considered as our birthday: June 16, 1875 and September 8, 1875.

With regard to June 16 Arnold Janssen himself signed the following statement:

The beginning of the Society, Wednesday, 16 June 1875, anniversary of the second centenary of the first apparition of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, 16 June 1675. On this day, 16 June 1875, many bishops and faithful consecrated themselves and their churches to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The first members of this Society did the same, adding the goal of the Society [to the consecration] (in Alt, Journey in Faith, p. 67).

September 8, 1875 was the actual opening of the German-Austrian-Dutch Mission House St. Michael in Steyl. During the inaugural Mass in the parish church of Steyl, just opposite the new Mission House, Arnold Janssen preached the sermon. He began with the words:

An in its kind unique and rare celebration it is which has gathered us today so numerous and solemnly around the Lord's altar. It is the beginning of an enterprise dedicated to God, which, even if it achieves only to a small extent what it has set out to do, cannot fail to become a source of salvation and blessing for many thousands of people (from: Auf der Heide, Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl, p. 43 [my transl]).

In conclusion he said:

Whether anything will come of it is known only to God. ... If the seminary succeeds, we will thank the grace of God. If nothing comes of it, we will humbly strike our breast and confess that we were not worthy of the grace. (in Alt, Journey in Faith, p. 80).

Today we know the seminary did succeed. At the time of Arnold Janssen's death two missionary religious congregations, working in all continents, had grown out of it: the Society of the Divine Word and the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit (Mission and Adoration Sisters). In deep gratitude, exactly six months before his death, Arnold Janssen prayed to the Holy Spirit thus: He may grant that after his death

others will stand in my place and my sons, my daughters will implore you in my spirit; and that they united and with all their might will praise you always and further your honour more and more, since I worked for it only poorly.

The Holy Spirit answered this prayer in a marvellous way: For today Arnold Janssen's sons and daughters do not only work in all continents, but they also come from all continents. As he was assisted by many lay people, so today his sons and daughters throughout the world are joined and assisted by countless lay people in their missionary work. Together they are the Arnold Janssen family of today.