

For your reflection:

When we joined the Arnoldus Family we joined our personal life story with that of the Arnoldus Family. In doing so our life story received a new orientation; on the other hand each one of us took up the thread of the Arnoldus Family Story in a very special way. And so our life itself has become a piece of that story.

(Adapted from Edward Schillebeeckx OP, "Dominikanische Spiritualität" [Dominican Spirituality])

IN THE SERVICE OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE – a description

Dialogue becomes a token of Christian humility and love, because it indicates our resolve to rid our minds of the prejudices and caricatures we may entertain about the other human being; to struggle to listen through his / her ears and see through his / her eyes; to sympathize with him / her in all his / her doubts, fears and 'hang-ups'.

(according to John R.W. Stott)

DIALOGUE – in action

From November 4- 8, 2006 in Assisi / Italy an Interreligious Youth Meeting was held to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Day of Prayer for World Peace in 1986. It was attended by young people from nearly 30 countries, representing 13 religious traditions. In their "Message from the Youth, to the Youth" they said:

We walked as pilgrims to the site of St. Francis of Assisi's conversion 800 years ago, when God called out to Francis "Go, rebuild my house." Likewise today, in the spirit of our respective religions, we young people hear the call to "Go, rebuild our world," which is too often broken by violence and war. ...

We will strive to follow the path to peace, guided by the precepts of our respective religious traditions. In the "spirit of Assisi" and with a united voice, we echo the words of that great ambassador of peace, the Servant of God Pope John Paul II, as we cry out:

**Violence never again! War never again!
Terrorism never again! In the name of God,
may every religion bring upon the earth
Justice and Peace, Forgiveness and Life,
Love.**

We young people represent a new generation and a new hope. We resolve to return to our families and communities, to be advocates for interreligious and inter-cultural understanding and respect. We accept the responsibility of continuing the dialogue begun here in Assisi ...

(Pro Dialogo, Bulletin 123, 2006/3)

POPE JOHN PAUL II to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See (January 1987)

The person who prays ... senses that the human family is one in its origin and in its destiny, that it comes from God and will return to God. He knows that every man and woman bears within himself or herself the image of God.

Because of that Pope John Paul called people of all religions "**my brothers and sisters**".

PRAYER FOR PEACE in Assisi 1986 Traditional Religion, America

O Great Spirit, I pray for your blessing. I pray that you bring peace to all my brothers and sisters of this world. I pray that you give us the knowledge to live as brothers and sisters, and to love one another.

ARNOLD JANSSEN SPEAKS

All human beings are God's children, and in each person's breast is beating a feeling heart. This heart can be spoiled through love of sin, but it can also be ennobled through the holy love of God.

(Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote

[Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], June 1874).

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The Arnoldus Family Story

Telling the story or stories of the Arnoldus Family we have to look at the story of Arnold Janssen's own natural family. Arnold's parents were Gerhard and Anna Katharina Janssen and on November 5, 1837 Arnold was born as the second of 11 children – three of whom died soon after birth. Below you see a family photo of Anna Katharina and her eight surviving children – arranged by Bro. Roland Scheid of Steyl. Missing is the father of the family, Gerhard, the reason being that there is no photo of him.

The spirit within the family in which Arnold Janssen grew up will serve us as a mirror to understand his spirituality. (Hermann Fischer SVD)

Arnold Janssen's Family

Gertrud

Peter Wilhelm

Mother Anna Katharina

Theodor Arnold Gerhard

Anna Margaretha

Johannes

Mother Anna Katharina Janssen, formerly Wellesen, 1809-1891
Father Gerhard Janssen, 1801-1870 (no photo existing)
Anna Margaretha, 1836 – 1894, married as Lötz, no children
ARNOLD, 1837-1909
Gerhard, 1839-1927 (married, but no children)
Wilhelm, 1841-1914 (Bro. Juniperus OFM/Cap)
Peter, 1844 – 1926 (married, six children)
Gertrud, 1846-1900 (unmarried)
Theodor, 1850 – 1905 (married, but no children)
Johannes, 1853-1898 (Fr. Johannes Janssen SVD)

Arnold Janssen in the midst of his brothers
St. Wendel's, Pentecost 1904

The Janssen family lived in the Lower Rhine town of Goch, only three kilometres east of the Dutch border. Gerhard Janssen was a farmer; most of the land he farmed with his two horses was rented land. Besides the farm he operated with his horses a freight hauling business between Goch and the Dutch town of Nijmegen (usually once a week) and also between Goch and the neighbouring German towns of Geldern and Straelen.

“My father was a plain and simple man, a caring father and a good Christian,” son Arnold recalls. His motto was: “Everything together with the Lord God!” Bro. Juniperus William Janssen describes how Gerhard Janssen practiced this motto:

Smuggling was something father could not bring himself to do. He always paid the customs duties conscientiously (Bornemann, Remembering Arnold Janssen, p. 19).

Father could discourse with great eloquence on the beginning of John's Gospel. He said it was the most efficacious of all prayers and had great power with God. Whenever there was a severe storm, a blessed candle would be lighted and then father would kneel and pray the beginning of John's Gospel aloud. When one of the cattle fell sick father and mother would pray it together (p. 18).

Father always received the year-book of the Propagation of the Faith. That was like his daily bread. He would read the letters from the missionaries with a warmth and enthusiasm I could never understand. (p. 18).

Arnold Janssen called his mother Anna Katharina “a great lover of prayer”. Bro. Juniperus recalls:

When mother prayed so much and for such a prolonged time, we bigger boys would sometimes tell her jokingly: “Mother, you are praying yourself to heaven and out the other side.” – “Children,” she then replied with an expression of deep recollection, “things that should shine forever have to be made perfectly beautiful. And to pray, to speak with our dear Lord, how can anyone become tired? If you have eight children around, then you can and have to pray. Nothing can come about without prayer! I have to implore God and our Lady, that you will be protected from sin; I alone cannot protect my children (in Hermann Fischer S.V.D., Arnold Janssen, p. 19 – transl. J.O.).

Towards his brothers and sisters Arnold Janssen wanted to be a “loving, loyal brother”. As a priest and teacher in Bocholt he had the means to let his youngest brother John study at his own expense. Great was Arnold's joy when he learned of his brother William's decision to enter the Capuchin order in Münster. On November 12, 1863 he wrote to his father Gerhard these words which are quite remarkable for a future founder of religious congregations:

I must say that for a long time nothing has given me so much joy as this. The vocation to the monastic life is a very great grace, and as much as I feel that I don't have that vocation, I still envy those who are called by our dear Lord to His exclusive service in the quiet cell of the monastery (Hermann Fischer, Arnold Janssen, p.30 – transl. J.O.).

After the foundation of the mission house in Steyl his brothers and sisters supported Arnold and his work greatly. When in 1904 his brothers expressed their wish to spend Pentecost in St. Wendel's mission house, Arnold wrote to the Superior there:

I am really happy about my good brothers wanting to come there; for they, as much as they were able to, have rendered great services to the Society. Gerhard, who lives in our parental house and has no children, has even transferred the parental house and I think also all his other land to the mission printing press. And Peter, who has children of his own, agreed and helped with it (Werner Prawdzik, 100 Jahre Missionshaus St. Wendel, 1898-1998, p. 44-45 – transl. J.O.). [The mission printing press then was the legal owner of all SVD properties in Europe except for those in the Netherlands.]



Birthplace of
St. Arnold Janssen
in Goch

