

For your reflection

Every individual member of the Arnoldus Family writes his own piece of the family story. All these stories keep us together. We form a "narrative community" which hands on its very own traditions. In that way we are made into a special family, to be recognised by various family traits, sometimes significant, sometimes not, but always noticeable. (Adapted from Edward Schillebeeckx OP, "Dominikanische Spiritualität" [Dominican Spirituality])

IN THE SERVICE OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

Ecumenical Dialogue – spiritual ecumenism

Arnold Janssen about the reunion of Christians:

"As Catholics we all know that this cannot be achieved without an extraordinary grace of God. But great graces must be fervently implored. Consequently, apart from the appropriate instruction, the only means that can really help are the supernatural means of prayer and sacrifice" (J. Alt, Journey in faith, p. 39)

"It all depends on people praying and not just one or two but a great number of people. They must pray, sincerely united and perseveringly" (ibid., p. 33)

To work for the reunion of Christians includes also "to make atonement for the fact that in the past centuries of religious lukewarmness, our forefathers and we ourselves by and large have shown so little commitment to the great concerns of Jesus at home and abroad. If we are to achieve anything better in the future we must begin by humbly confessing our guilt" (ibid., p. 38).

Ecumenism today

For Arnold Janssen unity of the Church meant the return of the Protestants into the fold of the Catholic Church. Today, however, we speak about unity "in reconciled diversity" or unity "in understanding the differences". Arnold's suffering over the division of Christians, his thoughts about the place of prayer and conversion on the way to unity, are quite relevant today. So Walter Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, writes in his latest publication: "The prayer for unity is the royal way to an Ecumenical Christianity. ... In every age men and women of prayer and

contemplation were the main builders of reconciliation and unity and inspired the divided Christians, to commit themselves anew to go the way towards unity....

The way towards reconciliation and unity opens itself when Christians feel in their heart, their spirit and their prayer the painful wound of separation." This experience evokes "in them the willingness, to make a serious examination of conscience, recognise their own mistakes and put their trust in the reconciling power of the Gospel. Only on the basis of conversion and renewal of the spirit can the injured bonds of community be healed" (Kasper, Wegweiser Ökumene und Spiritualität, Herder 2007, p. 12.13 [transl. JO]).

This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, "spiritual ecumenism" (Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, no. 8).

One should avoid insulting language, ridicule, sarcasm; indeed, anything that drives a sting into a person's heart (Arnold Janssen).

Christians should avoid attitudes, gestures or actions which could violate the feelings of Christians who belong to a different tradition (Walter Cardinal Kasper).

Love wins people's hearts (Mother Josepha).

In the present situation the dialogue of love must prepare anew the way for the dialogue of truth. For the dialogue of truth presupposes an atmosphere of trust (Walter Cardinal Kasper).

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The Arnoldus Family Story

Arnold Janssen grew up in a pious and hard working family. As soon as the children were able, they had to do their share of work. Little Arnold was no exception.

Early in the morning, before going to school, he had to take the cows out to pasture. At five o' clock mother awakened the little sleeper. Still half asleep he struggled into his clothes. Then together with mother he said his morning prayers. After that he was given a glass of milk and a piece of bread and butter. Then he went out. The four cows were linked together with chains and let out of the stalls. They trotted out at a good pace and headed for the fresh clover fields, the boy following after them (Bornemann, Remembering Arnold Janssen, Analecta SVD - 42, p. 24).

Since 1844 Arnold attended Goch Elementary School. Fr. Rüter, Assistant Priest in Goch, felt that Arnold might have a vocation to the priesthood. So he persuaded Arnold's parents to allow him to switch over to the newly founded junior secondary school in Goch. That was on January 2, 1848. "Without the intervention of this man" his parents would have never sent him to that school, Arnold later said.

The school's curriculum corresponded to the first five classes of a fully established secondary school. Already 1½ years later Arnold changed school once again; this time he went to the newly opened Minor Seminary and High School in Gaesdonck, just 3 km out of Goch, on the Dutch-German border. Students who wanted to enrol in this school had to master the first four years of the High School curriculum, since the Gaesdonck High School started with the fifth year. Soon it became evident that the 1½ years at the junior secondary school in Goch had not prepared him sufficiently to enter the fifth year in Gaesdonck, and so it is no wonder that he had to repeat that year.

In the course of the years in Gaesdonck Arnold developed a great love for Mathematics. His fellow students noticed it and called him "Pater Mathematicus". His younger brother, Br. Juniperus OFM Cap, tells us that Arnold was also interested in studying nature:

During the summer holidays he would bring our breakfast to us in the fields. He used this opportunity to study the tree mosses (Bornemann, Remembering Arnold Janssen, p. 27).

At the age of about 15, Arnold composed a lengthy evening prayer for his family, lasting 25-30 minutes - its purpose being "to obtain as many indulgences as possible for the poor souls", as he wrote later (Hermann Fischer, You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, p. 6).

The prayer consists of four parts: Praise and thanksgiving, Examination of conscience with contrition, Petitions, Intercessions. It begins with the words:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts! The earth is full of Your glory! Glory be to the Father! Glory be to the Son! Glory be to the Holy Spirit! Amen.

The first part is praise and thanksgiving, for instance:

Let us praise and adore God in all his works.

Let us offer homage to Him for creation.

Let us praise Him for redemption.

Let us thank Him for our heavenly vocation.

Let us thank the Most Holy Trinity for all the graces and privileges given to Mary and all the saints on the day of her assumption (conf. ibid., p.7).

At the end of this part we find the first invocations of the later "Quarter Hour Prayer":



Lord God, because of the truth of your words I believe in You – Increase my faith.

Because of the faithfulness of your promises I hope in You – Strengthen my hope.

Because of the greatness of Your goodness I love you – Enkindle my cold love (conf. Jacob Reuter, Proclaiming the Word in the Power of the Spirit, Arnold Janssen, p.19).

The third part consists of petitions, for instance:

For the sake of the precious blood of Jesus Christ we ask the following:

To ever fulfil the will of God.

To always remain in union with God.

To seek only the glory of God.

To truly become aware of my nothingness.

To get to know always better the will of God (conf. H. Fischer, You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, p.7).

*Arnold Janssen in prayer
Relief in the church in Gaesdonck*

The fourth part consists of intercessions, for instance:

For the poor and needy.

For the sick and desolate.

For the pagans who still haven't heard anything of the goodness and love of our saviour (conf. ibid., p.7).

Probably inspired by a prayer from the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom Arnold formulated in this part the following prayer for the reunion of all Christians:

Lord Jesus, before your passion you prayed to your heavenly Father, that all, who call themselves after the name of His divine Son, may be one in the

realization of the truth, which you revealed to us and which through your Church you gave to us to believe in; grant that with one voice and one heart we all may confess and glorify Your divine name as well as that of the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and for all eternity. Amen (conf. Reuter, Proclaiming the Word in the power of the Spirit, Arnold Janssen, p.19).

At the age of 16 or 17, so Bro. Juniperus tells us, Arnold "to the great delight of all of us" began to smoke a pipe. "Father and mother were pleased when they saw him do something like that for his recreation" (conf. Bornemann, Remembering Arnold Janssen, p. 27)

In July 1855 Arnold graduated from High School. His intention, as stated on his diploma, was "to study theology in Muenster." That was his "long-range plan", though. First he wanted to dedicate himself for an "indefinite period of time" to the study of "my beloved mathematics", and that he did from October 1855 at the "Royal Academy of Muenster" – the later University of Muenster. Wanting also to become a priest, he lived in the diocesan college, the Collegium Borromaeum.

In August 1856 Arnold had come to the firm decision to study mathematics and natural sciences for another two or three years in order to get the certificate for teaching in High Schools. After that he would go on to theology.



The reasons which brought me to this decision are, on the one hand, my fondness for these sciences, and then also my leaning towards a teaching career (in Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, p. 11).

In May 1857 he took up his studies of Mathematics and Natural Sciences as well as History of French Literature, Church History and Church Archaeology at the University of Bonn (ibid.).

Why didn't he stay in Muenster, why did he choose to move to Bonn?

He wanted to get to know new professors, and he added:

Perhaps there are other special reasons in my case. Little had I learned to associate with other people, and I had hardly gone beyond a restricted circle of people (conf. Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, p. 11).

*Arnold Janssen (with pipe)
as a student in Bonn*