

Spirit of Pentecost and furthermore they should commemorate the highest feast days and festive seasons of the church year. At 12 midnight there had to be night choir prayer (Bornemann, A. Janssen und Schwester Aufrida Seraphim, Nova et Vetera, December 1969, p. 288).

22 November – Election of first superior

On November 20, the future cloistered Sisters were asked to vote for a superior. Mother Maria and Mother. Josepha were also asked to give their vote.

On November 22, Sr. Aufrida / Seraphim was announced as unanimously elected superior. Her term of office was one year (Jos. Alt, transl. Frank Mansfield, Jacqueline Mulberge, Journey in Faith, p. 377) First the cloistered sisters were told and then later all the other Sisters, (ibid. p. 368).

First task of the Cloistered Sisters

The first task of the future Cloistered Sisters was to make their own religious habit. “And since it was decided that only the Cloistered Sisters themselves should do the work, they had to sacrifice much sleep in order to have the work ready in time” – that is for December 8 (Karl Müller, Contemplation and Mission, p. 31).

ARNOLD JANSSENS ADVICE FOR 2021

Trust the Lord in every situation,
Whether it is day or dark night.
Whether storm clouds fly overhead
Or the sun smiles down gently.
Leave everything in His hands.
O,h, He means so well with you.
When the time comes
He will calm the storms,
You are safe in His care!

To all readers
A BLESSED AND HAPPY YEAR 2021



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The Arnoldus Family Story

NOVEMBER 1896 – Steyl – Retreat apostolate

Up till October 1896, 1513 men took part in the retreats offered by St. Michael's mission house in 1896. Of these 247 were priests, 245 teachers from Germany, 20 Belgian teachers, 78 students, 829 German and 94 Dutch laymen.

In the convent of the missionary sisters during the same period of time, 834 married and unmarried women took part, among them 71 teachers (Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], 24, No. 2, November 1896).

Steyl – Togo

1. November 1896

On this day, from the convent of the missionary sisters four Sisters were assigned to their mission in Togo: Bernarda, Anna Althoff, Franziska, Maria Dold, Vincentia, Anna Bergmann and Margareta, Aloysia Zintinger. During the same celebration Fr. Nicolaus Schöning SVD was also missioned to Togo. Sisters Bernarda, Franziska and Fr. Schöning left on the same day for Manchester to take an English language course there.

Brazil – November 4:

Fr. Arnold writes to Fr. Franziskus Dold in Brazil

Fr. Arnold informed Fr. Dold of the imminent departure of Brothers Berchmanns and Germanus



Sr. Margareta
Sr. Bernarda, Superior

Sr. Franziska
Sr. Vincentia

for Brazil where they were to be his faithful helpers.

Fr. Dold and his fellow missionary Fr. Tollinger must have deliberated about the founding of a college. In response Fr. Arnold wrote: “Concerning the question of a college, the foundation at this point in time is not yet possible.” However, if people wished it, he could accept young men for private lessons. “But, to carry out well such an undertaking, is not easy, although perhaps necessary,” Towards the end of the letter Fr. Arnold mentioned that Fr. Dold's sister, the Holy Spirit Sister Franziska Dold, had gone to Manchester for English language studies from where she would go on to Togo. Fr. Arnold also mentioned Fr. Dold's parents' visit to Steyl, probably to say goodbye to their daughter Sr. Franziska. “Your good parents were here from October 11-14. They were very brave when the time to say goodbye had come” (Jos. Alt, Arnold Janssen SVD, Briefe nach Südamerika, [Letters to South America], Vol. 1, pp. 189-190).

November 16 – Fr. Arnold writes to Frs. Dold, Tollinger and Benzerath

First he speaks about Brothers Berchmanns, Johann Giesen and Germanus, Franz Speckmeier who would soon arrive in Brazil.

Then he mentions the planned new SVD foundation in Germany near the town of Lethmathe. Fr. Arnold was only waiting for the State's permission to start a mission house there.

Finally he speaks about the missionary sisters: "By the end of the month we will have 100 Sisters."

Since 1895 the sisters' convent in Steyl had been renovated and extended by a new building – in order to have room to begin with the second branch of the missionary sisters, the cloistered sisters. The new building was to have an upper church and beneath it a double chapel, the bigger one for the missionary sisters and the smaller one for the cloistered sisters. The building had progressed so much that Fr. Arnold wrote: "In 14 days I plan to bless the new chapel for the sisters (a double chapel) in the lower part of the building. December 8 is always the day for the investment and profession of the sisters, and on that day I plan also to invest the first 7 cloistered sisters. Let us pray that they become truly faithful servants of the Holy Spirit (ibid., pp. 190-192).

Steyl – Foundation of the Cloistered Sisters

Fr. Arnold's vision of the congregation of the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit

According to the St. Michael's Almanac of 1891

In the St. Michael's Almanac of 1891 Fr. Arnold informed the public for the first time of a house for Missionary Sisters. There we read: A short while ago a house has been founded also for Missionary Sisters. Those are sisters who will be active in the house in Steyl. Later on they will also work in the foreign missions and there they will in particular work for women. This new house for the sisters will be under the direction of St. Michael's mission house.

Besides the Missionary Sisters already mentioned, some sisters will be accepted into the house who see it as their vocation to live in greater seclusion, performing women's activities, and to pray with special zeal for the missions and the overall task of the Society to God the Holy Spirit, to whose adoration and veneration we are particularly committed.

According to the constitutions and statutes of 1893

From the beginning of the foundation of the Missionary Sisters, as we just saw, Fr. Arnold thought of a congregation which would have an active and a contemplative branch. It is, therefore, no surprise that we read in the first constitutions and statutes of the congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit which had been approved by Bishop Boermans of Roermond on January 14, 1893:

Chapter Two: About the foundation of the congregation, Rule 1: About the two parts of the congregation. Then follows the constitution which reads: "The congregation consists of Sisters who take the usual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. However, as otherwise choir- and lay sisters are distinguished, here are

to be distinguished Cloistered and Missionary Sisters. Both venerate in a special way God the Holy Spirit and Mary as His immaculate spouse and as sisters they follow the two sisters Mary and Martha, the first in the practice of the contemplative life living in strict cloister which they never leave. The latter predominantly in the works of the active life for the benefit of women, particularly in those missions where the priests of the Society of the Divine Word are working."

Then follows statute 1: "Cloistered and Missionary Sisters form together the one spiritual body of the congregation..."

In statute 2 we read: "All cloistered and missionary sisters are daughters of the same spiritual mother, that is the congregation, and have the same Father, that is God the Holy Spirit."

The building up of the congregation

The building up of the congregation began in 1889 with the Missionary Sisters. However, right from the foundation of the missionary sisters, there had been some who wanted to dedicate themselves to the active missionary service and others who preferred the contemplative life (see Karl Müller, Contemplation and Mission, Sister-Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration 1896-1996, Rome 1998, p.30). Mother Maria, Helena Stollenwerk felt drawn to the cloistered sisters and she had been promised admission since 1893 (Ortrud Stegmaier, Mother Maria Helena Stollenwerk, Groundwork, p.408, footnote 2 to letter 207).

November 18 – The names of the Sisters chosen for the cloister

On November 18, 1896, the feast of the presentation of our Lady, Fr. Arnold "announced during a talk which sisters were appointed for the Cloister. The election for the different offices had also already taken place" (Mother Maria, chronicle, in ibid.). The chosen Sisters were: two in temporal vows - Michael Tönnies (first vows in 1894) and Clara Schmitz (first vows in 1895), 4 novices who were just about to be professed – Euphrasia Stellermann (later Sr. M. Gertrudis), Aufrida van Basten Batenberg (later Sr. M. Seraphim), Martina Schlüter (later Sr. M. Scholastica) and Coletta Hampel (later Sr. M. Agnes); and also a new novice, Christine Fecke. Sr. Michael Tönnies was appointed novice directress and Sr. Euphrasia (Gertrudis) Stellermann postulant directress (Karl Müller, Contemplation and Mission, p. 30). Mother Maria Helena Stollenwerk had not been chosen and "apparently she learned in this way" that she was not to be one of the Cloistered Sisters (Ortrud Stegmaier, Mother Maria, Groundwork, p. 408, footnote 2 to letter 207).

November 20 – Final plans

On November 20, Fr. Arnold and the two general counsellors Wegener and Blum had a meeting in which they spoke about the Cloistered Sisters. The Superior said: "after the completion of the new building [today St. Gregory] and the chapel for the Cloistered Sisters, the time had come to think of the foundation of the Cloistered Sisters. Therefore the Most Rev. Bishop of Roermond had given permission that on December 8 of this year the first seven Cloistered Sisters could be invested." Fr. Arnold continued: "They should have a pink religious habit and a white scapular and white mantle." "Silent consent followed". The sisters should pray the Latin office of the Holy