

For your reflection

On November 5, 2007 we remembered the 170th birthday of Arnold Janssen. Thanking for the many congratulatory messages at the occasion of his 70th birthday in 1907, Arnold wrote in the Nuntius SVD of December 1907 amongst other things:

Truly, reverend priestly confreres, dear and beloved Brothers, dear reverend Sisters, I need the help of your prayers. ... And then let us continue to work without rest for the many intentions of Jesus throughout the whole wide world and for all the important tasks which are ours to do. To work for the salvation of souls is the most divine of all divine works...

Let us do so by turning in a very special way to God the Holy Spirit. Our Society is dedicated to his special veneration. Cardinal Simeoni... once said of us: "It is no wonder that they have so many blessings, for they venerate God the Holy Spirit in a special way." I add: This blessing of the great Father of grace, light and strength will remain upon the Society as long as it venerates and loves Him in a childlike way and is full of zeal for His veneration. ...

The grace, love and joy of the Holy Spirit be with you all! Arn. Janssen, Superior General.

(p. 38 – transl. JO)

AT THE SERVICE OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

In October 2007 in Naples / Italy an international and interreligious prayer for peace was held. It ended with an appeal for peace, and in this appeal we read for instance:

Men and women of different religions, from many parts of the world, we have gathered here in Naples to forge bonds of brotherhood, and call to God for the great gift of peace. The name of God is peace. ...

From Naples we can say, more strongly than before, that anyone who uses the name of God to hate the other, to practice violence, or to wage war, is cursing the name of God. As Benedict XVI told us, "Never can evil and violence be justified by invoking the name of God."...

In the depths of our religious traditions, we have discovered that a world without dialogue is a world without hope, where people are fated to fear each other. ... Dialogue is not the illusion of the weak, it is the wisdom of the strong, who rely on the power of prayer. And prayer changes the world and the destiny of humankind.

Dialogue weakens no-one's identity, and it encourages everyone to see the best in the other. ...

Our religious traditions teach us that prayer is an active power in history, and it moves peoples and nations. Humbly we offer this ancient wisdom to the service of all peo-

ples, of every man and every woman, to open a new era of freedom from fear and contempt for the other. It is the spirit of Assisi, and here, from Naples, full of courage and strength, it challenges violence and any abuse of religion as a pretext for violence.

Following in this path, confident that peace can be a gift to the whole world, we commit ourselves to the Most High.

(www.zenit.org 17.11. 2007)

ARNOLD JANSSEN ADVISES:

You should resort to prayer and implore the Lord God in fervent prayer: "O Lord, show us Your holy will..."

Naturally, it is not enough for you to pray in this way once, twice or three times. You must rather try to force yourself on God, so that you make yourself heard and emerge victorious in your wrestling match with Him, just as the patriarch Jacob once did. (adapted from Alt, Arnold Janssen SVD, Letters to the United States of America, p.310)

ARNOLD JANSSEN SAYS:

All human beings are God's children, and in each human being's breast beats a compassionate heart. This heart can be spoiled by the love of sin, but it can also be ennobled by the holy love of God

(Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], 1874, No. 6, p. 47).

Publisher: Jürgen Ommerborn SVD
Secretariat Arnold Janssen, Steyl/Netherlands
Foto: Heinz Helf SVD – Layout: Clemens Jansen SVD

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The Arnoldus Family Story

As in previous newsletters so in this one, we will seek to penetrate deeper into the spirit of the Apostleship of Prayer which was so important for our founder St. Arnold Janssen.

Once again we follow the book by Fr. Ramière, *The Apostleship of Prayer; A Holy League of Christian Hearts United with the Heart of Jesus, to obtain the triumph of the church and the salvation of souls*. The page numbers after quotations refer to this book unless otherwise stated.

In the first part of his book, Fr. Ramière speaks about the "nature of the Apostleship of Prayer – the sources of its efficacy" or its power. The first two sources we have already studied: the first one is prayer as such. The second source is the community aspect of prayer: it is a prayer in community. *The third and chief source (p. 133) is the union with the Heart of Jesus*, and it is that source that we will study now.

The Apostleship of Prayer is efficacious and powerful because our prayer is not just a human work, but it is "a divine work" and that for a twofold reason: firstly, "it is divine in virtue of the source from which it emanates, which is the Heart of the Incarnate Word"; secondly, "it is divine in virtue of the principle which produces it in our hearts, namely, the Holy Ghost" (p. 134).

Our prayer – a divine work because of its source, the Heart of Jesus

Let us first reflect on the source of our prayer, which is the Heart of Jesus. How can it be that our prayers have their origin in the Heart of Jesus? That is so, Fr. Ramière answers, because

in the order of salvation, all Christians form with Jesus Christ but one body, of which He is the Head, and they the members; whence it follows that every supernatural work must have its origin in the inspiration of Jesus Christ, begun, carried on, and ended by His help alone (p. 135).

In Jn 15 Jesus expresses the same truth using the image of the vine and the branches:

I am the vine, and you are the branches. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me. Remain united to me. Those who will remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. If you remain in

me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it (cf p. 136-137 [Quoted from Good News Bible, TEV]).

By now it should be clear that Jesus with his heart full of love is the source of all we do, and that includes our prayers as well. Therefore our prayers are *“the prayers of Jesus Christ as truly, and even truly more than they are our own”* (p. 135) and that means: our prayers are divine prayers and so they cannot but be effective. The only thing we have to do is to remain united to him so that he will remain united to us. Therefore

let us never do any action, or utter a prayer, without uniting ourselves to Him, without taking counsel from Him, and without securing His assistance. If we do this we can ask anything we please with the greatest confidence, particularly that which our dear Lord wishes for above all: namely, the conversion of sinners, the salvation of the world, and the triumph of the Church; and our prayers will be heard (pp. 139-140).

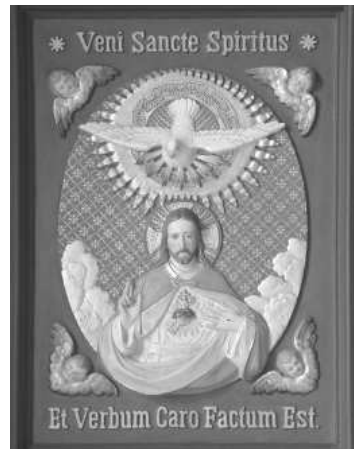
Our prayer – a divine work because it is produced in us by the Holy Spirit

The second reason that our prayer is a divine work is that the Holy Spirit is “the principle which produces it in our heart”. We will reflect upon this now.

In the mystical body of Christ the Spirit is the bond which unites head and members. If we let ourselves be led by the Spirit

then truly we will become sons of God, because we shall live the life of His only Son; ... in a word, we shall become as it were other Christs; consequently our prayers will be no longer merely our prayers, but the prayers of Jesus Christ. the Spirit of God....reproduces in the depths of our hearts the sentiments of our Saviour. It causes our hearts to beat in union with the throbbings of His divine heart, with the same regularity as the least arteries of the human body answer to the beatings of the human heart. ... It teaches us to call God our Father; or rather the Spirit invokes Him Himself, by our mouth, and cries to Him, saying, Abba! Father! in such accents and with that filial love which our Heavenly Father’s Heart cannot resist (pp. 143-144).

The Spirit unites us with Jesus and with all of His heart’s desires. It is He who makes us pray like Jesus: *“Father, Father”*. The Father, on the other hand, recognizes in this prayer *“the prayer of his well-beloved Son, and of His Holy Spirit”* and it is precisely because of that *“that He cannot refuse to hear it, and is forced, as it were, by a holy violence to suffer His most precious gifts to be extorted from Him”*(cf. p. 134).



Relief in the room
in which Arnold Janssen died (Steyl).

The meaning of the words “Apostleship of Prayer”

Fr. Ramière would like us to enter still deeper into the nature of the Apostleship of Prayer, and so he presents a few thoughts about Jesus’ presence in the tabernacle under the appearance of bread. He asks:

What does Jesus do in the Eucharist? What does he do in the tabernacle? His answer is:

He loves and prays. ...

Through the length of the day He prays; and whilst all around Him is in a state of excitement and commotion, whilst ungrateful man forgets his heavenly country, despises and denies his Saviour, neglects the care of his own soul, and sacrifices his eternal interests to perishable and frivolous occupations, the suppliant voice of the divine Mediator appeals in his favour from the depths of His tabernacles. Through the length of the night also He prays; and whilst His rational creatures buried in sleep have no longer intelligence to know, or will to love their Creator; Jesus Christ lives, knows, adores, loves, and prays unceasingly for them (p. 150).

The members of the Apostleship of Prayer are called to “accompany” their “Saviour to His Tabernacle”. If they do that they will understand the meaning of those words, the Apostleship of Prayer. For here in the tabernacle, in union with Jesus who intercedes always for the people of the world, this apostleship

is unceasingly exercised, and puts forth all its energy, granting fruit to the labours of apostolic men, inflaming their zeal, touching the hearts of those who listen to them, consoling the just, entreating sinners, bringing down grace from heaven, and averting the thunderbolts of divine justice; in a word, from this place souls are saved and life is shed abroad upon the earth (p. 151).

Every Christian man and woman is invited to participate in this Apostleship of Prayer. For:

It is impossible to possess sincere faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist; impossible also to believe that He there prays unceasingly for us, for our brethren and His Church, without acknowledging ourselves compelled to unite our prayers with His. Still less can we receive Him into our breast and there feel His heart beat with unbounded love for souls, and that our own hearts should not beat in union with His (ibid.).

Arnold Janssen felt the Heart of Jesus “beat with unbounded love for souls” and he let his own heart “beat in union with the Heart of Jesus”. That made him eventually a missionary and founder of the Steyl mission organization. In it the saving, life giving, unceasing prayer in union with Jesus in the tabernacle has its firm place through the founding of the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters.

Our contemplative life draws its strength from the Sacrament of the Eucharist. To the love which encounters us human beings in this sacrament, but which is not returned by all, we answer with the service of perpetual adoration (cf. Co. SSsPAP).