

For your reflection

Arnold Janssen said about his work in the Apostleship of Prayer:

I worked especially for an increase in the spirit of intercessory prayer so that people would offer their usual prayers, for example the rosary, for the intentions of Jesus (Alt, Journey in Faith, pp. 31-32).

Henri Nouwen writes:

When I pray for others, I lose myself and I become identical with them. So Divine Love finds me being with them, that Love, which embraces the whole of humanity in a single, big embrace of compassion (transl. by JO from the German book: H. Nouwen, Dem vertrauen, der mich hält; Herder, Freiburg 2003, p. 156)

AT THE SERVICE OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

Ecumenical Dialogue

It might come as a surprise to many that already since 1972 there exists the "International Dialogue between Classical Pentecostal churches and leaders and the Catholic Church". Our former SVD Assistant Superior General, the late Fr. Karl Müller, was one of the Catholic members of this Dialogue for several years. This dialogue does not seek "to establish structural unity. Instead its purpose is to promote mutual understanding and respect" amongst Catholics and Classical Pentecostals.

The dialogue takes place in phases; the first phase was from 1972-1976; the draft of the final report of the fifth phase was the main task of the meeting which took place in Prague from June 30-July 6, 2005. That phase began in 1998 and studied "both biblical and patristic perspectives on how one becomes a Christian." Discussed were topics like "Christian Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit", "Faith and Christian Initiation", "Conversion and Christian Initiation". The study of the perspective of the Church Fathers was a new feature in this dialogue. (Source: The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Information Service, N. 119, 2005/III, p. 142).

Interreligious Dialogue

When Pope Benedict XVI appointed Cardinal Poupard, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, as President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue as well, many saw this as a devaluation of the Council

for Interreligious Dialogue. The appointment of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran as new President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue was seen as the Pope giving back to this Council its proper position. In an interview with Radio Vatican the Cardinal said that it was during his journey to Turkey last December that Pope Benedict had made that decision. The Cardinal continued: "I believe that this is a sign of the importance which the Pope attributes to the dialogue with other religions and particularly with Islam. He wanted this Dialogue Council to regain its autonomy in order to be a more efficient tool in this religious dialogue. ... I believe (the debate about the Pope's speech in Regensburg) played a decisive role, for thanks to the reactions to this speech, the Pope was able to explain his thinking more clearly; and when one reads his addresses to the ambassadors from countries with a Moslem majority, one clearly sees a thread running through the Pope's thinking: that interreligious dialogue is a peace factor. In his opinion, religions are at the service of peace" (source:www.cibedo.de/aktuelles.html,2.9.2007).

In his message for the end of Ramadan, 2006, Cardinal Poupard wrote:

The world has need, and so we do, of Christians and Muslims who respect and value each other and bear witness to their mutual love and co-operation to the glory of God and the good of all humanity.

(source: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue).

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The Arnoldus Family Story

On April 1, 1866, at the age of 29, Arnold Janssen joined the Apostleship of Prayer: The certificate of membership states: "Arnold Janssen has been accepted as a promoter of the veneration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Apostleship of Prayer" (Alt, Journey in Faith, p. 31). In the very same year, on October 19, 1866 Helena Stollenwerk, later co-foundress of the Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit, joined the Apostleship of Prayer as well. She was then aged 16 (Ortrud Stegmaier, M. Maria Stollenwerk, Berufungsgeschichte, Quellen 3, p. 120).

What is the "Apostleship of Prayer"?

It is a "a holy league of Christian Hearts united with the Heart of Jesus, to obtain the triumph of the Church and the salvation of souls".

Its founder was Jesuit Fr. Francis X. Gautrelet; it owes its popularity in particular to the writings of another Jesuit, Fr. H. Ramière. It is certain that Arnold Janssen possessed at least two of his books:

"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 French original "L'Apostolat de la Prière" had appeared in 1861) and

"Der Apostolat des allerheiligsten Herzens Jesu. Ein Weiheschenk für die Beförderer und Beförderinnen des Gebets-Apostolats" [The Apostleship of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. A gift dedicated to the promoters of the Apostleship of Prayer] – the German edition dating from 1868. In his private library in Bocholt Arnold Janssen had several copies of "The Apostleship of Prayer...". "He bought it both in French and German and it appears that he bought it for other priests, or sent it to them as a present" (Herman Fischer SVD, You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit!, p.10).

Fr. Ramière describes the founding of the Apostleship of Prayer in this way:

Its origin is an humble one, as doubtless is that of all undertakings which are inspired by God's Spirit; nevertheless, in spite of the smallness of its beginnings, it gives us much cause for encouragement.

Established on the 3rd of December 1844, at the foot of the ancient sanctuary of Notre Dame du Puy, in a seminary which every year sends forth numberless



Steyl upper church, altar of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 1900

apostles to all parts of the world, the Apostleship of Prayer had no other object in its origin than that of affording to the young religious [Jesuits] engaged in the hidden occupations of a student's life, a means of exercising their zeal, and of enabling them to unite themselves to the not less efficacious but also neglected Apostleship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who from the annihilation of His tabernacle works the salvation of the world (H. Ramière, The Apostleship of Prayer, transl. by "a Father of the Society" [of Jesus], Richardson and Son, London 1866, p. 5).

The Apostleship spread very fast to other religious communities and all over Europe.

For Arnold Janssen, joining the Apostleship of Prayer was like a milestone in his development from a priest of the diocese of Muenster and a teacher in Bocholt Junior High to a missionary and founder of missionary religious congregations. Fr. Herman Fischer SVD writes:

There can be no doubt that, besides the grace of God, the introduction of Arnold Janssen to the Apostolate of Prayer and its spirit was responsible for his broad outlook. His strong-minded and generous surrender to the "Will of Jesus", as he put it, and his espousal of the spread of the kingdom of God on earth, the winning back of separated Christians, and the salvation of the non-Christians – all of these laid the foundation for the birth of the Steyl mission work. The last forty years of his life arose out of the fire of this apostolic love. (Herman Fischer SVD, You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit!, p. 12).

Since the Apostleship of Prayer had such a tremendous influence on Arnold Janssen, it is only fitting to get to know some of its main thoughts. Like Arnold Janssen a long time ago, so let us allow ourselves to be led into its spirit today by Fr. Ramière.

In the Introduction to his book "The Apostleship of Prayer..." Fr. Ramière's starting point is the problem that our world is not yet Christian. Who is responsible for that? Not God, he says, and he quotes 1 Tim 2:1ff:

I desire therefore first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men... For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who wishes all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself up for the redemption of us all (Ramière, The Apostleship of Prayer, p. 19)

Since God is not responsible for the world not being Christian yet, what then is the reason for it? For Fr. Ramière this has first of all to do with the freedom of people:

We all, without exception... hear our Father's voice, echoing in the depths of our souls, calling us to Heaven; but it is in our power to remain deaf to it, ...(*ibid.*, p. 29).

The deepest reason, however, for this sad state of the world is that we have not yet faithfully done what the Apostle tells us to do in 1 Tim 2:1-2. There he says 'we ought to pray for all our brethren, because God wills the salvation of all. What other meaning can we give these words, except this, that the accomplishment of God's merciful designs depends not only on the free co-operation of those whom He seeks to save, but also on the zeal, the prayers, and efforts of those who are already walking in the way of life, and upon whom God calls to bring to this same way also their brethren' (*conf. ibid.*, p. 31).

Turning directly to his readers, Fr. Ramière then writes:

Perhaps, you who read these lines may never have suspected that you are endowed with the power of saving the souls of your brethren, and are called to be auxiliaries and fellow-helpers with your God.

Nothing however is more real than this great Apostolic Vocation which is quite inseparable from the Christian Vocation. I know not how far Providence may have destined you to co-operate in this great work. I know not if you are to become as the rapid river spoken of by the Prophet, which, going forth from the threshold of God's house, soon overflowed the plain, and caused majestic forest trees to flourish on its banks; or whether you may not rather resemble the gentle dew which God scatters in the desert upon plants unknown to man. But ... your vocation is certain: and you are not destined to save yourself alone ...(*ibid.*, pp. 41-42).

The reason that there are so few Christians in the world is not that God did not really wish to save them, but that God does not want to save people without people and 'because it pleased Him, who alone and by His own virtue is the universal Saviour, to communicate the merit of His glory and redemption to these co-mediators of salvation' (*conf. ibid.*, p. 43).

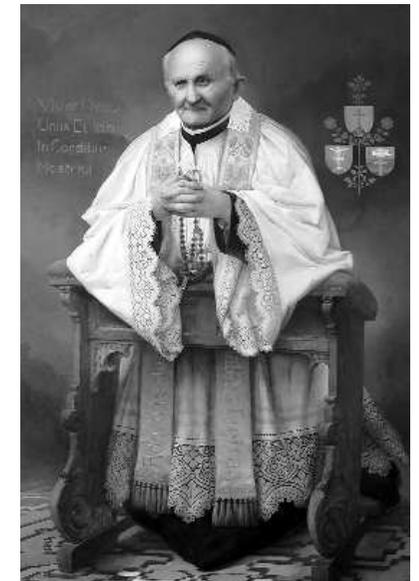
Finally, Fr. Ramière asks the reader:

And now, what answer will you give? Will you not follow your glorious vocation? ... Must the heart of your God renounce His hope of finding a fellow helper in you, ready to assist in gathering in the harvest already watered with His blood, and to enkindle the fire He came to cast upon the earth?

How much longer must Jesus wait, *not like the sick man of Bethsaida, for some one to put him into the healing waters; but rather for one to bring those sick souls to Him whom He is able and willing to cure?* (*conf. ibid.*, p.44).

Arnold Janssen and Helena Stollenwerk did not want Jesus to wait any longer, they wanted to be Apostles of prayer and in that way bring people to their Saviour. So in 1866 both joined the Apostleship of Prayer, and already in 1867 Arnold accepted the invitation to become the Apostleship's diocesan director for his home diocese of Muenster. "From then on I took special interest in the Apostleship of Prayer", he recalled (Alt, Journey in Faith, p. 31).

Divine Providence, on the other hand, had destined both, Arnold and Helena, "to become as the rapid river spoken of by the Prophet, which, going forth from the threshold of God's house, soon overflowed the plain, and caused majestic forest trees to flourish on its banks."



Painting by Bro. Lucas Kolzem SVD