

For your reflection - Hendrina Stenmanns – Mother Josepha

On January 10, 1884 Hendrina Stenmanns had been accepted as a maid for the mission house in Steyl. On January 18 she wrote to Arnold Janssen:

Reverend Father Rector,

Thank you wholeheartedly for accepting me to share in the work of spreading the Faith. I will remain truly grateful to God for this great grace. I will also pray fervently that the good Lord may support me with his grace and enable me to give myself wholly to him.

I beg your Reverence kindly to have a little patience because I cannot come sooner than three weeks from now, Tuesday, 12 February,

1. because I must first complete and deliver the work [as silk weaver] I have begun, and

2. there is still something needed for my clothing. ...

Recommending you and yours to the most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary I remain, obediently yours, Hendrina Stenmanns.

As planned, Hendrina did come to Steyl on February 12 and joined Helena Stollenwerk and Theresia Sicke who already had been there for some time.

(Ortrud Stegmaier SSpS, ed., transl. by Jacqueline Mulberge SSpS, Arnold Janssen – M. Josepha, Hendrina Stenmanns, Correspondence 1884-1903, p. 35)



Mother Josefa at her final profession

AT THE SERVICE OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

On June 25, 2007, Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran was appointed President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. During an interview with journalists he presented his views on interreligious dialogue; among other things he said:

"I would like to build interreligious dialogue on my concrete experiences. ... The most important thing in dialogue is that partners get to know each other mutually. Yes, mutual knowledge among believers is very important in all dialogue. Each one of us has always to learn something about the other. For example, we Christians can appreciate in our Muslim partners the dimension of God's transcendence, value of prayer and fasting in life, courage to bear witness to God in daily life. The Muslims on their part, can learn from us Christians the value of a healthy secular outlook on life. ...

Given the geo-political situation of our world, dialogue with Muslims is urgent and important. However, the Catholic Church is also

mindful of its commitment to dialogue with religions other than Islam: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucian Tradition, Shintoism, just to name a few. I have read that the third religion in Europe today, after Christianity and Islam, is Buddhism. In this case also, as I said above, it is an indispensable duty of every believer to acquire mutual knowledge of each other's religious traditions. ... Recently I had the opportunity to visit a big Buddhist monastery in the South of Taiwan and, quite frankly, I was much impressed by the welcome and the spirit of prayer of the Buddhist monks I met there. Obviously, interreligious dialogue must never mean that all religions are to be considered the same and equal; it means rather that all those who are in search of God merit our utmost respect, because all believers are created by God in His own image and likeness; all believers of every religion are, therefore, equal in dignity; this fact must never be forgotten or trivialized in the practice of interreligious dialogue" (Jean-Louis Tauran, Thoughts on Interreligious Dialogue, in Pro Dialogo, Bulletin 125, 2007/2, pp. 138.139.142).

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The Arnoldus Family Story

Arnold Janssen – Missionary Beyond the Boundaries of his Home Diocese

In 1867 Fr. Joseph Malfatti S.J., director of the Apostleship of Prayer for Germany and Austria, asked Arnold Janssen to become the Apostleship's director for his home diocese of Muenster. Pretty soon Arnold's enthusiasm for the Apostleship of Prayer urged him to extend his activities in the Apostleship's service beyond his home diocese. In his capacity as Director of the Apostleship for the Diocese of Muenster, from September 6-9, 1869 he attended the General Assembly of the Catholic Associations of Germany in Duesseldorf, in order to submit the proposal that the assembly should recommend the Apostleship of Prayer to all German Catholics.

The General Assembly of the Catholic Associations of Germany

In the 19th century the Catholic Church in Germany had to suffer much from official whim and regimentation by the State. In order to free the church from this control by the State, lay people, together with priests, founded a number of associations which met in Mainz from October 3-6, 1848 for their first general assembly. "The freedom of the church is the mother of a better future for Germany. That is the basic idea of the Catholic Association of Germany", we read in a declaration of that association from 1849 (<http://zentralkomitee-deutsche-katholiken.org/uerberuns/geschichte.php> - 11.04. 2008). In the course of time these general assemblies or "Katholikentage", as they were called later, "established themselves as an expression of a Christian engagement in church and world".

The Vatican Council and the return of the separated Christians to the Catholic Church

From the point of view of the church's history, the most important event in the year 1869 was the opening of the Vatican Council on December 8, 1869. During the 'General Assembly of the Catholic Associations' from September 6-9, 1869 in Duesseldorf, exactly three months before the opening of the Council, Catholics will certainly have been thinking of that Council. In connection with the Council, Catholics were filled with hope for the return of the separated Christians to the Catholic Church. For already in the course of the preparations of the Council, more than one bishop had proposed that on the occasion of the Council the church should try to get into contact with the separated Christians. Pope Pius IX also hoped for their return to the Catholic Church and so, at the beginning of September 1868, a letter was sent to all orthodox bishops inviting them to return to the Catholic unity in order to be able to attend the Council;

a few days later a global invitation was sent to Protestants and Anglicans (cf. Jedin, ed., *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, vol. VI/I, p. 776-777).

With regard to England and the Anglicans, hopes that England would become Catholic were raised by the Oxford Movement, with its wish to renew the Anglican Church by strengthening the old Catholic elements in the Anglican Church, part of which involved the study of the Church Fathers, as well as conversions to the Catholic Church, particularly by the two renowned Anglicans, John Henry Newman and Henry Edward Manning.

Arnold Janssen and the Duesseldorf General Assembly of the Catholic Associations

One item on the agenda of the general assembly was Arnold Janssen's proposal that the general assembly should recommend the Apostleship of Prayer. This meant that Arnold "who was used to facing a mere handful of students in a classroom, or at the most preached an occasional sermon to a few hundred souls, now had to prepare to mount the speaker's platform before a huge national Catholic assemblage" (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, p. 22). So seriously did he take that preparation that he wrote two drafts of his speech. However, it is "no longer apparent what AJ actually said"; nevertheless both drafts give us a good insight into the religious ideas which moved him in those days and are therefore important (cf. Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 34, footnote 36).

Having given an introduction to the Apostleship of Prayer, in the first draft of the speech Arnold then continued: "But now take a look at the times we are living in. Indeed was there ever an epoch in history when evil and hope were simultaneously so great?" The "evils" that one could see in his time included, for instance, the hate many educated people harbored against the Church and the priesthood and the "immoral and unnerving energy" which the general striving for money and pleasure had unleashed. And then we see how he, like many Catholics in those days, was also full of hope for the return of the separated Christians to the Catholic Church:

... we are being challenged to hope for greater things, to hope that many separated Christians will return, and for a transforming effect from the ecumenical Council.

The return of separated Christians! Gentlemen, what an exalted and holy slogan! Imagine for a moment that ancient and proud England, with its world-wide dominions, were a young Catholic country... How that would renew the face of the earth!

Oh, the return of those separated in the faith! ... But if we only could succeed in moving God to bring about such events that the eyes of a separated people would begin to open. ...as sure as God is in heaven, it is in our power to do this if we could only get enough people to pray. 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).

If anything good is to come about, it depends on the grace of God; and God's grace will be merited through prayer. "So there is no association that contributes more to the advance of all that is good than a prayer association" (*ibid.*, p. 34).

In the second much longer draft of the speech Arnold said, among other things, the following about the Association of the Apostleship of Prayer:

The goal of the Association is to unite into one great alliance of prayer all Christians who have not yet been totally depraved by the world and still have an understanding for the power of prayer and a heart for the intentions of their Savior. [...] Just imagine what a great power this would be, ... Let us pray and help others to pray, and then we have no need to worry about the future (*ibid.*, p. 34-35).

As in the first draft so we see here, too, that the return of separated Christians to the Catholic Church was on Arnold's mind: "If we ask for the return of the separated Christians ... such prayers are always in the name of and in the spirit of Jesus and will always be answered, even if the Lord God postpones the execution of such petitions for some time" (*ibid.*, p. 35).

When Arnold finally submitted his proposal to endorse the Apostleship of Prayer it was unanimously adopted (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, p. 23).

The members of the Apostleship of Prayer prayed for the return of the separated Christians, and they prayed also for the spread of God's kingdom among all those people throughout the world who had not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. For his part Arnold Janssen did not only pray for the missions: "Wherever he found an opportunity, he recommended the missionaries and he himself collected significant sums of money for the missions." Looking at the recipients of those donations it seems that his favorite missionary must have been Daniel Comboni, missionary and later Vicar Apostolic/Bishop in central Africa and by then his trusted friend and advisor – and still later his fellow saint. On October 5, 2003 Arnold Janssen, Joseph Freinademetz and Daniel Comboni were canonized together (cf. H. Fischer, Arnold Janssen, Gründer des Steyler Missionswerkes, p. 65-66).

One Hundred Years Ago

Each year Arnold Janssen used to give a series of lectures to the newly ordained priests in St. Gabriel in order to introduce them to priestly work. On March 24, 1908 he wrote from St. Gabriel to Fr. Superior Schmid in Brazil:

Finally a personal remark: On 23 February, 44 priests were ordained; soon afterwards I began giving them my lectures; however, still in that very same week I was forced to cancel them because I fell ill. I suffered from severe bronchitis and, particularly during night, I had to cough a lot. Everything that could be done for me was done; and so, thanks be to God, I seem to have improved so much that next week I will be able to continue the lectures. May everything come about according to God's holy will. I will still have to cope with a lot of work. Until now my sickness hindered me from doing my work and rendered me partially inactive (Alt, Arnold Janssen SVD, *Briefe nach Südamerika* [Letters to South America], vol. IV, 1905-1908, Analecta SVD – 65/IV, pp. 381-382).

Fr. Superior Schmid was a sick man himself, and so Arnold Janssen had written to him on March 16, 1908: "Please, take good care of your health and do everything possible to improve it; avoid anything that is a hindrance to it. Furthermore I order you to read this part of my letter to the superiors of those houses where you are now or where you will be in future. I oblige them to take good care of your health and not to let themselves be put off because you yourself never ask for anything" (*ibid.*, p. 377).