

Novitiate

The new cloistered Sisters first had to do a 3-year novitiate, the novice directress, Mother M. Michaela, included. She had already been two years in vows as a Missionary Sister. The novitiate was to be followed by temporary vows for seven years and then the final vows (*ibid.*, p.111).

The Importance of the foundation of the Cloistered Sisters

The chronicler of the Mother House of the Cloistered Sisters states: “But this day [December 8], was important not only for us. It was important for the whole Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit. We pray that this be realized and becomes what was planned from the beginning, namely, a Congregation of two religious communities illustrating the relationship between Martha and Mary. The holy Church also, yes, even the whole world, participated in the event which happened today. For all the prayers rising to God in the enclosure will profit holy Church and immortal souls” (in Müller, *Contemplation and Mission*, p. 32).

Fr. Arnold wrote a short history of the Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit in “Komm, Heiliger Geist hernieder” [Come down Holy Spirit], the supplement no. 28 of the Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart] of January 1897. Having said that on December 8 the first Cloistered Sisters had been invested, he continued: “Herewith the foundation is laid, the first developmental phase [of the Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit] is completed, and now it is our task to continue working on the foundation laid with the graced blessing of the Holy Spirit.”

Argentina

December 22 – Fr. Arnold writes to Fr. Superior Becher (excerpts)

“Here in Steyl on 7.12.96 the new Lower Chapel for the Sisters was blessed. It has two parts, 1. for the Cloistered Sisters – 2. for the Missionary Sisters and on 8.12. I invested the first 6 Cloistered Sisters as well as 10 Missionary Sisters and 6 Sisters made their first vows. ... It was a beautiful feast.”

“I believe that in future we have to start training some sisters also in nursing. At the moment, however, we cannot do it.”

“Regarding wishes for Brothers, I ask you to let us know already one year ahead of time. The reason is that now we take that much time to select and train Brothers. Since Easter 1895 in St. Gabriel’s some useful elective subjects are being taught, including architecture, 4 hours per week over several semesters.”

“I am very happy that the branch of the Cloistered Sisters has now been founded. Hopefully their constant prayer before the Blessed Sacrament will call down a lot of blessings upon the Congregation” (Jos. Alt, *Arnold Janssen SVD, Briefe nach Südamerika* [Letters to South America], vol. I, pp. 195.197.199).



Divine Word Missionaries
Arnold Janssen Secretariat Steyl

VOLUME 15 | NO. 2 | FEBRUARY 2021

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The Arnoldus Family Story

DECEMBER 1896

Steyl – Development of the Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit

Renovation and a new building

The numerical development of the Congregation and the planned foundation of the Cloistered Sisters made the renovation of the old Notre Dame convent and a new building necessary. In December 1896 these two projects had progressed to the extent that the new building could be used. In the new building there was a double lower chapel, one bigger one for the Missionary Sisters and a small one for the Cloistered Sisters, as well as an upper chapel which only was completed in 1898. At the beginning of December 1896, the lower chapel was ready for use.



Retreat before investiture, profession of vows and the beginning of the Cloistered Sisters

On December 2 the retreat began for all sisters, missionary and future cloistered sisters. The meditations were led by Fr. Weißenfels and the conferences were given by Fr. Arnold Janssen himself.

In his conference on December 6, Fr. Arnold spoke about the relationship between the missionary and cloistered sisters.

That very December 6, Sr. Clara Schmitz died, who on September 3, 1892 had entered Steyl “to become a cloistered sister”. Therefore she had been chosen for the cloister. Even though she died before investiture, on December 10 she was buried “in the habit of the Cloistered Sisters” (Müller, transl. Frank Mansfield SVD, *Contemplation and Mission*, Rome 1998, p.32, footnote 51).

Blessing of the double – Lower Chapel

On December 7, Fr. Arnold blessed the double lower chapel. The chapel had been built in such a way, that the back wall behind the main altar in both chapels and the sacristy were in common. In the Missionary Sisters’ chapel on the right of the main altar and in the Cloistered Sisters’ chapel on the left of the main altar there was a door between the two chapels (Hermann auf der Heide, *Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl, ein Bild der ersten 25 Jahre ihres Bestehens* [the Mission Society of Steyl, a picture of the its first 25 years of existence], p. 568).

Since the enclosure did not yet exist, Fr. Arnold celebrated the first holy Mass for both groups of sisters together after the blessing in the chapel of the Cloistered Sisters. In the chronicle of the Mother House of the Cloistered Sisters we read: “How nice that the first Mass was celebrated in common! Are not both sections, though spatially divided, internally linked to each other?” (Müller, *Contemplation and Mission*, p. 31).

Mother Maria Helena wrote to the Sisters in Argentina: “The Blessed Sacrament had been carried from our old chapel into the chapel of the Cloistered Sisters. After holy Mass we gathered once more in the old desolated chapel, to thank our dear Lord for all graces and blessings that he had given us in this house of God” (*M. Maria Stollenwerk, Briefe an die Schwestern* [Letters to the Sisters], p.83).

New religious names for the Cloistered Sisters

In the afternoon of December 7, Fr. Arnold informed the future Cloistered Sisters of their new religious names: Sr. Aufrida got the name Sr. Maria Seraphim of the Holy Spirit; Sr. Michaela was now Sr. Maria Michaela of the Holy Spirit; Sr. Euphrasia now Sr. Maria Gertrudis of the Holy Spirit; Sr. Martina now Sr. Maria Scholastica of the Holy Spirit; Sr. Coleta now Sr. Maria Agnes of the Holy Spirit and the postulant Fecke received the name Sr. Maria Theresia of the Holy Spirit. Two young women entered the cloister as postulants (*ibid.*, p. 84).

In the evening of that day Fr. Arnold held the benediction in the chapel of the Cloistered Sisters. Mother Maria writes: “Before benediction we [the missionary sisters] solemnly renewed our vows with lighted candles in our hands” (*ibid.*).

Investiture, profession of vows and beginning of the Cloistered Sisters

December 8, 1896 – The early morning – a first holy Mass

Early in the morning a first Holy Mass was celebrated in the chapel of the Cloistered Sisters. After Mass the Blessed Sacrament was carried into the chapel of the Missionary Sisters. Mother Maria writes: “We also went into the chapel and for the first time we adored our dear Savior in the blessed sacrament there” (*ibid.*).

Solemn High Mass

In this chapel of the Missionary Sisters the solemn high Mass began at 8.30am with investiture, profession of vows and entrance into the enclosure. “It was very, very beautiful,” Mother Maria remembers (*ibid.*). 10 postulants of the Missionary Sisters received the religious habit and 8 novices professed their first vows.

The professed sisters accompanied the celebrating sisters in solemn procession into the chapel, led by sisters carrying the beautifully decorated baskets with the new religious habits, the bridal dresses of the sacred religious state (Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote, 24, No. 4, Januar 1897, Beilage no 28 in honor of the Holy Spirit, “Komm, Heiliger Geist, hernieder” [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart, 24, No. 4, January 1897, supplement no 28 in honor of the Holy Spirit, “Come down, Holy Spirit”).

Fr. Arnold’s sermon

After the gospel Fr. Arnold delivered his sermon: “The Cloistered Sisters were to sit at the feet of the Lord like Mary, glorify him day and night through the Divine Office and

– when numbers permit – hold perpetual adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. In this way they will call down rich graces on the Church and the Congregation. On the other hand, the Missionary Sisters are to be thoroughly trained in all subjects here in the Mother House and do all kinds of work in a Martha-like fashion, working for the salvation of souls, especially in the missions where priests of the Society are working” (Müller, *Contemplation and Mission*, p. 32).

Investiture of the Cloistered Sisters and entrance into the enclosure

After the sermon the cloistered Sisters received their beautiful pink religious habit and a white veil. They withdrew into the enclosure to put on their new habit and veil, went back into the chapel and received the white scapular and white cloak (Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote, [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart,] January 1897, Beilage, Komm Heiliger Geist hernieder [Supplement, Come down Holy Spirit]).

After the celebration the door in the wall separating the two chapels opened and for the first time the Cloistered Sisters walked through their little chapel into the rooms of the enclosure which were prepared for them (Hermann auf der

Heide, *Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl, ein Bild der ersten 25 Jahre ihres Bestehens* [The Missionary Society of Steyl, a picture of the first 25 years of its existence] p. 568).



To the right of the altar is the door leading into the Cloistered Sisters’ chapel and enclosure

Life in the Enclosure

December 10, Announcement of the daily schedule

The daily schedule was like this:

4:55 rising, 5:20 morning prayer, followed by meditation, 6:05 Holy Mass, then breakfast followed by a 3-minute visit to the chapel, 8:00 second Holy Mass with Prime and Terce, ca. 10:00 Sext, 12:10 None and examination of conscience, 12:30 lunch and recreation, 14:00 Vespers. In the afternoon there was a 1½ hour meditation with Compline, 18:00 evening meal with recreation, 19:00 evening prayer followed by night rest. At 12:15 in the night they rose to recite Matins and Lauds. Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays there were devotions with Benediction. They were given a talk three times a week, twice together with the Missionary Sisters. In the times not mentioned there was work. The Office was that of the Octave of Pentecost from the Roman Breviary. It was the same every week and was recited in Latin.” For better understanding, Fr. Arnold “made the seven daily Offices with corresponding German translations available” (Müller, *Contemplation and Mission*, p.34). Because of the small number of sisters, adoration was held only during the day and then before a closed tabernacle (*ibid.*, p. 35).