

Furthermore he wrote: "I was thinking to myself, are we really not going to have any difficulties at all this time? Lo and behold, there is the difficulty" (Bornemann, transl. John Vogelgesang, *Arnold Janssen*, Manila 1975, p. 330)

### Steyl – Togo (Holy Spirit Sisters)

#### *On the way to Togo: Stage One*

On January 26, 1897 Srs. Vinzentia and Margaretha who had been appointed to Togo left Steyl and travelled by train to Rotterdam. There they met the other two new Togo missionaries, Srs. Bernarda Althoff and Franziska Dold. Having completed their English language course they had travelled by ship from England to Rotterdam.

#### *Disappointment in Togo*

Meanwhile in Togo, the Apostolic Prefect was disappointed that the Sisters had not yet arrived. On January 27 he wrote to Fr. auf der Heide in Steyl: "This morning I heard... that on January 6 the Sisters had not yet left Steyl and that perhaps they would not leave Steyl in January. This is not nice at all. Either they should write: They will come at the end of 1897, or they should be sent. The people ask us again and again about the arrival of the Sisters, and quite frequently we have embarrassed ourselves by repealing our earlier statements. Soon people will consider us as swindlers on this point. Please, tell this to Rev. Fr. Superior (Karl Müller, *Geschichte der katholischen Kirche in Togo* [History of the Catholic Church in Togo], p. 94).

#### *On the way to Togo: Stage Two*

On January 29<sup>th</sup> the four sisters began their journey from Rotterdam to Togo on the steamer "Mandingo" (auf der Heide, *Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl* [The Mission Society of Steyl], Steyl 1900, p. 566) .

### Steyl – Lethmathe

On January 29, Fr. Arnold asked the Bishop of Paderborn to extend the oral permission for the mission house he had already given on 7 June 1896 to include a sisters' convent. "For in the long term we cannot do without a house for missionary sisters." The main reason being "Sisters are absolutely necessary in the missions". By return mail the Bishop granted permission "for the Society of the Divine Word, that is, for men for the training of missionaries for pagan countries and for a sisters' convent for women who will be trained to work in the foreign missions" (Alt, transl. Frank Mansfield, Jacqueline Mulberge, *Journey in Faith*, Nettetal 2002, p. 457).

By this time Fr. Arnold had heard the report "that a group of Protestants was agitating against the seminary. They feared the Protestant Church might be weakened in the same way that Fathers Janssen and Klagges knew that the mission seminary would mean for the Catholics "a remarkable strengthening of their faith" (Bornemann, transl. John Vogelgesang, *Arnold Janssen*, Manila 1975, p.330).



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MISSIEHUIS ST. MICHAËL | ST. MICHAËLSTR. 7 | NL-5935 BL STEYL

## The Arnoldus Family Story

### DECEMBER 1896 – Kaiser Wilhelmsland – New Guinea

On October 28, 1896 the first five Steyl New Guinea missionaries had celebrated their first community Holy Mass on Tumleo island.

#### First tasks – Building

The missionaries right away hired a few local laborers. Together with them the Brothers cleared the bush for a place to assemble the wooden tropical house for the missionaries which had been prefabricated in Steyl. It had been dismantled and shipped to Tumleo.

"A larger room in the house became the chapel and was decorated as well as the missionaries could do. At Christmas the house was finally standing. Full of joy and



gratitude towards God the missionaries moved into the house. They were very happy that they had the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. Some smaller buildings were also put up for which palm leaves served as a roof (auf der Heide, *Die Missionsgesellschaft von Steyl, Ein Bild der ersten 25 Jahre ihres Bestehens* [The Mission Society of Steyl. An Account of the first 25 years of its existence], Steyl 1900, pp. 477-478).

#### Language learning

At the same time as the house was being built, the two priests tried their best to record and learn from the people their language, which proved to be extremely difficult. Proudly Fr. Erdweg wrote on December 6, 1896 that by then they had learned 377 words. Because even with things that seemed simple to them, "you have to ask for half an hour before you find out what they are called in the local language. How will it be when we want to get the meaning of abstract words? Only God can help then." In addition to the difficulty of recording and learning the language, there was the number of languages spoken by the people. "In our near neighborhood about a dozen languages are spoken. On our small island alone (Tamara) with 600 inhabitants people speak two languages" (*ibid.*, p. 478).

## **JANUARY 1897**

### **January 3 – Mother Maria writes to Sr. Andrea in Argentine (excerpts)**

Sr. Andrea had informed Mother Maria of the difficulties she had with one of the sisters in her small community. In reply Mother Maria wrote: “Dear Sr. Andrea: Let us stick to our principle: To God the honor, to the sisters and (school)children the benefit and to ourselves the burden. If we understand that well, we won’t get discouraged all that easily.”

“Probably there will be more building activities in our convent: this winter inside the convent I think, and towards spring a new building... I find it pretty difficult that so many jobs have to be done within the convent, for most of the time it means we cannot observe the cloister. However, St. Francis de Sales said: Wish nothing, desire nothing and refuse nothing!”

“Try to win Sr. Agatha over with goodness and mildness... I recommended you and your children and intentions to the prayers of our dear cloistered Sisters and particularly to the dear Reverend Sr. Superior Maria Seraphim (Aufrida). In this critical situation God the Holy Spirit will send you counsel and help. We remain always united in the love of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray, suffer, work and sacrifice in honor of God and for the benefit of the Sisters entrusted to us (Stegmaier, *M. Maria Stollenwerk, Briefe an die Schwestern* [Letters to the Sisters], pp. 93-94).

### **China – On January 6, Fr. Arnold writes to Fr. Henninghaus**

Fr. Augustin Henninghaus was dean and in his deanery there had been violent unrest which led to the destruction of churches, local prayer rooms and to attacks on Christians and missionaries (Richard Hartwig, *Steyler Missionare in China* [Divine Word Missionaries in China], *Analecta SVD* – 61, Rome 1983, pp. 289ff).

In his letter of January 6, Fr. Arnold wrote: “My sincere sympathies for the great sorrow that has befallen you in the destruction of the missions entrusted to you.

But must one not expect something of the kind from the very outset? Anyway, everything will rise again soon out of the ruins, and it will stand there with new vigor. From a field of ruins, a fruitful field will come forth, even more flourishing than before.”

Fr. Arnold mentions the planned new mission house in Lethmathe: “I have hopes that everything will develop well with the foundation at Lethmathe, even though not all the problems have been dealt with.”

Fr. Arnold took confidence in the prayer of the cloistered Sisters. He writes: “The cloistered Sisters are now praying the Office of the Holy Spirit every day, even at midnight Let’s hope that helps us.”

Finally, Fr. Arnold mentions the decree of September 12, 1896 regarding the ecclesiastical and religious superiors in the missions: “Propaganda appoints the Superior of the Mission and the superior general appoints the Religious [‘regular’] Superior whose duty it will be to preserve and promote the religious discipline of the missionaries belonging to his own order; likewise, to assign the works of the mission to each individual according to each one’s talents and physical ability; however, he is not to do this without first consulting the Mission Superior. The ordinary administration of

Christian communities is up to the Mission Superior,...[who is] to decide whatever he prudently deems best for the governing of the mission” (Alt, (transl. Frank Mihalic, Vincent Fecher), *Letters to China, vol. I, Analecta SVD* – 83/1, Rome 2002, pp. 478-480).

### **Steyl – Plans for new buildings**

#### **January 18, Construction plans**

At the meeting of the provincial council in Steyl, the society’s architect, Fr. Beckert, presented the following plans: “1. floor plan of the extension of the printing press by two wings, including the book binding room; 2. floor plan of the extension of the new Sisters’ building; 3. floor plan of the extensions in Holy Cross (Nyssa); ground plan of the envisioned new building in Lethmathe.” All plans were approved; the only point of discussion was which building should have priority (Alt, *Arnold Janssen SVD, Briefe nach Südamerika*, Bd. I [Letters to South America, vol I] p. 207, footnote 2 to letter 100).

### **Ecuador – On January 19, 1897 Fr. Arnold writes to Fr. Neuenhofen**

1. Encouragement. How often can you go to confession? Can you manage to keep on there? Your courage makes me happy...

*P.S. There will be a general chapter this autumn. Attached you will find the letter of convocation. As Superior General I invite you to the chapter. As your spiritual father I say: Seek to get to know the holy will of God and to act in agreement with your bishop, since a shepherd must not leave his flock if there is no replacement or if it is not absolutely necessary (Alt, Arnold Janssen SVD, Briefe nach Südamerika, Bd. I [Letters to South America, vol I] pp. 201-202)).*

### **USA – Mission among the African Americans**

#### **On January 21, Br. Wendelin Meyer writes to Fr. Arnold**

In this letter, at the suggestion of Fr. Lambert Welbers, Br. Wendelin draws Fr. Arnold’s attention to the pastoral care of the African Americans.

Fr. Lambert Welbers had been a student in Steyl from 1877-1882 and had been supported by Mother Josepha, Hendrina Stenmanns who at that time had not yet joined Steyl. For health reasons Fr. Lambert did not continue in Steyl but joined the Mill Hill Josephite society in England. As an ordained priest he went to the USA where he spent his life in the pastoral care of the African Americans. On June 5, 1896 he had written to Fr. Arnold urging him also to work for the African Americans (Alt, transl. Robert Pung SVD, Peter Spring, *Arnold Janssen SVD, Letters to the United States of America*, Steyler Verlag Nettetal, 1998, p. 15, footnote 3).

### **Steyl – Lethmathe: First difficulties**

On January 21 Mr. Overweg, Privy Councillor and Governor of the province of Westphalia, wrote to Fr. Arnold that he would neither sell nor exchange the plots of land needed for an approach road to the mission house.

On January 22 Fr. Arnold wrote to the parish priest of Lethmathe, Fr. Klagges: “I feel the best thing to do is keep the matter secret for the time being so that it will not affect the decision in Berlin and in the meanwhile pray fervently” (Alt, transl. Frank Mansfield, Jacqueline Mulberge, *Journey in Faith*, Steyler Verlag Nettetal, 2002, p. 458).