

For your reflection

Our two saints, Arnold Janssen und Josef Freinademetz, both had a great appreciation for nature. In the very first issue of his family magazine "Die Heilige Stadt Gottes" [The Holy City of God] of January 1878 Fr. Arnold wrote:

Nature is the "exalted temple of God". God has placed us in nature, so that nature will tell us of "His existence, His greatness, His wisdom and all His exalted qualities".

While at sea on the way to Hongkong, Fr. Freinademetz was deeply impressed by the ocean. He wrote:

"Like no other element it [the ocean] is the mystical ladder by which one mounts up to the Creator". The sea is like a mighty organ of a thousand pipes, or a marvelously harmonious ringing of bells whose celestial chords praise the glory of God as the Psalmist says: "more powerful than the roar of many waters, more powerful on high is the Lord" (see Bornemann, As wine poured out, Blessed Joseph Freinademetz SVD, Missionary in China 1879-1908, Rome, 1984, p.45).

AT THE SERVICE OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

For the occasion of the G8 Summit in Japan from July 7-9, 2008, the chairpersons of the National Conferences of bishops of Germany, England and Wales, Scotland, France, Italy, Japan, Canada, the USA, and the Russian Federation wrote a letter on June 17, 2008 to the leaders of the G8-Nations. In this letter we read amongst other things:

Our religious and moral commitment to protect human life and promote human dignity moves us to be particularly concerned for the poorest and most vulnerable members of the human family, especially those in developing countries. The experience of the Catholic Church in serving the needs of the poor communities leads us to applaud the Summit's focus on the development of Africa.

It is critically important that you reaffirm and build upon the substantial commitments made in Gleneagles in 2005 and in Heiligendamm in 2007. In 2005 the world's richest countries promised to spend an additional \$50 billion per year on development assistance by 2010, with half that amount going to Africa. This commitment must be met and additional commitments should be made in the areas of health care, education and humanitarian aid.

Once again the agenda of your Summit includes global climate change, an issue of particular concern to people of faith based

on our commitment to protect God's creation. As Catholic bishops, we have a special concern for the impact of climate change on the poor. The poor, who have contributed least to the human activities that aggravate global climate change, are likely to experience a disproportionate share of its human effects, including potential conflicts, escalating energy costs, and health problems. This is true in our own countries as well as in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world. The costs of initiatives to prevent and adapt to the harmful consequences of climate change should be borne more by richer persons and nations who have benefited most from the emissions that have fueled development and should not unduly burden the poor. Specific mechanisms should be created to help poor persons and nations adapt to the effects of global climate change and adopt appropriate technologies that will enhance their development in ways that do not contribute to global climate change.

The G8 Summit will explore many issues of critical importance to human life and dignity. We pray that your meeting will be blessed by a spirit of collaboration that enables you to advance the global common good ...

(www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/2008_g8_letter.pdf)

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The Arnoldus Family Story

Arnold Janssen and Germany's religious division

Arnold Janssen was a man who was well aware of the ever new challenges his time posed and who responded to them in ever new and creative ways. In September 1869, during the General Assembly of the Catholic Associations of Germany in Düsseldorf, he promoted the prayer for the reunion of all Christians. He did so in response to the hope of many Catholics at that time – which had been nourished also in connection with the then imminent first Vatican Council – that Protestants would return to the fold of the Catholic Church (see The Arnoldus Family Story, vol. 2, no. 2, March 2008).

The desire for the union of all Christians grew particularly strong in Germany because of the founding of the German Empire in January 1871. While it was united politically, it was divided religiously into Protestants and Catholics (see The Arnoldus Family Story, no. 11, December 2007).

"The unity in faith would have been the most ideal completion of the great work of creating the German Empire", Fr. Herman Fischer SVD writes in his biography of Arnold Janssen (H. Fischer, Arnold Janssen, Kaldenkirchen 1919, p. 67). Fischer continues:

"It was only too natural that in those days this idea and this desire arose on both sides and found its expression in the spoken and written word" (cf. *ibid.*).

For Arnold Janssen who loved his home country of Germany it was "impossible", so Fischer writes, "to pass over this great contemporary concern disinterestedly. His apostolic heart was touched by the tragedy of the division in faith particularly deeply, whilst he recognized in the union in faith a high national good, as well as a marvelous promotion of God's honour and the tasks of the church of Jesus Christ in the world. He wanted to and he had to help to bring about this union in faith" (*ibid.*).

Fr. Arnold responded to this "great concern of his time" with the paper "Invitation to participate in a pious work regarding the religious reunion of our German fatherland" and also with a long journey during the summer of 1873.

The paper began with the words:

Since of late the thought of the reunion of the separated brethren has been made the object of discussion by various sides, even by those who are not church-minded, so the wish arose that also on the Catholic side a bit more should happen than has happened so far, in order to gradually get closer to this so eminently Catholic and patriotic goal (*ibid.*, p. 68).

The reunion, though, cannot be gained “without the great and extraordinary grace of God”. Prayer and sacrifice are the means to gain that grace. He continues:

Since the sacrifice of holy Mass is the most powerful means of grace, so we are in need of many holy Masses to be offered for this purpose, and if possible in connection with common prayer. We would like them to be offered particularly at the most important shrines in Germany and especially during those days that many pilgrims are gathered there. In particular we look to Fulda where St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, is buried. That would be the right place for a daily holy Mass in honor of St. Boniface and all apostles of Germany. Working very zealously they laid the foundation for Christianity in Germany and some of them paid with their blood to spread it. Therefore they are the most qualified intercessors.

For those holy Masses we need financial contributions so that through the interest accrued, the daily holy Mass in Fulda will be guaranteed at least.

Therefore we now turn to all good Catholics who love their religion and their fatherland and ask them for a financial contribution and to promote this work amongst their own [relatives, friends and acquaintances] (ibid., pp. 68-69).

Fr. Arnold saw in the promotion of holy Masses at the grave of St. Boniface an “eminently religious” project,

for it aims to make up for the lack of reparation for the old injustice of religious division through which Germany perpetrated so much evil in the world ... (Alt, Journey in faith, p. 38.)

Furthermore, Fr. Arnold saw in the promotion of holy Masses at St. Boniface’s grave also an “eminently national and patriotic” project and he continued:

We can do no greater good for our German fatherland than by abolishing this terrible religious division which for centuries has split our people spiritually in two...Without the removal of this internal cancer, there will be no lasting unification of minds and consequently no really lasting German greatness (ibid., pp. 38-39).

For Fr. Arnold the daily holy Mass at St. Boniface’s grave in Fulda was of such importance that, as already mentioned, during the summer of 1873 he made a long journey to collect money for those Masses.

The journey went via Saxony to Bohemia and Silesia, from there to Vienna and Switzerland and then via Southern Germany back home....

It was an arduous journey, full of sacrifices. Quite a bit of distance he covered, as usual, on foot. Always wanting to save money and being very strict with himself, he often denied himself even that which was necessary. The parish priest of Erfurt [in East Germany] would say later: “Janssen came to me absolutely frozen and starving.” ... Once in a while he was met unkindly in places where he should have expected a friendly welcome and understanding; he was ridiculed, jeered at and sent away. On the other hand he also made some friends and received some money for the realization of his project.

However, he did not succeed in collecting enough for the interest to be suffi-

cient to set up a foundation for a daily holy Mass in the crypt of St. Boniface in Fulda (H. Fischer, Arnold Janssen, p. 70).

“The small amount that did come in he sent to Fulda” (Alt, Journey in faith, p. 40).

In spite of this failure to collect enough money, Fr. Arnold did not give up collecting money for holy Masses at the grave of St. Boniface – even after he had founded the mission house in Steyl: So in 1877 he also sent 75 Marks to Fulda from the meager profit from the sale of his enrollment booklet for the Apostleship of prayer. The reason for that was that he saw a connection between the unity of Christians and the success of missionary work. He said:

We can expect worthwhile accomplishments in the foreign missions only if God grants that we first become reunited in the faith in our western world.

For that we hope and pray (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, Founder of Three Missionary Congregations, Manila, 1975, p.28).

One Hundred years ago – June 1908

Arnold Janssen’s health

Fr. Arnold spent most of the month of June still in St. Gabriel where he had been since February. On June 7 he described the state of his health in a letter to Fr. Wegener in Steyl:

With my health it is not all that good. For several days I had 4% [sugar]. Then for two days 0%; but then again 2.2; at present I have 3.8 [% sugar]. ‘Praised be the name of the Lord.’ May He do with His servant as He pleases. In any case, I am well looked after, probably better than could be done in Steyl (Alt, Arnold Janssen Reisen [travels], unpublished manuscript, p. 151).

On June 23, Fr. Arnold left St. Gabriel and went to St. Rupert / Bischofshofen. In a letter of July 11, 1908 to Fr. Kaufhold in Chile he described his departure from St. Gabriel:

My sickness had become so bad that I felt I had to say good bye to each individual priest and brother and to give them a small picture card with some words from my own hand. I said that it was possible that I would come back and that I would live for a few more years, but I felt that this was rather uncertain. Right now sugar is the smallest evil; the worst thing is that since a few months I have acetone which won’t go away all that soon (Alt, Arnold Janssen SVD, Briefe nach Süd-amerika [Letters to South America], Bd.[vol.] IV, Rom 1993, p. 419).

About his stay in St. Rupert he writes in the same letter to Fr. Kaufhold:

Here in St. Rupert, in the healthy air of the mountains, I can recover very well. In the small forest which is next to the mission house, a tent-roof was put up; beneath it a table with lockable drawers was placed, so that I can be in the open air almost all day long. There I also do my work. The doctor told me to spend as much time as possible in the fresh air (ibid.).