

For your reflection

The first SVD priest to live and work amongst the African Americans in the USA was Fr. Aloysius Heick. Having established the first permanent SVD SSpS mission in Vicksburg, in 1908 he tried to start another in Jackson. However, there the white population caused him enormous difficulties. It was at that troublesome time that he received this encouraging letter from Arnold Janssen:

... wish you the same success that you achieved in Vicksburg. No doubt you will meet with difficulties because there are no Catholic Negroes in Jackson. But if God is with you, these difficulties, as well as others due to ignorance and prejudice, will gradually be overcome... Have a good word for everyone you meet. In this way you will conciliate your enemies and make friends (in: Mary E. Best, Seventy Septembers, Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, 1988, pp. 44-45).

Arnold Janssen's thoughts about the mission among the Indians in Paraguay

In July 1908 Arnold Janssen did not only think of dying, but also of the founding of a mission among the Indians in Paraguay. To the former Togo missionary Fr. Franz Müller, whom he had chosen as founder of this new mission, he wrote his thoughts about the foundation on July 1, 15 and 23. In his letter of July 1, he gave Fr. Müller some hints regarding the way he should proceed during his first visit to Paraguay, for instance:

"The oral discussions you are to have should be preceded by a letter in which you give explanations that are conducive to getting the negotiations off to a good start, so that the tone of the talks will be all the more friendly".

Then Fr. Arnold suggests the following route:

"a. ... Traveling to Asunción ... From the government or other people who know the country well, try to find out everything about the mission that will be helpful when you travel there. It would be good to establish contact – either directly or through a mediator – with 1 or 2 good catholic deputies who, if necessary, could influence the government and who could instruct you about things that are important in this matter. ...

b. Travel from Asunción to Villa Rica by train, and from there to Caaguazú into the mission area. Going through the mission area won't be easy. It would become much easier if you could establish friendly connections in the 4 places in question, e.g. S. Joaquin, Caaguazú, Villa Azara and the other place at the Paraná river whose name sounds something like: lacuru Puru...

Naturally, you will take your map along and wherever you can, you will collect information about the area. Along this way you will not only meet friends; however, I trust that God will not send you only enemies or people who are indifferent. He sends the necessary helpers to those he has called to carry out his plans.

c. Return to Posadas [Argentina] by steamship on the Paraná river.

d. When you have rested a bit, considered and discussed everything well, begin your second journey to Asunción. There you are already known..." (Alt, Arnold Janssen SVD, Briefe nach Südamerika [Letters to South America], vol. IV, 1905-1908, Analecta SVD – 65/IV, Rome 1993, pp. 412-413).

Publisher: Jürgen Ommerborn SVD
Secretariat Arnold Janssen, Steyl/Netherlands
Fotos: Heinz Helf SVD - Layout: Clemens Jansen SVD



Divine Word Missionaries
Secretariat Arnold Janssen Steyl

VOLUME 2 | No. 6 | JULY 2008

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The Arnoldus Family Story

A Hundred Years Ago – July 1908

From February 1908 to June 1908 Arnold Janssen was in St. Gabriel near Vienna. There he was taken so ill, he felt death might not be far off. From June 24, 1908 on, he was in the second Austrian Mission House, St. Rupert / Bischofshofen. There in the healthy mountain air he hoped to recover from his sickness – if God so wished. He enjoyed the beautiful surroundings tremendously, yet the thought of approaching death did not leave him. So on July 1, 2 and 14 – six months before his death – he wrote three “songs” “on the way to death”.

SONGS OF FAREWELL TO THIS EARTHLY LIFE

St. Rupert's, July 1st, 1908

My first Song on my Way to Death

In honour of the Heavenly Father

The end of my days is drawing near
And now death is awaiting me.
Be then, O Lord, my good Father,
And give me your bread of joy.

Forgive my failings here on earth,
And plunge them into Jesus' blood.
May the Spirit of Love assist me
And you, o Father, dear and good.

Firmly have I believed your words
And taught others to know you.
I thank you for this grace;
Enfold me in your love.

I placed my hope in you on this earth,
Trusted through every need and pain,
So let me now become your portion,
Let me be with you, good Father.



St. Rupert

You helped me always to love you,
Often to speak of your love,
Now lead all to your love,
Complete all that I have always hoped.

My works were only paltry;
But you were strong in the weak,
Completed what I was not able to do;
You were the strength of my soul.

So call me now to see you,
And the Son whom you sent,
Together with the Love of your hearts,
The God of Love in the joyous Land.

Amen



St. Rupert's, 2 July 1908

My second Song on my Way to Death

In Honour of the Most Holy Son of God

O you whom I have served on earth,
O dear, sweet Son of God,
What will become of me, poor man,
For see, evening is already approaching.

If I contemplate your great works,
And all you have done for us,
O how little then it seems
That I have done for my part.

And yet, O Son of God most high,
How greatly you have loved me.
By your death you gave me life,
You died for one who grieved you.

Through you heaven was opened,
Salvation bought for us with your blood.
You who became our Brother
Obtained the highest grace for us.

Clothed in our poor flesh,
You lived piously among us,
You, most high Son of the most high God,
Seated in majesty at his right hand.

And since you chose your servant
You looked down upon me,
Called me through your Spirit
And protected me through his Bride.

In your holy priesthood
I could share completely:
Like you to teach and to save,
To offer you on the altar.

And as you sent out your servants
To teach about heaven's door,
That fortune was also mine,
How can I repay you, O Lord, for that?

Yes, great was your goodness and love
To me, such an unworthy servant.
Now I come to you, Highest Good,
A branch from a sinful race.

With the arms of your love
Enfold me, sweet Jesus.
I have struggled and fought for you,
Placed my life's path in your hands.

St. Rupert's, 14 July 1908

My third Song on my Way to Death

In honour of the great Father of Love, the Holy Spirit

In the evening of my life
I come to you, God Holy Spirit,
To give fervent honour and thanks
To you whom my soul praises.

God of beautiful love, never
Can I praise and thank you enough.
You gave me all I have on earth,
Even body and soul I owe to you.

You gave me intellect to recognize you,
And powers to love you, too.
How I thank you that you made it possible
To direct all of them to you.

You made me a child of the Church,
Gave me pious parents and teachers.
Thus I was guided on the path of goodness,
All of this I owe to you.

You gave me the ability to learn,
Drew me to yourself through grace,
Called me to the priesthood
And prepared the path for me.

Thus, Lord, I became your son,
You gave me strength and grace for
yourself,
Anointed me with your oil,
Filled me with your Spirit.

Then I worked as a priest,
Strove for your holy kingdom,
Encouraged people to practice prayer
And encouraged myself as well.

Thus, Lord, you inspired me
To work for souls in need;
To train good priests for them,
To save them, as God commanded.

But it was not I who achieved this,
You yourself accomplished that work,
You gave the grace for it, and helpers,
Alone I would have done everything wrong.

Therefore, Spirit of Eternal Love,
Love and thanks be to you.
Forgive me that I loved so poorly,
Accomplished so little for you.

But now, when my life here ends,
Grant, O my dearest Consoler,
That I may be united with you
And enter into your repose.

And when my eyes have closed,
Let others stand in my place
And let my sons, my daughters
Implore you in my spirit,

That united and with all their might
They praise you always and ever,
And continue to promote your honour,
Since I worked so weakly for that.

And yet, O Father of Love,
My heart is full of thankful joy
That I have helped some people
To do what you inspired in me.

Yes, that I spoke and encouraged
People to see your great love
So that they would love you more,
You, God's sweet breath of love.

You are the great finger of God,
The love of the Father and the Son.
You have glorified them on earth,
You Star of Love of the eternal throne.

You have glorified their love,
Revealed it, high and commanding,
And inflamed by their love
Forgot yourself all too much.

Yet now that, perhaps, the day is ending,
The evening of the times very near,
Arouse from the midst of your own,
Those who insist on your greater honour.

For it can no longer remain this way
For you, exalted Lord of Love.

The Son and the Father want it
For you, the apple of their eye.

Grant, then, O mild and gentle Spirit,
That my children will think that way,
That they may love you in return
And be zealous for your honour,

That they may love you sincerely,
Since you have given us so much,
In addition loved us so greatly,
You God, who guide all things.

Therefore I consecrate them to your love,
Oh take them under your protection
That they may serve you, chaste and pure,
Not following sinful human paths.

For that is your exalted will,
You who love purity so greatly;
For you are holy, thrice holy,
And you wish the honour of the pure.

The father of your children exalts you,
Your children exalt you too.
Accept them in your goodness and love,
You, God's sweet breath of love.

(Bro. Eugenius Wachter SVD & Bro. Bonifatius Gas-
smann SVD (eds), Selbstverfasste Gedichte des Dieners
Gottes P. Arnoldus Janssen S.V.D. [Poems by the Servant
of God, Arnold Janssen SVD, transl. J. Mulberge.] Steyl,
1949, pp. 307-313)



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Relief by
Franz Gutmann
(1978)
Church in
Gaesdonck
near Goch