

End of the chapter

The chapter ended on May 4, 1898; however, at the request of several capitulars, “as well as to have more time to work out the draft, they resolved to have a longer break from 2 December 1897 to 10 January 1898” (*ibid.*, p. 244).

Chapter Events

Sad news

November 4, 1897 the capitulars were given the news of the murder of the two China missionaries Nies and Henle. Because of that Bishop Anzer could not attend the chapter for the following three weeks, but returned to Steyl on November 23. At the order of the Propaganda, Bishop Anzer left Steyl for China on February 8 (*ibid.* p. 244).

Thursday, April 14 1898, the founder’s brother, Fr. Johannes Janssen, died in Steyl of TB.

The title “Pater” and the SVD priests’ dress

In German-speaking countries only religious priests are addressed with the title “Pater”. Diocesan priests are called “Herr” (Mr.) followed by their surname. Until the IIIrd Chapter all SVD priests were therefore called “Herr” Janssen or “Herr” Freinademetz, and only when on 25 November 1897 the title “Pater” was introduced, were they called Pater Arnold Janssen or Pater Josef Freinademetz. This is very different from the English custom of calling every priest “Father”.

The chapter also discussed the dress of the SVD priests. One application read: “Could we not change the style of our priests’ dress, particularly regarding the buttons and the cut?” The majority of the capitulars were in favor of the abolition of the many buttons”. And it was also decided that regarding “the habit of the Society for the priests it was resolved to have a sample cassock made” (*ibid.* p. 246).

Final vows for the clerics

It was decided “that the clerics should take perpetual vows before ordination to the subdiaconate” (*ibid.* p. 246).

The difficult situation in South Shantung

A letter from the provincial councillors in China describing the situation there was read out. After some discussion a letter about the situation in South Shantung was drafted to the Propaganda and adopted by the chapter on May 4 (*ibid.*, p. 248).

The decree on the Missions

This decree was introduced to the chapter in April 1898 “when the work on the Rule was concluded.”

It is divided “into a) general principles, b) contract with the mission superior, c) doubtful cases about what pertains to the mission or the Society superior, d) property of the Society in the missions and contracts to do with it, e) special decrees for the missions” (*ibid.*, p. 249).

CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter ended on May 4, 1898 at 1.15 pm with the Te Deum. At 3.50 pm Fr. Arnold left Steyl for St. Gabriel’s (*ibid.*, p. 245).



Divine Word Missionaries
Arnold Janssen Secretariat Steyl

VOLUME 15 | NO. 6 | JUNE 2021

MISSIONSHAUS STEYL | POSTFACH 24 60 | D- 41311 NETTETAL
MISSIEHUIS ST. MICHAËL | ST. MICHAËLSTR. 7 | NL-5935 BL STEYL

The Arnoldus Family Story

JUNE 1897

Steyl – Missionary Sisters

June 26-29 – Retreat Apostolate of the Missionary Sisters

Mother Maria writes: “In the evening of June 26 our convent saw a real mass migration of peoples: for about 30 to 40 women arrived unregistered. Just imagine: good Sister Felicitas told me the next day with joyful humor: I was already in bed when a Sister came and told me, I had to get up and give my cell to retreatants. She then told the sister to kindly wait outside in front of the door and she would come soon. When she had dressed she was told to go back to bed; for Sister Superior had found a few more empty cells in one dormitory. That the house was so crowded you can imagine: 190 women for retreat and in addition 96 Sisters. Work in our dear little kitchen had also demanded many drops of sweat” (Stegmaier, ed., *M. Maria Stollenwerk, Briefe an die Schwestern* [Letters to the Sisters], p. 113).

Togo – June 30 – A look into the heart of a New Missionary to Togo

The two new Togo missionaries, Fr. Gregor Arand and Br. Clementius had arrived in Togo. On the day of his arrival Fr. Arand wrote in his diary: “I celebrated the first holy Mass on African soil. O earth, I kiss you, not because you support me, but because precisely you, this harsh sand of Africa, this arid land, this hot land, this infertile field has been assigned to me by God as a vineyard.... O dear Lord, help me; O Mary, Joseph, all dear saints and angels whom I always have been eager to love and revere, help me (Karl Müller, *Geschichte der katholischen Kirche in Togo* [History of the Catholic Church in Togo], p. 97).

JULY 1897

Ecuador – July 18 – Fr. Arnold writes to Fr. Neuenhofen

“If you still have good courage and the dangers of your loneliness are not too great for you, then I thank God; but please, speak frankly to me any time. It is true, the salvation of the people there is close to my heart; but still closer is your salvation, since you are a priest and I have no obligations towards the people over there. Therefore, if ever you should feel that in moral regards the place there is not the right one, that means that you are in danger of falling into mortal sin, particularly sacrileges, I give you permission to travel to North America and ask Fr. Hofschneider in Hoboken, opposite New York, in Hudson Street 404, where our people live.... In September Frs. Peil and Fischer will travel there. However, if it is not necessary, I wish that you remain where you are.- All this with regard to the extraordinary situation you are in...

I had resolved to write you every month. But unfortunately my workload makes it impossible for me. Right now I have to work for the General Chapter and I have to lay aside everything that is not absolutely necessary, in order to make progress” (Alt, *Briefe nach Südamerika* [Letters to South America], vol I, pp. 211-214).

Argentina

Steyl – Argentina – July 23 Mother Maria writes to the Sisters

To Sr. Superior Andrea Mother Maria wrote: “Dear Sr. Andrea, You will surely remember the first talk in the little house [Three Lindens], how the Rev. Superior recommended to us to care more for our fellow sisters than for ourselves. This talk somehow was the foundation upon which our congregation is to develop. Therefore, let us beware of taking offence too easily, and particularly of jealousy. From time to time this can be rather difficult for us, and then it seems we didn’t achieve anything or only little. Let us persevere patiently; our dear Lord knows our weakness; but he also knows our good will” (Stegmaier, ed., *M. Maria Stollenwerk, Briefe an die Schwestern* [Letters to the Sisters], p. 119).

AUGUST 1897

Ecuador – August 27 Fr. Arnold writes to Fr. Neuenhofen

Should you be forced to leave the country, I ask you to go to Argentina where you can still be of good use because of your knowledge of the Spanish language (Alt, *Briefe nach Südamerika* [Letters to South America], vol. I, p. 221).

SEPTEMBER 1897

Steyl/St. Michael – September 8 Mission sending celebration for new missionaries

On the 22nd anniversary of the foundation of St. Michael’s mission house 13 priests and 9 brothers received the mission cross. They were appointed for Togo, North America, Argentina, Brazil and China.

USA – September 27: 1897 Arrival of new missionaries

September 27, Frs. Peil and Fischer as well as Br. Michael Fecken arrive in Hoboken, NJ. Together with Brothers Wendelin and Homobonus they are now 5 SVD in the USA.



STEYL – THE THIRD GENERAL CHAPTER (1897–1898)

September 29: Opening of the IIIrd General Chapter

Since the chapter began on the feast of St. Michael, the prince of angels, the chapter was placed under his special protection.

The participants of the chapter

Arnold Janssen, Bishop Anzer as provincial superior of South Shantung, Hermann Wegener, General councillor and Assistant Superior General, the general councillors Johannes Janssen, Johannes Holthausen, Nikolaus Blum, the delegates Josef Weber (Heilig Kreuz [Holy Cross] Neisse/Nyssa, Bernard Eikenbrock, Steyl province and novice master in St. Gabriel, Eberhard Limbrock, Prefect Apostolic and Religious Superior in New Guinea, Rudolf Pieper, delegate from South Shantung, Heinrich Becher, Superior in Argentina, Hermann Bücking, Prefect Apostolic and Religious Superior in Togo (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 first 25 years of its existence], Steyl 1900, p. 125).

At the age of 60, Fr. Arnold was the oldest member, followed by Bishop Anzer at 46 years. The two youngest members were 34 and 37 years old.

Fr. Arnold in relation to the members of the chapter

Fr. Arnold had led most of them “to the priesthood. Now he saw that he had trained this first generation of priests to think and act independently and to occupy positions of responsibility both at home and abroad. Each was a mature, fully developed and self-reliant personality. This was true of his brother John and of Wegener, and even more so of Holthausen and Blum. It is known that ‘lively discussions’, sometimes involving the Superior General took place ... But it was clear to all the capitulars that Superior General Janssen, the man of wide experience, kept the reins firmly in his own hands” (Bornemann, transl. John Vogelgesang, *Arnold Janssen, Arnoldus Press Manila, 1975, p. 341*)

Secretaries of the chapter

At the suggestion of Fr. Arnold, Fr. Blum was appointed secretary of the chapter and Prefect Apostolic Bücking, second secretary (*ibid.*).

The liturgical opening of the chapter on September 29

In the chapter minutes we read:

“On the afternoon of the 29 September 1897, after solemn vespers [in the Upper Church] the priests and brothers of the Mission House proceeded to the Lower Church from where they led the members of the General Chapter in procession to the chapter hall. After singing the ‘Veni Creator Spiritus’ and the gospel of St. John ‘In principio, the non-members left the hall and the first session of the Chapter began under the presidency of the Very Reverend Superior General Arnold Janssen (Jos. Alt, transl. Frank Mansfield, Jacqueline Mulberge, *Journey in Faith, p. 243*).

The task of the General Chapter

The chief task of the chapter was the revision of the Constitutions so that they could be submitted to Rome for approval. Special consideration was to be given to the government of the Society and to the relationship of mission and religious superiors (*ibid.*, p. 246).