

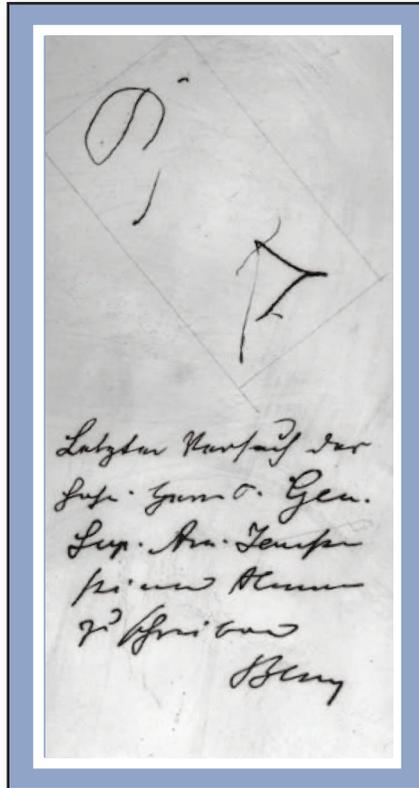
### For your reflection

*Thoughts which moved Arnold Janssen after resigning his teaching position in Bocholt.*

In the draft of a letter to Pope Pius IX, which most probably was never sent, we read: For the last few years several circumstances [as Director of the Apostleship of prayer] led me to promote with all possible zeal the prayer of intercession for the salvation of souls and the triumph of the Church; and so I have already devoted quite an amount of energy to this important matter. I would be ready to undertake even greater labors for that purpose, to dedicate myself completely to this sacred task, to pledge all my powers and abilities and my very life to it, if only the result would be that the thrice holy God would pour forth the spirit of grace and prayer more bountifully over the earth, without whom all our hopes are to be considered all in vain and worth nothing (H. Fischer SVD, Arnold Janssen, Steyl 1919, p. 72 / cf. Bornemann, Arnold Janssen [Engl. edition], p. 34).

### Arnold Janssen's last gift

Fr. Arnold wanted to give all members of the Society a memorial, as an invitation to thank God for his divine generosity. Thus on November 12 he began to sign these memorials. Since his right hand was completely paralyzed, he used his left hand – which was also slightly paralyzed. Furthermore, he had no practice in writing with his left hand. In the opposite column we see – in the words of Fr. Arnold's successor, Fr. Blum, – Fr. Arnold's last attempt to write his name. The signature on the memorials will probably have looked like that.



**A memorial does not need to be built for the deceased.  
He built one for himself that reaches out over all continents.**

Bishop Dingelstadt of Muenster,  
Fr. Arnold's classmate in Gaesdonck High School,  
at the occasion of Fr. Arnold's death.  
(Nuntius Societatis Verbi Divini, No. 12, Febr. 1909, p. 47).

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



**Divine Word Missionaries**  
Secretariat Arnold Janssen Steyl

VOLUME 3 | No. 1 | FEBRUARY 2009

Missionshaus Steyl | Postfach 2460 | D-41311 Nettetal ■ Missiehuis St. Michaël | St. Michaëlstr. 7 | NL-5935 BL Steyl/Venlo

## The Arnoldus Family Story

In previous issues of the “Arnoldus Family Story” we accompanied our founder St. Arnold Janssen during the days of his final sickness, his death and burial. Prior to that (August / September and October 2008) we studied the Kulturkampf / Cultural Struggle. We begin this new issue of the “Arnoldus Family Story” with an event from the early days of the cultural struggle.

### Arnold Janssen leaves Bocholt

During the first years of the cultural struggle, Fr. Arnold made a decision which changed his life: he quit his job as a teacher in Bocholt. From 1869 on, Fr. Arnold's relationship with the school board had been rather strained over the issue of putting up a statue of Our Lady. Three-fourths of the students of the Bocholt Junior High School were Catholics; on Sundays, while the sermon was delivered in church, these students went to the school's auditorium where they were given a special talk by the school's principal, Rev. Waldau or by Fr. Arnold. Fr. Arnold wished to adorn the auditorium's stage with a suitable religious image. He offered to purchase the image by giving some scientific lectures in the auditorium and charging a small admission fee. The faculty as well as the school board favored his plan. In the spring of 1869 he gave those lectures; “after deducting expenses, a net profit of a little more than 42 thalers remained. This he deposited in the bank” (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen [Engl. Edition], Rome 1973, p. 31).

The religious image that Fr. Arnold had in mind, which he ordered and paid for from his own money, was a statue: in his own words “the image of our divine Savior as a child, carried in his mother's arms” (Josef Ulbrich, Eine Episode aus der Bocholter Zeit Arnold Janssens [An Episode from Arnold Janssen's time in Bocholt], Verbum 2, 1960, p. 221). On hearing of this statue, the school board informed Fr. Arnold in a letter dated November 18, 1869, that it would not allow the statue to be placed in the auditorium; however, they would have nothing against it if a “discreet crucifix” were placed there. In his response of January 7, 1870, Fr. Arnold asked the school board either to give him the reasons for rejecting the statue of our Lady or leave the decision to some future date. In a letter of May 1870, the school board refused to disclose its reasons; he should just be satisfied with their declaration that they were not able to accept his proposal (ibid., p. 223). Fr. Arnold did not reply to that letter, and then, probably because of the Franco/German war of 1870/71, the whole matter was dropped for the time being – actually until 1873. By then the cultural struggle had started. Already in July 1872, the provincial

school board in Muenster had informed all the high schools of an order of the “Minister for Religious Affairs that students in institutions of higher learning should not belong to any association such as the Marian Sodality or fraternities and, in case of default, would face disciplinary measures, even expulsion from school” (Alt, *Journey in faith*, p. 29).

“In this tense atmosphere, after a moratorium of almost three years”, the Bocholt Junior High school board revived the matter of the statue and referred it to the next higher educational authority, the Provincial School Board in Muenster. On its behalf the local school board wrote to Fr. Arnold on January 9, 1873:

“On May 20, 1870 we asked your Reverence to indicate as soon as possible the following: Are you willing to use the amount of money you collected from the lectures given in the school’s auditorium for a different religious object to decorate the auditorium than the one you had proposed?”

At the instigation of the Provincial School Board, to which we referred this matter, we herewith require you to reply within fourteen days from today to our letter of May 20, 1870” (Josef Ulbrich, *Eine Episode aus der Bocholter Zeit*, [An episode from the Bocholt time], p. 224).

Fr. Arnold gave his reply on January 22, 1873: “I sincerely regret that on this point I cannot comply with the Board’s wishes.” However, the school board should consider the following: it could force him to spend the money collected by his lectures for a different purpose; but it was not in its power to take away the image he had already acquired and it might very well be possible that the image (statue) would be put up in the auditorium “at a better time”, and the more it had been fought by the board, the greater the honor would be given to it then. “Naturally, its honor will then be your humiliation, and it is my strong wish that this be avoided.” Fr. Arnold finally expressed his regret that the board’s refusal to tell him the reasons for rejecting the statue had made any further negotiation impossible (*ibid.*, p. 226).

One month after Fr. Arnold had written this letter to the school board, he asked his Bishop for permission to quit his job as a teacher in Bocholt. “To my great surprise he immediately allowed me to give up my position”, he recalled later. “In these critical times [of the cultural struggle] there were more important matters [for the Bishop] than the placement of a statue of the Madonna in an auditorium,” the SVD historian Fr. Bornemann comments (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen* [Engl. edition], p. 33). On March 19, 1873 Fr. Arnold submitted to the school board his notice to quit teaching in the fall of 1873, and on April 5 the board accepted his resignation.

On May 30, 1873 the school’s principal, Rev. Waldau, wrote a very good reference for Fr. Arnold: “... His teaching demonstrated that he had a thorough mastery of his subject. He prepared his classes carefully and went to great pains to make the matter understandable to the students. By posing precise questions, he showed the students how to give exact answers; ... He knew how to maintain discipline. He really tried to introduce the students to a moral and religious life and confirm them in that, not only in school but also outside it ...” (Alt, *Journey in faith*, p. 29).

Why did Fr. Arnold quit his job as a teacher in Bocholt?

Later in his life he said: As a teacher in Bocholt “I was imbued with the idea of doing more for the spiritual welfare of the Church and especially the foreign missions.” But since his teaching load did not leave him any time for that, “I wanted to take up a

position where I could do this; that meant giving up the job in Bocholt. My intention in particular was to find the time to publish a popular monthly magazine for the promotion of prayer and participation in the great intentions of the Divine Savior, especially the propagation of the faith” (*ibid.*, p. 41).

Even though Fr. Arnold did not mention his dispute with the school board, “we may still take it that the personal conflict with the local and provincial school board played a role in his giving up his teaching position” (Josef Ulbrich, *Eine Episode aus der Bocholter Zeit* Arnold Janssens [An episode from the Bocholt time of Arnold Janssen], *Verbum* 2, 1960, p. 227).

## In Kempen

The school year ended in the last week of August 1873. Before that Fr. Arnold still had to look for a new home and – with his bishop’s permission – he found it with the Ursuline Sisters in Kempen. It was the time of the cultural struggle, priests were not allowed to take up a position without government permission, so it is not surprising that government officials immediately sought information about him and his position. “They can’t do anything to me; for I have not been appointed by any ecclesiastical superior nor do I occupy any ecclesiastical post,” (that is, in the understanding of civil law) wrote Fr. Arnold from Kempen on August 14 (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen* [Engl. Edition], p. 35).

Many years later Fr. Arnold recalled: “In October 1873, I started my job in Kempen as chaplain at a convent of the Ursulines who ran a boarding school...” (Alt, *Journey in faith*, p. 41).

At the time Kempen was a small town, smaller than Bocholt. Until today it “is best known as the birthplace of Thomas à Kempis, the author of the *Imitation of Christ*.” The town had an “excellent school system: a secondary school, a college for Catholic elementary school teachers, and a high school for girls which the Ursulines... opened in 1867.” The convent “housed eleven Sisters, most of them teachers. It also provided living quarters for 20 boarders and high school facilities for about 60 girls in four different classes. The youngest were twelve years of age.” “The Sisters also conducted a kindergarten for 60 pre-school children, as well as classes in sewing and knitting; they also gave lessons in the town’s elementary school for girls.”

Fr. Arnold resided in a small room next to the stairway on the first floor of the building. He signed his letters either with the title “private priest” or “Rector of the Ursulines.” The people of Kempen referred to him as Rector or Chaplain. His main duty was to offer daily Mass in the convent chapel. Furthermore he gave religion classes. “He also filled in as a science teacher for a time.

He enjoyed free board and lodging, but had to provide everything else for himself, including a small heating stove which he purchased for nine thalers soon after his arrival” (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen* [Engl. Edition], p. 36).



Ursuline Convent in Kempen