

### For your reflection

*Memorable words of St. Arnold Janssen*

(from: Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], February 1974)

It is an essential part of God's guidance that He reveal His intentions to us only gradually. How else would we learn to walk before Him in the light of faith and absolute trust!

A German poet once said: Man grows with his goals. May that become true also for us.

The work of the propagation of faith is the first and highest goal of God's church on earth.

### Congratulations on the one hundredth birthday!

In August of this year our confreres in the Philippines celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the first two SVD missionaries in the Philippines: Fr. Ludwig Beckert, a China missionary, and the newly ordained priest Fr. Johannes Scheiermann. On August 15, 1909, they arrived in Manila. Fr. Scheiermann writes about the arrival: "Under the obliging guidance of Fr. Moral, a Scheutveld Missionary, who lovingly cared for us during our four days stay... we entered the City, the "Pearl of the Orient". The Most Reverend Ambrosius Agius O.S.B., the Apostolic Delegate, wished to be our host for these days.... The Most Reverend Bishop... expressed his confidence that the success of our Society in this mission would be good."

From Manila the two missionaries went by ship to Vigan where they arrived on Saturday, August 21. On Sunday, August 22, the Bishop of Vigan, James Carrol, accompanied the two on the Abra River to Bangued where they arrived in the evening at 7 pm. The next morning, August 23, the three continued their journey on small horses. "After a four hours' ride on miserably bad, but sometimes also on well built roads we descended into a magnificently situated valley, which was surrounded by moderately high mountains. In front of us were several clusters of bamboo-straw huts; near one of them we were stopped. Coming from an old wooden frame we heard the sound of bells. Could it be the church? Yes, indeed, it was the parish church of our Lady of Pilar. We were home. Gradually the people,

dressed in their Sunday best, came together from the various widely dispersed parts of the village to greet their Bishop and to see the new "parish priest" and his "assistant". At 3 pm the Bishop said goodbye in order to go back to Bangued. He did not depart without once again, in his very own cordial way, encouraging us for the difficulties of the beginning.

Church and living quarters were quickly inspected. A bamboo building, 18 m long and 5.6 m wide, without windows, since light and air have entry into the church from all sides anyway, that is our church. ... Our living quarters consist of one room in a private home and a small adjacent room which has no windows...

At this time we mostly still sit quietly at our desk and study Ilocano and also English and Spanish. The latter is necessary for understanding the books which are to help us study the native language and particularly also in order, for the time being, to have a few interpreters among the people.... With God's help may we succeed in fulfilling faithfully and totally our task in the rebuilding of the Philippine Church." (Johann Scheiermann, Der erste Bericht aus unserer neuen Mission auf den Philippinen [the first report from our new mission in the Philippines], Steyler Missionsbote [Steyl Mission Messenger], March 1910).

When this story was published its author, Fr. Scheiermann, had already been dead for two months. He died suddenly and unexpectedly on January 4, 1910.

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



Divine Word Missionaries  
Secretariat Arnold Janssen Steyl

VOLUME 3 | No.3 | APRIL 2009

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

## The Arnoldus Family Story

An outstanding role in the foundation of St. Michael's Mission House in Steyl was played by Arnold Janssen's mission magazine *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote*, or *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*: "Without it this foundation would either not have succeeded at all, or at least not in such a short time," Fr. Arnold once said. Because of the magazine's importance we will look at it also in this issue of "The Arnoldus Family Story"; more precisely, we will focus on the issue of February 1874.

### The Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart at the Service of World Mission

#### A new emphasis

In January 1874 Arnold Janssen had this goal for his mission magazine: he wanted to inform people about "Catholic missions at home and abroad", that means, he wanted to report about the pastoral care of those Catholics who lived in predominantly Protestant areas of Germany and who were supported by the St. Boniface Association, and he wanted to write about the "pagan" missions. However, already in the second issue of the *Little Messenger* in February 1874, Fr. Arnold changed the magazine's orientation. In the article "A Word in Favor of the missions and the *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*" he wrote: "The intention of the *Little Messenger* is mainly to arouse interest in the church's mission abroad among the pagans." Fr. Arnold did not want to forget the mission within Germany, however from now on the emphasis was to be on the mission of the Church abroad among pagans.

Why this change of emphasis?

Fr. Arnold endeavored to recognize the "signs of the time" and interpret them in the light of God's will, as his following words show:

*While we give our attention to the mission of the church within Germany, no less, and perhaps to a higher degree, we turn to the mission in pagan countries, particularly at these times. It is now that God is allowing so many priests to be driven out of Germany. On the other hand they cannot get peaceful employment in the main area served by the St. Boniface Association. In all this God is giving us Germans a hint. For with regard to preaching the faith, compared to France we have done so little up to now to carry out the Lord's command 'go into all the world'.*

It was the time of the "Kulturkampf", the cultural struggle. Many priests were unable to do their priestly work, since they refused to obey the cultural struggle's anti-

church laws. In Prussia, therefore, more than 1000 parishes were without pastors. Fr. Arnold interpreted these bad times for the church, as God giving the Germans a hint to do something for the propagation of the faith among the non-Christian peoples. In obedience to this hint from God, in obedience to the will of God as it revealed itself in the particular circumstances of that particular time, he focused his missionary work through his magazine mainly, but not exclusively, on “the church’s mission outside Germany among the pagan peoples”.

### **The task of the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart**

Through the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart Fr. Arnold wanted to gain his readers for the “sublime” work of the propagation of faith among the non-Christian peoples; and that meant for him concretely:

*We hope to channel more prayers and donations to the missions. We hope here and there to awaken a dormant missionary vocation. We also hope here and there to motivate one or the other Christian mother to pray that God will give her a son who will become a missionary. Finally we hope that the stories of those heroic examples of virtue given by missionaries and their companions will also bear fruit among our somewhat apathetic and lax generation, so that it will become a little more active in matters of religion.*

### **The Apostolate of Women**

The last article of the February 1874 issue of the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart is entitled: “The Apostolate of Women”. Through this article he wished to instill his own enthusiasm for the propagation of the faith among the non-Christian peoples in German women religious. The “Kulturkampf”, that is the cultural struggle, threatened them, too, with expulsion from Germany and so Fr. Arnold asked:

*Where will they go if the danger becomes reality? Will perhaps the mission countries be able to give many of them a sincere welcome? Or will they just remain near the border [of Germany] or will they transfer to the almost European environment of Northern America? Obviously they can be useful everywhere. But one should ask where the greatest use lies. In our life we should strive to make the greatest possible effort for God. Furthermore, we should not choose what is easiest and most comfortable.*

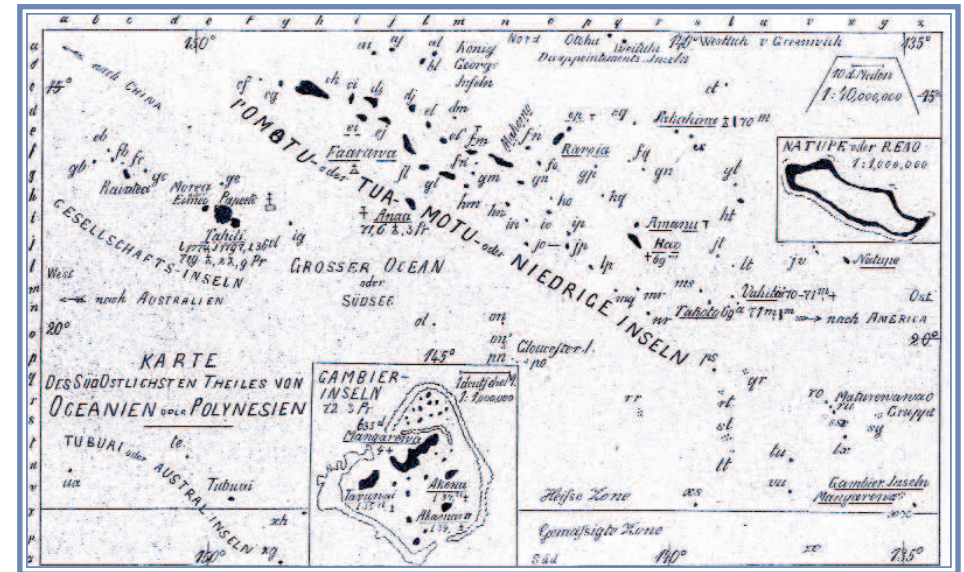
In case the religious sisters really were expelled from Germany and if they decided to work in the pagan missions, “it will be our pleasure to help as much as possible and to start collecting money towards covering the travelling expenses. If, however, the sisters do not have to leave Germany, these lines still stand as an admonition to establish mission stations.”

Fr. Arnold must have realized that some religious sisters might ask where this hitherto unknown priest found the courage to address them in such words; so he introduced his rather strong words with: “The following lines are written with the intention of promoting support for the mission countries. Since it is our duty and our task to work for the mission countries, one should not take these words amiss. We ask all

concerned to disregard the person of the writer and, rather, to see the reasons which must be brought forward and to examine them seriously before God.”

### **Knowledge of the mission countries brings joy to the readers in the home countries**

In the first issue of the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart (January 1874), Fr. Arnold had a long article printed about the Apostolic Vicariate of Mangarewa, Tahiti and Pomotu in Oceania. Added to this article was that little map of the south eastern part of Oceania or Polynesia which you see below:



It seems that some readers objected to that map. In the article already mentioned, “A Word in Favor of...” Fr. Arnold replied to the objection in this way:

*By the way, it is our urgent wish that as many people as possible study the map and that our readers help one another in that study. All effort applied here is worthwhile. If it is difficult to get through the first map, the second will be easier and the third one much better still. Finally, when there is a big map, you will be glad that you are so well informed about the mission countries. It is only like this that you get an idea of the situation of the kingdom of God on earth. And later on you will read all the stories from the mission countries with much greater pleasure. For you will know your way around everywhere as if you were in your own house.*

With his mission articles and the maps of the mission areas, Fr. Arnold wanted to establish a close and joyful bond between home and mission countries!