

own house for the pagan missions proper whilst the Protestant part has many of them and that so many other Catholic countries with whom we want to be equal in zeal have already done so much in that regard: the respectful signatories came together to use their limited powers for the foundation of a German house for the foreign missions. Furthermore several other considerations and further acts of providence made them decide that the house to be founded would also be for the Catholics of Austria and the Netherlands who were still lacking their own mission house as well, without, however, wanting to absolutely exclude members of other nationalities..." (ibid., p. 213).

Fr. Alt summarizes the main points of the letter in the following three points:

1. "Accordingly, the goal of the house would be to train, equip and send out missionaries for the mission countries, and in general work in an appropriate way to promote in our fatherland a constantly growing apostolic spirit and interest for the propagation of the kingdom of God on earth." 2. "Apart from this main goal, a secondary goal would be for the teachers of the house to cultivate Christian science, allowing them sufficient time for this purpose." 3. "If the project is to be fruitful, then like other mission seminaries, we will not be able to dispense with the foundation of a religious institute. In order to anchor the project already to an ecclesiastically approved base, we intend to use the rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic. This is because, according to their constitutions, the Dominicans are a teaching and missionary order. They have achieved excellent results in the missions and continue to do so" (Alt, Journey in faith, p. 60).

It was also pointed out that the Bishop of Roermond, in whose diocese the mission house was to be located, had already agreed to all of this.

The letter then continues: "When we now consider the magnitude of the task ahead of us and on the other hand our limited powers, we honestly have to confess that there certainly is justified cause for well-founded concern. The difficult situation of the present time can also still impose on us great trials and deprivations. However, since we have put our hand to the plow and since we have received so much encouragement from men wiser than ourselves and since Divine Providence, through the material and personal support which it sends day by day, seems to make its will ever more clear, we believe that in obedience to the word of the Lord we must not look back anxiously. Therefore it is our intention to go ahead during the coming days with the purchase of a house, in order to have a firm foundation as soon as possible" (Bornemann, Der Pfarrer von Neuwerk Dr. Ludwig von Essen [The parish priest of Neuwerk Dr. Ludwig von Essen], p. 214).

On March 20, 1875 Archbishop Melchers gave his consent to the establishment of the mission house.



## The Arnoldus Family Story

### The first major donation

In December 1874 the foundress of the "Poor Sisters of St. Francis", Mother Francisca Schervier, told Arnold Janssen that he would perhaps get a major donation for the new mission house. In January Fr. Metzemacher of Aachen, who had been asked by Mother Francisca to negotiate in that matter, invited Fr. Arnold to visit him in Aachen and to give him some information about the mission house project. After that conversation Fr. Metzemacher advised the "Poor Sisters of St. Francis" to pray novenas so as to discern clearly whether the money should be given to Fr. Arnold or not. Later the Sisters said that "the longer they had prayed, the more they had felt urged to give the money for the planned project" (H. Fischer, Arnold Janssen, Steyl 1919, p. 106).

Therefore, in the March 1875 issue of his mission magazine "Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote" (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart), after listing the donations for the month of February (until February 20) Fr. Arnold was able to add an article with the heading "Eine Ermunterung" (An Encouragement). In that article we read:

After compiling the list of donations given above, the editor of this magazine also received through a mediator the definitive assurance of the following donation for the month of March:

**"In honor of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, 3 000 Talers [9 000 Marks] from a mission friend for the projected mission house."**

In case the mission house has not been founded within three years, the donation should be given to the Xaverius Association in Lyon [France]. The name and place of residence of the noble donor are completely unknown to me. All I have heard is that he belongs neither to the rich nobility nor the wealthy business people but to the very ordinary class of people. May the Divine Heart of Jesus bless him in life and death with the greatest fullness of His most precious graces for the important encouragement which his generous gift has given this holy and necessary work. ... Even though this donation covers only 1/8 - 1/10 of what we need right at the beginning, we nevertheless hope that the mission house will still be founded this year; and we will not fail to pray zealously for the above-mentioned benefactor in life and death; every year on

his name day, which he will hopefully tell us, we will all offer one holy communion for him.

*At the same time I recommend imitation of his example ...*

*I would also like to add that all care will be taken that the donated gifts and the property which will be acquired will be safeguarded from any political interference. In regard to that, the competent diocesan bishop has already been consulted. Furthermore, due to the present situation in Germany, the cradle of the work will be located in a neighboring country and will serve that country as well. The house which we have in view, as well as the land belonging to it, are generally considered to be very conveniently situated and very suitable. Pursuant to a vow, the Archangel Michael is to become the house's patron. Hopefully in a month's time the project will have developed so far that even more exact information can follow* (Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote [Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart], Vol. 2, No. 3, March 1875, p. 24).

As soon as Fr. Arnold had been assured of this donation, he prepared a letter of thanks for the benefactor. "Two drafts of that letter and the original have been preserved. The drafts clearly show that they were written between February 25 and March 15. The date given, however, is March 19, the feast of St. Joseph. Yet the money itself arrived only after March 19, and in two installments: on March 24, 6000 Marks and on April 3 the other 3000 Marks. ... The founder had worked on this document very carefully, crossing out, making additions, rewriting the introduction completely, and then he still made two corrections to the content of the text (Fritz Bornemann, Arnold Janssen dankt dem ersten großen Wohltäter [Arnold Janssen thanks the first major benefactor], Nova et Vetera, 1977, p. 159).

### **Reply from Beuron**

On February 16, 1875 Arnold Janssen had asked Abbot Maurus of the Benedictine Abbey in Beuron if "he could help him with one or two good priests". Prior to answering this letter, the Abbot "solicited information about Fr. Janssen from Mr. Wolff, a teacher in Cologne, who had two sons in Beuron. Wolff went to Kempen in the early part of March and spoke first with the Director of the teachers' college, Hermann Joseph Ostertag, because Ostertag, a priest 20 years older than Janssen, had been the latter's advisor and was thus very well informed. [On March 8, 1875] Ostertag told Wolff that Janssen 'is a pious man, a model ascetic. He believes God has called him to undertake the work in question and, in my opinion, he will succeed with God's help. He believes that God wants the work and therefore it must come to pass. I find it difficult to keep him from acting too impetuously. At the moment, however, everything is still in the preparatory stage'." (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, Engl. ed., Arnoldus Press, Manila, 1975, p. 57).

Mr. Wolff "forwarded the results of his investigation to Abbot Maurus. It had extended as far as Bocholt and was wholly favorable to Father Janssen" (ibid.).

On March 14, the Abbot got Fr. Bonifatius (B. Wolff) (Alt, Journey in faith, p. 60, footnote 61), probably the son of Mr. Wolff, to send this reply to Fr. Arnold: "Because our own personnel is so limited, and partly also because the project is still so much in the planning stage and lacks all guarantees, Beuron can offer no help now. Whether it can do so in the future will depend primarily on the consolidation of your pious enterprise and especially on its financial stability. We regret that in this regard we are in no position to make any kind of sacrifice" (Bornemann, Arnold Janssen, Engl. ed., Manila 1975, p. 57).

### **Second major donation**

If during this first half of March 1875 the negative reply from Beuron had, perhaps, disappointed Fr. Arnold, in that very same first half of March 1875 a visit to the Franciscan monastery in Duesseldorf must have happily surprised him, because he was informed of a second major donation. The Franciscans told him that an elderly lady, Miss Katharina Schell, who had been employed for many years as a housekeeper, had inherited several thousand Taler from her employer. She wished to donate two thousand Taler [6000 Marks] for a good cause. The monastery's Guardian said "that at the moment his monastery had no need for such a sum" and knowing of Fr. Arnold's plan for the foundation of a mission house, suggested instead to give the money to Fr. Arnold. Miss Schell agreed and sent the money before March 27, and she did so with the proviso suggested by Fr. Arnold, that she would receive the interest as long as she lived (cf. ibid., pp. 53-54).

Just as the donor of the 9 000 Mark was unknown to Fr. Arnold, Miss Schell was completely unknown to him.

### **Arnold Janssen, Msgr. Dr. von Essen and their letter to Archbishop Melchers of Cologne**

At this time in March 1875, Fr. Arnold did not only visit the Franciscans in Duesseldorf, but also Msgr. Dr. von Essen in Neuwerk. During their meeting on March 17, 1875 Msgr. von Essen renounced "all of his own plans" to found a mission seminary, instead he promised to support Fr. Arnold's work as much as was in his power (Bornemann, Der Pfarrer von Neuwerk Dr. Ludwig von Essen und seine Missionspläne [The parish priest of Neuwerk Dr. Ludwig von Essen and his mission plans], St. Augustin 1967, p. 96). Furthermore, Fr. Arnold and Msgr. von Essen both signed a letter to Archbishop Melchers of Cologne which had been drafted by Fr. Arnold. Msgr. von Essen as a priest of the Archbishop's diocese signed in the first place; A. Janssen as a priest of the diocese of Muenster signed in the second place (cf. ibid., p. 97).

In this letter we read:

*"... Inspired by various personal requests, as well as particularly through the awareness that the Catholic part of our fatherland does not yet have its*