

*I am ready to travel to Tegelen any day if it can be at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Dominica in Albis I finished First Communion instruction and I can also come to Kempen for a more detailed discussion, unless you prefer to have a few days rest here with me. Consider my house your country estate* (Bornemann, *Der Pfarrer von Neuwerk Dr. Ludwig von Essen.....*, p. 98).

### **The attitude of the diocese of Muenster towards Arnold Janssen's plans**

Arnold Janssen had requested a recommendation for the new mission house not only from the Dutch bishops but also from his own bishop, Bishop Johann Bernard Brinkmann of Muenster. However, because of his resistance to the anti-church cultural struggle laws, Bishop Brinkmann had been imprisoned on March 18, 1875. In his place, on **March 29** the office of the Vicar General sent a letter to Fr. Arnold, asking him "to draw up and submit at least a general idea of how the institution for foreign missions planned by you is to begin and be established. At the same time give details about the assured material means so far and the names of persons who have more precise knowledge of the project and have promised active support" (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 62). "Only after you have submitted this information can we judge whether and to what extent we can meet your application for the Episcopal authority's recommendation for your undertaking". Unfortunately, there is no written record of Fr. Arnold's reply (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 62).

This reply of the office of the Vicar General shows that Fr. Arnold's superiors "were worried lest he embarrass himself and the ecclesiastical authorities if the project went wrong" (*ibid.*). We can understand those worries when we look at the situation of the Catholic Church in Prussia and in particular in the diocese of Muenster in 1875: There was the cultural struggle with its anti-Church laws. On February 5, 1875 Pope Pius IX published the encyclical "Quod nunquam" in which he condemned the cultural struggle laws and declared them "invalid in so far as they totally oppose the divine order of the Church". The politicians debated various new anti-church laws, for instance to stop the financial support of the Church by the State and, with the exception of hospital orders, to expel all religious orders from Prussia. Both laws were enacted in April and May 1875. Bishop Brinkmann had to spend 40 days in prison in the town of Warendorf and still in 1875 he had to go into exile in the Netherlands. Only in 1884 was he able to return to Muenster. Considering this tense and difficult situation of the Church, it is no surprise that the office of the Vicar General in Muenster wanted Fr. Arnold to give them some information regarding the prospects for the success of his undertaking. On the other hand we can also admire Fr. Arnold's courage to go ahead with the founding of the mission house in such a difficult situation. He gained this courage from the conviction born of a great deal of prayer: "God wills it!"



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## The Arnoldus Family Story

### March 1875 – Positive Results on the way to Steyl

On the way to founding the mission house the month of March 1875 had been rather successful for Arnold Janssen.

On **March 10, 1875** the Bishop of Luxemburg, Nikolaus Adames, wrote to Fr. Arnold:

*Dear and Honored Father!*

*Every good work meets with difficulties. You must not lose heart if your project encounters them. Precisely that is a proof that it is good and comes from God.*

*Therefore, go ahead courageously, trusting firmly in God, in the holy Mother of God and in St. Joseph.*

*For that my best wishes and my blessing!* (Mit dem Segen der Kirche, Briefe an Arnold Janssen [With the blessing of the Church, Letters to Arnold Janssen] St. Augustin, Steyler Mission 1975, p. 22).

In that very same month of March Fr. Arnold received two donations, one of 9000 Marks and one of 6000 Marks. In his joy over the donation of 9000 Marks he wrote a letter of thanks to the benefactor, dated **March 19**:

At the head of the letter he wrote: "Vivat Cor Jesu in cordibus hominum (May the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of people)!" Then he continued: "In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and especially of the adorable Incarnate Word, I, the humble undersigned, attest and declare as follows': He states his determination to work for the foundation of the seminary and mentions the permission from the bishops of Roermond and Muenster. Then he goes on to say 'the good God has inspired the one to whom this letter is directed, and whose name and address are entirely unknown to me, to donate 3000 Taler or 9000 Marks for the realization of this purpose. I accept this sum with humble gratitude and in honor of the Most Holy Trinity, and I promise to use it for the said purpose. Should the aforementioned seminary still not be a reality after three years, I promise to transfer the sum to the Xavier Mission Society in Lyons (France), according to the express wish of the donor" (Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen*, Engl. ed., transl. John Vogelsang, pp. 54-55).

On March 17, 1875, the parish priest of Neuwerk Msgr. Dr. von Essen and Fr. Arnold had sent a letter about the projected mission house, drafted by Fr.

Arnold, to Archbishop Paulus Melchers of Cologne. Msgr. von Essen was a priest of the archdiocese of Cologne and so on **March 20**, the archbishop addressed his answer to him:

*In reply to the report of the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month, regarding the project of a German mission house to be established in the diocese of Roermond, I gladly express my agreement with this project which without any doubt is pleasing to God and which has already received the approval and blessing of the Holy Father.*

*Even though in the current so difficult time for the Catholic Church the mission house will not be able to receive substantial financial support, the same difficulties may lead some people to the projected work who at present will not be able to be employed in the service of holy Church in their German home country.*

*Wishing your project from the bottom of my heart God's blessing, I regret not to be able to grant to you, Reverend Father, the release from your work as parish priest.*

Cologne, March 20, 1875

The Archbishop of Cologne  
Paulus

(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, Steyler Verlag, 1967, p. 98).

The Archbishop had already written this letter on March 20, but Msgr. von Essen notified Fr. Arnold of it only on March 27. In the meantime Fr. Arnold had not been idle.

### **Looking for a property and recommendations of Dutch Bishops**

Arnold Janssen had realized that because of the cultural struggle, the mission house could not be established in Germany and he saw the neighboring Netherlands as the best place for the new mission house. In the Netherlands the place where it was to be founded “had to have good connections to Germany. The first place which met this requirement was Venlo because three railway lines met there: 1. the Cologne-Minden line from Muenster, Wesel and Geldern; 2. the Rhine Valley line from Cologne, Krefeld and Kempen; and, 3. the line from Aachen, Duesseldorf and Gladbach. So in March or April 1875, I [Fr. Arnold] went to see the Dean of Venlo and inquired if there was a suitable place there for the establishment of a mission house. If I am not mistaken, I also went to the town hall to take a look at the local ordinance survey maps. But there was no bigger piece of property that might be considered” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 61).

Fr. Arnold then decided to look for a property once again in Tegelen where earlier on his plan to buy the “de Munt” property had fallen through particularly for financial reasons. Tegelen was a convenient place since it was near the German railway station of Kaldenkirchen. “I therefore went to Tegelen and in the mayor's office I asked for the local ordinance survey maps. A part of the so called ‘Handerthof’ near Tegelen seemed to be a suitable place. ... I then went to the owner, Mr. de Ryk who lived in Steyl and whose house was near the

church.” He rejected the idea of selling that property, but at the same time he said that Fr. Arnold “should, rather, buy the house of Nikolaus Ronck; it was situated very beautifully by the river Maas and in the immediate vicinity of the Steyl church” (Reinke, *Erinnerungen von Arnold Janssen* [Memoirs of Arnold Janssen], 3.347).

The name Ronck appears in a letter which Fr. Arnold wrote from Venlo on **March 22, 1875** to Prof. Moubis who was born in Steyl and who had participated in the negotiations concerning the “de Munt” property: “This morning I will travel from here to the middle of Holland and hope to return on Tuesday evening or Wednesday about noon in order to negotiate with Mr. Ronck and you. I very much hope you will be there then because my time is very limited” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 61).

“In the middle of Holland” Fr. Arnold hoped to meet the Bishops and receive their recommendation for the establishment of the mission house. First he “went to see the senior member of the Dutch hierarchy, Bishop Zwijsen of 's Hertogenbosch. The latter listened carefully and referred the petitioner to the Archbishop of Utrecht, Dr. Schaepman. ‘He gave me a warm reception and gave me his approval dated 23 March 1875. Then I got the approval of Bishops Wilmer of Haarlem, van Beek of Breda, and Zwijsen of 's Hertogenbosch” (*ibid.*).

Archbishop Schaepman's recommendation has the following wording:

*Herewith We, too, declare that We approve the plan of Rev. Arnold Janssen to establish a German-Dutch house for the foreign missions in connection with an apostolic school or preparatory school for the training of missionaries, and we hope that this project will be crowned with the best blessing of God* (Mit dem Segen der Kirche, *Briefe an Arnold Janssen* [With the blessing of the Church, Letters to Arnold Janssen], p.30).

### **Society of the Divine Word**

In the history of the “**Society of the Divine Word**” March 25, 1875 is of special importance. The long-time trusted co-worker of Fr. Arnold, Fr. auf der Heide wrote in his ‘Mitteilungen über Arnold Janssen’ [information about Arnold Janssen] from the year 1926: “*In my student years I heard that the Founder got the idea of giving the name ‘Society of the Divine Word’ to the proposed society after Mass on the feast of the Annunciation [March 25] 1875*” (see Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 61, footnote 69).

### **An interesting letter of Msgr. Dr. von Essen**

Msgr. von Essen himself copied the letter sent to him by Archbishop Melchers of Cologne and sent the copy to Arnold Janssen on **March 27, 1875**. In an accompanying letter he wrote:

*Dear Rector and our future Superior!*

*This morning I received the reply of the Reverend Archbishop of Cologne, a copy of which I hasten to send you immediately. The reply is very favorable and St. Joseph obviously helped again.*