

therefore, now also help to bring this work to a happy completion, in spite of our own weakness and the difficult times. To that end we hope for the intercession of the holy patrons whom we have chosen, of the two great defeaters of the serpent, that is the great, Immaculate Virgin, full of grace, who is the Star of the sea, the great woman who overcomes all heresies and the seat of divine wisdom, furthermore of the glorious Archangel Michael, protector of the Church, ..., patron of Germany and the foreign missions, and finally of dear, glorious Saint Joseph, patron of the whole Church and in particular the patron of China, the protector of Mary and the foster father of Jesus, whom we implore also to be our protector and provider. In particular may we enjoy the help of that Divine Word which lives in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is the divine wisdom, the splendor of the Father, the giver of the Holy Spirit and the Light that illumines every human being who comes into this world. May it become the passion of our devotion, our strength, our love and our light through which our teachers receive wisdom and our missionaries the strength to carry the kingdom and love of God into the night of paganism and into the loveless and lightless kingdom of the evil spirits..."

Finally Fr. Arnold asks his readers for financial support and the support of their prayers, "so that our dear Lord will grant us a strong, solid foundation, that is, in truly sound principles and views and a true, edifying striving for virtue".

He proposed to the religious orders and congregations in (Germany), Austria and the Netherlands that they hold a novena in honor of the patrons of the new mission house; and then he added the words: "For this is a work of far reaching public significance. Let us therefore pray that it will bring honor, salvation and blessing to both nations."

On the last page of that May edition of the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart, in the article "An unsere Leser" – "To our readers", Fr. Arnold mentioned that the St. Boniface printing press in Paderborn would no longer be able to print the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart. That caused him to add the following question in brackets: "Should that not perhaps give some mission friends cause to join together for the foundation of a mission printing press?..."

Finally, he drew the attention of his readers to June 16, 1875, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the appearance of the Sacred Heart to Margaret Mary Alacoque. On that day the whole church was to dedicate itself to the Sacred Heart using a prayer approved by Pope Pius IX. Fr. Arnold concluded that article with the wish: "May June 16, 1875 unite in the Most Sacred Heart of our Divine Savior all the people who truly love Jesus, together with all pious priests, bishops and the Holy Father, so that from there the power of genuine dedication will flow into the individuals, and new grace and new blessing into the whole body of the church."



## The Arnoldus Family Story

### First Applications for the Planned Mission House

In the previous issues of "The Arnoldus Family Story" we read the letters of the seminarian John Baptist Anzer to Arnold Janssen regarding the new mission house. Anzer was not the only seminarian who intended to join the mission house. In late 1874 when Fr. Arnold talked to "a rather large group of German students of theology" in Louvain about the future mission house, the seminarian Franz Xaver Reichart got "quite enthusiastic about the idea of a mission seminary". He was born in 1851 in Lochau in Vorarlberg, Austria, which belonged to the Diocese of Brixen. At the university he proved a talented student and had "very good grades" (see Bornemann, *Arnold Janssen*, Engl. ed., p. 64). From February 1875 on, he corresponded with Fr. Arnold.



Fr. F. X. Reichart

When Fr. Arnold was seeking recommendations for the new mission house from German and Austrian bishops, he went from Regensburg, where he had met the Bishop and John Baptist Anzer on May 3, to Innsbruck in Austria. Fr. Arnold remembers: "Then instead of traveling from there [Regensburg] via Passau to Austria, I decided it would be better to approach [Prince-Arch]Bishop V. Gasser of Brixen with whom I had to negotiate because of a person in his diocese who wanted to join" (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 63). This person was Reichart. The Prince-Archbishop wrote his recommendation on May 6. His wish was: "May our dear Lord bless the small beginning with great results" (*Mit dem Segen der Kirche, Briefe an Arnold Janssen* [With the Blessing of the Church, Letters to Arnold Janssen], Steyler Mission, St. Augustin, 1975, p. 78). One of the greatest results with which the Lord would bless the new mission house would be Joseph Freinademetz, whom Bishop Gasser was to ordain a priest just two months after having written these words (July 25, 1875).

On May 12, 1875 when Fr. Arnold was in Vienna, Austria, the parish priest of Buschrodt in Luxembourg, Fr. Peter Bill, expressed his interest in the mission house with the following letter to Fr. Arnold:

*Reverend Father!*

*The idea in your Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of founding a German mission house captured my interest enormously and I look forward to its development with a certain anxious tension. This is not the general interest in the success of a good*

work which must excite every Catholic, particularly every priest. Not only did an inner voice tell me: for this very best of all works you also have to do something; but another part within me was touched mightily.

Since childhood I was moved by a longing sometimes more intense, sometimes less, to be able to dedicate myself to the foreign missions; it was a longing which never completely left me, and which during recent years moved me again most vigorously to take steps towards it. –

Apart from a more or less unfavorable family background, a certain natural shyness also kept me back until my 24<sup>th</sup> year of life, before I had the courage to study for the priesthood (I thought myself incapable of it.) Therefore I did my studies – having only average talent – a bit over hastily. During the nine years that I have been a priest, as well as during the 9 years of my studies, the longing to dedicate myself to the foreign missions has never completely left me; but at one time it was lack of health, another time the fear of being incapable of it, but mostly perhaps the lack of generosity to sacrifice myself wholly to the Lord that prevented me from it. Over the last two years, however, this longing was sometimes so vehement, that I had to muster all my strength in order not to succumb to discouragement and neglect the duties of regular pastoral work. Right now my somewhat advanced age of 40 years, my not so brilliant knowledge, due to the hastiness of my studies, and a none too strong health seem to me equally insurmountable obstacles to the fulfillment of this continuing passionate longing. Forgive me, Reverend Father, in case I have overstepped the limits of prudence or also of modesty; a burdened heart feels the need to reveal itself. Only to my Most Reverend Bishop and to no one else have I recently entrusted this matter of my heart; he, however, still made me wait. Already some time ago I wanted to write to you about this matter, Reverend Father, and at the same time I wanted to ask you for some more information about the mission house which is to be founded. Finally I had decided to visit you in Kempen in Pentecost week in order to speak to you personally; however, I cannot manage that; perhaps I can make that journey in the week following the Octave of Corpus Christi. What I would like most is to put my poor person completely at the disposal of the future mission house.

Recommending myself and this matter so close to my heart to you and to your friends' pious prayer

I remain, Reverend Sir,

In the most sacred Heart of Jesus,

Sincerely yours,

Bill, parish priest (Peter Bill, Korrespondenz, *Erinnerungen "Zur Gründung des Deutschen Missionshauses in Steyl"* [Correspondence, Memories "Regarding the foundation of the German Mission House in Steyl"], unpublished manuscript, pp. 1-2).

Fr. Peter Bill was born on January 29, 1833 in Berg, parish of Betzdorf, Luxembourg. He "attended elementary school for five years; then worked on father's farm." He began high school studies at the age of 24 and in 1866, at the age of 33, was or-



Fr. Peter Bill

dained priest. First he was assistant parish priest in Befort, in 1868 he became parish priest in Buschrodt (See: Bornemann, *Remembering Arnold Janssen, Analecta SVD* - 42. Rome 1978, p. 420).

### The German - Austrian - Dutch Mission House

This was the heading over an article in the *Kleiner Herz - Jesu- Bote* (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart) of May 1875.

Arnold Janssen had already sent the May issue to the printer on April 20; however, only after his return from his journey to solicit the support of the German/Austrian bishops for the mission house was he able to do the proofreading on May 28. On April 20 he had only been able to report the recommendations of the bishops of Cologne, Muenster, Paderborn and Luxembourg, as well as those of the Dutch bishops, on May 28 he was able to add a few more episcopal recommendations from the German/Austrian area.

In that article he also mentioned the blessing of the Holy Father for a mission seminary which Cardinal Franchi, Prefect of Propaganda Fide in Rome, had forwarded to Msgr. Dr. von Essen in Neuwerk. Fr. Arnold then wrote about Msgr. von Essen: The cardinal's letter "is sent to a parish priest of the Archdiocese of Cologne, Rev. Dr. von Essen ... Since it had become clear that he himself was neither able to leave his parish in order to found the seminary, nor could he found the seminary within his parish, he very kindly and most willingly applied that blessing to the work which the editor of this magazine has taken up. Furthermore he pledged a not insignificant annual financial contribution; therefore he must rightly also be considered a founder of that enterprise which will hopefully soon be started."

Our SVD historian Fr. Bornemann points out that the title "founder" was not only conferred on Msgr. von Essen but at the beginning of the mission house it was an honorary title for the more significant benefactors. "At the same time we point out the great merits which those acquire for themselves who through their financial contribution become founders of this enterprise," Fr. Arnold wrote in the *Kleiner Herz-Jesu-Bote* (Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart), 2, 1875 (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), Steyler Verlag St. Augustin, 1967, p. 101, footnote 3).

In that article of May 1875, Fr. Arnold compares the foundation of his mission house with that of the English mission seminary Millhill near London: "While the English mission seminary in Millhill near London began in 1867 with one priest and one student, there is the prospect that the German-Dutch mission house can be opened on Dutch soil with at least four persons (two teachers and two students). Furthermore, a priest of the archdiocese of Utrecht who worked as missionary in China for 18 years and held high positions there, a man of experience and zeal for the missions – was so kind as to assure us of his help. In this help, then, which normally would have been very difficult to obtain and which, therefore, could hardly have been expected and which in spite of that our dear Lord gave us so easily, we can see yet new proof that He wants the project, that His divine providence wants it, has prepared it and will,